

The fine arts during the Baroque period in the Principality of Catalonia and the countships of Roussillon and the Cerdagne

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ABSTRACT

Once the prejudices that hindered our understanding of Baroque art's true nature had been overcome, the history of Catalan art has been rehabilitating the memory of the Baroque period and discovering a more faithful image of it. Nonetheless, it has also had to accept that much of the art from this period has been seriously compromised by the destruction wrought by the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of the 19th century and the Civil War of the 20th century. It is the memory of a fundamental, decisive era in the shaping of Catalonia's historical and artistic heritage, one that is brimming with authors and episodes capable of fostering stories as interesting, intense and suggestive as those from any other period in Catalan art history.

Keywords: painting, sculpture, Baroque, Catalonia, Roussillon

PART ONE: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ARTS SYSTEM

Towards a reconciliation with the "Baroque" heritage and its history

I think that today we can perceive the artistic deeds from the old 17th- and 18th-century Catalan bishoprics (in both the Principality and in Elne-Perpignan in North Catalonia) totally free from the aesthetic or intellectual reservations, suspicions and prejudices that until recently clouded the historiography of art and cultural opinion. If we are indeed able to perceive them in this way it is thanks to the effort and critical responses contained in the studies, research, teaching and informative actions coming from the field of art history in the past few decades, and thanks to the job of cataloguing, conserving and restoring our cultural heritage that the Catalan and French public administrations have been performing around the land, particularly at the restoration and conservation centres in Valldoreix and Perpignan.¹

However, the media have not been as helpful, given their general tendency to get mired in any fashionable banality, coupled with their deafness and blindness to this part of our cultural heritage, its historiography and the fluctuations in its assessments. Nor has the flagship Catalan museum, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), been overly helpful, as in this sphere it still remains a sadly passive agent. Ever since it was reopened after the Barcelona Olympics, MNAC has taken no inter-

est in remedying the notorious lack of a truly significant collection of the best artistic output from the Baroque era in Catalonia, either through a policy of exhibitions, or through acquisitions or temporary loans. To the contrary: it has sometimes sought to justify this black hole as evidence of the irrelevancy of the Modern Age in Catalonia, when in fact it is owing to the incapacity of our country's cultural ventures to create a representative collection of this period.

This is quite striking if we take into account that completing the art collection from the 17th and 18th centuries was part of the institution's founding ideals, as expressed in the famous inaugural speech by Pere Coromines in the autumn of 1934: "There remains a blank period: the three centuries which witnessed the glory of Baroque art, understood with all the breadth conferred upon it by the German archaeologists. [...] These are the three centuries of our decline which must be studied because the few figures from that time that did emerge from our unmerited oblivion enable us to hope that there are lovely discoveries to make, and that the Museu d'Art de Catalunya should enrich itself with new and as yet unsuspected riches when our Baroque artists come to occupy their rightful place in this Pantheon of our culture."²

However, I admit that I am referring to a single anomaly in our cultural system which, while noteworthy, does not overly attenuate our current perception that the momentum of the teaching activities, publications, research, restoration projects and museographic projects underway are pushing towards the normalisation of our relationship with art from the Baroque.³ I am confident that by now few doubts remain as to whether the artistic deeds of the period can foster stories as interesting and suggestive as

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those from any other movement in our history, and as to the fact that the Baroque period, just like any other, offered evocative, sophisticated works – along with, obviously, mediocre works and tedious, elementary products.

Thanks to all the aforementioned stakeholders, we are now becoming aware of what the period produced and what remains of it. The activity centres have been identified, we are aware of the most active authors and, among them, we are capable of distinguishing the more common from the more skilled, creative and daring. We are now poised to reflect on the uses and functions of the images, and the main subjects and thematic trends have been identified. We have shed light on a highly influential sector of the graphic culture of the painters and sculptors; we can now guess at the mechanisms and scale of values of the “eye of the period”; we are beginning to discover the nature of the art market; and we have been surprised by the existence of incipient episodes of collecting.⁴

Likewise, some of the most interesting phenomena regarding the clientele and patrons have been described, some of the forces that spurred the demand for painting and sculpture have been identified, and we are beginning to decipher the ties between the phenomena of the production of artistic representations and the contemporary cultural context. It is true that we must also admit that the work remaining is enormous and that researchers’ knowledge has many murky gaps with regard both to important artists who await monographic research (which is at times difficult to undertake), such as Joaquim Juncosa or Lluís Pasqual, and to overall studies on the world of goldsmithing, where the number of works conserved and the known documentation contrasts with the scant research efforts to date, usually concentrated on ambitious cataloguing studies.⁵

In any case, in the chapter of historiographic reflection, study after study and one heritage initiative after another have gradually marginalised the entire stream of deeply-rooted ideological and aesthetic obsessions that fostered such a late and reluctant acceptance of the artistic products of the age as counting among the intriguing times in the history of creativity or among the decisive stages in defining our cultural heritage and our visual culture. First came the series of late 18th-century academic objections against the overload, excess, bells and whistles and popular superstitious religiosity that was expressed through the figurative arts during the Baroque period. Then came the disdain of 19th-century Romanticism, which enshrined mediaeval art as the national style while stigmatising the art of the 17th and 18th centuries merely for having been produced in an age regarded as in “decline”, because – yet another prejudice – it was believed that a country with such eroded political sovereignty should necessarily have a weakened cultural system.

Few authors or cultural moments in time depart from the majority trend towards disdain. Eugeni d’Ors was one of the first, and he would be followed by the architects of late Noucentisme, including most notably Ricard Giralt

in “L’art barroc i la seva rehabilitació” (1920); Josep Francesc Ràfols in his *Entorn del nostre barroc* (1936); Jeroni Martorell, who promoted restoration criteria that were respectful of the testimonies of Baroque art;⁶ and Cèsar Martinell i Brunet. Martinell i Brunet had completed his studies on Baroque sculpture and architecture in Catalonia before the Civil War broke out, but the publication of the three must-read volumes of his *Arquitectura i escultura barroques a Catalunya* had to wait until 1959–1963, when, fatally, the majority of sculptural works analysed had been reduced to piles of ashes.

In 1920, when Jeroni Martorell stated that “for this reason, educated men, those for whom there are things more interesting than modern comforts, those who are fond of archaeology, feel a great respect for Baroque works of art”, and when Cèsar Martinell finished his magnum opus, it can be said that there were finally influential intellectual sectors in our culture that were willing to reconcile with that spectacular part of our heritage. However, the Civil War got in the way. What is more, the horrifying destruction wrought in the summer of 1936 (and the subsequent intellectual malaise of the Franco regime) set this “normalisation” back decades. Despite the weighty efforts of the Noucentistes, after 1939 the image of emptiness in the churches in Catalonia – such as the basilica of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona, which prior to July 1936 was bedecked with altarpieces from the 17th and 18th centuries, including the formidable main altarpiece – added a harsh new misunderstanding to the long list of anti-Baroque grievances: the presumed irrelevancy of the Modern Age to our cultural heritage, which injected new energy into the old stigma of this art from a creatively anaemic and historically declining period.

Fortunately, the evidence of heritage provided by the churches in the regions of Roussillon, the Vallespir, the Conflent and the French Cerdagne, along with the deepening of their rich documentary memory, have made a decisive contribution to exorcising many of these assumptions and to revealing their vacuity. These regions continued to be the professional workplace of Catalan artists during the 17th and much of the 18th centuries despite the political transformations that culminated in the Treaty of the Pyrenees and the granting of the Catalan lands lying north of the Pyrenees (1659) to the Kingdom of France. As any visitor today will notice, the temples of French Catalonia, which survived the French Revolution without major losses and were logically salvaged from Spain’s upheaval in 1936, are rich in altarpieces, thrones, organs, paintings, clusters of sculptures, fine metalwork and altar fronts, which first proclaim the vitality of religious art commissions during the 16th to 18th centuries, especially because some of these pieces are truly spectacular, and secondly indicate the transcendence that the artistic and sumptuary production of the age achieved in the characterisation of our cultural heritage. The Abbot Eugène Cortade, a renowned scholar on the studies on Roussillon altarpieces from the period, with Bruno Tol-

lon and Yvette Carbonell-Lamothe, called this region “le pays du retable baroque”.⁷

Today’s historiography has verified the overwhelming evidence that the assets in the eight southern bishoprics of the Principality were no different from their northern counterparts prior to the summer of 1936. Hundreds of pieces of documentary evidence, hundreds of photographs taken before the destruction wrought in that fateful July of 1936 and hundreds of pieces preserved and exhibited in museums and churches serve as overwhelming evidence. Listening to and disseminating this evidence has become the first step towards rehabilitating the memory of the art from the Modern Age.

On the other hand, this contributes to bolstering other assessments that I consider quite objective, such as the fact that during the 17th and 18th centuries the country invested major resources into an artistic output that was moderately ambitious and fairly uniformly distributed around the entire land, and that the art objects crafted during the centuries of the Renaissance and the Baroque were predominantly found in religious spaces, where there was a profusion of large-scale, monumental altarpieces. It should be noted that those from the Middle Ages had been replaced by “modern” works for simple reasons of conservation and changes in taste, and that much of the mediaeval heritage that survived in its original site was moved to the diocesan museums created in the late 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century, which fortunately saved them from the mass destruction wrought by the Civil War. Before this destruction, therefore, no one would have questioned the importance of art from the Modern Age in the configuration of our cultural heritage, unless the position was blurred by prejudices.

As mentioned above, this more accurate perception of what our country’s cultural heritage was like before the wholesale defeat of 1936-1939 is based on the image that art history has gradually rehabilitated thanks to hundreds of documents known, for example, through the discoveries of Josep M. Madurell or those exhumed by researchers in recent decades from Catalonia’s splendid archives, as well as from important remnants that escaped the havoc wrought by the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of Mendizabal or Spanish Civil War – some because they had already found refuge in the diocesan museums – or the impressive treasure trove of photographs stored in our archives and libraries (Mas Archive, Salvany Collection in the Biblioteca de Catalunya, Photography Collection of the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya, Photography Archive of the Servei del Patrimoni Arquitectònic Local of the Diputació de Barcelona, etc.). By showing the specific nature of what succumbed to destruction, these photographs verify a territory both north and south of the Pyrenees that was actively involved in a vivid artistic endeavour characterised by the capacity to maintain a sustained promotion of altarpieces in varied formats, along with paintings, imagery, religious silverwork and also, obviously, the architecture used to build parish

churches, cathedrals, chapels, convents and monasteries, as well as civilian buildings, urban homes, monumental estates and town halls.

This vitality would span the three centuries of the Modern Age (16th to 18th), despite the inevitable moments of stagnation or slackening caused by the frequent episodes of war in the Catalan Revolt and the War of the Spanish Succession, the demographic crises caused by plagues and the severe shortages during years of poor harvests. And it was a vitality that was coherent with Catalonia’s society and economy of the day, as has clearly been proven by historians.⁸ In this sense, it might be useful to add that there was a considerable number of parish churches or churchwardenships and local councils that were capable first, from the 16th until the late 18th century, of building new parish churches, sometimes of such monumental proportions as those found in Sant Joan de Valls or Sant Pere de Reus, and secondly, of fitting them out with all the silverwork and religious garments needed for each of its altars; and beyond that, of building spectacular new main altarpieces bedecked with imagery and vast narrative relief panels; and finally (or simultaneously), of crafting new altarpieces to adorn the side chapels that opened onto the central nave. And it was common to find churchwardenships and brotherhoods (and we will soon examine how these institutions were among the most active clientele in the country) replacing the altarpieces dating from the Middle Ages for 16th century pieces and then, decades later, renewing some of these with even more monumental structures crafted in the Baroque style in the late 17th or mid-18th century, two particularly exciting moments in the demand for art in Catalonia.

It is clear that to reveal the underpinnings of that artistic vitality, unsuspected until quite recently, we must not only evoke the surrounding economic surge but also allude to at least one determining factor, and one that is logical bearing in mind that the mainstream of artistic commissions bore some relationship with the production of altarpieces and religious art, namely the impact of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. We could claim that the revival of the Church stemming from the slow but steady application of the directives issuing from the Council of Trent was a powerful engine in the demand for religious art, and that the refashioned and revived spirituality that came in the wake of the Council’s decree motivated substantial changes in the arts.

There were changes linked to rituals, which were increasingly rich in externalising expressions of faith, along with others driven by reaffirmed confidence in the traditional Catholic doctrine on the persuasive and catechistic power of images. Many others stemmed from the advent of new subjects (an expanded parade of saints with emblematic new additions) along with a renewed stress on old subjects in representations with the emphasis on casting certain individuals, ideas or moments in a sublime light, such as the Virgin Mary, the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ, just to cite a few ex-

amples. This in no way downplays the consequences of the institutional revival on the healthy market in orders for religious art, specifically in relation to the improved finances of the churchwardenships and brotherhoods, or on the impetus for the faithful to join the parish churches, since the Church, through Episcopal supervision of the everyday activity of the rectors, preaching, catechism and masses and other celebrations, had managed to internalise in the congregation the conviction that caring for and ornamenting the holy places was a powerful way of expressing faith and a highly effective act of piety.⁹

The market, the clientele and the genres

It is natural that the movements within the post-Trent Catholic church and the nature of their doctrine would have repercussions in the local art market: an overwhelming proportion of the representations and images rendered by painters, sculptors and silversmiths was devotional in subject – and not only religious – and designed to furnish churches and become part of the complex ecosystem of religiosity dictated by the Church and learnt, experienced, exhibited and proclaimed inside the spaces of worship or religious life.

For this reason, it makes sense that the altarpiece would become the genre par excellence on the Catalan art scene in the Modern Age. Hundreds of them were built, adapted to the apses of churches and the backs of chapels, and many of them were quite monumental and extraordinarily costly for the meagre finances of the corporations that commissioned them. In fact, it often took more than one decade to pay them off, and they required varied and ingenious financial engineering (as we would call it today). The majority came from collective orders from local councils, churchwarden offices and brotherhoods. Among them are works aimed at promoting the major devotions of the Counter-Reformation (Rosary, Minerva, Sorrows, Purest Blood, etc.) and works that displayed the religiosity of the guilds and trades, which were under the protection of the more or less traditional saints, such as Isidore, Abdon and Sennen or Gaudérique for the peasants and farmers; Saint Elmo for seamen; Saints Cosmas or Damian for doctors or surgeons; Saint Mark for shoemakers; and Saint Eligius for gold- and silver-workers. However, individually-promoted initiatives were also noteworthy: bishops, canons, wealthy bourgeoisie, artisans and well-off farmers and, to a lesser extent, members of the nobility often defrayed the costs of altarpieces for their chapels, which were under the protection of the family's favourite saint. During the 17th century, the traditional parade of saints expanded with the inclusion of newly-canonised members, including Theresa of Jesus, Francis Xavier, Ignatius, Raymond Nonnatus, etc.

There are many examples of this private form of commission, but in this short article I will have to be highly restrictive in the repertoire of those I mention, as I can only refer to the ones promoted in the late 17th and first third of the 18th centuries by the numerous canons at the

cathedrals of Barcelona (Vicenç Massanet, Pere Roig, Francesc Valeri) and Girona (Miquel Català, Narcís Font, Ignasi Bofill, Jaume Codolar, Cristòfol Rich), who filled many of the side chapels with magnificent altarpieces.¹⁰ Driven by the impressive project, I must mention canon Diego Girón de Rebolledo's initiative to build the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in the cathedral of Tarragona. In 1678, he engaged the skills of project designer Father Josep de la Concepció, painter Josep Juncosa, gilder Josep Cabanyes and sculptors Francesc Grau and Domènec Rovira II, the heads of the sculptural team that rendered an altarpiece and two alabaster sepulchres with innovative iconography.¹¹

The prominence of other commissioning agents was proportionally lower in comparison. The monarchy should be regarded as unimportant as no Catalan artist was called upon to praise the glories of absolutism, even though a painter with Catalan roots, Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), a descendant of the Perpignan-born masters Jacint and Honorat Rigau, who, however, was French for all historical and artistic purposes, would end up becoming the champion of the most emblematic absolutism, that of the Sun King, Louis XIV.¹² Only the city of Barcelona felt what becoming a court might mean from the standpoint of the arts, yet only during Archduke Charles' brief sojourn in the city thanks to the establishment in the city of figures such as the painter Andrea Vaccaro; the painter and set designer Ferdinando Galli Bibiena, who was there from 1708 to 1711 accompanied by his sons and helpers, Giuseppe and Alessandro; and the sculptor Conrad Rudolph, who lived there from 1707 to 1713, occupied with building the column of the Immaculate Conception in front of the basilica of Santa Maria del Mar once the new facade of the cathedral of Valencia was finished.¹³

In terms of the most powerful nobility, that is, the noble dynasties that orbited around the Habsburg court during the 17th century and the Bourbon court throughout the 18th century, those who could vie for important posts in the game of Spanish dominions, their influence on the local artistic output was important in terms of the ambition of the few projects they promoted and their material, typological and thematic uniqueness. However, their involvement was occasional and very limited from the vantage point of their number and the amount of money invested. It is true that we could learn more from this entire noble world, which was so important in other territories, if, to refer to a highly evocative example (as it is full of allusions to the arrival of imported works), the art collections from monasteries like Santa Maria de Montserrat, whose church was burned down during the Peninsular War, had been preserved. Indeed if we survey the list of donations noted down in the monograph by Francesc X. Altés, it is frustrating to know nothing about the appearance of the painting decorations in the nave sponsored by John Joseph of Austria (1669-1672), or about the works of art and golden liturgical adornments given by the Superior General of the Jesuits Muzio Vi-



Figure 1. Saint Paul (1679), a work by Lluís Bonifàs. Cloister of the Casa de Convalescència in the former Hospital de la Santa Creu (Barcelona), the current headquarters of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. The crown is the work of silversmith Josep Ros. Archive of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

telleschi, by the former abbot Lorenzo Nieto (1601 and 1626), by Countess Savallà (1676), by the Dukes of Cardona (1669), by the Duke of Monteleón (1683) and by the Marquis of Aitona (1716).¹⁴

I would venture to say that of all the noble initiatives known in the Catalan bishoprics, the most spectacular took place between 1659 and 1674 in the monastery of Santa Maria of Poblet, with the Cardona-Sogorb family as the driving force behind it, first Lluís Ramon Folc and later Pere Antoni d'Aragó. It consisted of transforming the church presbytery into the sepulchral chapel of the family line by having the sculptors Joan, Francesc and Josep Grau build two large alabaster "burial chambers" mounted under the arches of the royal burials. The project also involved paving the presbytery with marble, crafting new sepulchres for the remains of Ramon Folc de Cardona, Alphonse the Magnanimous and the prince Enric d'Aragó, and installing two reliquary altarpieces in the lateral arches of the main altarpiece to house the donation of relics that Pere Antoni sent from Naples when he was the viceroy. The spectacular nature of the project (which

was so seriously damaged from the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of the 19th century as to render it unrecognisable) served as a rich political opportunity, since in addition to illustrating the bonds between the Cardona-Sogorb family and Poblet, it also strove to glorify the ties with Catalonia through the memory of those who united this family with the ancient Catalan-Aragonese royal dynasty. It was a fairly sophisticated play of symbolism, in addition to being a necessary step to overcome the distancing that Pere Antoni's participation on the side of Castilian interests in the recent Catalan Revolt had wrought with the land that was the cradle of the Cardona family line.¹⁵

Thus, for the purposes of genres and artistic typologies, we could conclude that, just as with their late mediaeval and 16th century colleagues, the most prominent sculptors, painters and silversmiths working during the Baroque devoted a substantial share of their activity to using their images, paintings or reliefs to depict religious stories and personages that decorated the tiers and niches of altarpieces which hung on or decorated the walls of churches and convents or monasteries, or which would enrich the treasures of sacristies and decorate altars in the most solemn festivities. The majority and most skilled of our figurative artists created stories from Catholic doctrine using characters and scenes from the hagiography, the gospels and other Biblical texts. They always drew from interpretations that matched the orthodoxy and guidelines of Catholic catechism as preached from thrones and altars, explained by rectors and assimilated by the people. In this sense, it was an iconographically canonical art bereft of alternative discourses or transgression. The parade of saints, the life and theological importance of the Virgin Mary, the life and meaning of Christ and trust in the beneficent power of his Passion, faith in the Eucharist, fear of Purgatory and condemnation to hell were the ideas conveyed the most frequently, combined with allusions to morals, reminders of the pillars of Christian doctrine, primarily the evangelists and the Fathers of the Church, and illustrious genealogies of the religious orders.

However, it is clear that the memory of the enormous importance that altarpieces and narrative religious painting had in characterising the artistic output and defining the visual culture should not make us lose sight of the fact that other genres and typologies were also in considerable demand and that they also enriched the cultural heritage with precious works. For example, still within the universe of individual or collective devotion, we should weigh the power of sacred gold art, as splendid as it is little-known today because, with a few notable exceptions, despite the admiration we feel for some of its more brilliant episodes, it is largely terra incognita from the standpoint of research (a fact that determines the knowledge that the educated public may have of it). Only with difficulty can we perceive the light emanating from the barely-sketched personalities of the silver workers Felip Ros, Eloi Camanyes, Agustí Roda, Antic Lloreda, Joan Perutxena, Francesc Via (father and son), Bonaventura Fornaguera,



Figure 2. A madman spreading his cape to so that Saint Francis can walk on it, a work by Antoni Viladomat (MNAC, 1724-1733).

Pere Llopart, Joan Matons and Francesc and Josep Tremulles, not to mention their works, such as the Saint George reliquary at Barcelona's Palau de la Generalitat (1626), the monstrance of the Corpus at the cathedral of Tortosa (1626-1638), the chests containing the holy bodies in Manresa's Santa Maria de l'Alba (1613 and 1656), the Santa Eulàlia from the cathedral of Barcelona (1644), the chest of the Monument to Holy Thursday in the cathedral of Barcelona (1688), the reliquary bust of Saint Peter in the priory church of Reus (1696), the urn of Saint Bernat Calbó in the cathedral of Vic (1701-1728), the monumental candelabrum in the cathedral of Palma (1703-1721), the urn of Saint Ermengol in the cathedral of La Seu d'Urgell (1755) and the reliquary bust of Saint Ursula in Santa Coloma de Queralt, the latter from the last third of the 18th century.¹⁶

Yet we must also turn our attention to the presence of other art promotion operations linked to the genre of painting (or wall painting) on the vaults and domes and to the development of the paintings and painting series meant to decorate the quarters of convents and monasteries. Once we have yet again underscored the magnitude of the losses, in this case more often caused by the consequences of the Mendizábal disentailment on monasteries, in which the assets of centres like Poblet, Santes Creus, Escaladei, Montalegre and Sant Domènec in Girona were pillaged or decimated, along with the grand Barcelona convents of Santa Caterina, the Carme and Sant Francesc, I will limit myself to recalling some of the most interesting examples conserved: the paintings in the chapel of

Barcelona's Casa de la Convalescència by Josep Bal (c. 1680); the paintings by Pau Priu in the chapterhouse of the cathedral of Barcelona (1705); the action by Dionís Vidal in the chapel of the Verge de la Cinta in the cathedral of Tortosa (1719); the one by Joan Gallart and Antoni Viladomat on the ceiling of the Boardroom of the Dolors brotherhood in Santa Maria in Mataró; the painting series in Barcelona's Sant Francesc convent, the crowning work by Antoni Viladomat (approximately 1725, now at MNAC); and finally the later decorations in the long Baroque series in the patrician houses of Barcelona by Francesc Pla, in Palau Bofarull in Reus by Pere Pau Muntanya, and at the Palau Castellarnau in Tarragona, which may be attributed to Josep Flaugier, all of them rich in profane subjects.

PART TWO: THE LANGUAGES OF ART DURING THE BAROQUE PERIOD

A late Renaissance in the 17th century

During much of the 17th century, the appearance that the fine arts conferred on the range of stories, personages and symbols that they were called upon to represent did not differ from what had been displayed in the waning decades of the 16th century. It was a particular version of the well-consolidated formulas of international late Mannerism, the latest guise of the Renaissance languages which, stripped of radical experimentation and paganising sensuality, of the hermeticism and narrative complication of

the strictly “Mannerist” phase, became a perfectly satisfactory language for the demands of the most observant and conservative Catholicism in the realm of illustrations of religious themes and devotional purposes thanks to the idealising focus on the subject, their clear narrativity and their faithfulness to the official doctrine.¹⁷

This critical assessment obligates me to spend a few lines on a minor yet complicated issue: the best name or historiographic category for this period, since there is evidence of the indisputable continuity of the Renaissance cycle until the decades after the Catalan Revolt, almost to the last quarter of the 17th century. Therefore, it makes little sense to think of the 17th century as a Baroque century in art, when it only began to become so in the latter years and in a rather peculiar way, as we shall see below. For this reason, things being as they are, when having to present a didactic overview, we have two options. The first, which is more conciliatory with the traditional date divisions of art history, postulates the aptness of the “umbrella” term of art from the Baroque period (the equivalent to the useful term of art from the Renaissance used by Joaquim Garriga),¹⁸ which enables us to be aware of the uniqueness of the art from the first two-thirds of the century, a far cry from the new plastic languages that were springing up and being developed in other parts of Europe during the 17th century (from the different branches of Naturalism, the Baroque rhetoric, the equidistant Baroque Classicism, etc.), while at the same time shedding light on its contemporariness with them. The second option is far bolder: it would consist of linking the first two-thirds of the 17th century to the development of the Renaissance artistic cycle, considering the lengthy period dominated by the formulas from international late Mannerism which would last until approximately 1660. In this case, the story of the events related to Baroque aesthetics would have to wait until the last third of the 17th century. In any event, choosing either option would only be justified if we have first managed to precisely describe both the prevailing expressive formulas and the less prevalent alternatives.

With regard to this early stage in the 17th century, we have already mentioned that we can consider it tinged with late Mannerism, since the world of characters and stories in art sprang from this broad expressive array that was present in many European lands during the second half of the 16th century and had reached Catalonia more through the Europe-wide circulation of engravings that emerged from the screw presses of Antwerp, Munich and Rome, than through direct contacts during the artists’ sojourns in centres that were promoting the avant-gardes of the time. In actuality, contrasting starkly with the fact that the Catalan art market was highly porous to the arrival of foreign masters (Castilian, Italian, French, Portuguese) during the 16th century and the early decades of the 17th century, there was just a handful of local authors who found the means and motivations to venture beyond the borders of the Principality and spend some years of their career in a major European centre, as Solsona native

Francesc Ribalta had done at the end of the 16th century, later remaining active in Valencia during the early 17th century. Another artist who did so was the Arenys native Antoni Joan Riera, who managed to consolidate an intense professional career at the Spanish Court, first in Valladolid and later in Madrid, and contemporary to him the mysterious Carthusian painter Lluís Pasqual, the vast enigma of 17th-century Catalonia, since despite his fame, none of his works has been recognised. Pasqual spent periods in Seville and Rome, where he seemed to have met Guido Reni and where, to no avail, he put himself forth to participate in painting the Paolina Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore.¹⁹

As mentioned above, the output of Catalan artists usually depended on imported ideas captured in the drawings that circulated around the workshops – which we have thus far been unable to identify – and in the hundreds of graphic messages conveyed by faithful replicas, stripped of colour, that the Flemish and Italian engravers using state-of-the-art technique, including Cornelis Cort, Gijsbert van Veen, Gilles Sadeler, Hendrick Goltzius, Agostino Carracci, Raffaello Guidi and Raffaello Schiaminossi, extracted from prominent works by Taddeo and Federico Zuccari, Orazio Sammachini, Jacopo Bassano, Federico Barocci and Marteen de Vos, among others.²⁰ This dependence on foreign ideas in the “inventive” phase is coherent in that dynamic market for religious art in which, just to cite three extremely important factors, most commissions were collective, made by the parish, municipal, guild or religious corporations; the purpose of the works was devotional; and the authors, with just a few exceptions which I will discuss below, worked within a mindset and remuneration system of fully artisanal commissions, since the value of a work was calculated based on the material cost of the object and the time spent to render it, without applying a bonus that would reward (or incentivise) technical virtuosity or the least bit of originality. Thus, creativity understood in its most genuine sense could only spring from intimate commitment to the work itself among the most exacting artists.

Therefore, the sculptors and painters who took inventive impetus in that valuable graphic instrument, the engraving, which was so decisive to the dissemination of artistic culture and iconographies in modern Europe, were in the majority. Painters with sound technical quality and sculptors skilled with the gouge based their works on the engravings of the life of Mary, Christ or the saints, and they strove to transcribe in them, either partly or totally, the compositional suggestions, figures and scenes proposed by some of the great painters, sculptors and draughtsmen on the international scene. I am thinking about artists who were so influential in shaping our artistic landscape as the sculptors Francesc and Jaume Rubió, the authors of the main altarpiece in Sant Pere in Rubí (1607); Onofre Fuster, master of the reliefs on the predella of the main altarpiece in Sant Joan in Valls (1617); Claudi Perret, sculptor of the alabaster main altarpiece in Sant

Joan in Perpignan (1618-1621); Joan Grau, creator of the altarpiece of the Roser in Sant Pere Màrtir in Manresa; Rafael Rocafort, master of the altarpiece of the Holy Name of Jesus in Sant Pere priory in Reus (1623, now partially conserved at the Municipal Museum); Pau Sunyer, patriarch of a line that would continue to craft altarpieces until the mid-18th century and creator of the Rose altarpiece in Santa Maria in Moià (today in the Museum of Moià, 1656-1658); and the anonymous master of the Roser altarpieces in the parish churches in Ponts and Agramunt.

The same held true of the painters: Honorat Rigau and his sons Honorat and Jacint in the paintings on the Sant Jacint altarpieces in the convent of the Dominicans in Perpignan (now the church of Jóc) and the Sant Ferriol altarpiece in the Minimes Convent in Perpignan (1623, now in Sant Jaume church in Perpignan); Francisco López in the panels of the main altarpiece in Sant Vicenç in Montalt; Antoni Rovira and Pau Torrents in the now-vanished Sant Miquel altarpiece in Esparreguera and the Roser altarpiece in El Bruc; the painter Angelica Giustiniano on the trusses of the organ in Sant Jaume in Ulldemolins (1638);²¹ and Pere Cuquet in the main altarpieces of Sant Feliu de Codines and the Carme church in Manresa (1654, now at the County Museum of Manresa). This also holds true of two noteworthy yet anonymous artists: the one nicknamed the Master of Ansalonga (who might be Jeroni d'Heredia), who was active in Andorra and Roussillon and painted the Roser and Sant Isidre altarpieces in the church of Argelès-sur-Mer, and the still-unknown author of the altarpiece in Sant Genís les Fonts (1635).

The rich career of the masters I have just cited serves as an indicator of these artists' ability to fulfil the requirements of the religious art market both north and south of the Pyrenees, and their conserved works serve as evidence of the rich graphic culture that they were all capable of handling. However, above and beyond this standard quality, we can find artisans who often behaved as artists and others who worked as more common craftsmen. I will only discuss the former, the ones who were above the norm, to say that Catalonia's artistic output includes a sound number of authors wielding the most sophisticated technique and the most inventive ambition. They include Italian painters Baptista Palma, Lluís Gaudín and Bartolomé Gassan and the Milanese Giovanni Battista Toscano, a late-Mannerist who is quite genuine and rather daring within the conservative Catalan art market and who painted the main and Roser altarpieces in Sant Andreu in Llanerres (1604-1611);²² the sculptor Domènec Rovira I, the vast bulk of whose oeuvre, especially the part rendered on the altars of Barcelona's Santa Maria del Mar, must be referred to with photographs predating the destruction of 1936; and the sculptors Josep and Llàtzer Tremulles, the masters of the Roser altarpiece in Tiana and the main altarpieces in La Geltrú and Sant Joan de Valls, the latter now vanished. And above them all we can cite Agustí Pujol (†1628), one of the great Spanish sculptors of the period. Never in the entire Modern Age did our country see

an artist like Pujol, capable of rendering such an exacting, inventive oeuvre based on such an up-to-date artistic culture. He always, without exception, behaved as an original, exigent sculptor, a master endowed with impeccable technique and an inventive instinct that empowered him to transform the beliefs that he had to draw from into an extraordinarily personal, artistically modern and extremely persuasive figurative world.²³

Finally, since I have already made a brief foray into such delicate concepts as originality, I should note that when valuing it (and weighing it, when necessary), we cannot simply analyse an isolated painting, image or relief panel, so often resolved using artisanal and strongly mimetic compositional procedures. Instead, we must recall that these representations did not serve as "paintings" or autonomous, self-contained elements; rather they gained meaning as "compartments" or parts of a work, of a whole, inserted within the scenography of the altarpieces, where they fulfilled a narrative and didactic purpose. The uniqueness of these masters' oeuvre must also be considered in light of the capacity of these monumental objects with reticular growth to evoke the dazzling supernatural fiction emerging from the apses of churches and chapels and to mediate between the believer and the afterlife through a combination of painted panels or reliefs with classicist ornaments and elements from Italian Renaissance architecture, which during the first two-thirds of the 17th century still drew from the repertoire extracted from Vignola's architectural treatise, fancifully reinterpreted.

On the other hand, we cannot forget that the ultimate effect of the whole relied heavily on the work of the gilders and polychromers, the third trade related to altarpiece-making: much of the communicative and persuasive power of the altarpieces depended upon the gleaming appearance of gold or the brilliant colouring of the embodiments of the figures and the ornamental details of the clothing and backgrounds. They were rendered by combining gilding with gold leaf, painting with brush over gold (*estofat*) and numerous artisanal strategies like scraping or stippling the layer of colour superimposed over the gold which clad the reliefs and imagery. The magnificent output of altarpieces from the Baroque period paved the way for the explosion of an impressive tradition in the art of gilding, one full of moments of extraordinary quality rendered by patient polychromers who transformed the work of the image-makers into opulent objects, jewels of wood, a ember of gold.

The most interesting examples include the subtle work of Joan Basi, Agustí Pujol's favourite, whose sculptures are bathed in thick gold and interpreted with vast sensitivity; the work of Gregori Ferrer, the polychromer of the Immaculate Conception of Verdú, also by Pujol; or, mid-century, the work of Gabriel Adrià and Magí Torrabruna, who gilded and coloured the Roser altarpiece in Sant Pere Màrtir in Manresa by Joan Grau (1642-1649, now in the County Museum of Manresa). We should also mention the oeuvre of the great gilders from subsequent periods,

including Josep Cabanyes, gilder of the Immaculate Conception altarpiece in the cathedral of Tarragona (1680); Joan Escribà, author of the chromatic cladding of the Santa Eulàlia altarpiece in the cathedral of Perpignan (1682); Joan Moixí, the sophisticated polychromer of the precious works by Joan Roig, father and son, from the late 17th century; Francesc Cervera II, gilder of the Sant Elm altarpiece in Sitges (1691); Erasme and Fèlix Vinyals, masters of the main altarpiece in Santa Maria in Arenys (1712); and the Colobran (and Soler i Colobran) brothers, who were also closely associated with the altarpieces by Pau Costa in the region of Girona.²⁴ They all attest to the splendid vitality of this trade, which only died out in the late 18th century when the decrees of Charles III and Charles IV were issued banning the manufacture of wooden altarpieces and allowing sculptors to polychrome their own creations. However, shortly before that, Antoni Bordons had rendered the swan song of gilded art in Catalonia on the main altarpiece of the Miracle sanctuary in Riner (1760-1774), adding delightful, ethereal rocaille landscapes to the branching motifs and to the traditional floral garlands.²⁵

Finally: The Baroque period

As mentioned above, only well into the second half of the 17th century did the effects of the penetration of Baroque-style expressive and ornamental resources begin to be visible in the workshops' repertoires. The first fully Baroque signals to appear in Catalan art after 1660 were the architectural elements and ornamental techniques of what is called the Solomonic Baroque, which was destined to overtake the structures of altarpieces – still reticular until 1730 – within a few years and to enrich their symbolism with specific Eucharistic and triumphal allusions (to the triumph of Catholicism as a universal religion) through vine leaves, maidens and pelicans nestled in the thick spiral of the shafts. The Solomonic Baroque, which spanned the 17th and 18th centuries, would herald the golden age of altarpieces, saturated with spectacular ornamentation and with rhetorical structures boasting immense persuasive capacity, such as the main altarpiece in Sant Martí in Palafrugell which Josep Pla, in his *Quadern Gris*, found “Xurrigueresque, infuriating and sonorous” and “a masterpiece” bathed by “liquid gold, thick and gleaming, like a light-filled swarming”.

In these altarpieces, the combination of the ornamental and dramatic values of the aesthetic of the triumphal, self-satisfied Baroque which was being promoted in the centres of Catholic power, coupled with the effects of the dynamic, inflamed figures that occupied their niches and reliefs, created pieces with a powerful, suggestive impact on the surroundings. Dominating the nave and featuring the religious experiences from the lives of those congregations of believers so swayed by Catholic convictions, so affected by the fear of the fate of the souls in the hereafter, works like the main altarpiece of the Assumption in Alcover by Francesc Grau and Domènec Rovira II (1679-

1693), the altarpieces in Sant Martí of Palafrugell (1708) and Santa Maria in Arenys (1706-1709) by Pau Costa, and the ones in Sant Pere in Prada (1695-1699) and Santa Maria in Igualada (1718-1747) by Josep Sunyer i Raurell became sumptuous scenes in white poplar (*Populus Alba*) and polychrome saturated with symbolism, filled with dense ornamentation and enriched with impressive reliefs and finely-wrought monumental sculptures.

After the seventh decade of the 17th century, sculptors such as the ones cited above and their coeval painters began to bring graphic models inspired by the creations of the great 17th century European artists into their repertoires, generally harvested from the world of engraving through widespread engravings made by experts as skilled as Jean Dughet, Cornelis Bloemaert, Robert van Audenaert, Pietro Testa, Teresa del Po, Lucas Vorsterman, Schelte Adams Bolswert and Jean Audran. Even though we should assume that drawings also played a role in this revamping of the compositional and figurative sources, at this point its role has yet to be clarified. However, what is clear is that since the workshops discovered them so late (after the 1670s), when the new Baroque elements did begin to appear in the local repertoires, they brought both the graphic features of their inventors from the classicist and Baroque rhetoric which served the cause of absolutism and Roman Catholicism so well (Annibale Carracci,



Figure 3. Altarpiece of the Roser in Sant Esteve church in Olot, a work by Pau Costa (1704-1707, sculpture) and Antoni and Joaquim Soler (polychromers and gilders, 1719-1723). Photography: Joan Bosch.

Pieter Paul Rubens, Anton van Dyck, Guido Reni, Josep Ribera, Pietro da Cortona, François Du Quesnoy, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Alessandro Algardi) and the latest visual input from the great creators in the international high Baroque (Ciro Ferri, Carlo Maratti, Giovan Francesco Romanelli, Antoine Dieux, etc.).²⁶

In this way, starting in the last few decades of the century, easily hybridising with the deeply-rooted late-Renaissance formulas, stirring and intensely emotional expressions of Roman Baroque art appeared in Catalan lands, with their inflamed, pompous and declamatory figures in transit between the real and the supernatural or between life and death, turned towards a vision of the afterlife or graced by a vision of the sacred or mysterious. And what began to appear in painting were the illusionist decorative artifices of vaults and domes envisioned as grandiose and convincing outbreaks of celestial glory viewed *sotto in su*, colourful and brimming with energy, peopled with saints in a state of weightlessness and a lively throng of angels busy holding the attributes of the surrounding saints or playing musical instruments.

We can find sophisticated and astonishing interpretations of the characteristic Berniniesque Baroque figuration by the great sculptors of the day: in the reclining, dying saints of Andreu Sala, such as the *Sant Francesc Xavier* in the cathedral of Barcelona or the *Sant Aleix* in the basilica of Santa Maria del Mar (1685, now vanished); in the vigorous, concentrated images by Pau Costa on the altarpieces of Santa Maria in Arenys de Mar or the Roser in Sant Esteve church in Olot; in the ascetic characters on the altarpieces by Joan Roig in the cathedral of Barcelona and by the anonymous author of the two apostles and Saint

Joseph on the altarpiece of Saint Joseph in the cathedral of Tortosa; and finally in the agitated sculptures on the main altarpieces in Santa Maria in Igualada, Sant Pere in Prada (1695-1699) and Notre-Dame des Anges in Collioure by the Manresa-born sculptor Josep Sunyer i Raurell.

With regard to supernatural fictions in painting, the examples must include not only the ones mentioned above by Flemish painter Josep Bal (one of the few foreigners who succeeded in the local market in the late 17th century, in contrast to the extensive presence of foreigners in Catalan lands during the long Renaissance cycle) and Pau Priu, along with the nature and effects-filled exercise of the *quadratura* by Antoni Viladomat in the Dolors chapel in Mataró; the *quadri riportati* by Joan Gallart on the ceiling of the boardroom in the Dolors brotherhood in Mataró;²⁷ and, later in time, the ascending *Glòria* on the dome of the basilica of Santa Maria in Igualada by Francesc Tremulles, which Francesc Miralpeix called *giordanesca*; and the paintings by Manuel Tremulles on the domes of Sant Narcís chapel in Sant Fèlix de Girona and by Josep Bernat Flaugier in the Paüls church in Barcelona, completed by another lovely display of *quadratura* in the presbytery.

These were splendid decades from the standpoint of creativity: ambitious commissions sprang up all over the land, and sculptors, painters and silver workers expertly resolved them with conspicuous creativity. Likewise, elements like the guild system and mindset were gradually coming unravelled, which shook up craftsmanship as the only criteria used to assess the quality of artistic objects. One can note the intense desire for liberality in the more demanding artistic milieus. This contributed to



Figure 4. The Coronation of the Virgin (c. 1680), detail of the painting by Josep Bal, in the chapel of Barcelona's Casa de la Convalescència. Photography: Joan Bosch.

the appearance of many works which not only boasted the usual technical virtuosity but also played with an innovative and increasingly free language less inspired by copying from the influential corpus of international engraving – which was also alive and omnipresent among Catalan artists, as it was everywhere.

Almost all the sculptors cited above prove this, as do the works by Lluís Bonifàs the Elder and Lluís Bonifàs i Sastre, along with the singular compositions of the altarpieces by Jean-Jacques Melair († 1698), a bold yet ungainly sculptor from Carcassonne active in the diocese of Perpignan for more than 25 years and a skilled, fantastical designer of altarpieces featuring a dense, sumptuous Solomonism, such as the altarpiece of the Transfiguration in

the parish church of Vinça (1697) and the one devoted to Saint Eulàlia and Saint Julia in the cathedral of Perpignan (1675-1686), decorated with canvases imported from Rome purchased from an author working in Pietro da Cortona's circle.²⁸

Yet I believe that this can be seen even more clearly in the careers of the three most interesting painters of this time: Father Joaquim Juncosa (1631-1708), Antoni Guerra the Younger (1666-1711) and Antoni Viladomat (1678-1755). Regarding the first, a Carthusian painter, the quality and stylistic novelty of his works conserved in Valldemossa monastery, coupled with the aura of his sojourns in Rome, truly exceptional and only comparable to the ones by Valls native Jaume Pons, which added to the



Figure 5. Altarpiece in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception in the cathedral of Tarragona. Francesc Grau and Domènec Rovira II (sculptors), Josep Cabanyes (gilder), Friar Josep de la Concepció (design).

resonance of his critical fame, which dates back to Antonio A. Palomino (1724), confer upon him an impressive presence that is also somewhat enigmatic in Catalonia, since none of the works that he rendered, especially in the Escaladei and Montalegre monasteries, has ever been confidently identified.²⁹ The second one, the son and brother, respectively, of the also-interesting Antoni Guerra the Elder and Francesc Guerra, was the fairly competent and natural author of works like *L'apoteosi de sant Francesc de Paula* (1695) and *Sant Mateu escrivint l'Evangelí* (1706), following the painting idiom of the most effects-laden, rhetorical high French Baroque based on a rich international artistic culture constructed perhaps, as first hypothesised, on his privileged formative years near Jean Ranc in Montpellier, or, as later yet equally uncertainly posited, through his contact with the great Hyacinthe Rigaud.³⁰ The last of the masters, Antoni Viladomat, fully deserves the top historical position which art critics have always given him based on the 18th century assessments of Anton R. Mengs, owing to his ability to handle highly varied painting genres and in particular to the originality of the genuine painting discourse he distilled, a cultivated, modern yet balanced language with disaffected, spontaneous notes which shines in the midst of a late Baroque artistic universe dominated by affected rhetoric.³¹

The great transformations of the second half of the 18th century

In the mid-18th century, many things were beginning to shift in the art world in the Principality. These changes are so numerous and important that a historian has the sense of witnessing a change of epoch, a huge evolutionary leap forward in the system of the arts inherited from the 16th and 17th centuries. To begin with, there was a formidable new development in the world of altarpieces, already visible in the main altarpieces crafted by Pere Costa (1693-1761) after 1720: one in the church of the Jonqueres convent in Barcelona (1721-1723) and the other in Sant Martí in L'Aleixar (1733-1737).³² It consisted of the eruption of a new concept of altarpiece which not only abandoned Solomonism but also gradually replaced the traditional rectilinear lines embellished with narrative compartments, which, however, in its resistance to losing pride of place, left us with such attractive hybrid solutions as the main altarpieces in Santa Maria in Cadaqués by Pau Costa (1723-1727) and Sant Feliu church in Constantí by the sculptor from Almàspera, Antoni Ochando (1747).

Whether it stemmed from the influence of illustrations of the perspectives and architecture of Andrea Pozzo, the ideas that emerged from Pere Costa's contacts with Ferdinando Galli while the latter lived in Barcelona, or the study of the inventions of altars and scenographies in Italy, or because knowledge of the ornaments of Roman altars in the second half of the 17th century became richer in the Principality, Catalonia's sculpture workshops suddenly started envisioning altarpieces as huge architectural

scenes framed by a grandiose triumphal arch crowned by aediculae and whimsical pediments and domes and clad with decoration borrowed from the repertoires of *rocaille*. Now, as we see astonishingly in the main altarpiece of the Miracle sanctuary by Carles Morató (1747), the symbolic and thematic discourse depended on a few monumental images of holy figures and on varied allegories that captured the (faithful) viewer's attention: "In a scenography such as that, the characters seem like actors in a sacred drama, declaiming, pleading, invoking the deity above a classicising machinery which the gilding set apart from the real world".³³

Tellingly, in North Catalonia, things evolved in a different direction, at least after 1721, when the ornamental system of the Romanesque and Gothic main altarpiece in the cathedral of Elna was replaced, which was sold and melted in the mint of Perpignan to make use of the precious material. Sculptor Pere Navarre was charged with the new altarpiece and built a marble canopy flanked by large sculptures inspired, as the canons wished, by those of the Parisian churches of Sant-Germain-des-Prés and Val de Grâce. This explicit invocation of two French models heralded that fact that the pathway of sculpture north and south of the Pyrenees, which had dovetailed until then, was about to branch off, and that the most modern workshops in the bishopric of Perpignan were beginning to feel more attracted to the Parisian court's referents of classicism than to the high Baroque scenography of southern altarpieces. Importantly, eight years after these deeds, in 1729, when updating its main altar, the council of the town of Illa decided to build it in marble from Caunas de Menerbés (Aude), "en escoulture à la nouvelle mode", tapping into a trend that would last until the 19th century.³⁴

In the Principality, the entire formidable artistic culture of the Baroque would continue to bear fruit despite the fact that, as we shall discuss in the conclusion, the new academic mentality had declared a war that threatened its very existence. This ripe fruit included several examples, such as the decoration of the chapel of Els Colls in Sant



Figure 6. Carles Morató i Brugueroles: Main altarpiece in the Miracle sanctuary in Riner (close-up). Photograph by Andrés de Mesa.

Llorenç de Morunys (1773-1784) and the main altarpiece in Sant Pere church in Matamargó (1792) by Josep Pujol, which must be interpreted as the last works from the powerful world of the family lineages of wood sculptors. There are others that we can associate with the artistic conquests of Rome's late Baroque, such as the sets that are part of the spectacular sculptural decorations of the Seu Vella or old cathedral in Lleida, which were unfortunately burned in 1936, especially the choir by Lluís Bonifàs i Massó (1774-1779) and the altarpieces built by Juan Adán or Salvador Gurri between 1775 and 1790.³⁵ In contrast, we have to refer to Rococo formulas and new colour schemes captured in Madrid or Paris to explain the expressive register of the canvases by Francesc Tremulles (1717-1773) in the Saint Mark and Saint Stephen chapels in the cathedral of Barcelona.³⁶

The greatest transformations of the kind alluded to in the title of this section came during the last quarter of the century, and they were so important that their overall effect signalled a veritable mutation in the arts at the close of the century. To begin with, Charles III's circular addressed to all the bishops in his kingdoms requiring them to ban wooden altarpieces led to a violent change.³⁷ Even though the agony of the timber altarpieces lasted for a long time – at first, only the fine stone altarpieces at the Universitat de Cervera made by Jaume Padró (1777-1781) were adjusted to the standards of the law – the decree, hammered home by a second circular from Charles IV in 1792, stanching the extraordinarily vivid secular tradition of altarpieces in polychrome wood. Another disruptive (and long-term) effect on the evolution of the Baroque arts in Catalonia was the founding of Madrid's Academia de las Tres Nobles Artes de San Fernando (San Fernando Academy of the Three Noble Arts) in 1752, as it signalled the start of the harsh struggle against Baroque typologies and language. It also ran counter to Baroque's traditional agents, since it fiercely struggled against the crafts system that governed the arts and was destined to die after the circulars of 1782 and 1785, which allowed artists, even foreign ones, to evade the control and supervision of the guilds and colleges and work freely throughout the entire kingdom.

However, the guild system in Catalonia had actually begun to totter a century earlier, when the art market heard the first protests in defence of liberality and the intellectual values of artistic work among the grievances submitted by the sculptors' of Barcelona against the woodworkers' guild to separate from the latter, or when the silver-worker Joan Matons defended the creative and inventive values of his monumental candelabra in the trial against the chapterhouse of the cathedral of Palma, and his insistence on their being paid at the artisan cost;³⁸ or when, like a solitary foot soldier in the cause of liberalism, Antoni Viladomat clashed with the College of Painters in a harsh struggle against the inertia of the guilds, which his disciples Manuel and Francesc Tremulles later carried on.³⁹

The academic cause, which was the cause of the king and courtly culture and taste, quickly gained ground in

the large urban centres of Catalonia. Suddenly there was a clutch of cutting-edge Catalan artists who were on the rolls of the academics (Pere Costa, Carles Salas, Lluís and Francesc Bonifàs, Pau Serra, Salvador Gurri, Ramon Amadeu, Joan Enrich, Jaume and Josep Folch, Pere Pau Muntanya, Marià Illa, Pasqual Pere Moles) and thus attained the privilege not only of working freelance but also of personal nobility and exemption from taxes. What is more, in 1775, the Board of Trade created the Escola Gratuïta de Dibuix (Free Drawing School) in Barcelona, which planned to grant scholarships to send artists for training abroad, such as the one received by Pere Pasqual Moles in 1766 to go to Paris, or the one that Antoni Solà was awarded in 1803 to travel to Rome. The school developed a drawing-based curriculum for painters, sculptors and architects which advocated studying subjects related to knowledge of the models of classical antiquity.⁴⁰

Finally, at the same time in Barcelona and the other prominent urban centres in the Principality, scientific, technical and industrial development was progressing outside the guild system, and on the socioeconomic scene a new mercantile bourgeoisie was taking shape with some quasi-enlightened ideas and a yearning for innovation in art, its genres and its subjects. This new wealthy, mercurial bourgeoisie spurred commissions that were somewhat unusual for the old art regime, as they were open to a wider variety of subjects (sculptures and painting series on mythological or allegorical themes, for example, or depictions of contemporary gallant scenes) which stood alongside a language interested in the sources of ancient and modern classicism. These are the foundations that promoted the tempered and refined art of Salvador Gurri, Nicolau Travé and Pere Pau Muntanya, and later the outpouring of the magnificent generation of the neo-classicists Antoni Solà and Damià Campeny. And they mark the beginning of the subject that I have addressed at the start of this article, the discredit of the Baroque period, which emerged when academicism enthroned "good" taste, which was fated to destroy the defamed "poor" taste of the Baroque expressions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] Recognition of the conquest must begin by recalling the pioneering efforts of Cèsar Martinell i Brunet in the three volumes of *Arquitectura i escultura barroques a Catalunya*. Alpha, Barcelona 1959-1963, "Monumenta Cataloniae" collection, vol. 10-12; and subsequently, the importance of the studies also by Martinell, with Joan Ainaud de Lasarte and Rafael Benet, in Joaquim FOLCH I TORRES (ed.). *L'art català*. Vol. II. Aymà, Barcelona 1958; the wonderful doctoral thesis by Santiago ALCOLEA GIL. *La pintura en Barcelona durante el siglo XVIII*. Barcelona 1959-1962, 2 vols., and the interest of more recent publications such as the ones by Joan AINAUD DE LASARTE. "Arte. El Renacimiento, el Barroco y el Neoclasicismo".

- In: *Cataluña*. Vol. II. Fundació Juan March, Barcelona 1978, pp. 73-132; and Joan-Ramon TRIADÓ. *L'època del Barroc, s. XVII-XVIII*. Edicions 62, Barcelona 1984, "Història de l'art català" collection, no. 5.
- [2] This excerpt from the speech was cited and analysed by Joaquim GARRIGA. "Entorn de l'escultura barroca i el seu context". In: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA (ed.). *Alba Daurada. L'art del retaule a Catalunya: 1600-1792 circa*. Museu d'Art de Girona, Barcelona 2006, pp. 18-19.
- [3] This can be seen in initiatives such as the 2006 exhibitions "Alba Daurada" at the Museu d'Art de Girona, "Lluís Bonifàs i Massó" at the Museu de Valls and "Guerra. La peinture baroque en pays catalan aux XVII et XVIII siècles" in Perpignan; the restoration policy of the restoration centres of the Generalitat and the Département des Pyrénées-Orientales; and the patient conservation and museographic efforts that the Museu Comarcal de Manresa strives to undertake with virtually no resources. This normality is beginning to become so evident that, just as in any historiographic tradition, we also witness misguided criticisms and editorials such as the studies on painting and sculpture in the Modern Age by Joan-Ramon TRIADÓ and Rosa M. SUBIRANA. "Pintura moderna". In: *Pintura moderna i contemporània*. L'Isard, Barcelona 2001, pp. 12-161, "Art de Catalunya. Ars Cataloniae" collection, no. 9, and Joan-Ramon TRIADÓ and Rosa M. SUBIRANA. "Escultura moderna". In: *Escultura moderna i contemporània*. L'Isard, Barcelona 1998, pp. 12-127, "Art de Catalunya. Ars Cataloniae" collection, no. 7, regarding art in the 17th and 18th centuries, a frustrating text filled with bits and pieces that reproduce verbatim materials from the important earlier book by Joan-Ramon Triadó in the "L'art català" collection put out by Edicions 62 in 1984.
- [4] One of the most innovative new contributions to the literature in recent years is the original book by Santi TORRAS TILLÓ. *Pintura catalana del Barroc. L'auge col·leccionista i l'ofici de pintor al segle XVII*. Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2012, which precisely signalled the discovery of the until now "unformed" world of the "minuscule" painting market in the city of Barcelona, with its production of less common genres and subjects which had gone unnoticed, its collectors (who were first identified in the seminal study by Marià CARBONELL. "Pintura religiosa i pintura profana en inventaris barcelonins". *Estudis Històrics i Documents dels Arxius de Protocols*, vol. XIII (1995), pp. 137-190), its painting shops, its small dealers and its most dynamic clients, their acquisitions of local or imported paintings (and the prices and values), with a port that served as a quick stopping point for artistic objects destined for the great court and noble collections, etc. Along similar lines but regarding Roussillon is the important study by Julien LUGAND. *Peintres et doreurs en Roussillon aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*. Trabucaire, Perpignan 2006.
- [5] About the latter, note the reflection by Jaume BARRACHINA. "Les arts decoratives catalanes a l'època del Barroc". In: Bonaventura BASSEGODA, Joaquim GARRIGA and Jordi PARÍS (ed.). *L'època del Barroc i els Bonifàs*. Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2007, pp. 109-132.
- [6] See Joaquim M. PUIGVERT I SOLÀ. "El Barroc revalorat pel Noucentisme: la contribució dels arquitectes". In: *Miscel·lània en honor de Josep Maria Marquès*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona 2010, pp. 639-646.
- [7] Eugène CORTADE. *Retables baroques du Roussillon*. Perpinyà, 1973, p. 13. Yvette CARBONELL. *Les retables sculptés du diocèse d'Elne (1643-1697)*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Université Toulouse-Le Mirail, Paris 1971; Bruno TOLLON. *Les retables sculptés en Roussillon et en Cerdagne française au XVIII siècle*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Université Toulouse-Le Mirail, Paris 1972. With regard to painting, for decades we have had to refer back to the pioneer Marcel DURLIAT. *Arts anciens du Roussillon*. Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales, Perpignan 1954.
- [8] This is amply demonstrated by the historiography on the 18th century and easy to see for the 17th century as well, such as in the texts by Albert GARCIA ESPUCHE. *Un siglo decisivo. Barcelona y Cataluña 1550-1640*. Alianza, Madrid 1998, and by Xavier TORRES and Eva SERRA. "El pactisme català davant l'absolutisme dels Habsburg". In: *Crisi institucional i canvi social: segles XVI i XVII*. Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona 1997, "Història, política, societat i cultura dels Països Catalans" collection, no. 4, pp. 15-68.
- [9] For the history and nature of the Catalan parishes during the Old Regime, as we see the religious institutions that became the most active forces behind art commissions, a must-read is the innovative study by Joaquim M. PUIGVERT. *Església, territori i sociabilitat (s. XVII-XIX)*. Eumo, Vic 2000.
- [10] Both are covered in Aurora PÉREZ SANTAMARIA. *Escultura barroca a Catalunya*. Virgili i Pagès, Barcelona 1988. Monographically, for some cases in Barcelona, see Santi MERCADER and Silvia CANALDA. "La tímida irrupción de los santos contrareformistas en la catedral de Barcelona". In: Germán RAMALLO (ed.). *La catedral: guía mental y espiritual de la Europa barroca católica*. Universidad de Murcia, Murcia 2010, pp. 441-476; and the documents supplied in Carles DORICO. "El llegat del canonge Francesc Valeri i el retaule de la capella de les Ànimes de la catedral de Barcelona". *Estudis Històrics i Documents dels Arxius de Protocols*, vol. xv (1997) pp. 221-256. For the cathedral of Girona, see Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. "Pintura del segle XVIII a la seu de Girona". *Estudi General*, no. 10 (1990), pp. 141-166.
- [11] On this topic, there is a monographic study by Josep M. MADURELL I MARIMON. *La capilla de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Seo de Tarragona*. Diputació de Tarragona. Tarragona 1958.
- [12] The Rigau case is reminiscent of the case of Tarragona native Miquel Serra, another wonderful Catalan painter who, in fact, is part of the history of Gallic art, since after

- his beginnings near Joaquim Juncosa and a sojourn in Italy, his career unfolded in Marseille: Marie-Claude HOMET. *Michel Serre et la peinture baroque en Provence (1658-1733)*. Edisud, Ais de Provença 1987.
- [13] An up-to-date summary of this “courtly” moment (which, though it seemed so promising, did not end up becoming a subject that is properly explained in our historiography) will shortly be available in Francesc MIRALPEIX VILAMALA. “Les manifestacions artístiques”. In: Joaquim ALBAREDA (dir.). *1714-1814. Desfeta i represa: a les portes de la Revolució Industrial*. Edicions 62, Barcelona [at press]. Regarding the column of the Immaculate Conception, see Conxita MOLLFULEDA. “*In futuri operi signum*. La piràmide de la Immaculada i el setge de Barcelona de 1706”. In: *Congrés internacional L’aposta catalana a la Guerra de Successió (1705-1707)*. Barcelona, 2007, III-Addenda, pp. 5-36.
- [14] Francesc X. ALTÉS. *L’església nova de Montserrat (1560-1592-1992)*. Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona 1992, especially pp. 100-161. The Montserrat episode draws similar attention in Santi TORRAS TILLÓ. *Pintura catalana del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-186.
- [15] Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. *Els tallers d’escultura al Bages del segle XVII*. Caixa d’Estalvis de Manresa, Manresa 1990, pp. 203-204.
- [16] Few of these artists and pieces have a historiographic corpus behind them: Eloi Camanyes and Agustí Roda in Joan-Hilari MUÑOZ. “La custòdia del Corpus de la catedral de Tortosa. Dades documentals”. *Nous Col·loquis*, no. v (2001), pp. 129-148; Joan Matons for his candelabra at the cathedral of Palma and the urn of Saint Bernat Calbó has aroused the most interest: Joan DOMENGE. “Una obra excepcional però controvertida: els canelobres de l’argenter Joan Matons”. In: Aina PASCUAL (coord.). *La Seu de Mallorca*. José J. de Olañeta, Palma 1995, pp. 272-283; Josep M. MADURELL I MARIMON. “L’urna d’argent de Sant Bernat Calvó de la Seu de Vich”. *Ausa*, no. 58-59 (1968), pp. 25-33; Alba ERRA ZUBIRI. “L’urna de Sant Bernat Calvó (1700-1728)”. *Butlletí del Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya*, no. 2 (1994), pp. 63-71. The urn of Saint Ermengol has also inspired research: Pere PUJOL I TUBAU. “L’urna d’argent de Sant Ermengol, bisbe d’Urgell”. *Memòries de l’Institut d’Estudis Catalans*, no. I, fasc. 1 (1927), pp. 1-29. A revelatory recent study is the one by Carles DORICO. “Col·laboració entre escultors i argenters en l’orfebreria catalana de l’època del Barroc”. *Estudis Històrics i Documents dels Arxius de Protocols*, no. xxv (2007), pp. 311-349.
- [17] To manoeuvre through the intricate late Mannerist world, no guide is better than the masterful Antonio PINELLI. *La Bella Maniera. Artisti del Cinquecento tra regola e licenza*. Einaudi, Turin 1993, especially pp. 166-200.
- [18] This was used for the first time in Joan-Ramon TRIADÓ. *L’època del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, although the justification used for the Renaissance comes from the volume by Joaquim GARRIGA RIERA. *L’època del Renaixement, s. XVI*. Edicions 62, Barcelona 1986, “Història de l’art català” collection, no. IV, and even more intensely in Joaquim GARRIGA RIERA. “L’art cincentista català i l’època del Renaixement: una reflexió” *Revista de Catalunya*, no. 13 (1987), pp. 117-144.
- [19] Riera’s sojourn was documented in Josep Maria PONS I GURI. *Notícia de artistes arenenses*, Arenys de Mar 1945, pp. 5-12. The information on Father Pasqual in Rome and Seville is contained in Francisco PACHECO. *El arte de la pintura*. Publication supervised by Bonaventura Bassegoda. Cátedra, Madrid 1990, p. 434, and in Jusepe MARTÍNEZ. *Discursos practicables del nobilísimo arte de la pintura*, unpublished manuscript issued in 1854, pp. 241-243 from the edition by Julián Gállego, Madrid 1988.
- [20] Regarding the phenomenon of the relationship between Catalan art and engraving during the Modern Age, I would venture to propose a reading of Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. “L’art del retaule: els recursos inventius”. In: Bonaventura BASSEGODA, Joaquim GARRIGA and Jordi PARÍS (ed.). *L’època del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-205; Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. “La culture artistique au service de l’art de dévotion: exemples en Catalogne à l’époque moderne”. In: Sophie DUHEM (dir.). *L’art au village. La production artistique des paroisses rurales (XVI-XVIII^e siècles)*. Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes 2009, pp. 167-189.
- [21] Regarding this astonishing female painter, see: Teresa AVELLÍ CASADEMONT. “Angelica Giustiniano: Sant Pere i sant Jaume (exterior de les portes) de l’orgue de l’església parroquial d’Ulldemolins (1638)”. In: *Llums del Barroc*, Fundació Caixa de Girona, Girona 2004.
- [22] We have a long monographic study on Toscano in: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. “El periple pictòric d’un pintor milanès a Catalunya: Joan Baptista Toscano, actiu entre 1599 i 1617”. *Locus Amoenus*, no. 11 (2012), pp. 97-127.
- [23] Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. *Agustí Pujol: La culminació de l’escultura renaixentista a Catalunya*. Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2009, “Memoria Artium” collection, no. 7.
- [24] The Soler i Colobran family line has been illuminated by Carles DORICO. “La dauradura del retaule del Roser, de l’església parroquial de Sant Esteve d’Olot”. In: *Annals del Patronat d’Estudis Històrics d’Olot i comarca*. Patronat d’Estudis Històric d’Olot i comarca, Olot 1994, pp. 103-132.
- [25] We owe an exceptional reflection on the world of gilding to Carles ESPINALT I CASTEL. “La tècnica de l’escultura policromada: de l’arbre a l’altar”. In: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA (ed.). *Alba Daurada...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-107.
- [26] A reflection on the artistic culture of this period can be found in two simultaneous publications: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. “L’art del retaule: retaulers i escultors a Catalunya (1600-1777 ca.)”. In: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA (ed.). *Alba Daurada...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-57; Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. “L’art del retaule: els recursos inventius”. In: Bonaventura BASSEGODA, Joaquim GARRIGA and Jordi PARÍS (ed.). *L’època del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-205. Regarding the phenomenon of the workshops in Northern Catalonia, a must-read is Teresa AVELLÍ. “Els tallers

- d'escultura dels segles XVII-XVIII a la Catalunya Nord". In: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA (ed.). *Alba Daurada...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-73.
- [27] The distinction between the hand of Antoni Viladomat and that of Joan Gallart in the Board Room of the Dolors chapel is a recent conquest which we owe to Francesc MIRALPEIX. "Joan Gallart (c. 1670-1714) en el context de la pintura catalana de la fi del segle XVII i dels primers anys del segle XVIII. Noves atribucions". In: Bonaventura BASSEGODA, Joaquim GARRIGA and Jordi PARÍS (ed.). *L'època del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-232.
- [28] See Eugène CORTADE. *Retables baroques...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-132; Julien LUGAND. "Les échanges artistiques entre le Roussillon et Rome aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles". In: *L'Art du Sud, de la création à l'identité*. CTHS, Paris 2003, pp. 155-180.
- [29] An interesting stylistic characterisation can be found in Francesc MIRALPEIX. "Fra Joaquim Juncosa i Donadeu, Pentecosta (ca. 1678-84)". In: *Llums del Barroc*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-123.
- [30] Julien LUGAND. *Guerra: La peinture baroque en pays catalan aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*. Trabucaire, Perpignan 2006.
- [31] Bearing in mind his historiographic prestige, it is imperative to recall the interest that Antoni Viladomat's work aroused in Antoni Fontanals del Castillo; in collector, literati and critic Raimon Casellas; in Santiago Alcolea Gil; and today in Francesc Miralpeix, who devoted his doctoral thesis to Viladomat: Francesc MIRALPEIX. *El pintor Antoni Viladomat i Manalt (1678-1755): Biografia i catàleg crític*. Universitat de Girona, Girona 2005, and who has illuminated such spectacular episodes as the ones contained in Francesc MIRALPEIX. "Quatre teles de la vida de sant Bru del pintor Antoni Viladomat i Manalt (1678-1755) a París". *Butlletí del MNAC*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 77-91.
- [32] Carles DORICO. "El retaule major de Sant Sever i la darrera estada de Pere Costa a Barcelona (1754-1757)". *Locus Amoenus*, no. 3 (1997), pp. 123-145.
- [33] I shall cite one of my own publications: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA. "L'art del retaule: retaulers...", *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- [34] Eugène CORTADE. *Retables baroques...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-168.
- [35] Manuel SEGRET i RIU, M.A. ROIG i TORRENTÓ: About the Pujol family, see *Altar dels Colls*, Sant Llorenç de Morunys 1984; and Joan VILAMALA i TERRICABRES: *L'obra dels Pujol, Farell*, Sant Vicenç de Castellet 2001. The choir of the Lleida's old cathedral however, it is very well-known thanks to the photographs prior to the defeat as well as the research by Cèsar MARTINELL. *El escultor Luis Bonifás y Massó*. Barcelona Town Hall, Barcelona 1948.
- [36] Regarding this change in referents, see Francesc MIRALPEIX. "Pintores franceses en Cataluña y catalanes en Francia en los siglos XVII y XVIII. Sobre modelos e influencias". In: Julien LUGAND (ed.). *Les échanges artistiques entre la France et l'Espagne (XV^e-fin XIX^e siècles)*, Trabucaire, Perpignan 2012, "Histoire de l'Art" collection, no. 1, pp. 247-262.
- [37] Bearing in mind the importance of the document, tribute should be paid to the first author who published it: Santiago ALCOLEA GIL. "Unes fites en el camí vers el predomini de l'academicisme a l'art català del segle XVIII". *D'Art*, no. 10 (1984), pp. 187-195.
- [38] Joan DOMENGE. "Una obra excepcional...", *op. cit.*, pp. 272-283.
- [39] See the story by Francesc MIRALPEIX. *El pintor Antoni Viladomat...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-116 and 140-146.
- [40] Regarding such an important issue, it is important to be aware of the contributions by Joan-Ramon TRIADÓ. *L'època del Barroc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-219 and 226-241; Rosa Maria SUBIRANA REBULL. *Pasqual Pere Moles i Coronas*. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Barcelona 1990; Lluïsa RODRÍGUEZ. *El gremi d'escultors de Barcelona a l'últim quart del segle XVIII*. Doctoral thesis. Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 1993; Anna RIERA. *La formació dels escultors catalans: l'ensenyament a l'Escola Gratuïta de Dibuix i els pensionats a Madrid i Roma*. Doctoral thesis. Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 1994; Rosa M. SUBIRANA REBULL. "Academicisme versus Neoclassicisme a l'Escola Gratuïta de Dibuix de Barcelona". *Pedralbes*, no. 23 (2003), pp. 651-666; Mariona FERNÁNDEZ. "L'ocàs de la retaulística a Catalunya (c. 1777-1808): el nou gust i la imposició de la norma acadèmica". In: Joan BOSCH BALLBONA (ed.). *Alba Daurada...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-89.

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The author is an art history reader at the Universitat de Girona and has served as a visiting professor at the Italian universities of Sassari and Cagliari. He studies the art of the 16th and 17th centuries produced in Catalonia, with a stress on the critical study and re-discovery of some of the most important authors in that historical period and on the phenomenon of the reception of international artistic culture in Barcelona. He has published books on Agustí Pujol, 17th century altarpieces from Bages, the main altarpieces in Santa Maria of Arenys de Mar and the priory of Sant Pere of Reus (with Joaquim Garriga) and articles on Pere Nunyes, Joan Baptista Toscano and Antoni Rovira. He has curated the exhibitions "De Flandes a Itàlia" (with Joaquim Garriga), "Llums del Barroc" and "Alba Daurada. L'art del retaule a Catalunya". He is currently at work on publications on the artistic culture of the artists from the Principality and on collecting in the house of the Toledos, the Marquises of Vilafranca, during the reigns of King Philip II and King Philip III. On these topics, he has already shared some arguments in the articles "Paul Bril, Wenzel Cobergher, Jacob Frankaert I, Willem I van Nieulandt y los ermitaños de Pedro de Toledo, V marqués de Vilafranca" and "Retazos del sueño tardorenacentista de don Pedro de Toledo".