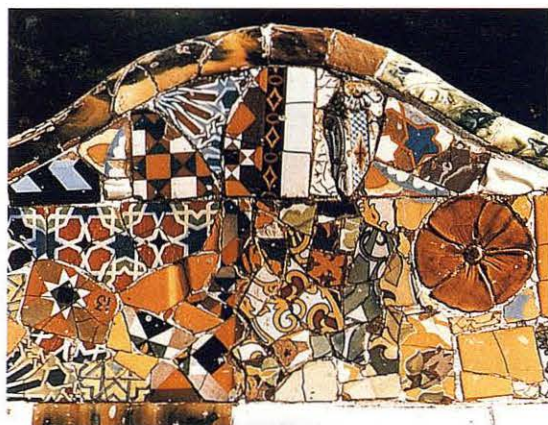


# h<sub>o</sub>mage



We are with the artist Perejaume, a pyrotechnist of isms: here, there nowhere, or anywhere the metaphor translates toponymy, and in the universal space of the mind. In the framework of N° 2 Wharf in the port of Tarragona, where the exhibition “At 200 metres of painting above sea-level” is being held, we are speaking of memory as nature of the history of art, understanding the term *painting* as disciplines, manners and tendencies that had confronted each other in the history of the breaking of the linguistic sign throughout the ruptures and the unleashing of isms, and the term *nature* as a lyrical, non-historical whole. And I am speaking to Perejaume —traveller and hermit— about Josep Maria Jujol because, side-by-side with other names such as Friedrich, Louis II of Bavaria, Monet, Watteau, Magritte, Ensor, Beuys and Mir, he is also the object of this homage: a homage to the contemporary, fragmented regard which gazes at the fragment and the signature, the craft and the technique, the original and the reproduction. A gaze that looks at a memory composed of both fragments and things forgotten.

**VICENS ALTAIÓ. One is disturbed by the painting *Collage català*, 1910...**

**PEREJAUME. It's a collage of two photographic fragments of works which entirely by themselves discover the pure presence of colour isolated from material and from the hill of fragments; one, by a *barceloní*, Joaquim Mir, painted in 1910 in the *Camp* of Tarragona, and the other, by a *tarragoní*, Josep M.<sup>a</sup> Jujol, created between 1910 and 1913 in Barcelona. The fragment of Mir's painting, that represents the crest of a hill in l'Aleixar, and the ceramic fragment by Jujol from the bench in the Park Güell,**

placed thus side-by-side seem to describe a common landscape, a unified mountain range in which the curve of the bench follows that of the hill, and both the vegetation and the way it is represented unsuspectingly cradle the same corner of world because metaphor has the capacity of bridging distances. Naturally this collage captivates us because we know it is not thus, because we have not forgotten the provenance of the two fragments, the different authors, the different techniques, the aspects in contrast.

v.A. The mechanical and industrial reproduction of the works of others has served you as a support and a metaphor. So if for you a landscape is a postcard converted into sculpture, a sculpture is a plate made of landscapes, a collage the encounter between two landscapes, and one individual, the cataloguing of all the works without errata.

Quotations have always been incrustated in the work of poets, but much less in the work of painter-artists, who much more jealously guard the sense and credibility of originality, of innovation and, very simply and globally, of the use of intelligence.

p.J. Before, referring to the previous work, I spoke to you about a metaphorical collage, by resemblance. For me, the word collage doesn't only describe the strict mechanism of putting together unconnected objects, but rather a will to find connections between these objects. And to achieve this end, collages often have to rely on metaphor: they complement each other. One is the pure vision of the encounter, while the other illustrates the jump involved. Traditional magic establishes two principles of sympathy between objects, which might be the equivalents of the links established by metaphors or collages: the principle of similarity by which two similar things exer-

cise a mutual influence upon each other, and the principle of contagion whereby two things that have been in contact continue to influence each other once they are separated.

v.A. The fact that you have been taught a lot by the Catalan artistic and literary avant-garde is because even Foix elaborates his language as a farmer tills the soil, because reading the classics provided Foix with knowledge of the One and of the Eternal. Neither have you hesitated to support the figure either of the landscape painter or of controversial architects such as Jujol, by virtue of his feeling for medieval and fin-de-siècle collage, for sumptuous baroque and for poor, rural objects, for the rational use of the irrational, and for establishing, in an attempt at immediate publication, the sense of Louis II of Bavaria as a model of the politician-artist as opposed to the politician-technocrat and as the final paradox of all the traits of the XIX century, the idea of the whole, of the one and of the inevitable appearance of the fracture of the fragment.

p.J. In the essay titled "*Ludwig Jujol*" there is of course an attempt to create a literary collage linking the two authors, as we can see from the subtitle: "*What is a collage if it is not bringing solitudes together? Louis II of Bavaria Josep Maria Jujol.*" Through this unlikely collage, the text itself attempts to illuminate the whole area that goes from one author to the other, both equidistant at both ends from the turn of the century and both equally distant from the capital of this turn: Paris.

v.A. A combination so logical and yet so illogical that transforms the original identity from the hand of the monarch to that of the architect, and not only through what has been perceived in linguistic operations, which have never been valued enough, of isms in the avant-garde, from the formalists to the

materialists, from the *Duchampians* to the *Kleinists* or *Beuyists*, from the conceptuels to the letrists, from the optics to the linguists, from the anonymists to the signers, from emptiness to fullness.

P.J. Just as in the *Collage català 1910* which we were commenting on earlier, I attempted to reveal the continuity from one fragment to another, from the bench to the hill in l'Aleixar, in "*Ludwig Jujol*" such a continuity is not spatial but temporal. Louis II was no creator or thinker; Louis II was himself, the work, an outstanding figure in the pantheon of the symbolists, a solitary Alpine character implicated in all the impossible aspirations and excesses of the XIX century: the desire for totality (historicism, collecting, monarchy, opera and ambiguity) and the awareness that all comes to an end (the last monarch, ecology and eclecticism). Without abandoning at any time the narrative style that can never describe such vast panoramas. Accentuating this impediment with unattainable recounts, love for ruins, the historical disorder of styles, folly and finally the appearance of the first fracture, not so much in the work but in the intimate self of the monarch split off into a vulgar heteronymy of French Louis and Wagnerian characters.

On the other hand, the fragment is a way out of this insufferable linearity, the figurative result of the conscious tendency towards narrative, the use of the fracture as yet another material, reconciliation with the fracture and the growing protagonism of the language where the regard no longer comes from the idea but engenders the idea.

V.A. Even so, just as in the mechanisms and processes of creation which are yours, and just as in the reply you give to the history of art, beyond the rhetoric of renaissance representation, perspective and the point of

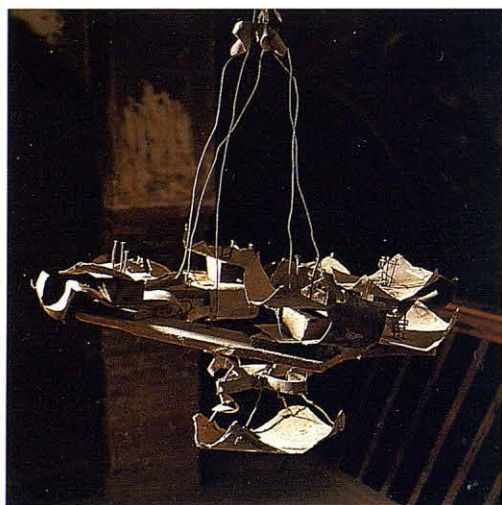
flight for example, concentrating on an execution and representation of a conceptual order through knowledge, even so you take Catalonia, with its landscape and beyond, as a model of cohesion.

P.J. The collage appeared in Catalonia as a natural thing, as an autonomous discovery with which to be able to conceive of national reconstruction, bringing some parts together and inverting others on the basis of a distant medieval foundation. Just as the opera had excelled, years before, as a narrative metaphor of the "one", in the unification of Italy or Germany.

V.A. For you, painting is also an appropriation of the painting of others and its intensification, but also of the thin traces that result after they have been thought up, thought about, and have made us think through them. Painting as a reference and, more still, what circumscribes them and refers us to them, space, material, the support, the frame and the conventional labelling that establish the limits of our sight. As with the object, it is not merely a case of learning or knowing but also of gnawing at it, thus the limits of subjects are impassable.

P.J. It doesn't make much sense within this framework of synthesis, of choral edifications, to establish authorship or mimesis in those works that were planned as formulae of collaboration. Jujol is no epigon of *Gaudinism*, as you can see at a glance in the Casa Bofarull or the Manyach shop. Nevertheless, one of the characters that best defines his architecture is dialogue: dialogue with the surroundings, with constructional impediments, with economic conditioners, with materials and techniques and also with other architects. In the same way that his work and that of Font i Gumà or that of Gallis influenced each other, that of Gaudí and that of Jujol





Church of Vistabella, Candelabra and Lamp, 1918. A structure of cardboard, sheet metal, wire and wood. Photograph: Ferran Freixa.

achieved a joint personality during one of the most brilliant periods not only of these two architects but also of architecture in general.

v.A. The art of the eighties has received many spatial contributions from the conceptual movement—which many painters reject through intellectual fatigue—and also from new materials: recycled industrial materials, and artificial and technological materials. The tutti-frutti of the pop movements of the sixties were succeeded by the monochrome of the seventies. And now appropriations are yoked together in a whirlwind that obliterates the sum and the dialectic in order to seduce, attract and infect each other. It is interesting to note the directions contamination and ecological recycling are taking.

p.J. Jujol's conservatism stemmed from this spirit of dialogue. I mean conservatism, of course, not so much in the political sense as in the ecological sense, of communion with the environment, of fidelity to those who inhabit it in order to "preserve" the common heritage as something living, extending it and, where it is lacking, inventing it.

Let's take, for example, his broken glass, already present in the discs in the Park Güell and on the group of chimneys for the Casa Milà, but fully developed on the roof (today restored) of the Torre de la Creu. What immediately springs to mind here is that behind these daring inventions are the traditional crests of broken glass on the top of enclosing walls. This is what leads me to talk about an archaic avant-garde in Jujol's work. The same thing that induced Foix to search for profound youth in antiquity, Gaudí to seek originality in a simple return to origins, or Miró to discover cosmic space in the tiniest corners.

v.A. And this is something quite different from the return to traditional ways of representation in painting around 1915, two

years after the *ready made* and the *black square*. Nevertheless, the fall of the paradigm of the modern has a cyclical nature in the history of the XX century and its personalities. Amongst local examples, we have Sánchez-Juan or Junoy. Compare, for example, just the titles of *Spherical expansion of light* (1914) and *Maternity* (1916), both by Severini, and the leaps and bounds of other futurists such as Malevitch or Rodchenko. This has questioned linguistic Darwinism and the lineality of history, but it has also allowed conservatism to place the avant-garde in the straitjacket of the period between the world wars.

P.J. For this reason we should revise the concept of “avant-garde” —the result both of a market strategy and of a view of the term from the reactionary standpoint— as a break by exclusion, above all during those years in which the Viennese, for instance, spoke not so much about atonality as about extending the tonal range, and in a special way in the majority of Catalan creators down to the present day who reconcile sonnets with visual poetry, informalism with other figurations, break with political activities and daring with paternal modernity.

You yourself are considered an outstanding “modern” figure by scorning all those most ethical aspects and through your obstinate will to take in all the collages as if they were your complete works.

The line of the modern movement holds orography in low esteem. A merely temporal concept has been established in the course of discoveries: urban, telematic, consensual, simple. Any discovery invalidates previous or parallel ones by abolishing the real landscapes that sustain them, the places that diversify them. In few places will we find a spatial, landscaped, rooted avant-garde better expressed than in the constructions that Jujol

worked on in the *Camp* of Tarragona. His audacious projects inserted into a rural setting, often for religious uses, and irremovable since they were works of architecture, posed the question of local-universal relationships in all its magnitude. A relationship seen as the motor behind the creation of a concept in which one potentiates the other, and not as a problem as others see it at the moment, moved by a sterile cosmopolitanism which has disfigured the local-universal diphthong until a divorce between the provincial and the cosmopolitan is reached.

V.A. If one wishes to consider the avant-garde as just another style, then the work of art has also suffered isolation by offering academic interpretations of an exclusively formal nature within each genre. To interpret the appearance of Cubism in sculpture as a solution to pictorial problems, as the desire to achieve a complex spatial volume based on planes and hollows and spontaneous execution through the use of light, readily available materials, strikes me as very limiting.

P.J. Of course, there is still another aspect that, linking conservatism and the avant-garde, singularises Jujol’s work: his eminently religious convictions. There have been well-known, but very rare, attempts to renovate the religious vocabulary through modern art: Rouault, Matisse, Le Corbusier. Jujol, on the other hand, renewed modern art from the purity of his own religiosity.

The lamp in the Vistabella church, made of wooden slats, visible keys, bits of wire and wine-vat lids has a parallel significance to and is from the same year as Picasso’s cardboard guitar. However, what in Picasso is fruit of a more intrinsically linguistic rupture, in Jujol is the result of a profound reading of the Gospels: the transubstantiation of matter, the redemption of what is humble, Fran-



ciscanism, the bringing together in the building-temple all the utensils and tools of the community. Of a similar meaning are the skittles made into candle-holders, the spare parts for a saw for cutting alabaster placed as grilles and, to an even greater extent, the choir bench made from the wooden slats that formed the boxes in which the temple images were transported.

v.a. (Throughout the conversation we have taken only one step. Now we are standing in front of a sculpture-installation, *L'accès*, Josep Maria Jujol). A trapeze is stretched out on the ground. This space establishes the measure of its own impossibility. The space dislocated the trapeze which, lowered with two ropes that are too long, from the ceiling of the nave, lies on the ground. Lengthened two metres more, it makes the swinging motion impossible that would allow a sufficiently large opening to move to and fro, to measure the whole space the movement should occupy. The piece thus becomes a black-humoured gag. Furthermore, according to the title, still action, movement without movement, becomes a metaphor in that in our reach we have an access that permits us to discover, without going up or even moving, things we have placed out of our reach and which are on our threshold: access to the unknown work of Jujol.

p.j. If the exhibition had not taken place in Tarragona, I probably wouldn't have added the name Josep Maria Jujol to this piece. Even so, it contains links with the work of the architect, from the most immediate —the use of the colour blue— to more obscure affinities, such as Jujol's lyrical use of the absurd. The trapeze that goes beyond its space and has to repose on the ground has something of the Can Negre balcony in the form of a carriage, a halted carriage suspended in the air from

two Dalí-esque poles, the access through the building to a carriage from which one can contemplate the passage of the day, of the air, of carriages. Furthermore, there is another aspect that links the trapeze with Jujol's buildings: the access, the building as the motive force behind spaces, colours, forms, styles and materials that take us up the spiral staircase to a craggy belvedere that crowns the building and dominates the landscape. This verticality, with broken, elliptical routes, is moreover the architectural equivalent of what in the plastic arts was the break in the narrative quality of the continuous space, of the uninterrupted, oblong view.

In Catalan, as opposed to other languages, there is often confusion between the concepts of modern and *Modernisme*. The latter term in other cultures has purely stylistic connotations (*Art Nouveau*, *Jugendstil*, etc.), while for us *Modernisme* marked the beginning both of a modern style and the modern era.

The force of *Modernisme* lies in the effort to escape from the vicious circle of neo-styles that were endless and finite. It was the moment when each style was determined by an architectural function, for a concrete use. The attempt, on the one hand, to create a Nirvana of styles metamorphosing one into the other, often with the ironic use of elements (useless

capitals that Domènech i Montaner placed half-way up his column shafts, or Gaudí's twisted pillars in the Park Güell) and, on the other, the formula we mentioned before of archaic avant-garde, in a vertical sense of history, in a collage of future and origin, permitting the creation of a new, inconcise, choral style with extremely wide scope.

Jujol reached definitive extremes in many aspects of the *modernista* movement. On the one hand, he renewed the use of fragments of other materials that are not strictly ceramic, some even of unrecognisable objects, through proposals close to Cubism, collage and abstraction. On the other hand, he incorporated the object as such, the everyday and the immediate in unusual contexts, in an exaltation —we've mentioned this earlier— of the transubstantiation of matter. However, a reflection of all this is his production itself, which is fragmented, poor, fragile, with interventions ranging from the whole project to tiny details, dispersed in space and, in many cases, unfinished. In addition, following the tradition of close collaboration with other architects, artists and craftsmen, so common during that period, Jujol was often above all his own collaborators: the architect who paints, sculpts, creates details in carpentry,

Perejaume: *L'accès*, Josep M.<sup>a</sup> Jujol; sculpture-installation.



small structural elements. Finally, and because he belonged to the second generation of *modernistes*, Jujol experienced the deadlock of *Modernisme* as such and the reconversion of his proposals towards those he had combatted: the nose that underrated medieval models in favour of other classical models, essentially renaissance and baroque.

This is one of the greatest paradoxes in all Catalan art: how two generations who formed the group of architects of greatest interest at the turn of the century, with a wide, forceful and personal vocabulary and work widespread over the whole country, came eventually to nothing. And, what is even worse, how many of the protagonists —although I don't believe this is Jujol's case— regretted their initial discoveries. Neither the fact that they maintained certain foundations that were too rigid to be renewed, nor the coming of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship or of the classicist concepts of *noucentisme*, explain to me why this change occurred, and even less why the generations that came immediately after took no advantage of such results.

There is, indeed, a reflection of the most audacious aspects of *Modernisme* in subsequent sculpture and painting, but this is a mere intuition, hardly defined despite the importance of the figures taking part, a fact characteristic of a country without a grammar. It is only this systematic ignorance, contrasted with individual intuition, that allows us to place Jujol, together with Gaudí, as the initiator of certain proposals that, a short time later, were to be reaffirmed in the work of Julio González, Miró, Gargallo, Angel Ferrant, Leandre Cristòfol, Joan Brossa and Antoni Tàpies, among others, without any of these protagonists being familiar with the work of Jujol.