



Castell dels Tres Dragons

The original purpose of this building, located at the western end of the Parc de la Ciutadella (Passaig de Picasso entrance), was to house the Café and Restaurant of the Universal Exhibition held in 1888, the year which is considered to have seen the birth of Modernist art. It is one of Domènech's most original works and one of the most interesting creations of European architecture of the period. The basic conception is both radical and innovative and derives the utmost benefit from the expressive powers of new materials –brick, iron, glass and ceramics– and new construction techniques.

Above the lower floor, which is occupied by utilities, stands a spacious room in the tradition of Catalan Gothic architecture, shaped like a parallelepiped, with plain walls incorporating arches, pilasters and capitals. The thick double outer walls are covered in brick. A solid tower stands at each of the four corners. A complex system of summers and visible iron girders replaces the classical panelled ceiling.

The outside of the stout, austere brick walls has an elegant band of large ceramic crests by Alexandre de Riquer and Joan Llimona running along the top. The towers rise above Gothic-inspired crenellations: two are square and two octagonal, one of the latter having a slender cupola made from glass and wrought iron.

Because of the short time available for building, the interior decoration is relatively sparse, but this makes it possible to admire the architectural purity of the construction and its high degree of rationality and functionality, which is surprising for the period.

The building was nicknamed the «Castle of the Three Dragons» after the title of a comedy (1865) in which the Catalan playwright Pitarrà parodied medieval heroics. When the Exhibition was over it was converted into an applied arts studio run by Domènech himself together with A.M. Gallissà. Later it became a Museu d'Història and then a Conservatori de Música. Since the 1980s it has housed the Museu de Zoologia. It currently hosts some of the exhibitions organised by the Museu de Ciències Naturals.

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Palau de la Música Catalana

The Palau de la Música was built between 1905 and 1908 as the concert hall and headquarters of the Orfeó Català, a choral society devoted to the promotion of music and founded in 1891. It stands at the intersection of two streets: Carrer de Sant Pere més Alt and Carrer d'Amadeu Vives. One of the most characteristic creations of Catalan Modernist architecture, it is a veritable anthology of the decorative arts of the period. It is also an eloquent expression of the objective of national revival proper to the Modernist movement.

The construction techniques are very daring: a laminated iron structure and pillars standing back from the façade to support the weight of the arches which makes it possible to use a sort of curtain-wall. The building fits well into the relatively small plot of land: the utilities and rehearsal room are on ground level, while the main auditorium and stage occupy the first floor. The extremely lavish decoration, revealing an obvious organic and symbolic naturalism, blends perfectly into the functional structure.

Noteworthy features of the façade include a group of sculptures by Miquel Blay on the theme of popular music; a large ceramic frieze by Lluís Bru showing the singers of the Orfeó; polychrome mosaic-faced columns; and busts of the great composers.

The unusually light and colourful auditorium comprises stalls and two circles providing seating for over 2000. Large stained-glass windows with garlands of flowers let in the daylight and the entire hall is covered with glazed ceramic and floral motifs.

The front of the broad stage is flanked by groups of monumental sculptures by Pau Gargallo: on one side is a bust of Anselm Clavé, a founder of choral music in Catalonia, with an allegory of his best known song, «The May flowers»; on the other side is a bust of Beethoven and Wagner's cavalcade of Valkyries.

At the back of the stage is a large organ. But even more surprising are the eighteen magnificent female figures –fairies or muses, each playing a musical instrument– on a background of *trencadis* (mosaic made of fragments of pottery). The lower part of each body is made of ceramic mosaic (by Bru), while the stone busts (by Eusebi Arnau) stand out from the wall.

Following the 1983 alterations, work commenced on a major enlargement and reorganization project directed by Oscar Tusquets, which is now complete. The Palau de la Música was catalogued as World Heritage by Unesco in 1997.

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Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau

The building of this large hospital complex in the El Guinardó- district (c/ Sant Antoni M. Claret, 167) began in 1902. Of all Domènech's works it had the greatest impact on the city, since the site is the equivalent of nine blocks of the Eixample district.

The decision to build it was taken by the authorities of the old Hospital de la Santa Creu, founded in 1401. By the late nineteenth century the magnificent Gothic building in the Old Quarter had become too small and the plan to build a new hospital to meet the needs of the growing city became reality through a legacy from the banker Pau Gil.

The system of locating the different hospital services in separate pavilions set amid gardens had already been tried out by Domènech at the Institut Pere Mata in Reus. In Barcelona he solved the problem of connecting the wards with the central facilities by building underground corridors which also provided space for many other services.

The first phase of building ended in 1909 when the roof was put on the Administration Building, which is also the main entrance. The first six ward buildings and the central operating theatres were also designed by Domènech i Muntaner himself, assisted from the outset by his son, Pere Domènech i Roura. Construction continued until well into the 1920s and further additions were made later.

A noteworthy feature of the structure is the use of the characteristic, age-old technique of Catalan brick vaulting in the ceilings and roofs, which constitutes the unifying leitmotif of the entire complex. Ornamentation is of fundamental importance: not only does it blend harmoniously into the architectural structure, as is customary in Domènech's works, but it takes on a deep symbolic and religious significance. Thus the ground floor of the entrance building is shaped like a pair of open arms, in imitation of the allegory of Charity, and there is abundant iconography referring to the history of the hospital and its Christian and social virtues: sculptures by Pau Gargallo and Eusebi Arnau, and paintings and mosaics by Francesc Labarta and Mario Maragliano. Floral, heraldic and typographical motifs occur repeatedly in the plentiful ceramic and mosaic decoration.

The Hospital is one of the most important and highly reputed in Catalonia. Certain parts of the Administration building can be visited. Classified as World Heritage by Unesco in 1997.

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Editorial Montaner i Simon

This building, located at Carrer d'Aragó number 255, was Domènech's first major work in Barcelona. It was built (1879-1885) to house a publishing house belonging to the architect's mother's family. The façade reveals the structure of the building and makes daring use of glass as a curtain-wall, and of iron and brick. The decoration, which is symbolic, is reminiscent of Mudéjar art; it includes rose windows incorporating industrial cog-wheels and medieval themes, and busts of great writers. An angel bearing a trumpet symbolizes Fame disseminating news and knowledge. Inside there are colonnades, as in industrial buildings, and a large pyramid-shaped skylight lets in the light. The building has been carefully restored and since 1989 has been the home of the Fundació Antoni Tapies, which houses a rich collection of the painter's works. It is also an active contemporary art centre featuring a library specializing in oriental art and cultures, temporary exhibitions, etc. A characteristic aluminium sculpture by Tapies entitled *Cloud and chair stands* on the roof.

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Casa Lleó Morera

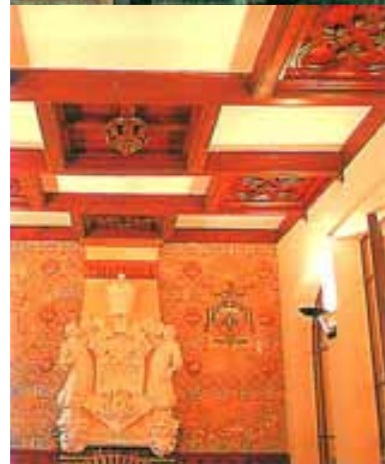
This building, located at Passaig de Gràcia number 35, was originally built in 1864 and entirely renovated by Domènech between 1902 and 1906. It stands on the block known as the «Mançana» de la Discòrdia. When the ground floor was turned into a shop in 1943 the fine sculptures adorning the outside were removed. The composition of the façade is extremely rigorous and the balconies and windows are decorated with sculptures by Eusebi Arnau. The decoration of the main floor, and other floors as well, was carried out by Domènech in collaboration with the best artists and craftsmen of his day. Several names are worthy of mention: Eusebi Arnau, who decorated the lintels on the main floor on the theme of a beautiful lullaby, the sculptor Joan Carreres, the painter Josep Pey, the ceramists Antoni Serra and Mario Maragliano, the Rigalls, who were glaziers, and the cabinet-maker Gaspar Homar (some highly interesting works can be seen in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya).

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Domènech i Montaner

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Domènech i Montaner at Canet de Mar

Domènech's links with this seafaring town on the Costa del Maresme, were many: his mother and wife were both from Canet, and he himself had his home and studio there and resided there for long periods.

His first work in Canet was the Teatre Principal, better known as the Foment Catalanista or **Ateu** (1887), located on the Carrer Ample. It is a two-storey building with a long, wrought-iron balcony across the façade and a prominent rose window in the shape of an eight-pointed star. At the corner is a large round tower with a slender glass cupola-shaped lantern on top. It is worth noting that it was here, for the first time, that Domènech used sgraffiti, a technique which, in addition to its ornamental function, plays an interesting part in the composition. It was once a lively cultural centre and theatre.

Casa Roura, popularly known as «Ca la Bianga», is a detached property on the Riera de Sant Domènech, built in 1889 for Domènech's wife's family. It is shaped like a parallelepiped with a round tower. The exclusive use of bricks on the outside and the design function fulfilled by the bricks lend it a coherence and personality all its own. There are numerous medieval-looking features and good ironwork on the balustrades. The large central hall is the focal point of the inside. Nowadays the building houses a restaurant.

The old manor farmhouse of **Can Rocosa** became Domènech's studio. The house has been refurbished as a museum, the **Casa-museu Lluís Domènech i Montaner**, containing written texts, sketches, models, books, furniture, samples of ceramics, and other items associated with the architect.

Domènech also left a number of minor works in Canet. The remodeling of the **Castell de Santa Florentina**, however, was a more ambitious undertaking. This former stronghold on the outskirts of the town (now a private house) belonged to his mother's family. Domènech i Montaner converted it into an imposing set of neo-Gothic buildings of great artistic and decorative value. His son, the architect Pere Domènech i Roura, designed other interesting buildings in Canet.

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Domènech i Montaner in Reus

Domènech's relationship with Reus—one of the most thriving cities in southern Catalonia, both economically and culturally—arose from his friendship with Pau Font de Rubinat, a Catalan nationalist politician and bibliophile from Reus, who was the mayor from 1899 to 1900, during a brilliant period of economic euphoria for the local bourgeoisie.

In 1897 Font de Rubinat and the psychiatrist Emili Briansó together founded the **Institut Pere Mata**, a mental hospital on the outskirts of the city designed in the light of the most advanced psychiatric currents of the day. It was here that Domènech tried out the system—later developed at the Hospital de Sant Pau in Barcelona—of independent pavilions surrounded by gardens to guarantee the seclusion and tranquility of the patients. Construction continued until 1919 and was largely completed by his son Pere Domènech i Roura. The hospital complex, overlooked by small, slender watchtowers, has a certain Arabian air about it. Two buildings can be visited: the entrance pavilion and pavilion number 6, the one reserved for patients «of distinction», which has preserved its original decoration. The predominant materials are brick and ceramics, another characteristic feature being the floral ornamentation on the hydraulic pavings, stained glass, grilles, etc.

Casa Navàs, built in 1901 on the Plaça del Mercadal, is one of the best examples of the type of house designed by Domènech for Catalan bourgeois families. It is also here that the extraordinary interior decoration and the furniture designed by the architect and made by Homar have been most carefully preserved. The façade has a porchway on the ground floor and floral decoration blending into the structure, which is reminiscent of a Venetian palace. The front door opens into a large central hallway which receives light both vertically from the ceiling and sideways from the large stained-glass windows. The whole interior is a compendium of Modernist design and the consummate skill of contemporary craftsmen.

There are two more buildings by Domènech in Reus. **Casa Rull** (1900), on the Carrer de Sant Joan, has a brick façade decorated with architectural elements. Restored in 1989-1991, it is now the home of the Institut Municipal d'Acció Cultural. **Casa Gasull** (1911) stands alongside it on the same street and is adorned with mosaics and sgraffiti.

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Other Works

Domènech's output was so vast that it is impossible to give an exhaustive list. However, several other buildings in Barcelona and elsewhere also deserve mention. The original plans of the **Palau Montaner** (Carrer Mallorca 278, Barcelona) were drawn up by Domènech i Estepà. Domènech i Montaner, who took over in 1893, was responsible for the brilliant ornamentation—ceramics, ironwork, panelled ceilings, stained glass—and for the great two-storey-high entrance hall with its handsome staircase. It is now the seat of the Delegació del Govern and can be visited on Saturday mornings.

Casa Thomas (Carrer Mallorca 293, Barcelona) is an apartment block (1895) built to be the home and workshop of one of the most prominent printers of the day. It was enlarged in 1912 by F. Guàrdia. The rich ornamentation—ceramics, stained glass, a long Ionic colonnade, wrought-iron grilles—reinforces the rigorous composition, creating a magnificent overall effect.

The **Fonda Espanya** (Carrer de Sant Pau 9, Barcelona, near the Liceu), which is still a hotel today, was remodelled in 1902 by Domènech i Montaner. Outstanding features of the characteristically lavish decoration on the ground floor—panelled ceilings, lights and large windows—include the big fireplace sculpted by Eusebi Arnau and the wooden panelling with fine ceramic crests in the dining room, which also contains sgraffiti decoration by Ramon Casas.

Casa Fuster (Passeig de Gràcia 132, Barcelona, at the corner of Carrer Gran de Gràcia) was built in 1908 and reveals an interesting evolution in Domènech's work towards more restrained ornamentation. The very flat façade has been compared with the style of the Viennese Sezession movement. In its day, the hypostyle hall on the ground floor housed the Café Vienès. Nowadays it is a hotel.

In 1913 Domènech carried out some interesting alterations to **Casa Solà-Morales**, a Baroque building with fine sgraffiti decoration built in 1781 in Olot, the chief town of the Garrotxa region. He added several large windows with two female figures by Eusebi Arnau on the ground floor.

In L'Espluga de Francolí, a town near the monastery of Poblet, Domènech designed one of Catalonia's first **cooperative wine cellars** (1913). The roofs of the two original halls rest on arches inspired by the characteristic diaphragm arches of Catalan Gothic architecture.

Lluís Domènech i Montaner has also designed two important works located outside of Catalonia: the **Gran Hotel** of Palma de Mallorca and the **Seminary** in Comillas.



Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1849-1923)

Architect and designer, historian and politician, Domènech is a paradigmatic figure of Modernism, the Catalan form of Art Nouveau. He was the designer of some of the most distinctive buildings of the period and the author of important theoretical works on the Modernist movement. He played a decisive educational role as Director of the School of Architecture and took an active part in contemporary Catalan nationalist politics and in the cultural revival set in motion by the Renaixença.

He was born and died in Barcelona and most of his activity centred around the Catalan capital, which was going through a period of great economic, demographic and cultural growth: having spilled over its ancient walls, the city faced the challenge of implementing the ambitious plan drawn up by the engineer Ildefonso Cerdà for developing the Eixample district.

Domènech's reputation gained enormously from the 1888 Universal Exhibition, considered the starting point of the Modernist movement. Besides the Café and Restaurant (Castell dels Tres Dragons), he designed the Hotel Internacional, which was built in eighty-three days and dismantled after the event, and was in charge of the alterations to the City Hall. He became one of the favourite architects of the powerful bourgeoisie and the dynamic civil society of the day and was entrusted with ambitious projects like the Palau de la Música and the Hospital de Sant Pau.

Well versed in contemporary European architecture and its theoreticians (Viollet-le-Duc, Ruskin, Durand, and others), Domènech wrote a synthesis of his ideas in an article entitled «En busca d'una arquitectura nacional» (In search of a national architecture, 1878) in which he calls for respect for autochthonous traditions, a search for rationality and the use of new techniques. He was a follower of the naturalist and symbolic current in Art Nouveau (the Franco-Belgian line). Domènech i Montaner worked in close collaboration with the artists and artisans of the period, designing furniture, floors, panelled ceilings, and industrial construction models of all types. He had family links with the world of publishing and produced some outstanding graphic art designs for *La Renaixença*, *Arte y Letras* and other publications. He was a leading historian of Catalan and universal art and a specialist in heraldry.

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