

# Antoni gaudí and his desire to please

[Design](#), [Architecture](#)



When one visits the city of Barcelona, they cannot fail to notice the beautiful attractions that are spawned by Gaudí. His sanctity and holiness preserved his artwork from the harsh criticism felt by others in his profession. By creating the Sagrada Familia as a key landmark of Barcelona and Spain as a whole, his status of a patron is surely hard to discredit. To this date, at least 7 of Gaudí's artworks have claimed the status of World Heritage sites by UNESCO.

In the year of 1909, many religious sites were infamously targeted by anticlerical dissidents, yet the Sagrada Familia was given unspoken amnesty and remained untouched by all. This week-long period of destruction was known as Tragic Week, meant to resemble early Christian sentiments governed by the same destructive reactions. By placing an image of a young Jesus working in his father's carpentry shop on the " Faith" section of the Sagrada Familia, Gaudí was able to represent the Catholic lower and middle class. Joan Maragall, a friend of Gaudí, characterized this style as " architectural poetry," since all of the artistic depictions held deeper meanings that Gaudí had long since envisioned.

The texture and fluidity of these sculptures turned the stone it was made out of into the exact embodiment of the Modernism movement. In grade school, I visited Barcelona and toured several of Gaudí's projects. At the age, I could not appreciate the work for what it is and represents, but I was still provided a sense of keen interest in the perplexity of the structure I was touring. Gaudí's Casa Milà's façade remains in my memory, but not as much as the elaborate designs unexpectedly seen on the inside. After visiting various monuments in countless locations for years, some sites were understandably

less memorable than others. My ability to recall numerous moments and sights within several of Gaudí's works including La Sagrada Familia and Parque Güell provide a justifiable example of its everlasting effects. The architect appreciated his work style as he chose to live within Park Güell for a certain period of his lifetime. As his life faced constant tragedies, the isolation allowed himself to focus wholly on perfecting his artistic traits that could provide the effects he so desired.

In 1915, Gaudí was quoted as saying: My good friends are dead; I have no family and no clients, no fortune nor anything. Now I can dedicate myself entirely to the Church." Despite the clear fascination of all of God's beautiful creations, Gaudí chose to remain single for nearly his entire life. This fact serves as a testament to Gaudí's lifelong ambition and goal regarding his professional work and nothing else. Those that were not fortunate enough to find themselves in his inner circle claimed that the man was quite arrogant and off-putting, yet he was full of pleasantries towards colleagues and associates. This pattern seems to be prevalent around those that are absorbed within their work and cannot devote energy towards social interaction and self-image.

One of Gaudí's closest friends was Josep Torras i Bages, the bishop of Vic. A contributing factor to this relationship would be the Catholic church alongside the Modernism art movement. The two of them, among others, were able to create the group Cercle Artistic de Sant Lluc. Early on, the local restaurant Les 4 Gats served as a meeting ground for the friends, where they could eat and drink while discussing art with other artists and writers. Interestingly,

The menus in this location are designed by Pablo Picasso. By congregating great religious minds, Gaudí was able to focus on his artwork while receiving guidance and constructive criticism from other talented individuals of his time. Around this time, a peculiar subsect of art appreciation developed within the group, known as Mediterraneanism.

After all, Gaudí was born in Reus, Catalonia, right on the Mediterranean coast. The exact location of his birth is unknown, but the proximity to this coastal region is undisputed. To understand the concept, one has to understand Gaudí's fascination with that area of the world and its people. Essentially, Gaudí believed that people born around the Mediterranean held a preference for artistic elements of the world, due to the art that the beauty there gave inspiration to. On the other hand, the Nordic people were far from the beauty of the Mediterranean, hence their partiality towards calculated, non-artistic professions and ways of life. This mindset of his can best be seen through his own statement: " Virtue is to be found at the midpoint: Mediterranean means in the middle of the Earth. The shores of middle light and at 45 degrees, which is the kind that best defines things and shows us their form, are where the great artistic cultures have flourished because of that balance of light: neither too much nor too little, because both provoke blindness; the Mediterranean is ruled by the specific version of things on which true art has to rest. Our plastic strength is the balance between feeling and logic: the Northern races intoxicate, smother all feeling, and, with their lack of light, neglect rationality and engender monsters... the Mediterranean arts will always hold a marked superiority over the Northern ones." Through such a long career, Gaudí was able to amass a large list of

priceless structures with his name on them. Even though Gaudí was not succeeded by an equally ambitious individual pursuing to extend the Art Nouveau movement, he is enough to establish widespread credibility for any art enthusiasts who are able to appreciate it.

The city of Barcelona is blessed to have sites such as Parque Güell available for all to visit and continue his worldwide legacy. In this perfect opportunity for Gaudí, Barcelona sought a reprieve from industry trends, and contracted him frequently to sustain the livelihood of the city. Parque Güell had a goal of exactly that when it was planned to provide a nature-filled escape within Barcelona. Gaudí goes as far as to include mushroom-like features to give a mystical and thought-provoking setting. Sitting on Carmel Hill in Barcelona, the site relies on specific imagery involving mythical creatures and religious figures. It is believed that much of his inspiration for this site came from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. No matter the spirituality of the visitors, people are able to appreciate Gaudí's creations. Though God was a motivating factor in their creation, he has little relation towards its outward manifestation and interpretation. Gaudí's first project of significance is claimed to be Casa Vicens, during an early stage of his career in which the Mudejar style of brick painting is taken to an amazing new level. It was not the use of stunning sculptures that gave Casa Vicens its status as Gaudí's first great piece of work, but rather its drastic variety of building materials: stone, brick concrete, glass, ceramic, iron, plaster tile, and papier-mâché. This complexity of building material combined with the vivid colors within is what gave pleasure to its visitors. This stylistic trend can be attributed to his colleague Josep Mariá Jujol, most noted for the broken tile designs seen in

many areas such as Parque Guell. With Jujol's help, Gaudí was able to be instill unique and creative methods of material use in his structures. Now that Gaudí's life has come and gone, we can appreciate this building as an early conception of the artist's ever-evolving art style.

Casa Batlló is yet another example of Gaudí's fine attention to detail combined with an overarching vision wherein the modernist aspects are defined by his own terms rather than his peers of the time. From 1904-1907, Gaudí helped decorate the façade of Casa Batlló in order to give it the widespread recognition that it was destined to receive once blessed with his unique sense of style. While this structure used its design and color to strike the senses of visitors, the majority of Gaudí's subsequent work revolved around the use of three-dimensional artwork to captivate audiences. We can see this with Casa Batlló and its outward façade, which, compared to Casa Vicens, strikes a much different pose. In fact, it is said by many that his designs can be seen as parallels to the illustrations seen in Dr. Seuss books. Despite being one of Gaudí's first projects, Casa Vicens has only been open to the public since late 2017. Since Gaudí aimed to captivate onlookers from the street, there is not too much that has been missed out on since its creation. Despite living in an era where technological innovation had not reached notable heights, Gaudí was more than familiar in how to build a structure that utilized natural lighting to a newfound level. The illumination that his techniques provided could be seen as key for such a widespread appreciation of his work, where all it takes is the sun's rays beaming down on a project to literally highlight its beauty. For such an artist, it would seem as if artificial lighting, such as what illuminates some of the most renowned

artwork such as the Mona Lisa, would be a sin in his eyes. In his own words, he has stated that “ architecture is the arrangement of light; sculpture is the play on light.”

At first, such a phrase may not make sense, but in Gaudí’s mind, what did or did not make sense to a viewer did not ultimately dictate its value and meaning. He was known to improvise a good deal of his work, but never in the crucial aspects such as proper lighting and functionality. In a period where widespread use of electricity was beginning to take hold, Gaudí did not want to rely on it as his tool to cast his artwork. To find the exquisite detail that Gaudí had placed on his artwork, we need not look elsewhere than the color choice of Casa Batlló’s floor tiles. By placing the darkest blue tiles on the top floors, and the lightest blue tiles towards the bottom floors, Gaudí was able to provide a keen impression on those standing in the courtyard. Those within the house would also be able to perceive a very similar shade due to the different sized windows. It is said that when you are on the top floor, the varying shades of blue provided the viewer with a congruent shade from top to bottom, instead of giving the impression that the viewer is looking down into a dark well. Light had to be taken not only from the street and backyard, but windows and openings in the patio as well, such as properly placed skylights which provided a precedent for the future of architecture.

Following Gaudí’s death, the Modernism movement he was so in tune with eventually died out, to be followed by a growth in Noucentisme. This artistic movement included Cubism, Futurism, and Dadaism. Just as he had put a

new twist on Gothic architecture, his own style had come to pass once society rapidly shifted pace. Following such a basic yet successful era such as Art Nouveau, it seemed difficult for artists and architects to find such a widespread appealing design such as the one being discussed. It is for this reason that Louis Sullivan, the original architect and designer for skyscraper buildings, referred to Gaudí's Sagrada Familia as "spirit symbolized in stone." By taking a look at the complexity of the work spawned by Antoni Gaudí, his motives and inspirations are as clear as day. His unique styles have inspired countless genres of designers, whether it be in the field of engineering or carpentry. With God on his side, Gaudí took his career so seriously that nothing else claimed similar importance. The results of such ambition are sure to yield the beauty and pleasure that one expects from a renowned work of art. From the start, Gaudí knew that he was capable of putting a new spin on previously mastered art styles, such as Gothic architecture. Once begun, his career aimed to reach the perceived maximum appreciation possible from any onlooker that has a respectable taste for art.

Although Gaudí was able to fulfill this goal, it was only due to the combined sentiment in the air following political, social, religious, and economical fallout on the part of the Spanish population. Once the Sagrada Familia reaches its completion, anyone will be able to experience the lucrative results of Gaudí's lifelong enthusiasms that are able to provide such a unique and provocative experience via art. Despite the sense of tragedy that surrounds certain parts of his life, Gaudí is seen as a martyr for the people, providing unexpected pleasure in the daily lives of those that just moved from the rural Spanish outskirts to the bustling, and usually dirty city. Today,



Barcelona seems to be one of the cleanest cities one can visit, meaning that the works of Gaudí that one visits are as miraculous as ever. I aim to revisit the city soon upon the Sagrada Familia's completion in order to experience and enjoy a monument found nowhere else in the world.