

The Legacy of
Antoni Gaudí

Gaudi's Childhood

Antoni Gaudí was born on the 25th of June 1852 in Reus. His birthplace is the question of a small controversy, as precise documentation is nonexistent and sometimes it is claimed that he was born in the neighboring municipality of Riudoms, his paternal family's native village. He came from a family of boilermakers, a fact that allowed the young Gaudí to acquire a special skill for working with space and volume as he helped his father and grandfather in the family workshop. His talent for designing spaces and transforming materials grew and prospered until it eventually metamorphosed into a veritable genius for three-dimensional creation. As a child, Gaudí's health was delicate, which meant that he was obliged to spend long periods of time resting at the summer house in Riudoms. There, he spent many an hour contemplating and storing up in his mind the secrets of nature.

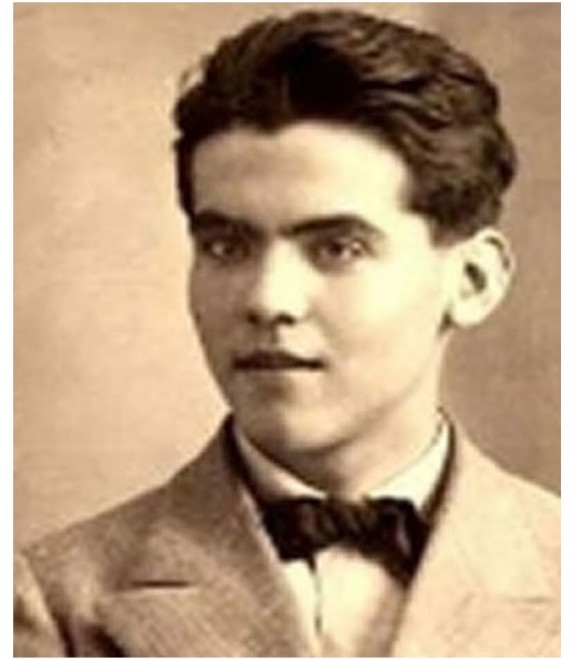


Photo taken by Uknown

Gaudi's Childhood

Antoni Gaudí found the essence and the meaning of architecture by following the very patterns of nature and by always respecting its laws. He did not copy it, but rather traced its course through a process of cooperation, and in that context he created the most beautiful, sustainable and effective work possible through his architecture. From the beginning, Gaudí exhibited a great appreciation for nature and especially the environment of his native region of Catalonia. He eventually became a very enthusiastic outdoorsman, joining the club called the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya in 1879. Gaudí spent most of his time up to the age 16 in Reus, where he attended nursery school with Francesc Berenguer, who would become one of his assistants, and worked in a textile mill. In 1868 he moved to Barcelona to study teaching in a convent, while there he became interested in utopian socialist ideas and together with two of his fellow students he conjured up a plan to transform the Poblet Monastery into a utopian phalanstery, a communal, experimental institution proposed by Charles Fourier and other philosophers of the age. Health problems seem to have been pervasive in Gaudí's family at the time, as in 1876 his mother died, as did his older brother Francesc, who, ironically, had just become a physician. Gaudí completed four years of compulsory military service starting in 1875, but poor health meant that he spent much of his time on sick leave, which enabled him to enroll at first the Llotja School.

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Gaudi's schools

Showing an early interest in architecture, he went in 1869/70 to study in Barcelona, then the political and intellectual centre of Catalonia as well as Spain's most modern city. Gaudí spent most of his time up to the age 16 in Reus, where he attended nursery school with Francesc Berenguer. Gaudí completed four years of compulsory military service starting in 1875, but poor health meant that he spent much of his time on sick leave, which enabled him to enroll at first the Llotja School and then the Barcelona Higher School of Architecture, from which he graduated with a degree in architecture in 1878. Showing an early interest in architecture, Antoni Gaudí went to study in Barcelona in 1869/70 and entered the Provincial School of Architecture in 1874.

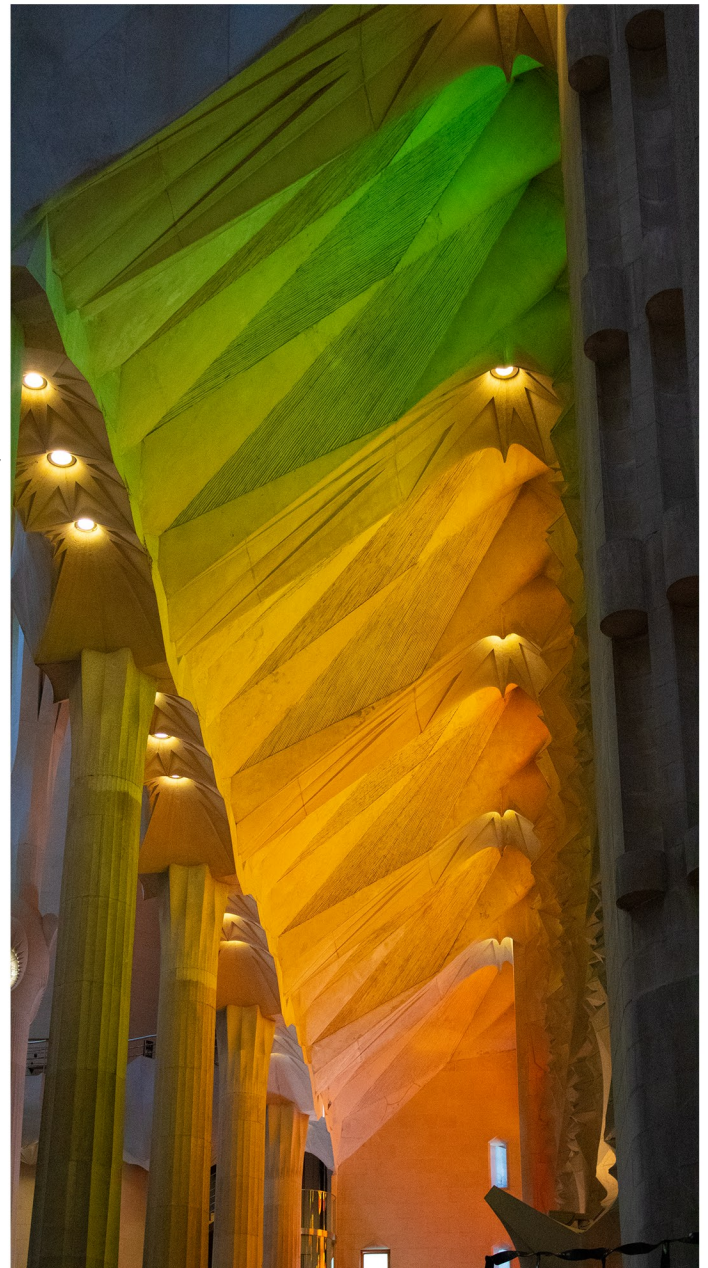


Photo taken by Theo Gsell
July 2019

Gaudi's schools

His studies were interrupted by military service and other intermittent activities, but he graduated in 1878. In 1870 he moved to Barcelona to pursue his academic career in architecture, at the same time working at various jobs to enable him to pay for his



Photo taken by Theo Gsell
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studies. He was an inconsistent student, but he was already showing some evidence of brilliance that opened doors for him, allowing him to collaborate with some of his professors. When he completed his studies at the School of Architecture in 1878 the Director, Elies Rogent, declared: "I do not know if we have awarded this degree to a madman or a genius only time will tell."



Gaudi's Adulthood

During his early period, at the Paris World's Fair of 1878, Gaudí displayed a showcase he had produced, which impressed one patron enough to lead to Gaudí's work on the Güell Estate and Güell Palace, among others. In 1883, Gaudí was charged with the construction of a Barcelona cathedral called *Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família*. The plans had been drawn up earlier and construction had already begun, but Gaudí completely changed the design, stamping it with his own distinctive style.



Photo taken by Theo Gsell
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Gaudí's Adulthood

Gaudí also soon experimented with various permutations of historic styles: the Episcopal Palace (1887–1893) and the Casa de los Botines (1892–1894), both Gothic, and the Casa Calvet (1898–1904), which was done in the Baroque style. After 1902, Gaudí's designs began to defy conventional stylistic classification, and he created a type of structure known as equilibrated — that is, it could stand on its own without internal bracing, external buttressing, etc. The primary functional elements of this system were columns that tilted to employ diagonal thrusts and lightweight tile vaults. Notably, Gaudí used his equilibrated system to construct two Barcelona apartment buildings: the Casa Batlló (1904–1906) and the Casa Milà (1905–1910), whose floors were structured like clusters of tile lily pads. Both projects are considered to be characteristic of Gaudí's style. Increasingly pious, after 1910, Gaudí abandoned nearly all other work to focus on the Sagrada Família, which he had begun in 1883, cloistering himself onsite and living in its workshop. While employing Gaudí's equilibrated methods, the church would borrow from the cathedral-Gothic and Art Nouveau styles but present them in a form beyond recognition. Gaudí died while still working on the Sagrada Família on June 10, 1926, in Barcelona, Spain. He died after getting hit by a trolley car in Barcelona, only a few weeks shy of his 74th birthday. While the structure remained unfinished at his death in 1926, the extraordinary structure has a final completion target date of 2026, to mark the 100th anniversary of his passing.