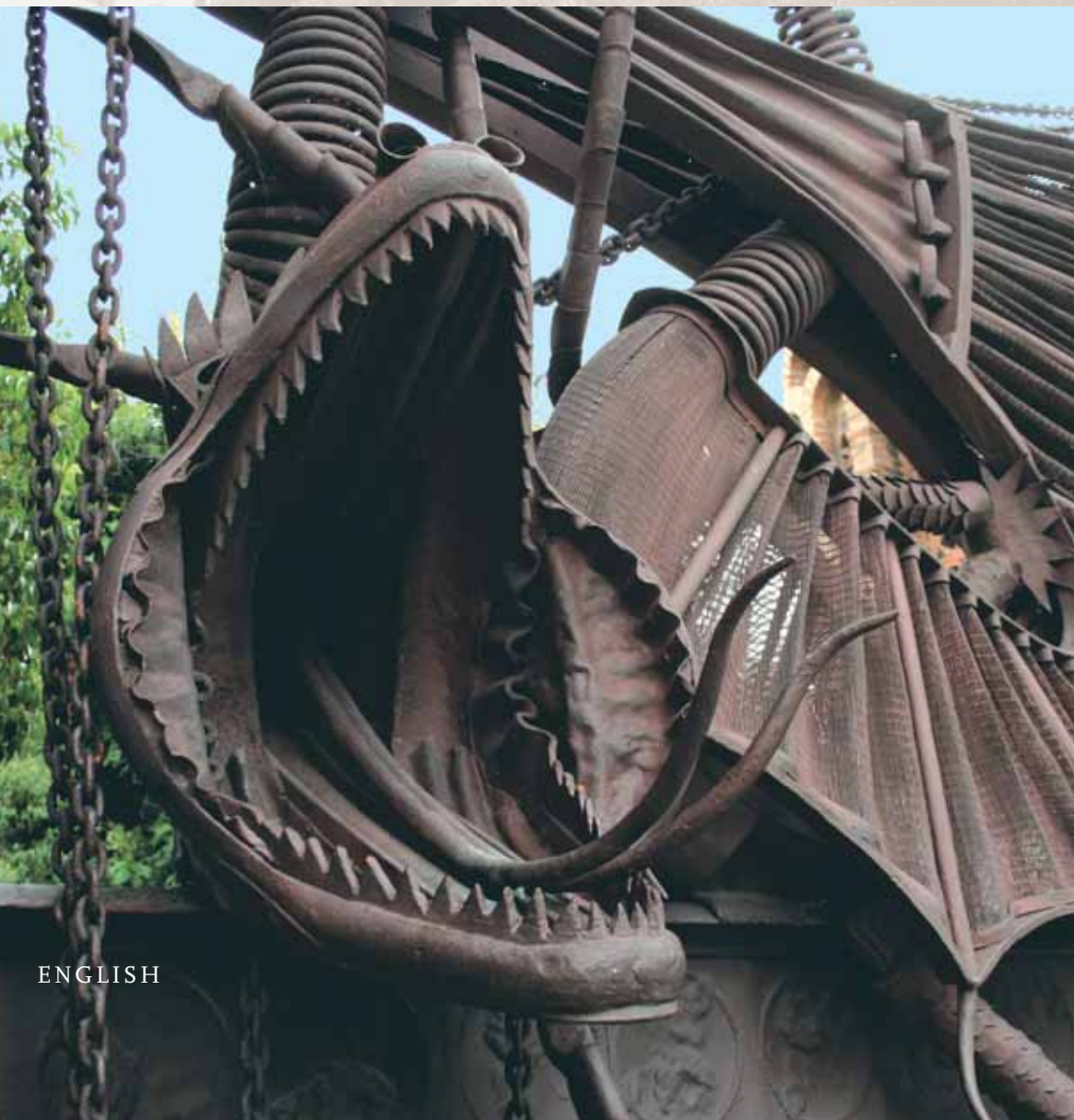


Gaudí Spaces at the University of Barcelona



UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA



ENGLISH



Gaudí on the Diagonal Campus

The University of Barcelona is home to an important set of works by the architect Antoni Gaudí, including the entrance pavilions of the former Güell Estate, found in Avinguda Pedralbes directly behind the grounds of the Faculty of Law, and two of the estate's former gateways, one of which is located in Avinguda Joan XXIII near the entrance to the Faculty of Pharmacy, and the other which stands behind the Faculty of Biology. Any tour of Gaudí structures in the area must also take in Pedralbes Park where you can find the Fountain

of Hercules and a shade house built of iron and spanned by parabolic arches.

These Gaudí structures became part of the University of Barcelona's architectural heritage when the new Diagonal campus was founded and, since 1969, they have been recognised as national monuments of historical and artistic interest. The rest of the property, which includes the former summer residence of Eusebi Güell as well as nearby gardens and orchards, was given by Güell's heirs in 1919 to make way for the construction of the Royal Palace of Pedralbes.



Arches and lantern seen from the roof of the stables

Carried out between 1883 and 1887, Gaudí's interventions on the Güell Estate are examples of the architect's earliest reworking of historical styles –in this case, neo-Mudejar and other, more exotic models– and they display great compositional freedom. From a construction standpoint, Gaudí makes masterful use of a traditional Catalan building technique, the brick vault, to trace daring parabolic and hyperbolic arches, which project from walls made of alternating earthen and brick layers and also feature stucco covering. The decorative elements interplay with the building materials and, for the first time, Gaudí makes use of ceramics and broken tile known as *trencadís* in the covering of the cupolas.

Layout of the Güell Estate after enlargements made by Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi, based on a reconstruction by the Historical Municipal Archives of Les Corts
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The Güell Estate: From the Ancient Hamlet of Les Corts to the Diagonal Campus

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the hamlet of Les Corts was a large, independent municipality that was still rural in character and home to extensive agricultural operations. As a result, a large number of centres devoted to public healthcare sprang up and the well-to-do of Barcelona sought out large summer residences in the area. While they continued to cultivate their lands, local landowners restored and adapted their centuries-old rural manors to the new demands. The most representative of these properties were the Torre Melina, which has sadly been lost, and the Torre Güell, which underwent large-scale transformation when it became the Royal Palace in Pedralbes.

Joan Güell i Ferrer, the father of Gaudí's principal patron Eusebi Güell, purchased Can Custó, his first property in the Les Corts, in 1859 and subsequently renovated it. The property had previously belonged to the Sarrià family, a branch of the Custó family, who had been Barcelona apothecaries since 1643. Eusebi, on the death of his father, went about gradually expanding

the estate through the purchases of Can Feliu, Can Baldiró and Can Berra. His first acquisition, Can Feliu, stood opposite the present-day Faculty of Biology; Can Baldiró was located on the site of the front lawns of the Faculty of Law; and Can Berra was slightly farther north, hidden by a line of pine trees that still stand behind the Faculty of Law.



Eusebi Güell's building works included a project to put in a new access road to the estate that would be quicker than the old route through Les Corts. The projected drive, running towards the

new Sarrià road, was dubbed "Senyor Güell's private road", and is now traced by the present-day street of Manuel Girona. Güell gave Gaudí the commission to build the new gate and entrance pavilions. Access was to be gained through a private entrance opening onto the drive, and the tree-lined drive cut through a series of private properties until finally arriving at the Dragon Gate. In other words, reaching the estate was a rather private affair, out of sight of the hustle and bustle of the street, and that might well explain its unusual appearance.

Garden entrance and replica of the Casa Vicens fountain lost in 1953.



View of garden path with the replica fountain in the distance.



The Garden of the Hesperides

Stretching from what is now Pedralbes Park, where the Fountain of Hercules is found, to the Dragon Gate and its immediate surroundings, the gardens of the Güell Estate should, according to Joan Bassegoda Nonell and subsequent experts, be seen as a physical expression of Jacint Verdaguer's great epic poem *L'Atlàntida*. A friend of Joan Güell, Verdaguer finished the epic on the estate and dedicated it to his patron Antonio López, the Marquis of Comillas, whose daughter married Güell's son. The first edition of *L'Atlàntida* came out in 1878, only five years before Gaudí started work on the estate. The poem narrates the dream of a young Christopher Columbus, who is listening to a hermit recount how the mythical continent of Atlantis met its end. In the second canto, Hercules risks his life going to the island to steal the golden oranges tended by the nymphs called the Hesperides. With the stolen fruit, Hercules would then be able to take the hand of Queen Hesperia in marriage. Enraged by the theft, however, the queen's children, the Atlantians, cause the island to plunge into the sea. Columbus, overcome by the tale, is impressed by the need to bring Christianity to the peoples beyond the ocean.

The dragon Ladon, described by Hesiod, and the three Hesperides together stand watch over the garden where the fruit tree and its

golden fruit are hidden, but Hercules kills the dragon when he makes off with the fruit. The dragon, now dead, is raised among the stars as the constellation Draco and, in April, its alignment echoes the disposition of the dragon on the gate. The mythical fruit tree is reproduced atop the pillar supporting the gate and the hero Hercules is recalled by the fountain named after him, found within the garden itself. The Hesperides, for their part, were nymphs of the earth and the twilight. Aegle, Erythea and Hespera were their names and they too were punished for their carelessness, turned into trees planted on the grounds: the willow, the poplar and the elm, respectively. A lovely tale, the details lend symbolic meaning to the grounds and to the Torre Güell, dubbed the Torre Satalia by Verdaguer, after a kind of wild rose called *satalia*, which is widely depicted in the Güell pavilions.



Pillar supporting the Dragon Gate and its G for Güell

Lantern atop the vaulting of the coach house



Interior view of stables arches



The Coach House and Stables

The Dragon Gate is flanked on either side by two buildings known together as the “Gaudí spaces”. They include the old stable block—including coach house and stables—and the gatekeeper’s lodge. Though modest in size, both are highly complex in technique and composition. Their exterior facades feature brick coursing and earthen masonry, and there are a large number of cement panels with semi-circular decorations in ochre tones. All the openings are parabola-shaped and framed in brick. Brick also appears in the gauged brickwork of the balustrade, but this time small pieces of ceramic tile appear as well. The large overhead lantern of the coach house is covered in *trencadís*, or broken tile.

The enormous pillar holding the main gate in place is also made of brick on a stone foundation, and its central stone medallion displays the initial G for the Güell family, encircled with the *satalia* roses of the poet Verdaguer’s work. At the top, the mythical fruit tree of the Hesperides stands. While the lower portion is carved in stone, the tree is crowned with a striking, stylised sculpture made of antimony.

Accessible through a small entryway, the stables are formed by a series of parabolic arches supporting perpendicular vaults that pierce



Interior of coach house looking toward the entryway

the roof in parabolic shapes and let in overhead light. By contrast, the coach house has a square floorplan with a barrel vault and a lantern to let light enter. In two of its corners, the coach house has unusual flights of triangular steps directly inspired by the French architect and theorist Viollet-le-Duc. Currently, the room houses a collection of great historical value, featuring tools used by the builder Josep Bayó i Font in the construction of La Pedrera, and later given to the Royal Gaudí Chair of the School of Architecture of Barcelona.

Outside, at the far end of the coach house is the drinking trough for horses. It is made of courses of brick, which run horizontally below and vertically above, with a smooth, rounded lip.

Antoni Gaudí Royal Chair

Until 2007, the Gaudí Pavilions housed the headquarters of the Antoni Gaudí Royal Chair, which is attached to the School of Architecture of Barcelona at the Technical University of Catalonia. The new headquarters are at the nearby Barcelona Science Park, in its Antoni Gaudí Documentacion Centre [gaudi@pcb.ub.cat].



Sculpture atop the pillar supporting the Dragon Gate

The Gatekeeper's Lodge



The gatekeeper's lodge has a central octagonal space that serves as a kitchen and dining room. Crowning the space is a dome-shaped cupola and vented lantern, which rise above flat-brick vaulting. The two legs of the L-shaped floor-plan face the main gate

and the small entrance courtyard, creating two pairs of square rooms on the upper and lower floors. The upper-floor rooms feature cupolas and turrets. The door to the lodge is located on the building's north face, and a small stairway leads up to a corridor opening onto the upper-floor rooms. The treatment of the facade is similar to the stables, with a stone socle, brick courses and cement panels. The windows have wooden blinds, and the roofs dominating the building are, like the coach house, covered in *trencadis*, or broken ceramic tile.



Gatekeeper's lodge doorway

Dragon Gate ►

The Dragon Gate

Forged of wrought iron, the imposing Dragon Gate offers visitors their first sight of the estate. Built as a carriage entrance, it is five metres wide and supported by a single pillar, built of red brick. Midway up, the pillar has a stone plaque sporting the initial G for Güell, and it is crowned by an orange tree made of antimony in reference to the mythical tree of Hercules. The upper half of the gate itself features the dragon Ladon standing watch over the Garden of the Hesperides. The dragon's body is slender, with bat's wings and a small but fierce head, and its gaping mouth reveals a menacing forked tongue. Crowned like a haughty king, the dragon's head swings outwards because it never sleeps as guard over the mythical fruit. To the right, a smaller pedestrian entrance depicts a lyre overhead, in memory of the poetic inspiration of Jacint Verdaguer. All the ironwork was carried out by the Barcelona workshops of Vallet i Piquer in 1885.



South gate opening onto the rear facade of the Faculty of Biology

Elevated drawings of the east gate of the Güell Estate



The Grounds

Beyond the Dragon Gate lie the grounds of the former estate, including ornamental gardens and agricultural lands, which are now green spaces of the Faculty of Law. A path leads from the entrance to a small clearing with a fountain, which is a modern replica of the fountain lost from Casa Vicens in 1953. The circular basin is covered in white and green tiles that feature small decorative flowers. Two paths fork off from the fountain, one leading to the transverse axis of the estate and the other running directly to the Torre Güell. The lawns to the east are bounded by a row of pine trees originally marking the border of the ancient estates of Can Custó and Can Berra. Along the paths, terracotta pots stand atop a handful of marble columns that have been brought here from a work by the architect August Font. A ceramic tile fireplace from the old Torre Güell stands against the rear wall past the coach house, and in the middle of the lawns rises the crane used by the builder Josep Bayó i Font in the construction of La Pedrera. In 1982, the enclosing wall was rebuilt, and a wrought-iron gate made in 1901 was added, with an overhead sign reading “Hortus Hesperidum”.

Reconstruction of the east gate between the Faculty of Pharmacy and the halls of residence ►

Secondary Entrances

The estate's secondary gates are still visible on the other side of the Diagonal. A perfect reconstruction of one of the gates, which originally stood deeper inside the grounds, now rises near the Faculty of Pharmacy. A single low archway resting on two pillars crowned with small pinnacles, the gate is built of red brick and covered with small ceramic tiles in red-and-white chequered patterns. Farther to the south, the other secondary entrance also makes use of contrasting tiles. In this case, the small tiles form chequered patterns of green and white. The second gateway, opening onto the rear of the Faculty of Biology, is larger than the first and it formerly provided the estate's exit through the hamlet of Les Corts. Topped by an array of pinnacles of varying heights, the gateway's two sidewalls once supported a metal grillwork gate that does not survive.

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Modernisme Route

Since 2004, the Gaudí Pavilions have been a part of the Modernisme Route jointly sponsored by the Institute of Urban Landscape and the Barcelona city government.

Open to the public: Fridays to Mondays, 10 am to 2 pm; tel. 933 177 652

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