

One hundred years after the exposition. Searching for 'lost' lace

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1 BOHIGAS TARRAGÓ, Pere, *Anal de los Museos de Arte de Barcelona*, 1945, vol. 3, num. 4. «Apuntes para la historia de las exposiciones oficiales de Arte de Barcelona (de 1918 a 1929)», cap. XXI, p. 258-265.

2 Oddly enough, Centre d'Arts Decoratives, which would later become the FAD, was set up by two figures with close ties to the world of lace-making and, by extension, what were known at the time as ladies' handicrafts: Josep Fiter i Inglés, also president of Col·legi Major de la Seda de Barcelona and owner of one of the most renowned lace- and blonde-making companies of the time; and Jaume Brugarolas, founder of the *La Bordadora* journal.

3 We would like to thank Maria Josep Balcells, from the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona Documentation Centre; Neus Ribas San Emeterio, director of Museu d'Arenys de Mar; and Núria Peiris, of Arxiu Mas at Fundació Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic.

4 *Exposició d'Art. Catàleg Oficial. Secció del Foment de les Arts Decoratives*, 1918. Palau de Belles Arts, Barcelona, Barcelona City Council, Oliva de Vilanova Impressor.

From 11 May to 30 June 1918, the now demolished Palau de Belles Arts hosted a new art exposition in Barcelona. Due to the war in Europe and resulting border closings, the event mainly focused on Spanish and Catalan creators.¹ In addition to some other associations for the promotion of the arts, such as Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluç and Societat de les Arts i els Artistes, the Fostering Arts and Design association, founded in 1903, played a key role in this exposition. In addition to the sections focusing on ex-libris, performing arts, applied arts, the Institut Català de les Arts del Llibre and multifaceted artist, designer and collector Josep Pascó Mensa (1855-1910), the FAD also set up a space devoted exclusively to Catalan lace.²

The two halls dedicated to this craftwork, which was still an artistic industry at that time, were decorated to look like the inside of a home on the coast of Catalonia, meaning most of the Barcelona coastline, which is the area where this activity was traditionally done. Likewise, for the duration of the exposition, visitors could see lace-makers in action on certain days and times, showcasing their skill at needle lace and other styles. Although most of the more than fifty exhibitors (merchants, manufacturers, amateur lace-makers and collectors) were from Barcelona, the exposition also had representatives from towns renowned in this field, such as Arboç del Penedès, Arenys de Mar, Arenys de Munt and Molins de Rei.

Until the FAD historical archive, now in the custody of the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona Documentation Centre³, is fully searchable, we have to look for information on this exposition in the published catalogue⁴, and the few articles that found their way into the press.⁵

This exposition aimed to bring together as many lace-making techniques as possible, both bobbin and needle: *ret fi* (or Arenys lace), blonde, guipure, Brussels, Alençon, Catalan Chantilly, metallic, etc. Likewise, to better

5 In "La Secció de Punes Catalanes a l'Exposició", *Pàgina Artística de la Veu*, 8 July 1918, Adelaida Ferré, folklorist and historian

specialising in lace in Catalonia, not only remarks on the most noteworthy pieces in the exposition but also on the various techniques on

display and other technical or cultural aspects that are always interesting to know when compiling the history of Catalan lace.

► Decoration from one of the FAD halls, at the Palau de Belles Arts de Barcelona, for the lace exhibition. Picture taken from the catalogue.

▼ Cover of the catalogue for the Fostering Decorative Arts (FAD) section.



6 The collection of patterns from Castells in Arenys de Mar is particularly noteworthy, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, which according to Adelaida Ferré (in the article cited in note 5) show the evolution of Catalan blonde lace from 1800.

7 Museu del Disseny, MTIB, 3.131. Thanks to the 1918 exposition catalogue, this lace has been dated to 1825, from the early days of the Fiter company. Previously, through a misreading of the sources, it had always been dated from the end of the 19th century and attributed to Josep Fiter i Inglés (1855-1916) and Francesc Tomàs i Estruch (1862-1908).

understand the art of lace-making and its complex process, the display also featured patterns, some historical, and basic tools, such as bobbins and lace pillows.⁶ Unfortunately, the catalogue only included four pictures of the more than two-hundred laces on display, which included all sorts of pieces designed as decoration for secular and religious clothing and the home or altar.

Some of the lace that was on display in 1918, despite being quite fragile and has gone through much upheaval over time, still exists today. This is the case, for example, of the delicate multi-colour blonde of the widow of Josep Fiter i Inglés (one of the company's most emblematic pieces), which is now on display at Museu del Disseny de Barcelona.⁷ Most of the pieces in the exhibition are very difficult to identify, due to the lack of pictures and very brief descriptions in the catalogue. Nevertheless, after carefully studying the inventory of pieces on display, we now feel capable of identifying and locating several of them (not all, although we would like to) in both public and private collections. Inventorying and cataloguing this 'lost' lace (the focus of this article) not only allowed us to recreate part of that exposition, but also to continue expanding our country's incomparable heritage or lace corpus (much of which has been left totally without context and authorship) and, at the same time, continue putting together a view of the history of this art here at home.

Multi-colour blonde from the Fiter company being conserved at CDMT. Museu del Disseny de Barcelona, MTIB 3131.



⁸ We have to assume that the Castells company booth, in size and number of pieces on display, was one of the most noteworthy at the exposition. It featured images of their creations (Joaquim Castells took photographs of the company's samples) and dozens of patterns, most historical, in several styles and techniques, showing the significant archive the company had stockpiled since it was founded in 1862.

⁹ Museu d'Arenys de Mar has 5 sketches, 20 matrixes and 31 patterns for this alb (reg. no. 3623), dated 1908, of which at least two versions were made, and surely a rochet, too. Plus, there are six pinned fragments, most

Documented lace

Following the alphabetical order in which the exhibitors were listed in the catalogue, one of the first pieces of lace to be identified was the alb displayed by the Capuchin convent of Our Lady of Pompeii in Barcelona and made by Casa Castells in Arenys de Mar, lace traders also present at the exposition.⁸ Thanks to father Pere Cardona, the sacristan at the convent today, we had access to thirty or so albs that, although not currently used to celebrate mass, have been carefully preserved. It wasn't difficult to pick out the one that had been made by Castells, a magnificent white-cotton guipure with delicate, dynamic floral motifs in an art-nouveau style, designed by Marià Castells Simon (1876-1931). The photo sample books put together by her brother Joaquim, which are now at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar, allowed us to identify the alb from Our Lady of Pompeii manufactured by these renowned lace traders as almost certainly the one that was on display at the 1918 exhibition.⁹

likely samples, and photos for the company's sample books (number 530 Castells catalogue).

Photo from the early 20th century of Joaquim Castells with lace used to make the alb for the convent of Our Lady of Pompeii in Barcelona. [See more.](#)



10 Adelaida Ferré, in addition to her work with the Escola Municipal de Labors, submitted several historical items from her own collection (including patterns from the Fiter company) the location of which is unfortunately unknown today.

11 Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11988. On the back of the cardboard to which the lace is attached, there is a note that it was a reproduction of a piece from the Pascó collection and was the piece she made as her final project to get her leaving certificate in the 1915-1916 school year.

12 See: "Crònica. L'aula de puntes a l'Escola Municipal de Labors per la Dona", *Pàgina Artística de la Veü*, 9 October 1916, p. 356.

13 The Gimeno Pascual donation, in March 2014, included 145 pieces, including the some that we've considered samples or practice pieces.

14 See *Exposició d'Art. Catàleg Oficial. Secció del Foment de les Arts Decoratives*, núm. 1088, "Reproducció

Some of the main centres of learning for ladies' handicrafts in Barcelona also had their space at the exposition: Escola de Puntaires del Patronat d'Obreres de Sarrià; Institut de Cultura i Biblioteca Popular per a la Dona and Escola Municipal d'Oficis per a la Dona, whose embroidery and lace-making classes were led by Adelaida Ferré (1881-1951), an embroider and lace-maker, member of the FAD, and one of the most important lace historians in Catalonia.¹⁰

One of the pieces this municipal school had on display is now at Museu d'Arenys de Mar: a needlework piece by lace-maker Clotilde Pascual (1894-1969) copying a piece from the 18th century, with what was known as Catalonia lace, on loan from the rich textile collection of Patrici Pascó Vidiella.¹¹

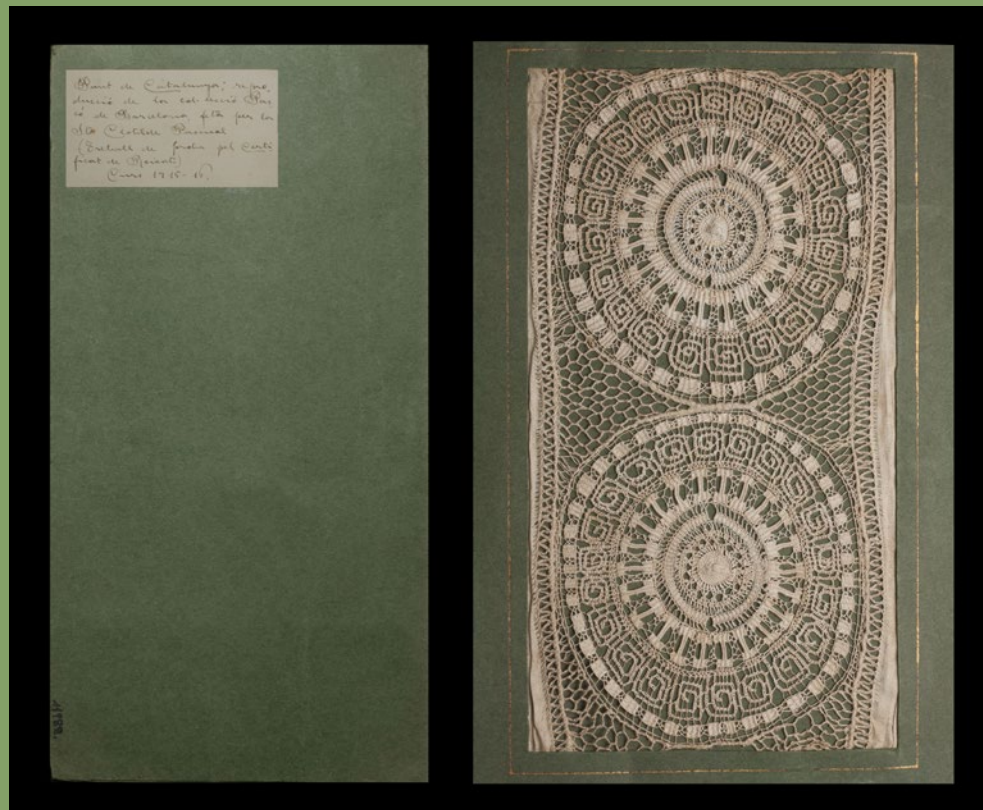
Thanks to an article in *La Veü de Catalunya*, we know that Ferré often took her students to visit not only the city's museums but also private collections, like Pascó's.¹² This is how Clotilde Pascual came to reproduce the lace shown at the 1918 exposition, donated to the museum in Arenys by the Gimeno Pascual family.¹³ This piece, which she made while studying, was shown in the article mentioned above, along with one using a different technique by Dolors Daunis, the current location of which is unknown, and it is reasonable to assume was also on display at the exposition.¹⁴

The same school also submitted the only two examples of what was called Barcelona lace, a technique created by Adelaida Ferré in the 1916-17 school year, which were designed and created by Clotilde Pascual.¹⁵ Thanks to pictures from

de punt de Catalunya del segle XVIII de la col·lecció Pascó. Treball a l'agulla fet per Dolors Daunis, deixeble de l'Escola".

15 It was the first time this new needle technique was mentioned, which would later be inherited by Escola de Puntaires de Barcelona, in the time of the Raventós sisters.

Catalonia lace, made by Clotilde Pascual from an example in the collection of Patrici Pascó. 12.5 x 23 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11988. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



16 Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11899 and 11900. The photo shows the two pieces of lace now in Arxiu Mas (number 29878) and reads: "punt de Barcelona, ideat per Adelaida Ferré, executat per Clotilde Pascual. Punta a l'agulla." (Barcelona lace, designed by Adelaida Ferré, executed by Clotilde Pascual. Needle lace).

17 Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 7 and 5, respectively.

18 Documentation and Research Centre. Museu Frederic Marès. Texts written by Salvador Espriu and dated November and Christmas 1982, respectively.

19 Bonnemaïson, as the representative of Institut de Cultura i Biblioteca Popular per a la Dona, along with the FAD and a committee of aristocratic ladies, presided over an exposition of lace and fans in 1922. Arxiu Mas has the list of pieces that were displayed.

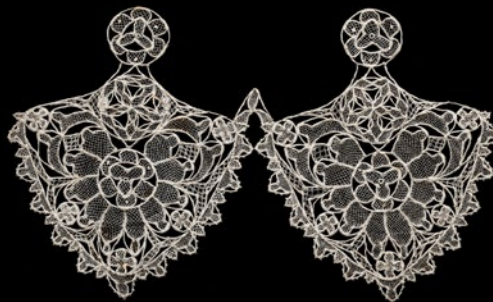
the Arxiu Mas, we've been able to locate and document these two pieces of lace at Museu d'Arenys de Mar, as part of a donation from Pascual's descendants.¹⁶

Of all the individuals that contributed pieces to the exposition, the most noteworthy was notary public Francesc Espriu Torres (1875-1940), father of the poet Salvador Espriu. Espriu submitted four pieces and, we have concluded, two of them have been preserved and, thanks to a donation from the family, are now at Museu d'Arenys de Mar: a communion tray doily, beautifully embroidered with a lace edging by the Castells company and a bit of *ret fi* (or Arenys) lace with the attributes of the passion of Christ that seems to be a fragment of an alb worn by Bishop of Girona Francesc de Pol.¹⁷ Two short unpublished texts by Salvador Espriu, which are at Museu Frederic Marès in Barcelona, refer to these two pieces of lace. However, the poet, we believe mistakenly, attributes them to the notary's sister Francesca Espriu Torras, who was a nun with the Sisters of the Presentation of Tours.¹⁸

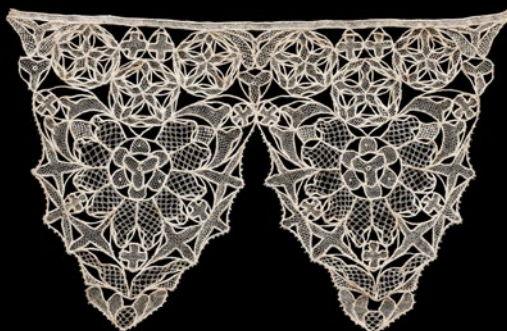
One of the great collectors at the exposition was Francesca Bonnemaïson (1872-1949), who promoted education for women (founder of Institut de Cultura i Biblioteca Popular de la Dona), was a member of the FAD and a great lover of textile and ladies' handicrafts, as they were called then.¹⁹ Thanks to a donation from her god-daughters, the Rucabado sisters, most of her collection of lace and embroidery is now at Museu d'Arenys de Mar.²⁰ Some of the pieces acquired

20 It was donated on 2 December 2012 by the Rucabado Verdaguer family. There was a total of 394 pieces, including secular clothing, household textiles and religious items.

► Sample of Barcelona lace, needle lace made by Clotilde Pascual from a drawing by Adelaida Ferré. 10 x 17 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11900. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



► Sample of Barcelona lace, needle lace made by Clotilde Pascual from a drawing by Adelaida Ferré. 10.5 x 17 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11899. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



▼ Communion doily belonging to the Espriu family. 95 x 185 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 7. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



Piece of lace from the alb owned by the Espriu family. 60 x 37 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 5. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



► Gold and pink silk bobbin lace made by Isabel Barberà. Francesca Bonnemaïson collection. 135 x 9.5 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, entry num. 11166. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



▼ Box decorated with needle lace and embroidery Francesca Bonnemaïson collection. 25 x 14 x 4 cm. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11173. Photograph by Irene Masriera.



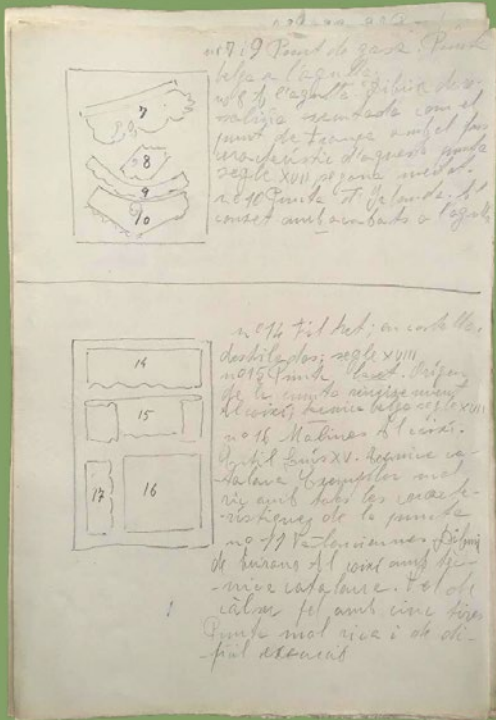
²¹ Isabel Barberà, although there is no documentary information, participated in the exposition on her own, with two pieces of lace, numbers 1036 and 1037 in the catalogue. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11166. The box has been inventoried as reg. no. 11173.

²² Museu d'Arenys de Mar, reg. no. 11272 and 11163, respectively. Thanks to a photograph from Arxiu Mas (number 38237), we know that the white mantilla was on display at the exposition of lace and fans held in Barcelona in 1922. For more

through this donation were surely on display at the 1918 exposition. Specifically, a gold lace and pink silk piece made by Isabel Barberà, which Adelaida Ferré called one of the greatest pieces on display, and the needle lace and embroidery box, with a firmly art-nouveau look with symbolic roots.²¹

Other pieces of lace from the Bonnemaïson collection could be associated with the pieces at the 1918 exposition, but the descriptions in the catalogue are so brief that they are hard to identify. Two pieces that, given their excellence, were probably on display at this event are the magnificent [bridal veil](#) in Lille lace, which in the catalogue is described as a “white mantilla, ruffle moiré background” and the [black Chantilly shawl](#), an extraordinary creation in bobbin lace.²²

information, see: *Vestits per a l'ocasió. La indumentària en els ritus de pas*, Arenys de Mar City Council, 2016, p. 64.



◀ Fragment of the inventory of Oleguer Junyent's lace collection. Armengol Junyent collection, Barcelona.

▼ Samples of lace still preserved in Oleguer Junyent's studio. Photograph by Sabine Armengol.



23 There isn't any sort of biographical or professional information on Font, Cardús or Navarro.

24 An accurate introduction to the life and work of Junyent is available in: *Oleguer Junyent, col·leccionista i fotògraf. Roda el món i torna al Born*, Barcelona City Council, 2017.

25 Arxiu Mas has images of the lace Oleguer Junyent presented at the 1922 exposition mentioned above.

26 We would like to thank Sabine Armengol, heir to the Armengol Junyent collection and director and curator of the Oleguer Junyent study, for her collaboration and the information she provided.

Other pieces documented in this exposition that have not been located are those submitted by Rosa Font, one of which could be a piece donated to the FAD museum, Josep Cardús' blonde fan (possibly the one shown in the catalogue), and the handkerchief and lace fragment displayed by Raquel Navarro de Fortuny, the photo of which is also in the aforementioned inventory.²³

Future studies will hopefully also reveal the lace submitted by multifaceted artist Oleguer Junyent (1876-1956), also a member of the FAD, though he was more well-known for his collections of sculptures, ceramics and jewellery boxes than lace.²⁴ Apart from an "old white lace fan", twenty of the pieces displayed by Junyent were called Spanish lace, meaning they were made with metal threads, generally gold and silver.²⁵ The renowned set designer contributed a small sample of what, thanks to an inventory found in his studio, we know was a very significant lace collection, with all sorts of techniques from here at home and abroad.²⁶ The search continues... ●