



Antoni Gaudí: Ornament, Fire and Ashes (Columns of Smoke)

Juan José Lahuerta

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Juan José Lahuerta's *Columns of Smoke* series offers bold new readings of modernity and its key figures while redefining the connections between architecture, ornamentation, and the portrayal of both in print media. The third volume focuses on the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926), whose spectacular fin-de-siècle bohemian modernism stood in revolutionary contrast to the leading approaches of the day.

With the rise of Le Corbusier's modern style of architecture in the early twentieth century, architects who favored ornamentation and a strong bond with nature, like Gaudí, were relegated to the sidelines. Lahuerta draws on first-hand documents, many previously unpublished, to show that Gaudí, far from being the isolated eccentric seen in other accounts, was keenly aware of the major theories and works of his time and cleverly used industrial processes to produce ornamental details that appear today to be almost handmade. Equally impressive was Gaudí's ability to capitalize on his fame once in the public eye, as both the architect and his buildings appeared in illustrations in the popular press. His influence on avant-garde artists like Salvador Dalí, who admired the edible appearance of Gaudí's Casa Milà in Barcelona, and Pablo Picasso, who was fascinated by the eroticism of the Casa Batlló, attests to the architect's impact far beyond his field.

Richly illustrated with rare images from a variety of sources, this highly visual take on Gaudí is also a spirited commentary on the roots of modernism more generally. Entertaining and perceptive, *Antoni Gaudí* challenges us to reconsider what we thought we knew about this pioneering architect and his distinctive work.

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