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The nineteenth century saw the consolidation of the Romantic vision of the private as the realm of individual expression, the creative locus of the unique, distinctive personality. At the same time, it was also the height of the national movements, generating a reworked understanding of the political underpinnings of the idea of community, its relation to the nation, and to the state. Nineteenth century nationalisms posited the existence of an *authentic* collective personality in the same way that Romanticism exalted an *authentic* individual one. The overlapping of the approaches, which are still at the heart of our understanding of 'imagined communities' and the private self, reinforces the perception of public space as a reflection of collective character.¹ It facilitates the permeability between the realms of the private and the public, and encourages the transference of ideas of taste, style or comfort into the built environment and back into the expression of individual practices. Moreover, it has also been noted by urban anthropologists how the aesthetic experience, far from being an exclusively individual feeling, is often expressed as a collective experience, in particular when it relates to the banal, everyday appreciation of the built environment and urban space, and to the civic relationship to cherished monuments.²

The transformation of the city underpinned the impact of the changing retail practices discussed in the previous chapter, which were expanding the access to design-led goods and the shared definitions of design. Throughout the 1980s, public space became a primary site for the collective consumption of design, an essential link in the chain of design provision. Through the production of new public spaces and the process of urban regeneration, design production and design consumption entered the public sphere, supported by the agency of the City Council and the institutional enthusiasm generated by the approaching Olympic Games. The following two chapters (5. *Barcelona, Object of Design* and 6. *The Culture of Regeneration*) look at the transformation of Barcelona during the 1980s and early 1990s, its effect on the everyday experience of the city and on its inhabitants' relationship with architecture and design.

The transition to a democratic government in Spain was paralleled in Barcelona by the physical alteration of the built environment, thus merging both old and new aspects of urban sociability and civic life with the material reconfiguration of the city. To the traditional experience of street life characteristic of many southern European cities –however dulled in Spain by the context of dictatorship— was added in the eighties a vibrant new landscape of bars, shops and restaurants that became an often extravagant showcase of local design and catered for a new generation of style-conscious, upwardly-mobile youth. Beyond that, the material detailing of the street itself

¹ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1991.

² Signorelli, Amalia. *Antropología urbana*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1999.

was affected by the Council's efforts to regenerate the city through architectural projects. With them came new fountains and bollards, street lamps and benches, leaving their mark on the texture of Barcelona's urban fabric with as much insistence as Art Nouveau had done almost a century earlier.

Behind these changes lay a fascination with modernity, a national feeling of historical opportunity and of a need to 'catch up' that the City Council successfully tapped into, and which informed its approach to urban regeneration, finding formal expression through architecture and design. Thus the eighties saw the configuration of a narrative of the city reborn that sought to leave behind the memory of its fascist heritage, offering its citizens a purified urban experience and international capital an attractively packaged tourist product.

Living in the New City

Anyone who has not lived through a period that presages the fall of Fascism, who has not breathed in the bittersweet atmosphere of a dictatorship in decay, will never really know the true meaning of democracy.

Manuel Vázquez-Montalbán, *Barcelonas*.

It is hard now to imagine Barcelona as it was in the mid-1970s, a dense, dirty industrial city trapped between the mountain and the sea. In the 1850s, the city had burst from its confinement within the mediaeval walls, with the *Eixample* expanding North towards the *Tibidabo* mountain. Although Cerdà's 1859 visionary, almost utopian project of a garden city quickly fell victim to land speculation, it nevertheless generated an environment attuned to the human scale, an urban landscape that encouraged strolling and browsing along tree-lined streets.³ By the 1910s, Barcelona had two of the world's most beautiful promenades: the stately *Passeig de Gràcia*, studded with *Modernista* architecture and design, and the *Rambles*, popular and vibrant. In the following decades, both the Catalanist civic spirit of *Noucentisme* and the Modernist energy of *Racionalisme* would leave their imprint on the architectural landscape. The effects of civil war, autarky and chronic underdevelopment would also leave their mark on the city, as well as the successive waves of immigration in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, which generated shanty towns and more crucially unbridled housing speculation.⁴

The seventies in Spain was a decade of turmoil, and marked the beginning of a fundamental transformation in the nature of public urban space. The material comforts brought by the consumer revolution of the sixties had not been matched by greater political and social freedom and the regime found it increasingly difficult to suppress a rising wave of opposition.⁵

The agitation was particularly intense in the Basque Country and Catalonia, where it was infused with strong nationalist feelings. Francoist rule became especially repressive, as a

³ See Bohigas, Oriol. *Barcelona entre el Pla Centà i el franquisme*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1963; Mackay, David. *Modern Architecture in Barcelona 1854-1939*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

⁴ Officially totalling some 500,000 immigrants between 1955 and 1970. Barcelona's population in 1955 was 1.4 million. *Anuari Estadístic de Barcelona. Demografia i població*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1990.

⁵ Richards, Mike. 'Terror and Progress: Industrialization, Modernity, and the Making of Francoism' In *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, edited by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; Carr, Raymond, and Juan Pablo Fusi. *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1981.

fragmenting and increasingly fragile government tried to counter the escalating terrorist attacks, labour strikes and student revolts with an obsession for 'public order'. The death in December 1973 of the Prime Minister Admiral Carrero Blanco victim of an ETA bomb, often put forward as the actual beginning of the period of transition, sparked a brutal reaction from the government. Blas Piñar, one of Franco's closest advisors, said in 1974: 'Gentlemen, ...the [Civil] War is not over yet'.⁶ In the Basque Country the number of deaths from terrorism increased from 6 in 1973, the year of Carrero Blanco's assassination, to a maximum of 91 in 1980, the year of the first democratic elections to the new Basque Parliament.⁷ Social unrest peaked nationally in 1979, with just under six million workers on strike that year.⁸ Problems concentrated around urban centres with a considerable student population and large factories; years after the General's death in November 1975, the city was still experienced as a stage for conflict, where everyday life hovered carefully on the surface of violent political confrontation. Decades of neglect and municipal corruption had turned Barcelona into a sooty and battered post-industrial capital; the soiled and deteriorating urban fabric was but a constant reminder of better times. In a hushed, defeated if still defiant city, 'street life' was confined to the colourful but seedy neighbourhoods of the *Barrio Chino* and other areas around the *Rambles*.⁹

A Space of Freedom

By late 1981, however, the country's main democratic institutions were in place. The first general elections in four decades had taken place in 1977, a constitution was passed in 1978, municipal elections were held a year later, regional elections in 1980. The suppression of a military coup in February 1981 ultimately reinforced the stability of the new political framework, and through the 1980s Spain relaxed into a second level of transition. The Catalan Socialist Party had won the 1979 elections to the City Council; it inherited an institution in debt and a city in crisis. The historical centre was derelict and congested, neighbourhood associations across the city were up in arms trying to stop urban speculation, and unemployment was increasing dramatically, reaching 20% in 1985.¹⁰ There was much to be done, and Barcelona's 1984 bid to host the 1992 Olympics only reinforced the drive and the necessary consensus – amongst the population, with the central government and with private investors—that backed a decade of frenzied public works. The reconstruction and 'normalization' of civic life became the cultural and political focus, and the street, or more specifically its increasing collective

⁶ Quoted in J.L. Cebrían, 'La agonía del franquismo' in S. Julià, J. Pradera and J. Prieto (eds) *Memoria de la Transición*, Taurus, 1996.

⁷ Antonio Elorza 'La metamorfosis de la violencia' in S. Julià, J. Pradera and J. Prieto (eds) *Memoria de la Transición*, Taurus, 1996 p.290. The year 1999 has been the only one since 1976 with no mortal victims of ETA terrorism.

⁸ Mestre i Campi, Jesús. *Atles de la transició*. Barcelona: Edicions62, 1997, p.24.

⁹ See Vilarós, Teresa. *El mono del desencanto*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1998; McDonogh, Gary. Bars, Gender and Virtue: Myth and Practice in Barcelona's Barrio Chino. *Anthropological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (1992): 19-34.

¹⁰ J. Borch and E. Puig 'La evolución económica de Barcelona 1979-1994' in J. Borja (Ed) *Barcelona. Un modelo de transformación urbana*, Programa de Gestión Urbana, Serie Gestión Urbana Vol.4, 1995; X. Casas 'Introducción' in *Barcelona 1979/2004. Del desarrollo a la ciudad de calidad*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999.

reappropriation as '*espacio de libertad*', a 'space of freedom', was possibly one of the most vivid markers of that process.

Thus it was a high priority for the new democratic Establishment of the 1980s to recover 'the street as promenade'.¹¹ By the end of the decade, the Art Nouveau buildings clad in multicoloured pieces of *trencadís* tilework glittered under the sun, once again a study in outspoken bourgeois self-confidence. Soft pastel yellow and green façades enhanced the ornamental sgraffito that livened up most of the *Eixample*, balconies were full of flowers and the ancient stones of the massive mediaeval palaces in the old city had lost their oppressive coating of grime. Countless small *plazas* had been rebuilt, opening up breathing spaces throughout the labyrinth of gothic streets on either side of the *Rambles*. Larger parks punctuated the periphery of the city, and together with the new seaside promenades, pedestrian avenues, clean beaches, and the public paths laid out across the Collserola hills, they had led Barcelona's citizens to the year-long enjoyment of their public spaces.

Outdoors life is at the very core of the everyday experience of a Mediterranean city, and in barely a decade the quality of that experience changed in Barcelona to an unprecedented degree. It has been said that 'the very speed of change in Spain provide[d] the rest of Europe with a kind of technicolour close-up of a world-wide cultural and economic process'.¹² There is no doubt that the overwhelming intensity of change at all levels in Spanish life –social, political, economic and cultural— coloured the experience of the city and affected in equal measure not just what was being seen, but those who were seeing it: new citizens in a new metropolis. The transformation of the city continued apace, but its first impulse was as shocking as it was intense. The built environment, in its progressive transformation, pulled along with it the people who lived there: 'The modernization of the city at once inspire[d] and enforce[d] the modernization of its citizens' souls.'¹³

This process of *fer ciutat*, or city-making, initiated by the first elected Socialist Mayor Narcís Serra (1979-1982), engaged with Pasqual Maragall's perception of Barcelona as what lies at the heart of being Catalan, and without which Catalonia would just not be.¹⁴ Maragall, who succeeded Serra in December 1982, was the grandchild of one of Catalonia's most celebrated intellectuals and poets, Joan Maragall, and the son of Senator Jordi Maragall.¹⁵ He was the

¹¹ Hughes, Robert. *Barcelona*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993, p43.

¹² Graham, Helen, and Antonio Sánchez. 'The Politics of 1992'. In *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction. The Struggle for Modernity*, edited by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

¹³ Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982].

¹⁴ McNeill, Donald. *Urban Change and the European Left. Tales from the New Barcelona*. London: Routledge, 1999 p.70

¹⁵ Born in Barcelona on January 13, 1941, Pasqual Maragall became Mayor on December 2, 1982. He was later confirmed in the municipal elections of 1983, and re-elected successively on June 10, 1987; May 26, 1991; and May 28, 1995. He stepped down from office in October of 1997. Maragall earned a degree in both law and economics from the University of Barcelona (1965) and a Master's degree from the New School for Social Research in New York City (1971-73). He was awarded a Doctorate in Economics at the University of Barcelona in 1978. He lectured in Urban and International Economics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona until 1979, when he was named Deputy Mayor under Narcís Serra.

inheritor of a long family tradition of progressive Catalanism, and his understanding of Catalan identity was informed by a vision dear to the nationalist left since the nineteenth century, the notion of *la Catalunya-ciutat*, a cosmopolitan identity open to outside influence that merged the city and the nation in one, reaching out to the universal through the local.¹⁶ This approach seemed particularly suited to the context of the European Union, which could offer the perfect framework for a federalist network of city-states as units of political governance. Moreover, the celebration of urban vitality is one of the oldest recurring themes in modern culture, the experience of the street and its inexhaustible richness part of the urban romance of modernity.¹⁷ Through the celebration of urban life and urban renewal, Maragall was offering a vision of modernity that many Barcelonese had been longing to experience. At the same time, he was making a highly political statement; the progressive Catalanist project of a city-state, *la Catalunya-ciutat*, offered an alternative to the *Generalitat's* more conservative vision of an identity rooted in the regions, folk traditions, and the land.

Soon street life took on a new meaning. Once mostly restricted either to risky demonstrations of political contestation or to the individual use of the myriad cafés and bars that laced the urban network, it turned into an institutionally backed exercise in collective citizenship. In the early days of the transition, the celebration of the *verbenes*, traditionally held in early summer on the festivities of *Sant Joan* (St John) and *Sant Pere* (St Peter) with much dancing, drinking and fireworks, were cunningly used by the numerous neighbourhood associations to highlight the success of their demands or to draw attention to ongoing problematics. The role of urban social movements in the production of space in Barcelona will be addressed below, but it is worth noting here how those celebrations were very closely related to the evolution of the experience of the city, as well as often inseparable from a feeling of active ownership of the changing urban space. Already in 1974 the journalist Rafael Pradas, closely involved with the work of the neighbourhood associations, noted how

‘...the *verbenas* are more than just *verbenas*. They are about the recovery of the street as a framework of conviviality and relationships, as well as the affirmation of the political work that the neighbourhood associations—and the neighbours themselves, without whom there would be no associations—are doing in favour of public spaces, public services and a more human and democratic understanding of the city.’¹⁸

During the following years, there was no escaping the direct relationship between popular *festes*, urban life and democracy. From June to late September, the streets became the backdrop to an endless succession of festivities. Starting in June with the *verbenes*, they continued with each neighbourhood's *festa major*, until Barcelona's own patron saint *La Mercè*

¹⁶ Colomer, Josep Maria. ‘La “Catalunya Ciutat”’. *L’Avenç*, May 1984; Lorés, Jaume. *La transició a Catalunya (1977-1984). El pujolisme i els altres*. Barcelona: Empúries, 1985.

¹⁷ Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982], p316.

¹⁸ Pradas, Rafael. ‘Verbenas que son algo más’. *El Correo Catalán*, 22 June 1974.

was celebrated in late September in a week-long ecstasy of fireworks, parades, games, carnivals, free concerts and open-air theatre. These celebrations have in many cases, thanks to considerable institutional expense, achieved truly grandiose proportions.¹⁹ Rescued by the neighbours —with the support of the democratic institutions— from the deadening officialdom of Francoism, *festes majors* (corresponding to the patron saint of the various boroughs) and *verbenes*, cultural and recreational activities multiplied spectacularly across the city, a celebration of civic pride and urban identity.²⁰

Indeed, urban spectacle can be one of the most efficient ways to promote identity and counteract civic unrest, both by diverting and diffusing interest about other aspects of the *polis*, and by generating a greater degree of emotional attachment to the city.²¹ Crucially, during the eighties, it was architecture itself that became Barcelona's main urban spectacle, generating a degree of public interest that peaked just before the Olympic Games. On the first week-end during which the redevelopment of the Olympic Village was open to the public in April of 1992, it was visited by 700.000 people.²² In a city of some 1.7 million people (3.5 million if one counts the whole metropolitan area) that figure reveals a truly amazing degree of interest in the process of urban regeneration. Architecture was 'enlarging the meaning of "the public"',²³ providing both symbolic and material proof of an enhanced quality of life. [Fig. 1]

Moreover, as architect Richard Rogers has suggested, '[s]afe and inclusive public space, in all its forms from grand to intimate, is critical for social integration and cohesion. Democracy finds its physical expression in the open-minded spaces of the public realm, in the quality of its street life.'²⁴ And whereas the quality of the street life and open spaces might be subject to debate, the quantity of such spaces is in itself an indication not only of the physical availability of places where pleasurable —or not— citizenship can be enacted, but also of the attitude of governing institutions with respect to civic participation and ideas of metropolitan life. In just a decade, between 1982 and 1992, two hundred hectares of parks were added to the city of Barcelona, one hundred and ten being urbanized as part of the Olympic project. By comparison, during the preceding thirty-seven years of Francoism only seventy hectares of parks had been developed.²⁵

¹⁹ The City of Barcelona and corporate sponsorship are the two primary sources of funding for the Festes de La Mercè. In 1991 approximately 41% of its festival budget came directly from the city. See Schuster, J. Mark. 'Two urban festivals: La Merce and First Night.' *Planning Practice & Research* 10, no.2 (1995): 173-188.

²⁰ Prieto, Carles. 'Les festes populars a la ciutat.' *La Hoja del Lunes*, 21 May 1979; Espinàs i Xivillé, Josep. 'Les festes majors i la voluntat de ser.' *Diari de Barcelona*, 22 August 1991.

²¹ Harvey, David. *The condition of postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990.

²² Moix, Llàtzer. *La ciudad de los arquitectos*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994, p.223.

²³ Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982], p.299.

²⁴ Rogers, Richard. *Cities For A Small Planet*. London: Faber & Faber, 1997, p.152.

²⁵ de Cáceres, Rafael. 'Estratègia de la intervenció als espais públics a la ciutat de Barcelona.' In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993.

Articulating the City

While urban life was being organized in time around a sequence of participatory public celebrations, Barcelona was also simultaneously proposed as a place to wander through, a network of streets and avenues, punctuated by parks, *plazas* or monuments, a space that 'invites one to stroll'.²⁶ The density of the city, stacked between the geographical boundaries of the Tibidabo mountain, the sea, and the rivers Besós and Llobregat (roughly to its North, South, East and West) has always constrained its growth. The space available for development was physically limited, the number of park hectares finite. To address that problem the successive teams in charge of urban planning at the City Council approached their task from a strategy of 'connections, *paseos* and urban itineraries [...] looking for spaces that could articulate a city with a permanent deficit of parks'.²⁷ These urban itineraries also sought to give a logic to the city, to supersede the fragmentation and alienation imposed by previous bouts of unplanned development. It was thus the actual fabric of the city itself that was subject to intervention, and as a result the transformation affected not just spaces such as parks, that people might go to for a week-end stroll, but the very streets they walked in daily and where they lived. Commenting on the approach to London as he entered the city from Heathrow, Maragall once noted: 'Look at all this. I am unable to understand what is going on about me. For a citizen of a city, that is the most damaging of sensations. Being lost in a landscape you cannot understand.'²⁸ The fundamental aim was therefore to recover a sense of place, structuring interventions around one of the main elements of successful urban planning, a psychological grasp of the city. This was bound up in the notion of what Kevin Lynch has called 'mental maps', as the underlying support of a cultural, social and psychological dimension leading to a feeling of ownership of urban space.²⁹

The General Metropolitan Plan of 1976, which is still in effect today, was the framework for all urban interventions throughout the transition. It had been developed in a climate of political uncertainty by transitional City Council planning teams, neighbourhood associations and professional pressure groups.³⁰ It was criticized at first both by neighbourhood associations and professionals for its destructive approach to the urban structure, prioritizing traffic flows and promoting a 'megalomaniac' vision of planned urban growth.³¹ However, the many agents involved in the development of the 1976 GMP ensured an outcome that has ultimately served

²⁶ Maragall, Pasqual. Quoted in McNeill, Donald. *Urban Change and the European Left: Tales from the New Barcelona*. London: Routledge, 1999, p156.

²⁷ de Cáceres, Rafael. Quoted in Moix, I. Lätzer. *La ciudad de los arquitectos*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994, p158. See also de Cáceres, Rafael. *L'estratègia de la intervenció als espais públics a la ciutat de Barcelona*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993.

²⁸ Maragall, Pasqual. Quoted in McNeill, Donald. *Urban Change and the European Left: Tales from the New Barcelona*. London: Routledge, 1999, p141.

²⁹ Lynch, Kevin. *The image of the city*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press under the auspices of the Joint Center for Urban Studies, 1960.

³⁰ See Domingo, Miquel, and Maria Rosa Bonet. *Barcelona i els moviments socials urbans*. Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrània, Fundació Jaume Bofill, 1998.

³¹ See de Solà-Morales, Ignasi. Barcelona: construir sobre lo ya construido. *Revista de Occidente*, no. 97 (1989): 24-43. Also the monograph *La lucha de los barrios Barcelona 1969-1975*. CAU, November-December 1975.

the city well. It was also seen as an essentially positive plan, establishing a sorely needed degree of detailed control on the development of the city and enabling the implementation of an architectural understanding of concrete, project-led urban design interventions.³² It moved away from zoning and the separation of land use which was then still the prevailing urban development strategy, allowing for a more mixed-use approach to urban growth and avoiding suburbanization.³³ This supported the priority of architecture and design as modes of imagining and developing the city, resulting in the rapid entry of design into the public sphere and its enduring role as the formal expression of Barcelona's identity.

From the beginning of the eighties the regeneration of Barcelona and the renewal of its public environment were driven by architecture and design as both conceptual and practical tools of urban transformation. Public space in Barcelona was produced on the basis of three main elements: the street, the *plaza* and the park, the keystones of the initial micro-interventions led by Oriol Bohigas (1980-1984) and later by Josep A. Acebillo (1984-1988) at the head of municipal planning. Above all public space was consistently proposed as the backdrop for non-commodified practices. Open to all, freely accessible, 'the street, the *plaza* and the park [were] understood as a place to be in, a space for the citizens' urban leisure, in contact with vegetation and play areas, without the presence of places of consumption'.³⁴ This is doubtless one of the crucial elements that underpinned the success of the Barcelona model of urban regeneration, in contrast with other such processes of which there are many examples in Britain.³⁵ The renovation of many Northern industrial towns in the 1980s and especially the 1990s, relied heavily on converting old industrial architecture into shopping malls and pedestrianising city centres that have been turned into a succession of shop fronts.³⁶ Obviously, the problem with such an approach is that it is hard to maintain those areas as active ones once the shops are closed, precisely because the existence of the spaces themselves and of the itineraries they suggest have been articulated around consumption. In other words, this is consumption as a way of imagining metropolitan life. Conversely, Barcelona seemed to propose architecture as a mode of imagining metropolitan life, if only because it engaged with a use of outdoor public space that is often removed from the practice of commodity consumption. No doubt backed by the weather, and possibly by the absence of a protestant work ethic, Southern European public life often seems to lack a sense of purpose. The Spanish word *paseo* or the Italian

³² See Bohigas, Oriol. *Per una altra urbanitat! In Plans i Projectes per a Barcelona, 1981-1982*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, Àrea d'Urbanisme, 1983; de Solà-Morales, Ignasi. 'Barcelona: construir sobre lo ya construido.' *Revista de Occidente*, no. 97 (1989): 24-43; Hecce, Manuel. 'Una década de renovación urbana.' In *Barcelona. Un modelo de transformación urbana*, edited by Jordi Borja. Barcelona: Programa de Gestión Urbana -PGU, 1995.

³³ In 1990 the European Commission Green Paper on the Urban Environment established a new landmark in urban planning strategies, moving away from zoning and stressing the importance of building a sense of place and the need for a multi-functional city. See Montgomery, John. 'Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design.' *Journal of Urban Design* 3, no. 1 (1998): 93-117.

³⁴ Montaner, Josep Maria. 'Parques metropolitanos.' *El País*, 24 July 2000.

³⁵ Marshall, Tim. 'Urban Planning and Governance: Is there a Barcelona Model?' *International Planning Studies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 299-320; Montgomery, John. 'Cities and the Art of Cultural Planning.' *Planning Practice & Research* 5, no. 3 (1990): 17-26; Montgomery, John. 'Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design.' *Journal of Urban Design* 3, no. 1 (1998): 93-117.

³⁶ See Montgomery, John. 'Cities and the Art of Cultural Planning.' *Planning Practice & Research* 5, no. 3 (1990): 17-26.

passeggiata have no direct equivalent in English; the concept of 'going for a stroll' fails to encompass their highly aimless and socialised connotations. Richard Rogers has described it as feeling part of the community of the city: 'The Italians even have a word which describes the way men, women and children interact with the public space of their city as they stroll on their streets and squares in the evening: they call it *la passeggiata*.³⁷ In Barcelona one finds the greatest number of people in the streets on Sundays, when most of the shops are closed. The direct experience of the city is therefore less commodified, in that it can be used with a variety of objectives which are removed from commodity consumption – maybe just sanctioned at the end of the walk by drinking a coffee at a sidewalk café. It is also more strictly public, in that most of it does not take place in privately owned shopping or leisure centres. When the use of public space does involve commodity consumption and shopping, moreover, it takes place in the same spaces that house work and home. These are dense, hybrid spaces of urban life, the paradigmatic 'mixed use' spaces that do not physically compartmentalize work, shopping, leisure and habitat.³⁸ When a process of urban renewal such as the one that Barcelona underwent in the 1980s engages with such spaces, it touches all aspects of daily life.

In the decade that followed the first democratic municipal elections, the urban experience was transformed by the shared use of new public spaces and the recovery of the street as the stage of active citizenship proposed as a pleasurable, democratic undertaking. Through the recovery of traditional public festivals and the invention of new ones, the public realm was enriched with popular celebrations that promoted a feeling of community and emotional engagement with the city. The intense citizen participation in the renewed activities and spaces of urban life engaged with the deeply architectural outlook of the regeneration process. Architecture and urban design, used by the city council as the essential tools of urban transformation and showcased in spectacular landmarks such as Norman Foster's Telecommunications Tower or Richard Meier's Museum of Contemporary Art, interfaced with daily life and became the principal modes of imagining the rebirth of the city and its vibrant new identity.

³⁷ Rogers, Richard. *Cities For A Small Planet*. London: Faber & Faber, 1997, p15.

³⁸ See Jacobs, Jane. *The death and life of great American cities*. London: Pimlico, 2000 [1961], Ch 8. Jacobs' anti-zoning vision was taken up by urban planners from the 1980s, who saw mixed-use and high-density as positive characteristics. See for instance Jacobs, Allan, and Donald Appleyard. 'Toward an Urban Design Manifesto.' In *The City Reader*, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout. New York: Routledge, 1996 [1987].

Urban Furnishings

The physical transformation of the city has been the most visible and internationally acclaimed of the various processes that turned design into an everyday presence. While the private consumption of design-led goods in the early eighties was still mostly restricted to the upper-middle classes, the public consumption of design by the Barcelona City Council, and by the Barcelonese through the collective use of the new public spaces it provided, brought the wider population into everyday contact with contemporary design. The team in charge of urban planning, led by Oriol Bohigas, the patriarch of Barcelona's architectural family and a leading light of the *Gauche Divine*, was committed to a policy that would address specific problems and improve the quality of life in each neighbourhood. [Fig. 2] Structured around a postmodern understanding of 'the city as a compendium of realities, a juxtaposition of pieces with a degree of autonomy, and not as a global system rationalized *a priori*, aseptically coherent and incontrovertible', the City Council's project for urban regeneration implemented a set of priorities that paid particular attention to immediate needs and short-term impact.³⁹ Between 1980 and 1986, the city was transformed through numerous local interventions, as well as through the recovery for civic use of elements of architectural and industrial heritage or the monumentalization of the urban periphery. Problematic peripheral areas like *Carmel*, *Zona Franca* and *Torre Baró*, and central districts of the inner city such as *Ciutat Vella* (the Old City) with Barcelona's highest population density and infant mortality rate, or *Gràcia*, a traditional neighbourhood of artisans and shopkeepers, were the first to benefit from a programme that sought 'to project, once more –and to realize—squares, streets, walks, parks, *rambles*, intersections, pedestrian crossings, urban furnishings, signals, monuments.'⁴⁰ A second phase, from around 1986 to 1992, would provide global infrastructures and the facilities needed for the celebration of the Olympic Games, while creating *àrees de nova centralitat* (areas of new centrality) to balance the pull of the historical core. But for the Barcelonese going about their daily activities within the *barrio* (the neighbourhood), the most noticeable change was not on the large scale of planning, or even in the 'conversion projects, but in the texture and detail of the streetscape'.⁴¹ Dotted around the city a new generation of street benches, lamps, fountains,

³⁹ Oriol Bohigas 'Per una altra urbanitat' in *Plans i projectes per a Barcelona, 1981-1982*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, Àrea d'Urbanisme, 1983, p18.

⁴⁰ Oriol Bohigas 'Per una altra urbanitat' in *Plans i projectes per a Barcelona, 1981-1982*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, Àrea d'Urbanisme, 1983, p16.

⁴¹ Hughes, Robert. *Barcelona*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993, p43.

ponds, information points, bus stops, bollards, bins and kiosks welcomed people who got out there to walk, work, sit, drink or talk.

The consumption discussion to date within the history of design has focused mainly on the private domain of individual acquisition, often without either considering or linking it to the public sphere, other than in terms of shared social meaning. However, 'The individual acquisition of goods [...] is also about the articulation of an identity that is intimately bound up in conceptions of place or, in any case, self-knowledge in terms of a public habitus'.⁴² This is often defined through the consumption or use of non-commodified collective goods, groups of objects that have been, in Igor Kopytoff's words, culturally 'singularized' and placed beyond the sphere of exchange by

'... "public institutions of singularization": [...] historical commissions, panels deciding on public monuments, neighbourhood associations concerned with "beautification", and so on; who controls them and how says much about who controls the society's presentation of itself to itself'⁴³

The use of these singularized goods takes place outside the boundaries of individual choice or commodity acquisition, as with public monuments, or urban spaces and furnishings. They all put into question the idea of consumption as a highly significant act of individual expression, for they offer no choice and demand the passive acceptance by the user of the symbolic content of the built environment.

During those first few years in the early 1980s, a new generation of objects and environments started redefining the material fabric of the city, as dozens of public spaces were created or refurbished.⁴⁴ The agents behind this intense process of singularization still operated within the framework of high-culture and bourgeois taste that had configured the design of objects for the modern domestic interior, but the network of design provision established in previous decades was expanded to incorporate the public sphere.

Architecture and Tears

In 1975 the members of Studio Per had teamed up with the architect Xavier Sust and the advertiser, designer and filmmaker Leopoldo Pomés to present an exhibition at the Sala Vinçon called *Arquitectura y Lágrimas* (Architecture and Tears), subtitled 'Documents of Popular Catalan Architecture 1975, for a Museum of City History'. [Fig.3] The show included photographs of everyday street objects and furnishings, as well as a series of what was

⁴²Julier, Guy and Viviana Narotzky. *The Redundancy of Design History*. Wolverhampton 1999. Unpublished paper.

⁴³Kopytoff, Igor. 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process.' In *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

⁴⁴Between 1981 and 1983, 55 new plazas and public gardens were built in Barcelona. For a detailed list see 'Las polémicas nuevas plazas de Barcelona' *La Vanguardia*, 25 September 1983. The City Council has many publications on the new public spaces, especially interesting are *Barcelona, Espai Públic*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993, and *Barcelona 1979/2004. Del desenvolupament a la ciutat de qualitat*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999

described as 'Architectural Accessories'. These were elements, pictured in actual use, that could be found in four of the main shops that sold furniture, household goods and hardware in Barcelona: things such as mailboxes, adhesive letters for ad hoc signage, kitchen chairs and door chimes.⁴⁵ The exhibition was a compendium of an urban and domestic environment that made its curators recoil in horror, a hellish vision of the material culture that surrounded them presented as if it were a catalogue of a sad past:

'Oscar [Tusquets]: The idea for the exhibition is to induce seeing daily things as if they were already historic. That is to say, that the observers look at today's objects as if they were in another age.

Lluís [Clotet]: We have tried to suggest to people to isolate these daily objects of today in order to see them with a certain perspective'.⁴⁶

Their own perspective, that which informed their choice and made them cry at the sight of this unhappy state of things, was that of the architect:

'Oscar: They are architects' tears, above all. We cry because old buildings are torn down and we cry because any new building makes us tremble. We cry because architecture is now in a defensive phase...'⁴⁷

Pomés, Sust and the members of Studio Per were conscious that their selection showed much that was genuinely appreciated by a vast majority of their fellow citizens. The exhibition included a performance during which these young radical chic aesthetes sat around a table, drank whiskey and 'cried', discussing their feeling of alienation from the late Francoist built environment, their 'sorrow, [...] anger, [...] impotence, [...] bitterness [and] perplexity' about what had 'become the popular taste'.⁴⁸ Luckily the event ended on a more uplifting note as, being by then considerably drunk, they decided that since they could not, as Nietzsche supposedly had, go off to live in Italy because 'he spent too much energy trying to isolate himself from an environment that horrified him', and since 'they don't invite us to Princeton', they would 'take off the suffering glasses and put on the learning glasses', and stay.⁴⁹

The municipal interventions of the sixties and seventies in Barcelona have been described by the design historian and art critic Alexandre Cirici as a 'modern kitsch', combining a repressed academicism with the tame pseudo-cubistic decorativism that covered the entrance to Metro stations and underground parkings, some of which had pride of place in *Arquitectura y lágrimas*.⁵⁰ This was the 'Porcioles style', after the mayor who ruled unchecked over the city between 1957 and 1973, a period of unregulated growth and municipal corruption which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapters.⁵¹

⁴⁵ The shops listed were Bazar Perpiñà, Muebles Tarragona, Servicio Estación and Vda. De J. Alsina. See Pomés, Leopoldo, Xavier Sust, Pep Bonet, Cristian Cirici, Lluís Clotet, and Oscar Tusquets. *Arquitectura y lágrimas*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975.

⁴⁶ Pomés, Leopoldo, Xavier Sust, Pep Bonet, Cristian Cirici, Lluís Clotet, and Oscar Tusquets. *Arquitectura y lágrimas*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975, p108.

⁴⁷ Pomés, Leopoldo, Xavier Sust, Pep Bonet, Cristian Cirici, Lluís Clotet, and Oscar Tusquets. *Arquitectura y lágrimas*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975, p108.

⁴⁸ Pomés, Leopoldo, Xavier Sust, Pep Bonet, Cristian Cirici, Lluís Clotet, and Oscar Tusquets. *Arquitectura y lágrimas*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975, p107, 111.

⁴⁹ Pomés, Leopoldo, Xavier Sust, Pep Bonet, Cristian Cirici, Lluís Clotet, and Oscar Tusquets. *Arquitectura y lágrimas*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975, p116-7.

⁵⁰ Cirici, Alexandre. *La estética del franquismo*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1977, p183. The entrance to Barcelona's underground parkings seemed to be, for the city's architectural élites, a particularly hated example of urban design. As well as by Cirici and Studio Per, it had also been criticised by Bohigas. See Bohigas, Oriol. 'Actualitats i revisions'. *Serra d'Or*, no. 100, January 1968.

⁵¹ See 'La Barcelona de Porcioles'. *CAU*, no. 21 (1973).

If the aspects of the city that had been actively 'designed' were causing designers and architects such unhappiness, so did those those that had not been subject to any kind of self-conscious aesthetic input. The nineteenth century tradition of urban furnishings had been long lost, so that from the end of the Civil War most of the new elements that were incorporated to the streets of Barcelona were cheaply manufactured out of bent iron tube and metal sheet. It would take a new team of municipal architects from 1980 to research and repair the old moulds from which many of the city's historical elements had been cast, and reintroduce objects that were part of Barcelona's material memory.⁵² The lack of municipal regulations normalizing interventions on the built environment, or the failure to enforce those that existed, had resulted by the late seventies in a fragmented, crowded and visually confusing streetscape.⁵³ Analytical studies of urban furnishings tend to propose the street as a semiotic space where a variety of signs, both denotative and connotative, compete for attention.⁵⁴ This competition takes place at various levels, not just in the sense of their signifying content, but in terms of physical space and historical layering. In Barcelona, to the absence of any coherent form of enforced normative were added various factors that contributed to the degradation of this semiotic space. On the one hand, the rapid demographic growth of the 1960s and the intense urban speculation of the period generated large sections of new urbanisation, both in central city areas and in the periphery. These areas often lacked the most basic equipment and servicing (and therefore elements such as bus stops, lighting, benches or bins) or were fitted with objects that were installed with no consideration towards already existing elements of street furniture, pedestrian circulation needs or immediate architectural context.

What furnishings existed were also often subjected to what Florence Pizzorni has called 'wild writing' (*écriture 'sauvage'*), where individuals, professional groups and commercial interests expressed their identities or needs in direct dialogue with the users of the public space.⁵⁵ Pizzorni used the term originally to describe urban practices that existed prior to any normalization and were therefore freely applied to a completely unregulated space, such as was the case in sixteenth century Paris. She called 'resistant wild writing' that which subverted or transgressed an existing code of acceptable practice. 1970s Barcelona can be said to have incorporated to an excessive degree both types of intervention: transgressive and unregulated. Moreover, until the end of the decade there was no institutional framework that could channel the expression of political and civic concerns, which had no option but to use unregulated supports to express their often politically transgressive messages. The first appearance in the

⁵² de Lecea, Ignasi. 'El mobiliario urbano.' In *Barcelona 1979-2004. Del desarrollo a la ciudad de calidad*, edited by Josep Maria Montaner. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999, 270.

⁵³ Chaves, Norberto, and Oriol Pibernat. 'Imatge i comunicació urbana.' *Temes de Disseny* 1, no. 1 (1986): 23-30.

⁵⁴ See Chaves, Norberto, and Oriol Pibernat. 'Imatge i comunicació urbana.' *Temes de Disseny* 1, no. 1 (1986): 23-30; Pizzorni, Florence. 'Les objets de la rue ont-ils un sens? Une écriture du collectif.' *Espaces et Sociétés. Les langages de la rue*, no. 90-91 (1997): 213-227.

⁵⁵ Pizzorni, Florence. 'Les objets de la rue ont-ils un sens? Une écriture du collectif.' *Espaces et Sociétés. Les langages de la rue*, no. 90-91 (1997): 213-227, p219.

early eighties of what the Council defined as 'pillars for free expression' (*columnas de expresión libre*) that were made available to freely affix posters of any type, represented the materialization of democratic enfranchisement.

Furthermore, and particularly in the city centre, the growth in the number of commercial premises and office space generated an increase of private signage that used any support available, from lamp-posts to first floor balconies.⁵⁶ Going beyond the usual dynamics of the pavement, where the energy of commercial life was forever challenging the efforts of architects and planners to regulate the visual logic of the street, this practice became so extended that whole levels of buildings disappeared behind a barrage of commercial signs. It was one of the first aspects of the streetscape to be strictly controlled by the Council from the early eighties, as part of the *Barcelona posa't guapa* campaign (Barcelona, make yourself beautiful).⁵⁷ [Fig. 4]

Urban Gestures

Other than the recovery of many of the old nineteenth century moulds, the first generation of objects that entered the public space in Barcelona was linked to individual architectural projects. Consequently, those elements were designed by architects in response to the needs of each intervention, and were in many cases one-offs and considerably site-specific. The great number of so-called micro-interventions that took place between 1980 and 1986 left the city with a catalogue of furnishings that were hard to adapt to sites other than the original ones.⁵⁸

The main reason that drove the architects involved to design their own pieces was the absence of an existing pool they could draw on to furnish their projects. But this only helped to reinforce one of the characteristics of local architectural practice during those years, what architect and historian Ignasi de Solà-Morales has called its 'decorativistic' tendencies: an obsession for detail, finishings, 'the design of minor elements and small gestures that are proof of its completeness, the careful detailing of interiors and furniture'.⁵⁹ Barcelona's public spaces were soon full of many such small gestures, not only fountains, benches and railings, but also less striking elements like paving and borders. There was a profusion of finishes, materials and typologies, not to speak of highly personal architectural styles. [Figs. 5 to 10] The eclectic influence of postmodern architecture and design merged with the local practitioners' general tendency towards more restrained modernist solutions. Many projects strived to be conceptually self-contained, treating public space as if it were a building, where everything had been thought through and no further intervention was possible. A development such as the

⁵⁶ Chaves, Norberto, and Oriol Pibernat. *Imatge i comunicació urbana. Temes de Disseny* 1, no. 1 (1986): 23-30, p27.

⁵⁷ *Barcelona, posa't guapa. Diez años de campaña*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1996.

⁵⁸ Quintana, Mánus, and Montserrat Periel. Barcelona. El mobiliario urbano a debate! In *L'espai urbà. Criteris de disseny*, edited by Aquil·les González Raventós. Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1993.

⁵⁹ de Solà-Morales, Ignasi. Barcelona: construir sobre lo ya construido! *Revista de Occidente*, no. 97 (1989): 24-43, p41.

1981 *Moll de la Fusta* waterfront by Manuel de Solà-Morales did not leave any scope for subsequent growth, trying from the outset to design into the street all the complexity of the urban environment. This was not just a newly colonized, but a fully domesticated public space, an instance of over-design that left little opportunity for a more organic development of use or public equipment.⁶⁰

By 1988 the situation was getting out of hand. The architect Rafael de Cáceres had just replaced Josep A. Acebillo at the head of municipal planning, Acebillo himself having been put in charge of IMPU, the most powerful structure yet to have been established to oversee the development of the Olympic works.⁶¹ With Acebillo, Bohigas's 'heir', in charge of the larger projects linked to the Games, de Cáceres could concentrate on the city on a smaller scale. From the outset, he sought to standardize street furnishings, by creating the Department of Urban Elements within the council's Area of Projects and Public Works, and later issuing the 1991 Municipal Regulation for the Installation of Urban Elements in Public Spaces. De Cáceres' view was that the common elements were those that gave the city a shared level of urbanity when they were generalized, becoming 'the basic language of interventions and defin[ing] the cultural landscape of public spaces'.⁶² Many of the furnishings designed for specific sites were thought to have proved successful in terms of quality, price, use, adaptability and 'valuable cultural input'.⁶³ Those would be adopted as standards and new designs would be commissioned with the brief to provide maximum capacity for generalization and formal stability. De Cáceres would later explain that 'To seek stability and the safety of generalization gives solidity to the research and implies a certain renunciation of experimental or fashionable attitudes'.⁶⁴ Invoking in one breath Leon Battista Alberti, Le Corbusier, the Parthenon, the VW Beetle and the Mini, de Cáceres issued a call for restraint, for the reinstatement after a decade of postmodern follies of the controlled universalism of modernism, and the beauty of classical harmony. This, he was careful to point out, was not meant as a critique of previous designs, rather it was an admission that, after years of indiscriminate overlaying, the quality of all the individual pieces had not quite achieved a balanced whole.⁶⁵

Thus the beginning of the nineties signalled a new stage in the council's approach to urban furnishings, bringing a restrained maturity that sought to redress the previous excesses of youthful exaltation. De Cáceres also put an end to what had been a long-drawn struggle at the heart of Barcelona's urban planning between architects and engineers. The supremacy of architecture and outside commissions as the defining approach to urban renewal gave way to a

⁶⁰ de Cáceres, Rafael. *El disseny en l'espai públic*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993.

⁶¹ Municipal Institute for Urban Promotion and the Olympic Games, created in December 1987.

⁶² de Cáceres, Rafael. *El disseny en l'espai públic*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993, p.20.

⁶³ de Cáceres, Rafael. *El disseny en l'espai públic*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993, p.20.

⁶⁴ de Cáceres, Rafael. *El disseny en l'espai públic*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993, p.21.

⁶⁵ de Cáceres, Rafael. *El disseny en l'espai públic*. In *Barcelona, Espai Públic*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1993.

more balanced approach, implemented by an internal team of professionals belonging both to Public Works (engineers) and Urban Projects (architects).⁶⁶

Many of the objects that configured a more systematic catalogue of urban furnishings were manufactured by existing companies specialized in that type of product at a national level, as in the case of the ONCE lottery kiosk, discussed below. However in Barcelona the production of these elements was absorbed to a significant degree by existing design editors who coordinated the production, selected and briefed designers, and generally acted as 'design-literate' intermediaries between public institutions and manufacturers, a process exemplified by the case of Santa & Cole. This literal overlapping in the editing of objects and furniture for the home and urban furnishings for public spaces sometimes resorted to shared pools of designers and evidenced the transfer of concepts of taste, beauty and good design from the private to the public sphere. This transfer took place, on the one hand, through the input of the architectural profession. Architects had been much involved, as seen above, in the development of furniture and industrial design at the outset and were now creating objects for public urban spaces. On the other hand, it also involved designers who had previously worked only in the field of domestic or contract furniture but were now designing urban furnishings. Furniture and interior designers such as Jorge Pensi or Leopold Milà, for instance, were being approached by Santa & Cole to design street lights and benches.

In 1988 Santa & Cole took over the production of the *Lamparaalta* street light from an existing editor, Santiago Roqueta's Snark Design.⁶⁷ [Fig. 11] The *Lamparaalta* was a design by the architects Beth Galí (Oriol Bohigas' partner) and Màrius Quintana, who were part of the first team of young architects commandeered by Bohigas at the City Council in the early eighties and had worked together on one of the first projects of the period, the *Escorxador* park. This piece, which had obtained ADI-FAD's Delta prize in 1984, was to be the first in a new collection of urban furnishings called *Serie Urbana*, initially directed by Galí and Quintana. It took Santa & Cole a year to set up the Urban Series and develop the first products; it was launched at the *Construmat* construction fair in Barcelona in April 1989, starting its sales at the beginning of 1990. Its catalogue was small but included pieces that soon became very popular not just in Barcelona but with other city councils as well. The *Nikolson* street light column for instance, by P. Barragán, J.M. Julià and B. de Sola, offered the possibility of combining a simple and economical design with a variety of polyethylene or glass lamps, either existing or specially commissioned.⁶⁸ [Fig. 12] Another early success was the *Macaya* light, by J.M. Julià and M.L. Aguado, a wall-mounted piece in cast aluminium. [Fig. 13]

⁶⁶ Moix, Llàtzer. *La ciudad de los arquitectos*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994, p157.

⁶⁷ Created by Santiago Roqueta to produce designs such as the Zeleste alabaster lamp of 1969. Santa & Cole would absorb all of Snark Design's catalogue in 1989.

⁶⁸ Jorge Pensi, for instance, designed in 1990 a glass top to be fitted to the *Nikolson* column.

The timing for this new venture was excellent, coinciding not only with the pre-Olympic urban renewal process in Barcelona, but also with the public works build-up for Seville's '92 Expo. By 1991 *Serie Urbana* had grown into *División Urbana*, and produced not just lighting and benches but larger pieces such as news and flower kiosks.⁶⁹ [Fig. 14] Santa & Cole's business structure changed considerably during those years to adapt to the extraordinary growth in the volume of urban furnishings sales. At the end of 1992 it had concentrated into two main sections: *División Mayor*, encompassing Santa & Cole's own designs of domestic lighting and furniture, the Design Classics Collection and the exclusive distribution of Thonet, Shaker and Bulthaup products in Spain; and *División Urbana*, producing urban furnishings and equipment. *División Urbana*, under the direction of José Amor, was a steep learning curve for Santa & Cole. It sold not to retailers or even construction equipment wholesalers, but to large electrical and public works contractors, city councils and other public institutions, on a project by project basis. During the messy pre-Olympic construction frenzy and in true Mediterranean fashion, the agreements to supply millions of pounds' worth of equipment were often sealed with a handshake.⁷⁰ But the sales figures were truly spectacular. In 1990, the year the first pieces went on sale, the income from *División Urbana* was 31,96 million pesetas (some £123M at January 2002 exchange rates). Two years later the Division made 227,1 million pesetas (£874M) and generated 54% of Santa & Cole's total income.⁷¹

A New Streetscape

The new objects in the street were not just part of a material syntax of shape, style, size or finish, they were in effect a physical vocabulary that normalised collective behaviour.⁷² Everyday urban practices were taxonomised and formalised through their materialisation in elements of street furniture. Pizzorni has argued that through their choice, regulation and distribution, municipal governments propose –or impose— a code of 'good citizenship', a pre-defined set of practices that are meant to correspond to the correct experience of living in the city.⁷³ Some instances of regulation can transcend the public space: the presence of bottle banks demands that individuals conform to certain sustainable practices within the private sphere. Others inform aspects of public sociability. From the mid 1990s, for instance, the Barcelona Council started installing cast iron and wood chairs in central areas of the city. These were an adaptation of a previous design by Miquel Milà of a bench of similar characteristics, called *Neorromántico*, produced in 1995 by Santa & Cole. It was a restrained piece of soft-edged

⁶⁹ See Amor, José. Micro Arquitecturas. Dossier de elementos urbanos públicos. *Arki*, January - March 1994, 88-103.

⁷⁰ José Amor, in conversation with author, 10 June 1998.

⁷¹ Nieto, Javier. *Editar diseño. La aventura empresarial de Santa & Cole*. MA, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 1996, p119.

⁷² See Pizzorni, Florence. Les objets de la rue ont-ils un sens? Une écriture du collectif. *Espaces et Sociétés. Les langages de la rue*, no.90-91 (1997):213-227.

⁷³ Pizzorni, Florence. Les objets de la rue ont-ils un sens? Une écriture du collectif. *Espaces et Sociétés. Les langages de la rue*, no.90-91 (1997):213-227, p224.

modernism loosely inspired by traditional nineteenth century typologies, which had become by the end of the decade the closest thing to a municipal standard.

On the one hand these were the 'designer' version of the traditional iron tube chairs that had always lined the beginning of the *Rambles*, where people could sit for a modest fee and watch life walk by. As such these objects engaged with established practices, changing only the formal language that supported them. Their positioning, however, was innovative. The individual chairs were distributed across the city in differently arranged groups, some facing each other in open circles or in pairs, seeking to generate a feeling of communal use and to encourage conversation and interaction amongst strangers. Of course these chairs were solidly attached to the ground and the groupings could not be rearranged by users, often creating awkward situations of enforced proximity or unwanted distance. This was the most striking instance yet of aspects of collective practice being regulated through formal language, and of the paradigm of the designer chair entering the street. [Figs. 15 and 16] But as noted by William Whyte, '[f]ixed individual seats deny choice. They may be good to look at, ...they make interesting decorative elements. That is their primary function. For sitting, however, they are inflexible and socially uncomfortable.'⁷⁴

The case of Santa & Cole's Urban Division illustrated the overlapping of design agency –design, selection and production of goods— between Barcelona's private and public spheres. It also suggested the magnitude of the transformation in terms of volume of new pieces in the streets, furnishing the renewed public spaces and providing the material framework for the use of the recovered 'space of freedom'. By the end of the decade in 1998, and to list only some of the standardized pieces that were of new design, there were 1,100 covered bus stops, 600 municipal information panels, 400 general information columns, 767 ONCE kiosks (see below), 1,607 postboxes and 2,816 telephone booths. Also redesigned were most of the benches, rubbish skips, flower containers, tree gratings, bus stop information poles, litter bins, much street lighting, accesses to underground metro stations and parkings, etc.⁷⁵

Given the historical and political context of their insertion into Barcelona's public spaces, one could safely assume that the objects that embodied the transformation of the city would have been felt to express that spirit of renewal under a variety of styles and shapes. It is therefore interesting to note how that spirit was in fact linked to a very distinct formal language, a language of radical modernist descent with a marked feeling for local context, perfected in the fifties and sixties by the young architects of Grup R –including Oriol Bohigas— that gave rise to

⁷⁴ Whyte, William. 'The Design of Spaces.' In *The City Reader*, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout. New York: Routledge, 1996, p15.

⁷⁵ See de Lecea, Ignasi. 'El mobiliario urbano.' In *Barcelona 1979-2004. Del desarrollo a la ciudad de calidad*, edited by Josep Maria Montaner. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999; Carol, Mánus. 'Las olimpiadas que subieron el diseño al podio.' In *100 años de diseño industrial en España*, edited by Juli Capella, Quim Larrea and Daniel Giralt-Miracle. Madrid: Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999.

what was known as the *Escuela de Barcelona*, the Barcelona School.⁷⁶ In the design of urban elements in the eighties this formal heritage was combined with angular contemporary gestures and often some postmodern humour in the detailing. It was a language that interfaced quite seamlessly with the prevailing look of local architectural and design production, even when it occasionally resorted to an updating or recovery of traditional street furniture archetypes, be it nineteenth century street benches or larger structures such as news or flower kiosks.

In his analysis of the comprehensive redesign of London Transport in the 1930s, Adrian Forty critiqued previous design historical accounts for not

‘thinking of design as having any relevance outside purely artistic, or technical, spheres. That it might have affected the entire way in which the population of London regarded London Transport and might have influenced the development of ideas about the size, shape and character of the city does not seem to have occurred to them.’⁷⁷

The physical redesign of everyday objects in Barcelona’s public spaces and the sheer volume of new items, supported the perception of the city as an efficiently managed whole. It also promoted its conceptualization along particular lines, reflecting local design practice’s ideological links with the heritage of modernism and the unshakeable merging of design with ideas of democracy and freedom. It provided the perfect material interface with the prevailing obsession with cultural modernization.

The City Council’s firm support of modern design and architecture as the vehicles of urban transformation was helped by the shared social and cultural background of many of the people involved in the provision of these goods at various levels, from architects to editors to politicians, who belonged to a Catalan élite that shared schooling, family ties, holidays and professional ventures.⁷⁸ Consequently there was in Barcelona a generalised use of modern design as the preferred language of urban change, virtually enforced from within the city council at the expense of any other formal input, and ‘colonizing’ public space through elements that, in other Spanish regions, presented a very different formal solution.

One such case was the new O.N.C.E. lottery kiosk, designed in 1983 to replace the grey extruded aluminium and sheet metal cabins that stood virtually on every street corner in Spanish cities.⁷⁹ The Barcelona council suggested that O.N.C.E. and Primur, the manufacturer, develop a special kiosk for Barcelona with the designer Antoni Rosselló, who had worked on

⁷⁶ See Julier, Guy. ‘Radical Modernism in Contemporary Spanish Design!’ In *Modernism in Design*, edited by Paul Greenhalgh. London: Reaktion Books, 1990; Piñón, Helio, and Francesc Català-Roca. *Arquitectura Moderna en Barcelona (1951-1976)*. Barcelona: Edicions UPC/ETSAB, 1996; Ruiz Cabrero, Gabriel. *The Modern in Spain. Architecture After 1948*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001.

⁷⁷ Forty, Adrian. *Objects of desire. Design and society since 1750*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p224.

⁷⁸ The extremely self-contained social world of the Catalan élite is obvious in politics and business, but no less striking in certain professional circles such as architecture, engineering and the law. See McDonogh, Gary. *Good families of Barcelona: a social history of power in the industrial era*. Princeton, NJ: UMI Books on Demand, 1986; Cullé, Pere, and Andreu Farràs. *Loasi català. Un recorregut per les bones famílies de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2001; Bohigas, Oriol. *Desde los años inciertos*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1991; Jordi, Enric. *1000 Famílies de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Dopesa, 1977

⁷⁹ *Organización Nacional de Ciegos de España*, the Spanish National Organisation for the Blind, a powerful organisation that is part of everyday Spanish life through the sales of its extremely popular lottery tickets. By 1998 in Barcelona there was a proportion of one ONCE kiosk for every two postboxes. See de Lecea, Ignasi. ‘El mobiliario urbano.’ In *Barcelona 1979-2004. Del desarrollo a la ciudad de calidad*, edited by Josep Maria Montaner. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999.

ticket booths for the Barcelona Fair and would go on to design many of the micro-architectures for the Olympic Games, such as information stands and ice-cream trolleys.⁸⁰ [Fig. 17] Rosselló's O.N.C.E. kiosk for Barcelona, which was soon to be used throughout Catalonia, showcased the city's commitment to modernity, post-modern humour and Mediterranean flair. It was in essence a modernist composition of geometrical shapes, squares, circles and arcs, combining the white of local architecture with a deep and visually striking Mediterranean blue. The roof was a tensed polycarbonate sheet reminiscent of the *volta catalana*, the traditional Catalan construction vault, and there was a further reference to the vernacular in the rising shutters, whose distinctive shape could be found in countless food stands on streets and beaches, the popular *chiringuitos*. [Fig. 18] The post-modern touch came in the shape of a clock that crowned the whole structure perched at the end of a pole: the only number on its face was the eleven –*once* in Spanish. O.N.C.E. developed at the same time a set of new booths to be used across Spain, with a vague underlying concept of regional variation expressed principally in the names of the various models: named after cities such as *Bilbao* or *Sevilla*, rivers such as *Tajo* or *Guadalquivir*. Except for the Barcelona kiosk all were either brown or dark green and tried to reproduce as closely as possible traditional park structures and historical typologies. [Figs. 19 and 20]

This highly visible commitment of the Barcelona municipal power to modern design, leading to an often striking difference from what was happening in other cities as the democratic councils engaged with the built environment, was seen as a reflection of deeper cultural and political rift. In the realm of street furnishing as in that of politics Madrid and Barcelona would not see eye to eye. Madrid generally favoured a more conservative typology and exerted less aesthetic control. This resulted in a mix of historicist styles, and in what Barcelonese architects Juli Capella and Quim Larrea, writing in the main Catalan language daily newspaper *Avui*, interpreted as

'a dangerous polarization between the two great capitals of the State: one [Madrid] towards pastiche, old-fashioned and reactionary historicism and above all technical incompetence. The other [Barcelona] a model rooted in the city, courageous, with a will to provide service and an aesthetic ambition, linked to the industrial sector and with professional rigour.'⁸¹

The Barcelona council carried on with the policy of recommending that urban furnishings manufacturers work with local designers to develop the objects that would enter the city's streetscape. In 1995 the French company Decaux, already furnishing other Spanish cities like Madrid, Zaragoza, Oviedo, Gijón or Bilbao, received such a summons from the city council and ended up working with Oscar Tusquets.⁸²

⁸⁰ See Amor, José. Micro Arquitecturas. Dossier de elementos urbanos públicos. *Arxi*, January - March 1994, 88-103.

⁸¹ Capella, Juli, and Quim Larrea. Bancs, "chirimbols" i altres mobles del carrer. *Avui*, 2 June 1995.

⁸² Capella, Juli, and Quim Larrea. Bancs, "chirimbols" i altres mobles del carrer. *Avui*, 2 June 1995.

Through an intensive material input into the public space, as well as through extensive mediation (see below), the concept of design and its attendant modernist aesthetics entered the collective experience exerting an influence on mainstream taste. This barrage of new formal languages did not always elicit a positive reaction, but it was received in an extremely positive historical context and was therefore linked to an exhilarating process of renewal, emerging democracy, aspirations of European belonging and a long delayed access to modernity. This cultural context exerted a firm influence on the perception of what were for most people entirely new visual values and helped generate a degree of social consensus around them that went beyond the mere fact of 'liking' or 'not liking' the formal qualities of specific design outcomes.⁸³ Collective urban identity was given shape and that particular aesthetic soon became a common ground which, as we shall see, was often contested and subject to debate.

⁸³ See Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Design and Order in Everyday Life!* *Design Issues* 8, no. 1 (1991)