



ESCOLA MASSANA. EXHIBITION HALL

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THE DREAM OF A PASTRY-COOK: THE ESCOLA MASSANA

THE ESCOLA MASSANA, CENTRE FOR ART AND DESIGN OF THE BARCELONA MUNICIPAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION, HAS A CONCILIATORY SPIRIT BETWEEN HISTORY AND MODERNITY WHICH INTEGRATES THE DECORATIVE AND THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS.

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Finally, to the city of Barcelona, represented by its illustrious city council, five hundred thousand pesetas in one thousand municipal bonds for the creation of a school of Fine Arts applied to the decorative industries and arts, in which, as well as admitting a number of pupils without means and giving them classes, the chance of studying and learning, at a modest fee, will be given to young

workers and other people engaged in industrial specialities who desire artistic training and culture." This is section thirteen of the will of Agustí Massana, a well-to-do Barcelona pastry-cook whose generosity was not only financial but conceptual, sensing, as he did, the future marriage between industry and art and its significance: design. When the Escola Massana began its ac-

tivities on 14 January 1929 (the year of the Universal Exhibition in Barcelona, a meaningful coincidence), it combined two chief aspects that had made Catalan Modernism possible: the extraordinary wealth of the artistic, or sumptuous trades, and the daring culture of the project, characteristic of the architects Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner, Jujol, etc. The original premises were soon out-



ITEMS OF JEWELLERY. ESCOLA MASSANA

grown by the demand the new institution aroused and in 1935 the school moved into its definitive home in the former Hospital de la Santa Creu (a fine example of Catalan Gothic architecture), where it became an indissoluble part of Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood.

The catalogue of specialities with which the school opened, under the direction of Jaume Busquets, included "gilding and the art of the altarpiece; glass engraving and cutting; metal embossing, engraving and enamelling; and decorative painting" (taken from the school's first programme, in the year 1929).

After the period under Miquel Soldevila (1940-1956), a period marked by severe problems of survival, the director Lluís M. Güell (1956-1976) extended the possibilities for learning by adding mural pictorial processes, ceramics, jewellery, stained glass, Japanese lacquer, sculpture, painting, tapestry and copperplate engraving; and in 1963, for the first time in a school of arts and crafts in the Iberian Peninsula, he introduced design: printed fabric design, graphic design, industrial design and interior design. After Joaquim Sabater's headmastership (1976-1980), Francesc Miralles (1981-1989) set in motion the present study plan, bringing the school in line with a more unitary conception with interconnections amongst the different branches of art. This study plan was gradually consolidated under Lluís Doñate (1990-1993), a period which saw the incorporation of the subject of drawing and of intermedia option/contemporary image procedures.

This short historical summary reveals a characteristic inherent to this institution: its capacity for organic growth in tune with the times and, at the same time, its respect for the already consolidated educational heritage. Because the challenge for a school of art lies in its formal and technical memory as a transmitter of expressive languages with a history behind them we can not forget, but without this making it insensitive to new ideas, new languages and new technologies. Contemporaneity and tradition would ap-

pear to be the ideal conceptual dichotomy for a school of art and design. Above all, it is the pupils who are most sensitive to this dichotomy; they are inevitably contemporary, but are in need of the technical, formal and conceptual referents that will help them find their place in the flow of history.

Nowadays, the complex, changing nature of our culture gives rise to conducts requiring a high degree of specialization, alternating with others more markedly interdisciplinary. These conducts are basic in the creative sphere. The Escola Massana provides a wide range of expressive and technical skills (some 17 specialities), making up a four-year study plan which is structured in such a way as to allow specific or interdisciplinary learning through personalized curriculums. This has generated a highly versatile school culture which helps students find their own referents and their own methodologies. To this end, the teaching team alternate ideas for work for students based on a free search for highly speculative solutions, with closely patterned proposals adjusted to very strict demands in the social surroundings, which include variables referred to the market that respect the environment.

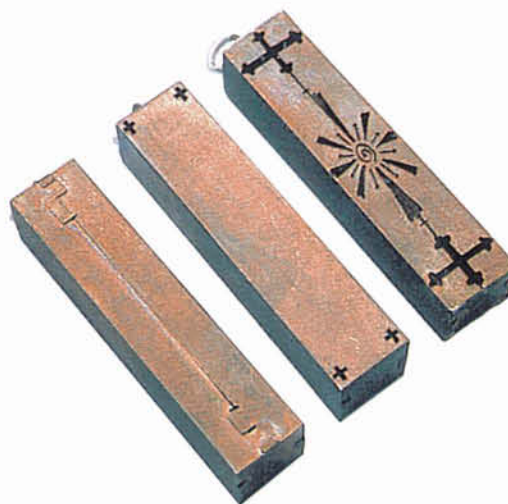
The school has for some years had a policy of relations with the world of business which has resulted in a series of formulas such as, especially, the contests and workshop-seminars for the development of ideas, helping students make contact with the world of production and, vice versa, opening doors to dialogue between business and the professionals of the future. It is particularly worth mentioning the contests with the firms Manbar, Aki-Briko, Societat General d'Aigües de Barcelona, Winterthur, Metges sense Fronteres, AssiDöman Frövi, etc.

Similarly, relations with other academic institutions are very important for the school: the phenomena of creativity need intercultural dialogue. The Kokusai Sogo Gakuin group of schools of design (Japan), the Polytechnic University of Managua (Nicaragua), the National Centre

for Art Ceramics (Tunisia), the St. Etienne College of Art (France) and the University of Derby (England) are just some of the centres with which we maintain specific contacts for student exchanges, exhibitions, educational knowledge, teaching consultancies, networked seminars (via Internet and others), etc. It's important to note that the presence of foreign students fluctuates between 10% and 14% of the total of annual enrolments.

Barcelona is a city with a recognized capacity for formal solutions, for a visual impact not exempt of conceptual replies. The Mediterranean tradition, taken in the particular perspective of Catalan culture, has given considerable fruits in the field of art and design, both in terms of personalities and of outstanding work, which have influenced developments in contemporary taste. This synthesis and this fecundity which the city has managed to catalyse has greatly eased the task of the institutions working in this field. And we realise this is something that feeds back –without the energy of their members, institutions, schools and business would not keep up with all the activities that take place in Barcelona, and without the city's capacity for tolerance and vitality, civil life would not show the same creativity.

It is in this respect that the Escola Massana feels fully identified with Barcelona, both because of its status as a Centre for Art and Design dependent on the Barcelona Municipal Institute for Education and because of the way it reconciles history and modernity, its cosmopolitanism and its origin, since it was founded by private initiative but is publicly maintained. Today, 67 years later, the school approaches the future with a clear idea that creativity is closely tied to our students' ability to interrelate different disciplines and languages, to integrate the sumptuous arts and the industrial arts, to work for a world of greater interconnection and solidarity. We sense, from the simple words of Massana the pastry-cook, that this was the school he dreamed of. ■



"IMPLÍCIT/EXPLÍCIT". EXHIBITION OF WORK BY STUDENTS