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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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WORK BY SPANISH ARCHITECT GAUDI SHOWN AT MUSEUM

Architecture by Antoni Gaudí (1852 - 1926), whose unique and highly expressive work in Barcelona has lately attracted the renewed interest of architects, sculptors and painters, will be shown in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from December 18 through February 23.

Five major projects, including two apartment houses, two churches, a school and a public park, as well as lesser buildings, have been selected by the architectural historian Professor Henry-Russell Hitchcock for the exhibition, which has been installed by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, and Wilder Green, Assistant.

Actual casts of sculpture, a nave window, and a column from the Sagrada Familia, a wrought iron window grill from the Casa Milá and a chair from the Casa Battló have been sent from Spain to supplement the photo-murals and stereo slides which illustrate most of the projects executed by Gaudí. All the objects and many of the photographs were made available through the cooperation of the Amigos de Gaudí Barcelona, who have scrupulously photographed and documented Gaudí's work.

Gaudí's work is characterized by curves, by the sculptural modelling in facades and interiors, by the use of highly imaginative wrought iron grills and gates, and colorful mosaics of bits of broken colored pattern, glass and tile. He used stone, rubble, brick and plaster and worked with enormous attention to technical and structural methods. Often his buildings resemble organic growths or eroded natural formations. He frequently designed the furniture and fixtures for his buildings, which achieve an unusual richness and complexity of forms quite unlike the main line of development taken by architecture since the mid-twenties.

Both Professor Hitchcock and Mr. Drexler, in the catalog* of the show, suggest that it is the recent preoccupation of many architects with sculptural forms and curved surfaces, and the latest international movements in painting and sculpture (the "action" painters and the sculptor-welders) which, although not directly influenced by Gaudí's little known work, have nevertheless provided the impetus for the recent quickening of interest in his architecture.

"In the total picture of modern architecture of the 20th century," Professor Hitchcock says, "Gaudí stands apart; his uniqueness is of an order no others approach. Not the least value of studying his work is the exhilaration that comes from realizing more. . . ."

*THE ARCHITECTURE OF ANTONI GAUDI by Henry-Russell Hitchcock. 52 pages, 86 black and white photographs. Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Simon and Schuster, New York. \$1.95

how vast, how unplumbed, are the possibilities of architecture in our time, how limited the aspects of the building art which most architects are today exploiting."

Two of Gaudí's most important commissions were churches: the Santa Coloma de Cervelló (1898 - 1914), of which he completed only the crypt, and the Sagrada Família, on which he worked from 1884 until his death in 1926 when it too was left unfinished. The church of Santa Coloma was built some 10 miles from Barcelona where the Güell family, one of Gaudí's great patrons, had cotton-spinning mills. "...the irregular basket of brick ribs carrying the nearly flat web of the vault recalls some of the boldest devices of late medieval construction," Professor Hitchcock says. Roughly hewn stones are used as columns and the window grills were made up of discarded bits of cotton-spinning machines.

The Sagrada Família is shown with an adjacent parochial school, the undulating vaults of which are prophetic of much modern engineering. The unfinished church's four tall spires dominate the Barcelona skyline. A profusion of sculpture, executed from 1903 on, give the steep gables a highly novel flavor.

The Park Güell was built between 1900 and 1914, for the same patron who commissioned several of Gaudí's most important projects. Partly landscaping and partly architecture, it includes terraces, colonnades, and small buildings. The slanting columns composed of rubble look like leaning tree trunks but are actually the result of careful technical analysis of structural forces. Curving benches covered with mosaics sweep around a great open terrace, and with the tile covered roofs of the lodges create a "Gulliverian dream of vegetable or animal elements grown to monumental size," Professor Hitchcock says.

Most of the interiors shown in the exhibition are from the Casa Battló, a small apartment house Gaudí remodelled in 1905 - 1907. Bonelike piers and window frames make the facade seem in motion. Within, the same sinuous lines are expressed again in sculptured ceilings, undulating walls, free-form windows cut into walls and ceilings and panelled wood doors and stair wells.

The Casa Milá (1905 - 1910) is a much larger apartment house built around two courts. There are no straight lines at all, and the building, Professor Hitchcock says, looks as if it had been made by seas and weather. The intricate iron-work that drapes each balcony of the facade looks like twisted seaweed. The roof is an undulating landscape of monumental chimneys and stairtowers.

The exhibition has been installed by Mr. Drexler, assisted by Mr. Green, in the Museum's third floor galleries. The area is dominated by a central court enclosed by lintels supported by four massive pillars. Here have been placed a cast of Gaudí's sculpture of stars and pigeons and a model of a nave window for the Sagrada Família, a 6 foot high wrought iron window grill from the Casa Milá, and a

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replica of a chair designed by Gaudí for the Casa Battló. Enlarged photographs are shown in separate bays around the sides of the central court. Many photographs are recessed in the walls, which have been covered with a white textured paint. A separate area contains the color stereo views of the building while in another bay are shown photographs of Gaudí's imaginative iron grills, fences, gates, and balcony railings. Also at the entrance to the exhibition is a photograph of the ingenious wire model Gaudí used to design his churches, and a cast of a column from the Sagrada Familia.

Professor Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Guest Director of this exhibition, is Professor of Art at Smith College. He is the co-author of Built in USA: Postwar Architecture and author of Latin American Architecture Since the War, both published by the Museum, and recently published a monumental study Early Victorian Architecture (Yale University Press).

For additional information please contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. CI 5-8900. Photographs and catalogs are available on request.