



The Pier (Aranjuez, 1911, MNAC)  
 Cover - Stately Garden. Raixa II (Majorca, 1902, private collection)



Arbour in the Late Afternoon (Aranjuez, 1913, private collection)



Abandoned Garden (Granada, 1898, private collection)



The Horta Labyrinth, II (Barcelona, 1900-1901, private collection)

Humour and irony, moreover, are constant features of Santiago Rusiñol's entire theatrical output, from *L'alegria que passa* to his last one-act farce or musical hall number. Even works influenced by Maeterlinck or Ibsen which aim to create a new Catalan drama contain sparks of irony and humour which keep the transcendental at bay and build bridges to the public at large. Rusiñol's alter ego, "Xarau", created in the early 20th century, cast this same ironical gaze. The articles he signed in the humorous weekly *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* (1907-1925) parodied the discourse of Eugeni d'Ors, alias "Xènius", the spokesman of the soberly classical Noucentista movement, who wrote in *La Veu de Catalunya*. Some of Rusiñol's best known books - *Del Born al Plata*, *L'illa de la calma* and *Màximes i mals pensaments* - arose out of this lengthy collaboration with *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*.

And this same wry humour was used by Rusiñol to create one of the foremost personages of modern Catalan literature, Senyor Esteve, a dull, humdrum small businessman who embodies the bourgeoisie who built modern Barcelona, and modern Catalonia, with all his contradictions and failings, but also with a few virtues. This literary character, later depicted in cartoons by Picarol, was to take on a life of his own and his name has become part of everyday language.

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**Other museums** and institutions which house works by Santiago Rusiñol: Museu Comarcal del Maresme, Mataró; Museu de les Arts Escèniques de l'Institut del Teatre, Barcelona; Museu Comarcal de la Garrotxa, Olot; and Casa Museu Pau Casals, El Vendrell.

**Outside Catalonia:** Es Bakard, Palma de Majorca City Hall; Museu del Santuari de Lluç, Majorca; Casa Museu Benlirue, Valencia; Cercle de Belles Arts, Valencia; Museu Municipal de l'Almudí, Xàtiva; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Musée Goya, Castres; Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Circolo de Bellas Artes, Madrid; Palacio Real, Madrid; Museo Zuloaga, Zumaia (Guipuzkoa); Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao; Museo Casa de los Tiros, Granada; Museo Provincial, Zaragoza; Museo de Bellas Artes, Córdoba; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Argentina; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Cuba.

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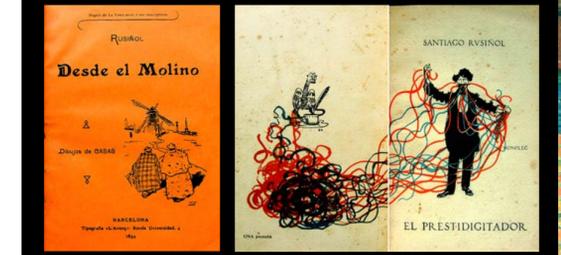
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L'Auca del senyor Esteve (Ramon Casas-Gabriel Alomar)



Sitges. Monument to El Greco



Desde El Molino (Barcelona, 1894)  
 El prestidigitador (Barcelona, 1903)



Barcelona. Els Quatre Gats (Ramon Casas, 1897)



Sitges. Cau Ferrat

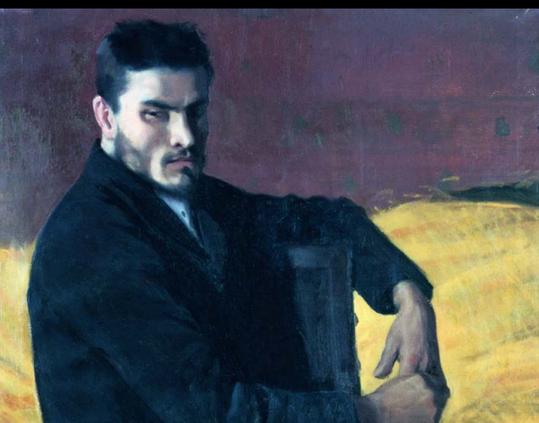




Reciprocal Portraits (Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas) (c. 1890, Cau Ferrat)



Montmartre Café (Paris, 1890, Museu de Montserrat)



The Sculptor Carles Mani (Paris, 1895, Cau Ferrat)

## SANTIAGO RUSIÑOL (Barcelona 1861 - Aranjuez 1931)

### The leader of the Modernist movement

Santiago Rusiñol was the eldest son of a family of textile manufacturers with a factory in Manlleu and an office on Carrer de la Princesa in Barcelona. At the age of twenty-eight, when he was married with one daughter, he decided to turn his back on middle class life and become a professional painter.

The atmosphere created by the Barcelona Universal Exposition of 1888 prompted him, the following year, to set off for Paris. There he took up a Bohemian lifestyle, first in Montmartre and then on the Île Saint-Louis, where he moved in 1895. Rusiñol immersed himself in the intellectual and artistic circles of the city that was then the epitome of modernity and played a key role in importing the new trends into Catalonia and Spain. Towards the close of the century, he frequented the Académie de la Palette, where Pierre Puvis de Chavannes worked, met the musician Erik Satie, became an habitu  of Le Chat Noir and Le Mirliton alongside Toulouse-Lautrec, saw Maeterlinck's plays, attended performances at the Th atre de l' uvre and Antoine's Th atre-Libre, and observed the new advertising techniques – posters, caf s and newspapers. Rusiñol assimilated all the new aesthetic trends that were emerging in Europe in the wake of the crisis of Positivism and Realism – notably the Decadent facet of Symbolism – and made his own personal interpretation of Zola's Naturalism. From Paris he collaborated with the Barcelona newspaper *La Vanguardia*, helping to build up the image of the modern artist in his letters "Desde El Molino" (From The Mill, published in book form in 1894).

Rusiñol's decision to become an artist must be viewed against the backcloth of the late 19th century cultural and intellectual "regenerationist" movement known as Modernism, which stressed the need to transform Catalan culture – considered provincial, antiquated, and regionalistic by young intellectuals – into a modern, national, European culture. The magazine *L'Aven * was the first rallying point for the Modernists (Jaume Mass  i Torrents, Joaquim Casas-Carb , Alexandre Cortada, Jaume Brossa, Joan Maragall, Pompeu Fabra, Raimon Casellas and Ramon Casas) but soon Santiago Rusiñol took over as leader, thanks to his pleasant character, his skill in the use of new strategies of mass communication (advertising, marketing, public relations), and his own willingness to become the Modernist figurehead.

No sooner had he returned from Paris than Santiago Rusiñol and his works began to stir up reaction. His individual and joint exhibitions at Barcelona's Sala Par s – with the painter Ramon Casas and the sculptor Enric Claras  – sought to provoke the middle-class, conformist public, who accused him of trying to import foreign tendencies, of extravagance, of painting too dull a picture, and of undermining the established canon of beauty. Even more provocative, because of their programmatic purpose and periodicity (from 1892 to 1897), were the Sitges Modernist Festivals (Festes Modernistes de Sitges).

### The Cau Ferrat in Sitges: A Temple to Art

Santiago Rusiñol discovered the seaside town of Sitges in 1891. He was captivated by the white houses, the blue patios, and the warm welcome he received from the painters of the Sitges Luminist School, Arcadi Mas i Fontdevila, Antoni Almirall, Josep Roig i Soler and Joaquim de Mir . He soon decided to build a studio there with a storage area for his large collection of antique Catalan wrought iron. Enric Claras 's workshop in Barcelona (Carrer Muntaner, 38), where this collection had previously been kept, bore the meaningful name of the Cau Ferrat ("iron lair"). Its Sitges counterpart, designed to perform the symbolic function of a Temple to Art, became the museum of Rusiñol's imagination.



Erik Satie, Bohemian (Paris, 1891, Arxiu Joan Maragall)



"Grand Bal" (Paris, 1891, private collection)



Twins. "Las Vicentetes" (Sitges, 1895, private collection)



L'alegria que passa (c. 1890, Biblioteca Popular Santiago Rusiñol, Sitges)



Female Figure (with self-portrait) (Paris, 1894, MNAC)

The Cau Ferrat in Sitges was built on the site of two fishermen's cottages in the Baluard area, alongside the church and overlooking the sea. The architect Francesc Rogent designed an eclectic-style building, midway between Gothic and popular Mediterranean architecture. The upper story was to house the collections of wrought iron, pottery and glass; the lower floor, with its large fireplace and Gothic window, from which only the sea and sky were visible, was to be the artist's dwelling.

The Cau Ferrat was inaugurated in the summer of 1894 with a spectacular lay procession at which two canvases by the Baroque painter Domenikos Theotokopoulos, alias El Greco, which Rusiñol had bought in Paris, were solemnly paraded through the streets. It was followed by a literary contest which aimed to be a modern alternative to the now degenerate poetry contest held in Barcelona – the Jocs Florals – and the literary tradition it represented. These festivities were declared to be the Third Modernist Festival because two earlier events, which had not originally been numbered, were retroactively considered part of the same series: in 1892 Rusiñol and the Sitges Luminists had organized an exhibition of landscape art at the town hall to illustrate how the contemplation of a particular landscape can produce an emotional shock on the soul of the – refined, sensitive and decadent – artist; and in 1893, the same group had produced *La Intrusa* (*L'Intruse*) by the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck, a Symbolist play about death, translated into Catalan by Pompeu Fabra. The mise en sc ne – the stalls were in complete darkness and the stage only slightly illuminated – gave the Catalan public its first contact with modern drama and avant-garde theatrical creations. At the Fourth Modernist Festival, *La Fada*, a Catalan opera with a libretto by Jaume Mass  i Torrents and music by Enric Morera, was given its first performance, and the fifth and last edition, in 1899, was devoted to the most innovative Catalan theatrical works. Both editions were rounded off by a variety of daring cultural events: concerts of Franco-Belgian Symbolist music, Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance, and the construction of a monument to El Greco funded by popular subscription. All aimed to foster renewal and, above all, to persuade society to acknowledge the importance of education and culture in regenerating the country at a period – from 1894 to 1898 – when the severe crisis already affecting Spain had culminated in a devastating war and the loss of its last overseas colonies.

During these years not only the Catalan Modernist intelligentsia but the cream of Spanish regenerationist intellectuals – Emilia Pardo Baz n,  ngel Ganivet, Rub n Dar o, Benito P rez Gald s, Ignacio Zuloaga, Manuel de Falla, Francisco de P. Valladar, and many others – visited the Cau Ferrat in Sitges. They held in common with the owner of the Cau Ferrat an idea which recurs in numerous speeches and articles around 1898: that any people that auctions off its history and squanders its cultural heritage deserves to be considered "a vincible nation, a backward people, a dying nation, to be split up by superior nations".

### Art for Art's Sake and Total Art

Santiago Rusiñol set himself up as a champion of art and successfully created an image, based on his own personality, of the modern artist who lives from and for art and becomes a work of art in his own right. He used his engaging personality, his flair for bringing diverse people together, and his nomadic lifestyle as tools for building up the myth, but he also resorted to writing. Throughout his extensive literary output, the spotlight is unequivocally on the strained relationship between the artist and bourgeois society. The artist appears as a "traveller on earth", the "wandering Jew", the "clay bird", the pierrot, or the sculptor son of "Senyor Esteve"; he is the advocate of poetry in a modern world dominated by prose; he is the leading figure in programmatic works such as *L'alegria que passa* and *Cigales i formigues*, and in others, such as *El mistic* and *La mare*, which aim to stir up reaction; he is the narrative voice in *Anant pel m n*, *Fulls de la vida*, *El poble gris* and *L'illa de la calma*, the voice



Flowers. The Little Girl with Carnations (Sitges, 1893, Cau Ferrat)

that prays in *Oracions a la natura*; he is the painter in *Jardins d'Espanya* and the poet in *El jard  abandonat*. This last work marked the turning point between the two major phases in the life and works of Santiago Rusiñol: in the first phase he embarked upon a voyage with no return, with art as its destination, and finished up a sick man, addicted to morphine; in the second phase, after tottering on the brink of disaster, he returned to life, but abandoned art as a process of constant exploration and research. Even so his image endured with the same almost self-perpetuating force as the literary personage he created: Senyor Esteve, the hero of the novel *L'auca del senyor Esteve*, which recounts the building of modern Barcelona by the bourgeoisie. Senyor Esteve is the prototype of the small businessman of Barcelona, or any Catalan town, whittled down and slightly distorted, as though in a fairground hall of mirrors.

The discourse about Art for Art's Sake which the public image of the leader of the Modernist movement exemplifies is inseparable from another discourse, about Total Art, which Santiago Rusiñol also put into practice in a variety of ways, first and foremost by being himself an all-round artist. Rusiñol was an exponent of several artistic idioms – painter, cartoonist, graphic designer, playwright, poet, prose writer, novelist, journalist, translator and collector –, a practice he justified in theoretical terms by invoking an overall conception of the artistic act which eliminated the boundaries between the different arts and genres. It was Rusiñol who introduced the prose poem to Catalonia, and he was actively involved in undertakings such as Adri  Gual's Teatre Intim, the project for the creation of a Teatre Liric Catal  – with Ignasi Igl sies and Enric Morera –, and the recovery of Catalan popular and traditional songs for choral singing.

Rusiñol also viewed books as artistic objects. As a result, his own works – notably the early ones, published at the printing shop of *L'Aven *, the workshops of *La Vanguardia*, or at Casa Thom s – became veritable collector's editions: *Desde El Molino* (with illustrations by Ramon Casas), *Anant pel m n* (narrative, obituaries and monologues), *Oracions* (prose poems with illustrations by Miquel Utrillo and musical illustrations by Enric Morera), *Impresiones de arte* (newspaper articles with illustrations by Ignacio Zuloaga, Pablo Uranga and Rusiñol himself), *Fulls de la vida* (narrative and poetic prose with illustrations by Ramon Pichot), *El jard  abandonat* (a poem for the stage with musical illustrations by Joan Gay), *Jardins d'Espanya* (his own etchings of gardens; 1903 Catalan edition with texts by Joan Alcover, Joan Maragall, Miquel dels Sants Oliver, Gabriel Alomar, Emili Guanyavents, Apel·les Mestres and Francesc Matheu; 1914 Spanish edition with texts by G. Mart nez Sierra, E. Marquina, Azor n, Diez Canedo, Manuel Machado, P rez Ayala and Juan Ram n Jim nez), *L'auca del senyor Esteve* (a novel with vignettes by Ramon Casas and rhyming captions by Gabriel Alomar), and many more besides.

### An artist who interpreted the turn-of-the-century scene

The total artist observes the surrounding reality in a special way, from the shadows, at ground level. His gaze is lyrical and critical at one and the same time and produces, from the very start, a salutary aesthetic and cultural impact which is part and parcel of the Modernist movement. In 1888, at the outset of his career, prior to his departure for Paris, Rusiñol went to Olot to paint and forged links with the Olot School of landscape art. This option was in line with the project ( of which the critic Raimon Casellas was the theoretician ( for fostering the native Catalan tradition of pictorial art in opposition to its academicist, officialistic Spanish counterpart. However, the cosmic harmony of the Olot School was alien to Rusiñol, whose works include dark patches evoking the restlessness of modern man and the bleak, harsh lives led by the impoverished inhabitants of the artists' idealized countryside.



Morphine (Paris, 1894, Cau Ferrat)



Pirate Garden, I (Majorca, 1902, private collection)



The Blue Patio, Sitges (1891, Museu de Montserrat)



Blue Patio with Irises, Sitges (1891-1892, private collection)

After settling in Paris, Rusiñol expressed in his paintings the emotional shock an artist feels when confronted with a modern metropolis with its slums and its human debris. His Montmartre is that of the Moulin de la Galette, of the murky Bohemian lifestyle of the would-be artists who flocked to the city of light from all corners of the earth, expecting to carry all before them and to exercise the priesthood of art, and often finished up as human wrecks beneath the sails of the symbolic windmill. The dull, grey tones of Parisian painting, the fragments of reality singled out by a gaze that peers out from the gloomy side of human existence – Rusiñol transposed all this to Catalonia and Majorca in the early 1890s: natural and artificial landscapes, interiors and exteriors, from the blue and white patios of Sitges to the ruins and cemeteries of Tarragona, from the slums of Barcelona to the abandoned gardens of Majorca.

Then came his discovery of El Greco, his trip to Madrid and Andalusia, the revelation of the ultimate garden – that of the Alhambra and the Generalife in Granada –, and the construction of what was to become the symbolic space *par excellence* of his own paintings: the abandoned garden. This vision has a twofold dimension, for while the abandoned garden is decadent – representing the artist's inner self and the exploration of his ego in the face of destruction and death –, it is also regenerationist – mirroring the backward, decadent society of an epoch which neglected its cultural heritage. The result is "Espana negra", the dark Spain of Dar o de Regoyos and  mile Verhaeren, which was painted by Zuloaga and described by Azor n, Machado, Unamuno, Baroja and Valle Incl n. Rusiñol's obsession with painting abandoned gardens climaxed during the years from 1897 to 1899 when he was ill and addicted to morphine. It was at this same period, under the influence of El Greco's "paradoxical realism", that he painted the monks of Montserrat.

After drug withdrawal treatment and an operation which left him with a single kidney, Rusiñol embarked on a new phase which was fertile in terms of the quality and, above all, public recognition. The unquestionable high point was reached in 1900 when his collection *Jardins d'Espanne* was shown at Siegfried Bing's Art Nouveau gallery in Paris. During this time he spent long periods in Majorca with Joaquim Mir and the Belgian Degouve de Nunques, searching for more abandoned gardens to paint. He also began to make yearly trips, visiting Aranjuez, Valencia, X tiva, Cuenca, S ller, Pollen a, Valldemossa, Girona and many other places in Catalonia and Spain. Later he went to Italy to paint, staying near Rome. Rusiñol worked till the day of his death in Aranjuez on 13 June 1931. The current catalogue of his paintings comprises 695 oils.

### The popular creator of Senyor Esteve

For a long time, Santiago Rusiñol was known and remembered for his image – boosted by 19th century *costumisme*, the fascination with local manners and customs, primarily, in his case, those of Barcelona – rather than for his artistic output. This advocacy of Art for Art's Sake was also famous for his journey across Catalonia in a cart with Ramon Casas, which he related in reports to *La Vanguardia*. The expedition gave rise to numerous anecdotes, many of them apocryphal, which reinforced his legend. His cycle trip from Vic to Barcelona also drew attention, as did his journey to Majorca with Raimon Casellas in 1893, and his tour of Andalusia, of which he gave an account at the Ateneu Barcelon s ("Andalusia as seen by a Catalan"). The official openings of his exhibitions at the Sala Par s were widely discussed because of the boldness of the paintings and the fashion of Parisian-style *vernissages* which Rusiñol introduced to Barcelona. The Modernist festivals in Sitges, too, featured manifestations of Rusiñol's rough-hewn humour, as well as avant-garde art, and this humour also characterized the distinct form of Bohemian life that revolved around Pere Romeu's caf , Els Quatre Gats. A young man named Picasso ended up in this same milieu on his arrival in Barcelona, attracted precisely by the ferment of Modernism.