

Picasso *versus* Rusiñol

The essential asset of the Museu Picasso in Barcelona is its collection, most of which was donated to the people of Barcelona by the artist himself and those closest to him. This is the museum's reason for existing and the legacy that we must promote and make accessible to the public.

The exhibition *Picasso versus Rusiñol* is a further excellent example of the museum's established way of working to reveal new sources and references in Picasso's oeuvre. At the same time, the exhibition offers a special added value in the profound and rigorous research that this project means for the Barcelona collection.

The exhibition sheds a wholly new light on the relationship between Picasso and Rusiñol, through, among other resources, a wealth of small drawings from the museum's collection that provide fundamental insight into the visual and iconographic dialogues between the work of the two artists.

The creation of new perspectives on the collection is one of the keys to sustaining the Museu Picasso in Barcelona as a living institution that continues to arouse the interest of its visitors.

Jordi Hereu

Mayor of Barcelona

The project *Picasso versus Rusiñol* takes a fresh look at the relationship between these two artists. This is the exhibition's principal merit: a new approach, with a broad range of input, to a theme that has been the subject of much study and about which so much has already been written.

Based on rigorous research over a period of more than two years, this exhibition reviews in depth Picasso's relationship — first admiring and later surpassing him — with the leading figure in Barcelona's art scene in the early twentieth century, namely Santiago Rusiñol.

Through an extraordinary series of visual and iconographic dialogues between the work of Picasso and Rusiñol, the curator of the exhibition, Eduard Vallès, has done an outstanding job in tracing Picasso's evolution from admiration for Rusiñol, to appropriation and finally to rejection: a process the Malaga-born artist would repeat with other artists over the course of his career.

Finally, I would like to stress that the exhibition is organised in conjunction with the Museu Cau Ferrat Museum in Sitges, which is currently undergoing refurbishment and so is able to make available for this project an exceptional collection almost in its entirety. Thus, this exhibition is also a unique opportunity to see side-by-side and in relation to each other two public collections which are key to any understanding of early twentieth-century Catalan art.

Jordi Martí i Grau

Cultural Delegate

In June 2008, we presented in conjunction with Cau Ferrat in Sitges the book by Eduard Vallès *Picasso i Rusiñol. La cruïlla de la modernitat* (Picasso and Rusiñol: The Crossroads of Modernity). The book was published as part of the celebration of Rusiñol Year, which took place in Sitges between 2006 and 2007. Upon reading the book, we sensed the potential of its thesis as the basis for an exhibition and, indeed, that same day we drew up the agreement for this exhibition, which we present just two years later, accompanied by a new publishing project.

In our view, this exhibition is exceptional for several reasons. Firstly, because it offers a unique opportunity to see first hand, for the first time, the connections between two of the most important public collections in the country: the Museu Picasso in Barcelona and Cau Ferrat in Sitges. The temporary closure of Cau Ferrat as it undergoes refurbishment enables us to reflect in an exhibition the entire sweep of the thesis and research project that bring to light the close relationship between these two artists in the context of *modernista* Barcelona.

For the Museu Picasso, this exhibition also represents the fulfilment of one of the museum's main endeavours, to exploit its whole collection. The show spotlights and places within a new narrative numerous small-format works by Picasso which play a central role here, to the extent that they evidence the visual dialogues and lines of relations between him and Rusiñol.

For the Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, the exhibition represents a unique opportunity to bring Cau Ferrat to Barcelona, to make it accessible to an extremely broad public and, at once, showcase Santiago Rusiñol as the complete artist; as a high priest of art, as he put it. Meanwhile, this is the first of Cau Ferrat's collaborations with other institutions that, over the coming two years while the museum remains closed for works, will give its collection greater exposure.

In addition, we believe that the show provides a new reading of the figures and work of both Picasso and Rusiñol. 'Picasso versus Rusiñol' reveals and demonstrates the Malaga-born artist's evolution from imitating to surpassing Rusiñol.

We wish to acknowledge our profound gratitude to Eduard Vallès, the exhibition curator, for the magnificent job he has done, the fruit of over two years of intense dedication and rigorous research.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of the numerous institutions and private collectors who have lent us works. To all of them, we would like to express our special thanks for their contributions, which are essential to this project.

We also wish to acknowledge the participation in this catalogue of Margarida Casacuberta, Eliseu Trenc and Vinyet Panyella, authors of the texts herein, along with Eduard Vallès.

Finally, our sincere thanks to the teams from the Museu Picasso and Cau Ferrat for their tireless dedication and involvement in the project.

Antoni Sella i Montserrat

Director

Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges

Pepe Serra

Director

Museu Picasso in Barcelona

The Rusiñol paradigm. From curiosity to homage

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘[Santiago Rusiñol] played a major role in Picasso’s development, as a champion of *Modernisme*.’

Pierre Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*, 1995

‘It is difficult today, now at some distance, to grasp what the presence of that personality once meant in the artistic realm and even in the social realm of Catalonia. In many ways, and in his time, Santiago Rusiñol was the innovator par excellence in the local sphere. For years and years, many young souls saw in him something of a symbol of idealism, at war with the vulgarity of that realm, and in his name of a kind of symbol of freedom and sincerity.’

Eugeni d’Ors, *Cincuenta años de pintura catalana*, 2002

In a period of approximately just four years Pablo Picasso did at least twenty-one portraits of Santiago Rusiñol.¹ Notwithstanding any other conclusions one might draw from this, it reveals an interest beyond the parameters of normality. We could cite other artists that attracted the attention of Picasso in such a small space of time and with a large number of portraits — Apollinaire, for example — but the circumstances were not the same. And above all, we are not talking of the same Picasso, since his interest in Rusiñol coincides with the start of the forging of his own personality, a process which had its point of greatest intensity in Barcelona, not for any reason inherent in the city but due to the time in Picasso’s life at which it occurred. Picasso arrived in Barcelona at the age of thirteen and left when he was twenty-two and a half, a key period in the formation of any person.

The fact that Picasso did so many portraits of Rusiñol cannot be described as extraordinary, however, in Picassian terms; Picasso’s capacity for portraits was enough for this and more. Nonetheless, three readings which rarely occur in other instances make the case of Rusiñol remarkable

in the portrait portfolio of an artist. In the first place, there is the great diversity of readings and situations found in the portraits, not at all common in Picasso given that he had a tendency to construct iconic images that he sometimes reproduced — often in runs — of the people that interested him. In the second place, several of these portraits highlight some of the fields in which Rusiñol stood out or was a leading figure, that is, they incorporate a factor of recognition of Rusiñol’s role in certain areas. And a third reading — perhaps the most novel — we have only been able to see after several years of work, once we had acquired sufficient perspective. This last gaze at the process of portraying Rusiñol has revealed the existence of an unequivocal sequencing of the portraits, which must be read as the plastic correlation of Picasso’s increasing closeness to and gradual distancing from his subject. In short, there is an almost exact chronological parallel between the years of Picasso’s effective introduction into the cultural life of Barcelona (1899-1904) and his portraits of Rusiñol. Individually, these three readings can each be found in Picasso’s series of portraits of other personalities,

but it is difficult to detect all three in any one artist as in the case of Rusiñol. This personal and intimate process focused on Rusiñol becomes the best of metaphors for Picasso's attitude towards the artistic world of Barcelona, to which, as we shall see, he was not at all alien.

An iconological reading of these twenty portraits previously mentioned suggests a process we might easily describe as being made up of three phases and begins with curiosity — portraits done perhaps from a perspective of a lack of familiarity, the artist in his first tentative approach to the personage; it goes on to admiration (more elaborated portraits based on iconic constructions tending towards homage), and it ends with a distancing from the personage (ironic and finally satirical portraits). Having confirmed this interest in portrayal, one must ask oneself what it was about Rusiñol that might have interested Picasso. The answer perhaps lies in what Rusiñol, more than anyone else, represented in turn-of-the-century Barcelona during those years: the figure of the artist par excellence. His complex personality goes beyond being a painter: Rusiñol was also a writer — critic, journalist, poet, storyteller and playwright — collector, traveller, amateur archaeologist and, above all, a cultural activist and indisputable leader of the *modernista* movement. Rusiñol was, in short, what might be called a 'total artist', as he has been defined repeatedly by his scholars.

Rusiñol has been commonly cited as one of those artists with whom Picasso was connected in Barcelona in an endless list which, canonlike, always includes the same names. Rarely has this relationship been singled out for separate examination.² Pierre Daix, in an attempt at doing just this, wrote that Rusiñol 'played a major role in Picasso's development, as a champion of *Modernisme*.'³ Unfortunately Daix did not expand on his point,

but the claim, coming from a Picasso scholar who knew Picasso personally, cannot be ignored; on the contrary. This 'major role', however, requires not only careful analysis — which is one of the aims of this book — but it also needs proper qualification so as not to pervert its meaning. One must be very careful whenever one seeks to establish connections involving Picasso because often, in an attempt to link him to absolutely everything, one oversteps the bounds of good sense. One must also be cautious when considering the figure of Rusiñol since his complexity exceeds that of an artist in the strict sense, hence his real sphere of influence as well. Despite this being a binomial study, we must clarify that Picasso and Rusiñol were artists who were also different in many respects. This circumstance means that a priori it might seem paradoxical that a personage in principle so unlike Picasso should become a starting point for explaining him.

Despite the various pieces of evidence that Picasso was a follower of Rusiñol, which will be discussed later, in my opinion, the 'major role' Rusiñol played in Picasso's life is elliptic insofar as Picasso, after arriving in Barcelona, drew on ideas, themes and discourses of which Rusiñol was one of the leading exponents and — above all — precedents. When Daix says 'as a champion of *Modernisme*' he is alluding to this less direct role which also influenced the young Picasso. When Picasso became obsessed with El Greco or gardens, he did so, without any doubt, as a follower of Rusiñol. On another level, Picasso would discover the world of harlequins and their possible use as a manifestation of otherness, perhaps for the first time, also from the work of Rusiñol. Picasso himself acknowledged this in three portraits directly linked to these themes: in one, Rusiñol appears in one of his classic gardens; in another characterised as El Greco's *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*; and

in a third he portrays Rusiñol surrounded by Pierrots. In addition to these themes directly linked to Rusiñol, there are others where the role he plays is not so explicit. This is the case with the themes of illness and death, subject matter in which Rusiñol was one of the most exemplary artists, and which Picasso took up almost from the outset. Much the same could be said of the creation of atmospheres with lighting effects, such as interiors based on the use of blue.

These portraits suggest an interest in a personage — basically it was the figure of Rusiñol that interested Picasso — but we might ask if he also had some interest in Rusiñol's work. We have no doubt now that Picasso followed Rusiñol's artistic output much more closely than had been believed until very recently. We will demonstrate how he did versions or reinterpretations of some of his works, from both the naturalist and from the Symbolist period, and from his literary works. One of the most lucid writers in the analysis of Picasso's early work, Rafael Benet, alerts us to this side of Picasso: 'Certainly Picasso was a great pirate in the History of Art and his sublime plagiarisms started back around 1897.'⁴ Benet gives the date 1897 but the certainty of this will remain in question until future studies into this capacity of Picasso for absorption. However, Picasso's 'piracy' is rarely cast in a single direction, occurring, rather, in more than one direction at once and almost always avoiding the exact copy, whether we are dealing with versions, recontextualisations — exploiting predetermined landscapes — confusion or other approaches. In my understanding, the process that Picasso carries out with Rusiñol might be the first one of systematic — rather than one-off — absorption undertaken with regard to another artist. The content of the process itself is as important as the choice of subject. Rusiñol was, when Picasso arrived in Barcelona,

the *modernista* artist par excellence and the leader of the movement, possibly the only artist that any explanation of the movement as a whole would be incomplete without. In short, Picasso did not pick just any artist but went to the top; he chose the most representative. This process begun with Rusiñol might be symbolised in a modest piece of paper at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona with a few sketches, among which there are several attempts at Rusiñol's signature, which Picasso tried to imitate with the utmost perfection (p. 22).

The juncture of two leaders

We close this introduction with a reference to the personal relationship between the two artists. It might cause some surprise that mention of this was not made at the outset, as is usual when speaking of the relations between two personalities. But this, for the purposes of this study, is the least important aspect. The basic argument rests on the work and the documentation rather than on the links between them: the bulk of the discourse can be inferred from reading the works and documents, and especially the portraits that Picasso did of Rusiñol. The portraits speak for themselves, as does Picasso's other work from those years, at times quite indebted to Rusiñol. An approach based on biographical confluences would risk making this text never-ending; after all, both subjects lived in the same city, shared acquaintances, and so on. And although they knew each other personally, one cannot speak of friendship in the strict sense. Their relationship was circumscribed and in all probability developed gradually, since Rusiñol and Picasso belonged to different generations and social classes. When Picasso was born in Malaga in 1881 Rusiñol was twenty years old and that same year became a member of the Ateneu Barcelonès. More than a decade later, when Picasso arrived in Barcelona in

1895 — still a student of fine arts — Rusiñol was already a recognised artist. Their travels aside, they shared a city between 1895 and 1904, after which Picasso moved to Paris. Picasso and Rusiñol coincide at key moments in their lives: both were at a personal existential juncture that coincided with a major, symbolic point in time: 1900. When Picasso arrived in Barcelona, Rusiñol was an established artist and Picasso, in contrast, was a young student of fine arts. The former held the role of paradigm and the latter was in search of paradigms. One had a glorious past and the other an uncertain future. At the moment that they crossed paths in the physical sense in turn-of-the-century Barcelona both were in a process of transition: Picasso was on a journey through academic orthodoxy under the eye of his father, while Rusiñol was harvesting the fruit of glory in life. But in no way is this a mere common juncture, neither in terms of the time nor of either man's ability to influence. Rusiñol was one of the prime movers in a modernisation of the Barcelona art scene that would grab the attention of all Spain: the direct links with Paris, the interaction with the most important Europeans and Spaniards from different artistic disciplines and, above all, an attitude of previously unheard-of modernity. This Barcelona which at different levels impacted on Picasso was largely a creation of Rusiñol's. In short, for a few years there would be a crossing of paths between two leaders, a role one was playing at the time and the other was preparing to assume on a global level.

Santiago Rusiñol i Prats was born in Barcelona in 1861, a short distance from the present-day Museu Picasso in Barcelona, and died in Aranjuez (Madrid) in 1931. Although not an artist of international renown, it is fair to say that Rusiñol is probably one of the most complex and exciting European artists of the turn of the twentieth

century. As an artist Rusiñol has been fortunate in that a number of scholars have concerned themselves with his work and, in addition to explaining artist and work, they have often found themselves burdened with another task: to reveal the person obscured by the myth, one nurtured to a certain degree by the artist himself. Rusiñol was for many years of his life a true modern, a modern who, in addition to living *in situ* amidst the modernity of the Paris of the latter third of the nineteenth century, was a rich conduit bringing this modernity to Barcelona. Even reputable Picasso experts have recognised this role in Rusiñol. Pierre Daix states that Rusiñol was the first person to speak to Picasso of Erik Satie, and John Richardson says that Rusiñol sparked Picasso's interest in Puvis de Chavannes. Rusiñol is considered the first modern artist in Catalan art and the most representative artist of *Modernisme* in the period Picasso lived in Barcelona. Rusiñol's contribution to the art world transcended his painting due to his standing as a writer, as a collector and as a cultural activist. The complete figure of the artist impressed Picasso for some time, as revealed in the more than twenty portraits he did of him from 1899 to 1903-1904. Rusiñol became his best work and, moreover, in a quite conscious manner on his part. That Picasso was obsessed with this construct can only be explained by his interest in the figure of the artist, by the status that he sought to arrive at, by all that he aspired to and that Rusiñol stood for more than anyone else in Barcelona.

In this study, the influence of — and/or confluence with — Rusiñol is as important as the paradigm that may be drawn regarding Picasso's processes of absorption: how Picasso chooses a model, analyses it, extracts from it what interests him, and, when he deems this process complete, drops it. However, this process is rarely culminated;

Picasso remained open depending on the theme, person, etc. Thus, in the case of Rusiñol, more than thirty years after his death and nearly sixty years after his real interest as an artist had waned, Picasso discovers him again and does several illustrations based on his most popular literary work, *L'auca del senyor Esteve* (The Epic of Senyor Esteve). At a later point we will break down this process based on several areas narrated from Picasso's viewpoint, in which we will also include an introduction to both artists before reaching the juncture at which they coincided in time. At that point, although several scholars have placed the figure of Picasso above Rusiñol — even to the point of talking of Picasso's influence on Rusiñol — the fact is that Rusiñol was then a major figure, which was not at all true of Picasso. Picasso was just a young artist, undoubtedly very gifted, but with no champions other than the enthusiastic young believers who followed him round, and perhaps the suspicious gaze of someone his senior, and that was about it. It is quite another thing that he gradually garnered recognition, even that of such established figures as Rusiñol himself, who bought six of Picasso's drawings and thus became one of the first collectors of Picasso's work. Rusiñol, however, not only had on his side a good number of the critics, the public and fame, but he was also the closest thing to a leader for the whole pleiad of artists and writers with whom the impetuous Picasso mixed during his years in Barcelona.

1. The existence of twenty portraits was first referred to in Eduard Vallès, *Picasso i Rusiñol. La cruïlla de la modernitat* (Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2008), in which I gave the figure of twenty portraits. Following the publication of the book, the Museu Picasso in Barcelona acquired the drawing *Miquel Utrillo and Santiago Rusiñol Smoking Pipes* (1903) in December 2008.
2. There are few known monographic texts on the relationship between Picasso and Rusiñol. In 1981 Josep Palau i Fabre wrote the article 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso' (*Serra d'Or*, no. 265, October 1981). Ten years earlier, Palau had written the book *Picasso i els seus amics catalans* (Aedos, Barcelona, 1971). In this book he makes a few scattered references to the links between the two artists but he devoted not a single monographic chapter to the figure of Rusiñol, when, on the other hand, he did devote many to other less important figures. As Palau admitted to me, the present article to some extent redresses that error. Although not a monographic work, one of the best sources for clues into the relationship between the artists is the book *Picasso. La seva vida i la seva obra*, by Alexandre Cirici (Caixa d'Estalvis de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1981). In his book, Cirici touches for the first time on Rusiñol's influence on Picasso in certain areas. That same year, Isabel Coll wrote an article on the link between the two artists that was published in a special issue of the journal *L'Avenç*, edited by Josep Palau i Fabre (Isabel Coll, "Santiago Rusiñol", in *Picasso, Barcelona, Catalunya. Quaderns L'Avenç*, Barcelona, 1981). In 1995 Pierre Daix wrote a brief entry on Rusiñol in his *Dictionnaire Picasso* (Robert Laffont, Paris, 1995). The same year the most comprehensive article on the subject, by Vinyet Panyella, appeared in the catalogue of the exhibition *Picasso i els 4 Gats. La clau de la modernitat*, produced by the Museu Picasso in Barcelona. In 1999, Margarida Casacuberta included in her book *Els noms de Rusiñol* (*Quaderns Crema*, Barcelona, 1999) a chapter on the relationship between the two artists.
3. P. Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*, op. cit., p. 804.
4. Rafael Benet, *Isidro Nonell y su época*. Iberia-Joaquín Gil, Barcelona, (194?), p. 44.

The common ground: Barcelona.

Academy vs. anti-academy

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘Picasso was a great pirate in the History of Art and his sublime plagiarisms started back around 1897:’

Rafael Benet, *Isidro Nonell y su tiempo*, (194?)

‘I’m not here [at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando] just to follow a particular school, because that road only takes you to affectation and mannerism.’

Picasso to Joaquim Bas, 1897

In talking about the connection between Rusiñol and Picasso, let us begin with the place that linked them, Barcelona, although both, for different reasons, spent much of their lives outside this city. This Barcelona was a city that was quite different from the ones Picasso had previously lived in — Malaga and La Coruña — not least from the artistic point of view. Picasso benefited from a Barcelona more open to European artistic currents, a circumstance for which Rusiñol, along with other artists, was largely responsible. This we will go into later.

The earliest examples of Picasso’s work in Barcelona are conditioned by his personal situation (family and friends) and geographical environment (the area round his home). So it is not surprising that two of his early works depict parts of Barcelona likewise immortalised by Rusiñol years before. We refer to a pair of oils, one of the port of Barcelona and one of the door to the chapel of Saint Lucia in the cloister of the cathedral (p. 32-33). Both spots had been chosen by other artists, hence the mention of these works is solely for the purpose of highlighting the presence of both artists in the

same city and both travelling in the same environs. Rather than the anecdote, we are interested in the classification, that which we might infer from two artists who trod the same ground over a number of years. The literature on Picasso is full of juxtapositions and comparisons between Picasso and other artists, just as there have been many exhibitions, books and articles that pair him with another leading figure (Picasso-Matisse, Picasso-Velázquez and so on ad infinitum). However, in the case of Rusiñol this element of a shared space comes into play, a rather significant factor not always entertained in these comparisons and which will enable us to draw out connections that we might otherwise never have noticed. Another issue altogether is the time factor: although they met at a particular juncture, a comparison of their work means that we are forced to consider timeframes that in most instances are different given that Rusiñol was twenty years Picasso’s senior.

Academy vs. anti-academy

Picasso’s artistic interest in his new home city ran parallel to his primary objective: academic training.

We must remember that as the son of a tutor at the School of Fine Arts he was under the same paternal pressures both at home and at school. In this sense the role of Don José, his father, was absolutely decisive in the young Picasso's training (p. 34-35). Despite the often repeated proclamations about Picasso's innate genius, beneath it all lay a solid foundation built out of numbing toil encouraged by his father, who instilled in him the value of repetition, in short, the ways of the academy. 'In the hand one sees the hand,' he repeated over and over as a teenaged Pablo drew one hand after another. The best collection of these academic pieces is found in the archives of the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, and to see it is to see the work and discipline that were the basis of the genius that emerged later. Picasso's period of academic training is considered officially over in the spring of 1899 when, after returning from the town of Horta, he still attended some classes at the Artistic Circle. However, between 1895 and this date we begin to see signs of an incipient deviation from academic learning. At the same time as the tiring but necessary copying of plaster and real-life models, there appear works by Picasso — for the most part minor ones — that are absolutely free and uninhibited, occasionally done on the backs of his academic drawings. This anti-academic trend is revealed not only by his art but also by a number of documents. In the early 1950s, when Picasso was asked about his background at the School of Fine Arts, he mentioned the name of just one tutor, Antoni Caba (p. 38).¹ His answer shows that Picasso had none too fond memories of his years of academic training, during which he must have had a constant urge to rebel.

In the area of self-portraits, for example, very early on he dispensed with the concept of identification in favour of psychological

introspection and even sublimation. His *Self-portrait as a Gentleman* dates from 1896! — that is, it was done when he was fourteen, fifteen at most (p. 39). Beyond the concept in itself — the self-portrait is evasive, a disguise — the brusque brushwork and apparently slipshod outline of the face are far from what they would have taught him at art school. Let us compare it with, for example, a contemporary self-portrait by his friend Manuel Pallarès (p. 39), clearly in line with the principles of the then director of the school — and the last person to oversee Picasso's schooling — Antoni Caba (p. 38). We can argue that *Self-portrait as a Gentleman* is a free piece, done 'extramurally', but this freedom is also seen in strictly academic works such as the partial copy Picasso did of *Study* by the painter Arcadi Mas i Fondevila. As Isabel Coll has pointed out, although it is an academic composition seen through Mas's realist lens, Picasso puts his own stamp on it, namely in a brushwork unheard-of in a youth who is, after all, merely copying (p. 37).² Let us not forget the figure of Mas i Fondevila for we will come across him again later.

As for documents, aside from the previously mentioned questionnaire, we know of an oft-quoted letter sent by Picasso to his friend and fellow student Joaquin Bas. In this letter, sent from Madrid where he had gone to study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Picasso made a series of judgements on a range of artists. But what is truly striking are not these observations (which we can hardly take as cast in stone) from an impetuous student, but rather two remarks that reveal his personal principles. Both refer to academic training and denote an unprecedented clarity in a lad of just sixteen: 'But do not kid yourself, here in Spain we are not fools, as we have always shown ourselves to be; we are just very poorly educated.'³ (p. 40) In this remark Picasso questions

academic training but in the following what he really questions is the student, in short, the future artist: 'I'm not here [at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando] just to follow a particular school, because that road only takes you to affectation and mannerism.'⁴ This principle led Picasso to extremes throughout his life even when he abhorred his own ways, for example when he abandoned Cubism and took up classicism and decoration for ballets even as artists round the world were rushing to produce all sorts of neo-Cubisms. In short, Picasso's break with the academy did not occur in 1899 with his official entry into the alternative world symbolised by the scene at the bar *Quatre Gats*, rather it was a gradual process that had started earlier. As Maria Teresa Ocaña notes, this split can be seen also in the landscapes Picasso did in his youth.⁵ Whatever the truth of the matter, several indicators enable us to detect quite clear anti-academic tendencies; for instance works like *Portrait of Aunt Pepa* (1896) bear no relation to his coeval academic work.

Artistic-referential change

The most significant impact Barcelona had on Picasso was not only of the strictly artistic order but also of what we might call the artistic-referential order. The son of a tutor of fine arts and on track for an academic career, he saw in Barcelona that success in the field of art was possible beyond salons and awards. Francesc Fontbona stressed this point, saying that Picasso 'was influenced by early *Modernisme*; but this is not the most important thing that happened to him in his encounter with Barcelona. The most momentous development was that Picasso found in Barcelona an atmosphere that broke, perhaps because there was no other way, with the official art world to which he, as the son of Don José Ruiz Blasco, had always belonged. In Barcelona, the young Picasso realised that apart

from academic art not only were there other paths but those paths might be more valid and even more prestigious than academicism.'⁶ The realisation that one could succeed as an artist outside officialdom was probably one of the greatest changes to occur in his outlook. Picasso would soon begin to explore these new paths, but for the time being, he had to combine them with the orthodoxy of the School of Fine Arts.

The new reality in Barcelona provided him with wholly new points of reference where only his father and his tutors had stood before. On his arrival in Barcelona, a new world opened up to him — as also happened when he got to Paris, of course — and it is here that the figure of Rusiñol, among others, appears. Although at this point Rusiñol was no longer an artist of the *Avant-garde*, he was an artist of renown and had achieved this recognition while ignoring the rules being drummed into Picasso at school and home. Several years hence, in 1901, in the most important criticism hitherto received by Picasso, Miquel Utrillo states this clearly: 'Although [Picasso] has not taken advantage of the statutory book lessons imparted at the School of Fine Arts, he has seen the fortunate bad example of many painters who know their trade without having studied at the official schools.'⁷ Utrillo's oxymoron 'fortunate bad example' surely refers to his friend Rusiñol, given that the latter was largely an autodidact and few of the major artists of the time had formal training as meagre as his. Picasso, accustomed to the pomp of the button-down teachers of his father's circle, discovered that Rusiñol, one of the most famous artists of the time, had not steered his life along the paths of conventionalism, neither at the personal nor at the artistic level: an artist who left his wife to lead a bohemian life in Paris, who brought back a series of works that disturbed and disconcerted the

Barcelona public, who championed an artist like El Greco, and who in short did not fit in with the idea of the artist Picasso expected to find when he arrived in Barcelona just entering his teens. When Picasso became interested in Rusiñol, although the latter was no longer on the cutting edge, he represented something of great significance to Picasso at that time: the world 'outside' the academy. Alexandre Cirici highlights this role Rusiñol played in Picasso's life, not so much in terms of his works — where we also find signs of his influence — but rather in his attitude, 'mould-breaking', in the words of Cirici, which eventually infected many young artists, Picasso among them: 'There is no doubt that these Rusiñolian doctrines influenced the mindset of the young Picasso, who under this banner of liberty and courage broke with Spanish academicism. When Picasso said, at Notre-Dame-de-Vie, that in his youth he found painting had run its course and decided that one had to do something else, clearly he was expressing and assuming this stance which, in his world, Rusiñol was the first to preach.'⁸

Barcelona Exhibition of Fine Arts, 1896

In April 1896, some seven months after arriving in Barcelona, Picasso made his debut in the official art world of Barcelona. At the Exhibition of Fine Arts and Artistic Industries in Barcelona he presented the large academic composition *The First Communion* (p. 45). Picasso was just fourteen and his painting appeared alongside the works of some of the most reputable artists of the time, Santiago Rusiñol among them. Rusiñol presented, alongside other works, the allegorical panel *Poetry*, the product of his recent symbolist turn (p. 42).⁹ Ramon Casas, another leading local artist, presented *Evening Dance*, a rather mundane work and a far cry from Rusiñol's (p. 43). Also showing was Mas i Fondevila, notably

with *Venite Adoremus*, a scene of religious fervour representing the adoration of Good Friday set in the Chapel of the Holy Blood in the Basilica de Santa Maria del Pi in Barcelona (p. 44).¹⁰ Picasso's choice of theme was selected by his father, in all likelihood influenced by his connection with his fellow art tutor José Garnelo Alda, who did works of this sort. In fact, it was at Garnelo's studio at number 5 on Plaça Universitat that Picasso painted *The First Communion*. Garnelo had turned his studio into a veritable altar, which evidences the importance of religious painting at the time, something which is also apparent in the Picasso's related minor works. A contemporary work, *The Altar Boy* (Museum of Montserrat) was most likely also done in the same studio.¹¹ Based on the awards from the exhibition we can conclude that Don José had picked his son's theme well because one of the works most praised by the critics — and which took one of the first-class medals — was Mas i Fondevila's *Venite Adoremus*, the most similar of the works cited to Picasso's. Rusiñol and Casas managed only second-class mentions. Mas i Fondevila's work received an extraordinary review in the *Diario de Barcelona*. The review of Picasso, on the other hand, although not entirely negative, comes off somewhat bittersweet, with Miquel i Badia saying that it was the 'work of a greenhorn in which we can see feeling in the main figures and confidently rendered fragments'.¹² Comparisons of their reviews aside, both painted what might be called a 'successful theme' in the official art world. Mas i Fondevila specialised in religious painting and was a great friend (and sometimes collaborator) of Santiago Rusiñol, of whom he also did a portrait in one of his favourite painting spots, inside a church (p. 45). As we have seen, for Picasso Mas i Fondevila embodied symbolically the tenets of the academy (he copied his works) and the official art world

(he exemplified one path to success in painting).

Already at such a young age, Picasso had a very keen eye for the work of established artists. A pair of sketches of the abovementioned works by Casas and Rusiñol from the exhibition provides early evidence of his eye for ideas to absorb from his artistic surroundings (p. 42-43). The drawings are quite freely executed and without any attempt to copy, a very Picassian trait. In the case of the Casas work he takes a detail from the dance scene while maintaining the same upward perspective. Rusiñol's allegorical panel he takes further, doing a more personal version and changing the muse of Poetry for that of Painting. Instead of a sheet of paper, the figure now holds a painting, although, oddly, the trees and the path winding away from the bottom of the composition remain. Whatever the exact date, the point remains: Picasso was keeping an eye on these artists' doings. As it turns out, the Rusiñol work Picasso chose to improvise on — the first perhaps? — was something of an anomaly in Rusiñol's career up to the time. Even Ramon Casas — like Picasso — joined in the parody and turned the Fountain of Living Waters in the panel into the popular dancing egg in the fountain of the feast of Corpus Christi in Barcelona. Picasso was not to follow any of these three lines — although the marks of Mas i Fondevila, Casas and Rusiñol are apparent in several of his works — but these sketches provide evidence of a Picasso who, perhaps that same year of 1896, is already looking beyond the academy and, moreover, at the most important artists of the Barcelona scene, not least of whom was Santiago Rusiñol.

1. This document, currently the property of the Fundació Palau de Caldes d'Estrac was given by Joan Vidal Ventosa to Josep Palau i Fabre. It was an improvised questionnaire for Picasso at the request of Cèsar Martinell, who was writing a book on the history on the School of Fine Arts and was interested in Picasso's testimony as a former student. The book was published in 1951 with the title *La Escuela de la Lonja en la vida artística barcelonesa*. Escola d'Arts i Oficis Artístics de Barcelona, 1951.
2. Isabel Coll, *L'escola luminista de Sitges. Els precedents del Modernisme* (exh. cat.). Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2002, p. 67.
3. From a letter from Picasso to Joaquim Bas i Gich, written in Madrid, dated 3 November 1897. Fundació Palau, Caldes d'Estrac.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Maria Teresa Ocaña, 'La consolidació de l'ofici', in *Picasso. Paisatges 1890-1912. De l'acadèmia a l'avantguarda*. Museu Picasso/Lunweg, Barcelona, 1994. p. 74.
6. Francesc Fontbona, 'Picasso en la Barcelona postmodernista' in *Picasso i Barcelona. 1881-1981*. Ajuntament de Barcelona, Ministeri de Cultura, Barcelona, 1981, p. 11.
7. Pincell (Miquel Utrillo i Morlius), 'Pablo R. Picasso', in *Pèl & Ploma*, no. 77, June 1901, p. 15.
8. Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, *Picasso. La seva vida i la seva obra*. Caixa d'Estalvis de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1981, p. 30.
9. In addition to this work, Rusiñol showed three others: another Botticellian allegorical panel called *Painting*, the oil *Notre Dame* and a portrait of a friend.
10. Isabel Coll, *ibid.*
11. See Eduard Vallès, 'El Monaguillo', *Obras maestras del Museo de Montserrat en BBVA. De Caravaggio a Picasso* (exh. cat.). BBVA/Museu de Montserrat, Madrid, 2008, pp. 233-235.
12. Francesc Miquel i Badia, in *Diario de Barcelona*, 25 May 1896, p. 6307.

Modernisme and anti-Modernisme

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘Vidal Ventosa [...] told me quite specifically that the 4 Gats went into decline when Santiago Rusiñol, who was the man of the greatest prestige among the bar’s regular coterie, decided to move, and with him his followers and admirers, to the Lyon d’Or in Plaça de Catalunya.’

Josep Palau i Fabre, ‘El final de los “4 Gats”’, 1995

‘The art of Picasso is very young; the child of his observing spirit which does not pardon the weaknesses of the youth of our time and reveals even the beauty of the horrible.’

Pincell (Miquel Utrillo), ‘Pablo R. Picasso’, 1901

Picasso and Rusiñol were both present in Barcelona at the turn of the twentieth century. One of the myths surrounding the bar, repeated almost reflexively now, is that they met at Quatre Gats in 1899. True or not, both of these supposed facts — place and date — should be taken with a pinch of salt: we can neither rule out the possibility that they met before 1899 nor assume that everything that happened in the Barcelona art world happened at Quatre Gats, as sometimes it may seem. We have shown that Picasso may have adapted some of Rusiñol’s works prior to this date and we cannot rule out that in time other examples of this might emerge or be identified as being even earlier. In the above-cited letter to Joaquim Bas, from 1897, Picasso mentioned artists such as Pichot and Nonell, rather less well known than Rusiñol, which indicates that he was sufficiently up-to-date on the Barcelona art scene. We should bear in mind that Picasso frequented exhibitions in Barcelona, perhaps with his father, friends or fellow students from the School of Fine Arts, and nobody can be sure that he had not met Rusiñol previously. Moreover, we know that Rusiñol often visited the family

home of two of Picasso’s good friends, the brothers Jacint and Ramon Reventós — whose father Isidre was a friend of Rusiñol — and thus they may well have met there rather than at Quatre Gats.¹ In any event, it was probably at Quatre Gats that they most often ran into each other, although Rusiñol, contrary to what one might think, was not as much of a regular as Picasso. According to Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, ‘his [Rusiñol’s] presence at Quatre Gats was rather rare, both because of his constant absences from Barcelona and due to problems with his health.’²

Cau Ferrat: Rusiñol, pioneer collector of Picassos

Before we talk about Quatre Gats, we should say something about Cau Ferrat, Rusiñol’s museum-home in the town of Sitges and a landmark in the late nineteenth-century modernity in Catalan art. In tracing Rusiñol’s role in the Catalan art world of the period his creation of Cau Ferrat represents a turning point, one which occurred shortly before Picasso’s arrival in Barcelona.

One of the most important aspects of Rusiñol’s persona is that of collector of art and craftworks,

and Cau Ferrat would become the home for his collection. Rusiñol had come to Sitges in autumn 1891 during a stopover en route to the town of Vilanova i la Geltrú to see another well-known collector, Víctor Balaguer. Later he bought two adjacent fishermen's houses there, Can Falua, in 1893, and Can Sense, in 1894, which he subsequently joined and refurbished to create the building which stands today on Carrer Fonollar in Sitges. The name Cau Ferrat, however, already existed: that was what he called the studio he shared with his friend the sculptor Enric Clarasó at number 38 on Carrer Muntaner in Barcelona. The name comes from the vast array of ironwork in his collection, which also covered an extraordinary range of both periods and artists, such as Rusiñol's passion for collecting: in addition to ironwork — *ferros* in Catalan — he amassed paintings, drawings, sculptures, glasswork and so on. On his death in 1931 he left the building and all of the works in it to the town of Sitges, and two years later, in April 1933, it was opened as a public museum, as it has remained to this day.³ Among the works he donated there were several by Picasso. Indeed Picasso visited Cau Ferrat on several occasions (two of which have been documented), although probably not as often as Pierre Daix has claimed.⁴ We know that, as a youth, he was there in 1900 with his great friend Carles Casagemas — whose family also had a house in Sitges — and that he was there again in 1933 with his family.

Although in the beginning of their relationship it is hardly likely that they became close friends, Rusiñol bought from Picasso at least six drawings, thus becoming one of the first collectors of his work (p. 62-63). According to Josep Palau i Fabre, 'the half-dozen works at Cau Ferrat Sitges come from the amicable auctions that, in order to get money for a meal, Picasso would improvise at 4

Els Gats: "Sold to the highest bidder!" And almost inevitably it was Rusiñol who walked away with the work.⁵ It is also from Palau i Fabre that we learn that these works were 'bought for a pittance.'⁶ This is hardly surprising given the poverty of the portions served at the tavern, as described by Josep Pla: 'At Els Quatre Gats the servings were always a mere dream of the spirit. Rather than an eatery it was an exhibition of painted dishes, cuisine in miniature, apt for a nursery school. The servings were weightless, sickly, of an extreme lightness.'⁷ Of this 'half-dozen' drawings only five have survived, all at Cau Ferrat in Sitges. Two of them, *Three Cancan Dancers* and *La familia de Don Paco en su casa* (The Family of Don Paco at Home), disappeared in 1940. The second was recovered but all trace has been lost of the first.⁸ In our research for this book we have discovered another drawing remarkably similar — in theme, technique and even the signature — to *Three Cancan Dancers*, such that it seems to be its forerunner: *Two Women Walking on a Windy Day* (p. 62). Certainly the best work here is the pastel *Bullfight (El Quite)*. All the drawings were done between 1900 and 1901 — probably in Barcelona, Madrid and Paris — representing three of Picasso's proverbial iconographic themes: bullfighting, music hall and the female figure.⁹ This acquisition from an up-and-coming artist was not an exception for Rusiñol. His support extended to a number of young artists whose work, while representing propositions quite different from his, he did not hesitate to buy. In addition to Picasso, this was also the case with Anglada-Camarasa, from whom Rusiñol bought a pair of oils at a show at the Barcelona gallery Sala Parés in 1900. Indeed Rusiñol's interest in young artists was so broad that Cau Ferrat now holds works by, among others, Isidre Nonell (p. 76), Manolo Hugué, Carles Casagemas and Ramon Pichot, all of whom hung

round with Picasso. All of this suggests that Rusiñol had enough of an eye to buy pieces that, though not within his own artistic scope, he knew showed the budding talent which would inevitably succeed him and the entire generation he stood for. In January 1917, *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, probably at the instigation of Rusiñol, who collaborated with the weekly, published four of these drawings that he had bought from Picasso.¹⁰ The date coincides with Picasso's first stay in Barcelona that year, and the caption made it clear that the drawings were 'never before seen', indicating Rusiñol's pride in being among the first to spot Picasso's merits. While we are on the subject of collecting, Picasso himself also owned a drawing signed 'S. Rusiñol' and which is now at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, part of the donation Picasso made in 1970 (p. 63). We have no records or other information regarding this drawing, so we cannot explain how it came into his possession.

A landmark year: 1897, from Cau Ferrat to Quatre Gats

1897 was an important year in the confirmation of Rusiñol's role in Catalan art, with two notable events: the opening of Quatre Gats and the fourth *modernista* festival in Sitges. Held from 1892 to 1899, the festivals were a hodgepodge of artistic disciplines — with painting, theatre, music and literature — in search of 'total art' and always looking to include the leading figures from each discipline. The third festival, for example, in 1894, the year of Cau Ferrat's inauguration, featured the enthronement, complete with a procession winding through the streets of Sitges, of two El Grecos Rusiñol had bought in Paris. Another of the leading figures at these events was the composer Enric Morera. Morera was a good friend of Rusiñol, who painted a portrait of him in a wonderful oil

that was shown at one of the festivals. Apparently Morera also proved an interesting subject for Picasso, who did several portraits of him around 1900, many of which are small sketches now at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona (p. 61). However, the heart and soul of these festivals was Rusiñol, who opened them with a speech, in fact, a veritable declaration of principles of his views on art. Although we have no evidence of Picasso being at the last festival in 1899 (by date, it is the only one he could have attended), the fact is that the festivals made quite a splash and it is rather doubtful that Picasso would not have known about them. Moreover we know that Picasso visited Sitges a number of times in his life. Both events, the opening of Quatre Gats in Barcelona and the *modernista* festivals in Sitges, had one basic point of intersection: Santiago Rusiñol. With Quatre Gats there occurred a symbolic shift in the centre of gravity of *Modernisme* from Sitges to Barcelona.

Quatre Gats, beyond its Parisian inspiration, was a part of a modernisation of Catalan culture that embraced all the arts, and to which Picasso's development was closely linked. His earliest known portraits of Rusiñol are all dated 1899, the year usually accepted as when they first met and also the year that Picasso started to frequent Quatre Gats. Indeed, Picasso would not have begun going there until he returned to Barcelona in January 1899, following his long stay in the town of Horta. Despite all the legends surrounding the establishment — largely due to Picasso's presence — we cannot avoid mentioning it when talking about the link between the two artists, and Rusiñol's elliptical influence on Picasso, of which we have spoken above. Picasso had the first two individual shows of his career at Quatre Gats, and, although Rusiñol's presence at Quatre Gats was rather sporadic, he did have a great deal to do with

not only its founding but with its demise as well. His role as an instigator of its creation — along with his friends Ramon Casas, Miquel Utrillo and Pere Romeu — is well known, although it was the banker Manuel Girona and the businessman Maties Ardéniz who put up the money.¹¹ This 'in-spirit' presence of Rusiñol was coupled with a more direct involvement, that of his works. Photographs from the period show that some of Rusiñol's paintings hung on the walls of the tavern, including an oil depicting a street in Sitges (p. 59). We also know that Rusiñol once showed work at Quatre Gats (by this time he had a more prestigious gallery, the Sala Parés) specifically to mark the inaugural exhibition, in 1897, in which he exhibited several drawings and an oil.¹² Both Picasso and Rusiñol were involved, each in his own way, in the activities of Quatre Gats. Rusiñol, for example, illustrated the cover of one of the issues of the magazine, also called *Quatre Gats*, published through the tavern (p. 58). It is common knowledge that Picasso, on the other hand, co-illustrated with Ramon Casas a leaflet advertising the establishment and its menu. Less well known — and less often reproduced — is a drawing he did, this time on his own, for what would seem to be a poster to announce the dish of the day. The original is owned by the Hunt Museum in Limerick (Ireland), and there was probably never any print run of the poster, at least no copies have yet been discovered (p. 65). It is likely that it was at Quatre Gats that Picasso did his first portraits of Rusiñol, some possibly before they really knew each other. One of them was probably included in Picasso's first show at the tavern. In this drawing Picasso already captures Rusiñol's melancholy personality and establishes one of the constants in these portraits: the half-closed eyes, typical of someone who seems to live in another reality (p. 64). This portrait would have been part of a second series of

works that Picasso did when the show was already hung and in which he portrayed more outstanding figures than in the first and better known series, with larger, charcoal drawings in the line of Ramon Casas's portrait work. This small but superb frontal portrait, which closes a sequence of portraits at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona (p. 64), is now owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The execution is wholly *modernista*, with a false black frame and a very Rusiñolesque blue background. This drawing was published in the magazine *Pèl & Ploma*,¹³ a publication to a certain extent also born out of Quatre Gats, insofar as it occupied the premises of its predecessor, *Quatre Gats*. It was Joan Vidal Ventosa (a good friend of Picasso's and an eyewitness to the events of the time) who claimed that Rusiñol also had a hand in the demise of Quatre Gats. Our guess is that the causes were various, but Vidal Ventosa told Josep Palau i Fabre that 'Els 4 Gats went into decline when Rusiñol Santiago, who was the man of the greatest prestige among the bar's regular coterie, decided to move, and with him his followers and admirers, to the Lyon d'Or in Plaça de Catalunya'.¹⁴ Whatever the truth behind this statement, it would be hardly surprising, given that the management of Quatre Gats, under Pere Romeu, left a great deal to be desired.

'The beauty of the horrible'

Although Quatre Gats is often cited as a well head of European modernity in Barcelona, at first it had a more important role for Picasso: as a place to mix with the new crop of artists who were taking over from the Rusiñol generation. Picasso would not only deviate from the lessons of the School of Fine Arts, but also — gradually — from the original *Modernisme* represented by Rusiñol and Casas, the two leading lights at Quatre Gats. Round the tables

of the tavern Picasso rubbed shoulders with his young artist peers, but it is perhaps paradoxical that he got the most explicit support from his elders of the first *modernista* generation: Utrillo, for example, wrote his first major review and backed him in his first solo exhibitions, as pointed out by Cristina Mendoza.¹⁵ In his review, Utrillo gave the key to Picasso's real interests, indicative of a clear generational change: 'The art of Picasso is very young; the child of his observing spirit which does not pardon the weaknesses of the youth of our time and reveals even the beauty of the horrible.'¹⁶ This quest for 'the beauty of the horrible' was indeed one of the main discourses of this new generation led by Isidre Nonell, the artist most admired by Picasso during those years. Carles Casagemas, one of Picasso's first and closest friends, had been his companion in his miserablism imbued with social chronicling — and sometimes criticism — in which the human figure was degraded or even presented subhuman features (p. 75). Casagemas borrowed directly from Nonell, whom he too admired. In his early years, Nonell, meanwhile, showed clearly the imprint of Rusiñol, especially in his landscapes. In the words of Rafael Benet, Nonell had started out in the 'Casas-Rusiñol city-edge lyricism'.¹⁷ Some of these young men, led by Nonell and as members of the 'Saffron Group', not only had opted for painting out of doors but they had done so from a wholly modern standpoint in which Rusiñol was for them a clear precedent. We refer to the interest in degraded rural environments on the outskirts of the city or simply banal spaces. At different levels, both Picasso and Nonell were indebted to Rusiñol. In 1896, when Picasso was still a student at the School of Fine Arts and showed *The First Communion*, Nonell was taking the great turn in his career as an artist and embarked on a phase as a chronicler of 'the beauty of the horrible',

especially after his stay in the remote Vall de Boí in the summer of 1896, where he portrayed the local simpletons and grotesques. Other artists joined in this discourse, some taking it to extremes; Rusiñol's friend the sculptor Carles Mani, for example, to whom Rusiñol lent support and of whom he did one of his best portraits (p. 77). Mani, as a sculptor, adopted this discourse of analysis of people on the margins of society, resulting in his masterpiece *The Degenerates*, thus embarking on an expressionist line that would have no continuity among his artistic peers (p. 76). Other artists of Picasso's circle, such as Manolo Hugué or Anglada-Camarasa — although quite different from the aforementioned artists — were also championed by Rusiñol. Thus, generational differences should not obscure the debt this generation owed to Rusiñol. In one way or another, he had contributed to creating for these young artists a more modern Barcelona and ensuring they had a place to show their work (some for the first time) and he had supported them in various ways, including buying their works or lending them money.

Anti-Modernisme: L'Esquella de la Torratxa

Picasso's personality, seen in hindsight, is littered with contradictions and counterbalances inevitably aimed at eluding fashions, even those started by him. If in 1897, in his letter to Joaquim Bas, he made it clear that he did not want to follow 'a particular school', then of course he would have to set himself apart from the *modernista* world in which he had immersed himself after 1899. As we shall see, Picasso sometimes questioned the artistic world represented by Rusiñol but, at the same time, he assimilated whatever most caught his fancy. His work from the time shows this duality. Those works of his which we might call 'major' show a strong *modernista* influence, as we will see

particularly in Chapter 7. On the other hand, it is in his minor works — some of which are caricatures — where we find a number of drawings mocking *Modernisme*. His non-conformist spirit also led him to look askance at the *modernistes*. At times he criticised their affected decadence and the outrageous attire some wore to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. One of the publications most disparaging of this fad was *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, which often railed against the *modernistes*, for example against Rusiñol's *modernista* festivals in Sitges. We know that Picasso read *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, and it is not surprising that it was in this magazine that he published what today can be considered his first illustration. The theme of the drawing was absolutely mundane, *Tornant de plassa* (Returning from Market), but what interests us here is the connection between Picasso and the magazine. We know that he submitted other drawings but, according to several sources, not only were they not published but never returned either.¹⁸ Having browsed through several issues of *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, we can safely say that Picasso was an avid reader and showed particular interest in its anti-*modernista* illustrations. The most eloquent evidence of this are several drawings — those which are considered minor in technical terms but which often hold richer discourses — at the Museu Picasso which in our view are informed by some of the drawings from this magazine.

We see early evidence of this in a pair of drawings of Boers, one of them done on the Casas portrait on the back of the menu of *Quatre Gats*, the front of which is by Picasso (p. 66), reminiscent of the images published in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* in 1900 (p. 66). The Museu Picasso also has in its collection the drawing *Caricature of a Man*, which, in our opinion, is taken from one of the characters that the illustrator Gaietà Cornet did for the *modernistes*;

that is, the drawing entitled *Modernista Soirees*, published 20 January 1899, just around the time of Picasso's return from Horta. The character's pose, bent over with his hands in his pockets, evokes an attendee at one of the *modernista* gatherings Cornet parodied (p. 71). But perhaps the most curious case is a drawing, also at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, showing Picasso and his friend Pallarès oddly characterised as *modernistes*, with long hair and smoking pipes, rather contrary to their usual appearance. Not surprisingly, this drawing always appears with the title *Picasso and Pallarès, Modernistes*. Obviously the characterisation is a self-parody: Picasso as a member of this band of ragged posers. Beside them, a dog relieves itself on Picasso while saying 'Voltals' (sic) (p. 69). Again in *L'Esquella*, we find another drawing, from June 1898, that contains identical elements. It is a caricature, much in the line of the magazine, in which two rod-bearing teachers — possibly Fortuny and Rosales — are driving a gang of young *modernistes* into an asylum (p. 68). These youths, with long hair and with *modernista* motifs in their attire — like Picasso and Pallarès in the self-parodic drawing, obediently file into the building. To one side of the drawing, a boy shouts the same 'Voltals', circled in the same manner, probably directed at the two teachers. In the jargon of Catalan shepherds 'Volta'ls!' is a command for dogs to encircle the herd. The similarities leave little room for doubt that Picasso would have based his drawing on this one, especially given that Picasso was unlikely to have known this Catalan expression. In short, Picasso understood the parody perfectly, he digested it and reproduced it in a form adapted to his own reality, just as he did with so many others in similar processes of absorption. Such drawings are not an exception in Picasso's oeuvre: he did a number of satirical and burlesque portraits, some probably also

indebted to contemporary publications we have yet to discover. Drawings like *Decadents* or *A Modernista* (p. 72), 'Señoritos' (Young Gentlemen) (p.73) and *Modernista Personality*¹⁹ are clearly linked to this critical view aimed at so particular a fashion. In Picasso's works from his time in Barcelona it is just as easy to find works influenced by the *modernista* aesthetic as it is to find those mocking it. But his true path would be to follow the lead of Isidre Nonell, surely the one he found most convincing and, with Symbolist echoes and duly stylised, the approach which would ultimately underlie the basic discourse of his first purely personal phase, the Blue Period.

1. Jacint Reventós i Conti, *Picasso i els Reventós*. Gustau Gili, Barcelona, 1973, p. 14.
2. Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, 'Rusiñol, pintor', in *Santiago Rusiñol. 1861-1931* (exh. cat.). Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya/Fundación Cultural Mapfre, Madrid, 1997, p. 29.
3. Ramon Planes, *Rusiñol i el Cau Ferrat*. Pòrtic, Barcelona, 1974.
4. 'For the young Picasso, [Cau Ferrat] was a place he visited all the time.' Pierre Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*. Robert Laffont, Paris, 1995, p. 170. Despite Daix's claim, we do not believe Picasso was a constant visitor, although he must have gone there on a number of occasions, more often than has been documented, twice as far as we have found, once in 1900 and again in 1933.
5. Josep Palau i Fabre, 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 265, October 1981, p. 52.
6. Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso i els seus amics Catalans* (2nd edn.). Galàxia Gutenberg/Cercle de Lectors, Barcelona, 2006, p. 110.
7. Josep Pla, *Santiago Rusiñol i el seu temps*. Destino, Barcelona, 2002, p. 190.
8. Cesàreo Rodríguez-Aguilera, *Picassos de Barcelona*. Polígrafa, Barcelona, 1974, p. 61.
9. For a detailed study of all five Picasso drawings at Cau Ferrat in Sitges, as well as the sixth, missing since 1940, see the chapter 'Rusiñol, col·leccionista. Els Picassos del Cau Ferrat', in Eduard Vallès, *Picasso i Rusiñol. La cruïlla de la modernitat*. Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2008, pp. 143-160.
10. Anonymous, 'Notes d'art. Quatre dibuixos inèdits d'en Picasso', in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 4 January 1917, p. 10.
11. Josep Bracons Clapés, 'Els Quatre Gats i la Barcelona modernista', in *4 Gats. De Casas a Picasso* (exh. cat.). Museu Diocesà de Barcelona/Museu d'Art Modern de Tarragona, 2005, p. 21.
12. Josep de C. Laplana and Mercedes Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan, *La pintura de Santiago Rusiñol. La vida*, vol. I. Mediterrània, Barcelona, 2004, p. 65.
13. *Pèl & Ploma*, no. 65, 1 December 1900, p. 4.
14. Josep Palau i Fabre, 'La fi dels "4 Gats"', in *Picasso i els 4 Gats. La clau de la modernitat*. Museu Picasso, Barcelona, 1995.
15. Cristina Mendoza, 'Casas i Picasso', in *Picasso i els 4 Gats*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
16. Pincell (Miquel Utrillo Morlius), 'Pablo R. Picasso', in *Pèl & Ploma*, no. 77, June 1901, p. 17. English translation: Roland Penrose, *Picasso, His Life and Work*. University of California Press, 1981.

17. Rafael Benet, *Isidro Nonell y su época*. Iberia-Joaquín Gil, Barcelona, (194?), p. 44.
18. '...Later, when he submits a series of similar works to *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* and to *La Campana de Gracia*, in Barcelona, the same thing happens, except that they don't even return them to him...' Jaume Sabartés, *Retratos y recuerdos*. Afrodisio Aguado, Madrid, 1953, p. 35.
19. Drawing reproduced in *Picasso i els 4 Gats*, op. cit., p. 164, fig. 153.

Rusiñol, a conduit for Parisian modernity

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘Picasso and Casagemas spent the majority of their time visiting the exhibition and the district of Montmartre – that Bohemian world they knew from the descriptions of Rusiñol and Utrillo.’

Marilyn McCully, *Els Quatre Gats and Modernista Painting in Catalonia in the 1890's*, 1975

‘Picasso heard talk of him [Erik Satie] firstly through Santiago Rusiñol, who had become his friend.’

Pierre Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*, 1995

Rusiñol’s importance to Picasso is evident in a letter, jointly signed by Picasso and Casagemas, having recently arrived in Paris for the first time, to a friend in Barcelona voicing their concern for Rusiñol’s health: ‘I believe that Rusiñol is dying and perhaps when you receive this letter he will already be dead. I would be truly sad about this.’¹ (p. 89) This comment refers to a recent decline in Rusiñol’s health, which rumour had inflated to the point that he was believed to be on his death bed. When Picasso and Casagemas left Barcelona, sometime before 27 September, Rusiñol was not yet that ill: ‘In September Rusiñol was still in Sitges, and was not feeling so ill that he could not attend a party given by the wealthy businessman Albert Monteyés [...]. It was in October that Rusiñol’s strength ran out and he felt he was dying. Only then, out of desperation, did he agree to submit to the opinion of Dr Pagès i Serratosà, who had diagnosed the cause of Rusiñol’s illness as an old kidney injury [...] and that there was no choice but to remove the necrotic kidney.’² The date of this letter, 25 October 1900, was also Picasso’s eighteenth birthday and he had just set foot in the city in which he would

make his name. This date is thus a symbolic juncture insofar as Picasso arrived in Paris just as Rusiñol’s health was in decline, which would affect Picasso’s activities and, above all, his artistic attitude. Here we must insert a kind of flashback, because Picasso’s perception of Paris was, to a certain extent, conditioned by Rusiñol’s role in the past. Rusiñol had previously made several trips to Paris and, although several artists had been there before him, none of them had done so much to forge the city’s legend in Barcelona. Rusiñol was a key figure in bringing Parisian modernity to Barcelona in both his paintings and writings, and thus established himself for many years as the leading local expert on the French capital as a centre of art.

It is generally accepted among scholars that the sojourns of Rusiñol and Ramon Casas in Paris were essential to the subsequent evolution of Catalan art and, thus, to the new art scene Picasso found when he came to Barcelona. For our purposes, we are interested primarily in Rusiñol’s first two artistic stays in Paris: the first, from September 1889 to May 1890, and the second from October 1890 until mid-1892. Many critics consider that

the paintings Rusiñol produced in Paris are among his best, and it is no accident that he held on to some of these works for the rest of his life and that they currently hang at his home in Sitges, Cau Ferrat. Rusiñol's contribution — partially shared with Casas — focused on aspects such as the city's spheres of decadence, a certain interest in locating the *punctum* in the banal, a 'beloved banality'³, as Xavier Barral put it, and especially in Whistleresque grey tones, which enabled him to create a sort of passage between clouds and buildings in search of atmospheres both evocative and disturbing. These Impressionist-influenced works were not well received in Barcelona on Rusiñol's return from Paris, at least not at first, with the critics divided. 'The opinions expressed in the Barcelona press reveal the enormous uproar which those attempts of Rusiñol and Casas caused. Indeed, the impact of the works as a whole was favourable but also disconcerting. Alongside well-painted canvases there were others which were not understood. It was said that the works lacked any theme, that the colours were dirty, drab...'⁴ Although Picasso did not make his first trip to Paris until 1900, nearly a decade after Rusiñol, he shared some of his themes, scenes and even friends, among others, Montmartre and the composer Erik Satie.

The Moulin de la Galette

Picasso's first stay in Paris was rather brief, lasting less than three months, from late September to late December 1900. Moreover his output in this period was not only rather meagre but also irregular. The influences that Picasso absorbed, given his restless nature and capacity for assimilation, were both notable and varied (above all, Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec). However, at least on this first visit, we get the impression that Picasso was still under the spell of an iconic preconception of

Montmartre, which at times seems to have obscured the reality of the place. Marilyn McCully has stressed the influence on Picasso of all the Montmartre iconography created by the Catalan artists who had preceded him, including Rusiñol: 'Picasso and Casagemas spent the majority of their time visiting the exhibition and the district of Montmartre, that Bohemian world they knew from the descriptions of Rusiñol and Utrillo.'⁵ This we can see in some of his choices of themes and his treatment of them, not far removed from some of Rusiñol's work.

In Paris, Rusiñol produced a large and varied oeuvre, but, even at the expense of other, perhaps better or more representative paintings, our focus is on those most closely related to the works Picasso also did there. There are two major themes in which Picasso and Rusiñol (albeit along with other artists) coincided. The first is the Moulin de la Galette, where Picasso did his most ambitious work during this first period in Paris, the famous night scene of the dance now at the Guggenheim Museum in New York (p. 94). Picasso was hardly the first to paint the Moulin de la Galette, and this painting hints at him trying to put himself alongside the great painters who had preceded him. It was not by chance that Picasso chose a place portrayed by Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and Steinlen, as well as by two Barcelona artists he knew well, Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas. Although Picasso had not seen for himself the work of the first three of these painters, he knew at first hand the originals by his fellow countrymen in Barcelona. Both Casas and Rusiñol, each for his own reasons, deviated from the Impressionist tradition and bequeathed us very personal visions of the windmill. At Cau Ferrat there is an oil painting by Casas of a dance scene at the windmill that is a far cry from Impressionism (p. 95). As for Rusiñol, he basically took an interest in portraying quiet scenes in

other settings around the grounds of the windmill — where he even lived for a time — especially during the period 1890–1892. Rusiñol had a natural tendency towards melancholy, which would have drawn him to a place of so many contrasts, and he immortalised several spots, among them the park entrance, the grounds, the kitchen and the fairground stall (p. 92–93).

Streets of Montmartre

Another theme Picasso cultivated during this first stay was the urban landscape, in particular the streets of Montmartre. It is surprising that Picasso was interested, as was Casagemas, in the almost bird's-eye views of the neighbourhood that Rusiñol had also painted in his day, albeit imbibing from a previous tradition. Rusiñol followed in the footsteps of the Impressionists and some of his works show the marks of the urban scenes of Caillebotte and Pissarro, although he also assumed the spatial concerns of Japonisme, with streets of oblique lines and vanishing points. There are some Picasso oils in this line, for example *Street Scene* (p. 98), now at the San Francisco Museum of Art, one of his best pieces from this time in Paris. The structure of *Street Scene* is similar, from a slightly elevated perspective the human figures seem anonymous strangers to a landscape which is the true subject. This oil is also comparable to a surely contemporary oil by Casagemas, entitled *Montmartre* (p. 99). They share a composition similar to some of Rusiñol's oils done at his studio and even the structure of the surrounding buildings is very similar, although Rusiñol is much more detailed in his treatment of atmosphere. Picasso's special interest in the streets of Montmartre can also be seen in one of his more important works from his first stay in Paris, *The Embrace*, held in the Museu Picasso in Barcelona. This work has never been displayed as Picasso

completed it, since it was mutilated at a later date. A vertical portion, equivalent to a quarter of the work, belongs to a private collection in Barcelona and is given the title *House-Street* (p. 100), but in fact it is the part that would occupy the left-hand side of the pastel in the Museu Picasso. The house and street, with a carriage driving along it, furnishes a new reading of *The Embrace*, giving it a movement and depth that previously were lacking. In addition to the unmistakable influence of Steinlen's iconography, we must now add his interest in street scenes, mentioned earlier, a characteristic aspect of his first stay in the French capital. Among the most outstanding works by Rusiñol on this theme are two street scenes, both precedents for Picasso's and Casagemas's Montmartrian landscapes (p. 96–97). Similar in geometric and atmospheric terms, we should cite *Le Sacré-Coeur en Construction*, an oil of the steps in Rue de Foyatier in Montmartre seen from Rue de Gabrielle (p. 96). This oil is especially meaningful for two reasons: it shows the Sacré-Coeur shortly before completion, and it does so from the same street in which ten years later, just a few feet away, Picasso would have his first studio in Paris, left to him by Isidre Nonell, at number 49 on Rue de Gabrielle.

The literary facet: *La Vanguardia*

Apart from painting, Rusiñol wrote widely about his Parisian experiences. His role as a chronicler, either literary or journalistic (the boundaries of which in Rusiñol are rather blurred), of Parisian modernity cannot be understood without the figure of Modesto Sánchez Ortiz, director of the Barcelona daily *La Vanguardia*. Sánchez Ortiz (Aljaraque, Spain, 1858–1937) modernised the newspaper and brought in Rusiñol as a correspondent in Paris. He had a big hand not only in making a name for Rusiñol in the media but also in making *La Vanguardia* a

powerful voice for the *modernista* festival in Sitges.⁶ Rusiñol immortalised Sánchez Ortiz in 1897 in an oil painting that includes three key elements in the Rusiñol oeuvre: the use of blue, the Grecoesque lengthening of the face and a search for psychological introspection (p. 91). Rusiñol wrote his first piece for *La Vanguardia* in 1888 and in September 1889 made his first trip to Paris on assignment as a correspondent. Late that year he submitted his first article from Paris and in late 1890 he began the series 'Letters from the Windmill', illustrated with drawings by Ramon Casas, largely talking about artists living in Montmartre. In 1894 *La Vanguardia* published a book (free for subscribers) called *From the Windmill*, a collection of Rusiñol's Paris reports from 1890 to 1892, also illustrated by Casas (p. 90). The format of the book might be considered revolutionary for its day, and, in the words of Margarida Casacuberta, 'it coincides with the making of Santiago Rusiñol's name as a modern artist and as a complete artist'⁷ In 1897 *La Vanguardia* issued a new book by Rusiñol, *Impressions of Art* (p. 90), in which articles written during his time in Paris were also published. *Impressions of Art* reflected Rusiñol's aesthetic beliefs, along with those of his fellow *modernistes* and painters of Spanish Regenerationism, including Zuloaga, Regoyos and Pablo de Uranga. The reports Rusiñol posted from Paris made quite an impact and helped popularise in Barcelona the image of Paris as a centre of art, as well as further bolstering Rusiñol's standing as an artist. His work as a journalist was often the literary correlate to his painting, thus creating a body of work that would be one of the keys to the creation of the Paris legend, eventually making an impression on artists like Picasso. This role played by Rusiñol became part of the elliptical influence he had on the young Malaga-born artist.

Picasso, Rusiñol and Satie

Rusiñol not only lived in the midst of the Paris of this period as an artist and as a chronicler but he also moved among the artistic elite, among some of the people who were — or would become — international figures. Perhaps one of the most interesting cases, insofar as he also was a friend of Picasso, is Erik Satie, whom Rusiñol knew in his bohemian years. Pierre Daix goes so far as to say that 'Picasso heard talk of him [Erik Satie] firstly through Santiago Rusiñol, who had become his friend'⁸ Although Daix offers no further details, it is hardly surprising that Rusiñol would have been the first person to mention Erik Satie to Picasso. This fact would add support to the argument that Rusiñol acted as a conduit of late nineteenth-century Parisian modernity. Both Rusiñol and Picasso befriended Satie, although at different times and at very different stages in the composer's life. To illustrate this we only need to make a brief iconological analysis of the portraits of Satie by Rusiñol and Picasso.

Rusiñol met Satie through Miquel Utrillo in 1890, while he was living at the Moulin de la Galette. He did several portraits of Satie and wrote about him, thus becoming one of the first to put the emerging composer, who by that time had already written several pieces, in the public eye. Rusiñol wrote an article about him entitled 'El réveillon' (published in *La Vanguardia*) in which he talks of a New Year's Eve party at the Moulin de la Galette where Satie played the harmonium in his studio.⁹ But the Satie Rusiñol knew was a world away from the one Picasso first met: Rusiñol knew him as a bohemian in the strictest sense of the term, as seen in one of Rusiñol's best oils, *Bohemian Portrait of Erik Satie*, from 1891. The painting shows Satie in his tiny studio at number 6 on Rue de Cortot, where the dejected figure of the composer mirrors the

humble sparseness of the room. The critic Raimon Casellas wrote that Satie was one of those men who 'so abounded in Paris, waging a constant struggle between their dreams of grandeur and the misery of the reality of their lives.'¹⁰ This 'misery' Rusiñol took it upon himself to immortalise; several decades later it would be Picasso's turn to portray Satie, his 'dreams' come true. Rusiñol — like Ramon Casas — did several portraits of Satie (the most striking of which is the above-mentioned), among them two titled *Erik Satie at the Harmonium*, one an oil belonging to a private collection,¹¹ and the other a pencil drawing at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, both from 1891 (p. 103). Rusiñol portrayed Satie again in 1894 in the oil *A Romance*, also at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.¹²

Nearly thirty years later, Picasso also portrayed Satie, whom he would befriend. Satie was no longer the young bohemian but a famous musician who would share programme credits with Picasso in the latter's first foray into the world of ballet. This first collaboration was on the ballet *Parade*, for which Satie wrote the music and Picasso did the set and costume design. The portraits of Satie, however, would come later. The first, from 1920, is a portrait of Satie's face, preceding the full-length portrait (p. 103) Picasso did the following day. Both portraits, especially the second, show a self-assured Satie aware of his success, quite the opposite of the slouching, downtrodden bohemian immortalised by Rusiñol. More revealing of Satie's new social status is a group portrait Picasso did in the salon of his flat on Rue de la Boétie in 1919. Here Satie is surrounded by illustrious company: Jean Cocteau, Clive Bell and the ballerina Olga Kokhlova, the hostess and now Madame Picasso. Picasso and Satie would work together on another ballet, *Mercury*, this time with financial backing from a member of Parisian high society, the Comte de Beaumont. However,

when Satie spoke of this ballet he called it a 'divertissement',¹³ with the same philosophy that had informed his spirit in his Montmartre days. Rusiñol always remained very fond of Satie and, indeed, when Picasso premiered *Parade* in Barcelona to withering reviews, Rusiñol was one of the few who rose in its defence, literally standing on his seat in the stalls of the Liceu opera house and applauding fervently.¹⁴

Rusiñol's role as an importer of foreign ideas extended to figures other than Satie. For example, Whistler, Degas and Puvis de Chavannes — beyond their influence on his own work — had in Rusiñol one of their most prominent champions in Barcelona. In this regard John Richardson says that 'Santiago Rusiñol, who revered Puvis as a modern equivalent of El Greco, was originally responsible for Picasso's interest in this painter.'¹⁵ We do not know on what evidence Richardson bases such a categorical statement, but, while it is true that Picasso saw the originals of Puvis's work in Paris, he was already familiar with it from his years in Barcelona, through such passionate advocates as Rusiñol.

Leaving aside the undeniable influence of Puvis de Chavannes during Picasso's Blue Period, the Museu Picasso in Barcelona also holds an incomplete sketch of one of the murals in the Pantheon, namely *Saint Genevieve Giving Food to Paris*, dated 1903 (MPB 110.468). Picasso was so familiar with Rusiñol's role that for one of the portraits he did of him that same year — '*What Rusiñol was Thinking*' (p. 104) — he turned to elements in Puvis's iconography, such as the muses, laurels and the idea of sleep, as seen in works such as *The Dream* (p. 105). Of greater interest than this small-format portrait in itself, the association of ideas in Picasso's mind linking Puvis and Rusiñol masks Rusiñol's status as the source of information on Puvis for art circles in Barcelona.

1. From a letter by Picasso and Casagemas to Ramon Reventós mentioning Rusiñol's precarious health, dated 25 October 1900.
2. Josep de C. Laplana, *Santiago Rusiñol. El pintor, l'home*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1995, p. 311.
3. *Art a Catalunya. Pintura moderna i contemporània*, vol. IX (Xavier Barral i Altet [ed.]). L'Isard, Barcelona, 2001, p. 211.
4. Isabel Coll, *Santiago Rusiñol*. AUSA, Sabadell, 1992, p. 35.
5. Marilyn McCully, *Els Quatre Gats and Modernista Painting in Catalonia in the 1890's*. Printed edition by University Microfilms International, 1986. Doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1975, p. 226.
6. Lluís Permanyer, 'Retrat de Modesto Sánchez Ortiz', in *L'Àmic de les Arts*, 2nd era, year 1, no. 1, Sitges, June 2009, pp. 8-9.
7. Margarida Cascuberta, 'L'escriptor de la vida moderna', in *Rusiñol desconegut*, (exh. cat.). Ajuntament de Sitges / Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales/ Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, Sitges, 2006, p. 135.
8. Pierre Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*. Robert Laffont, Paris, 1995, p. 817.
9. This article was published in *La Vanguardia*, 18 January 1891, pp. 4-5, and was later included in the collection *Desde el Molino*.
10. Raimon Casellas, 'Exposició Parés, Rusiñol, Casas, Clarasó', in *La Vanguardia*, 7 November 1891, p. 4.
11. Josep de C. Laplana and Mercedes Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan, *La pintura de Santiago Rusiñol*, vol. III: *Catàleg sistemàtic*. Mediterrània, Barcelona, 2004, p. 62, fig. 6.4.6.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 82, fig. 8.1.2.
13. Pierre Cabanne, *El siglo de Picasso*, vol. I: 1881-1937. Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid, 1982, p. 375.
14. Màrius Verdagué, *Medio siglo de vida íntima barcelonesa*. Guillermo Canals, Barcelona, 2008, p. 94.
15. John Richardson (with Marilyn McCully), *A Life of Picasso*, vol. I: 1881-1906. Random House, New York, 1991, p. 257.

Rusiñol and European Painting

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Naturalism

Before 1889, Santiago Rusiñol's painting was Realist, clearly derivative of Catalan Realism, of Joaquim Vayreda and the Olot school, in its focus on landscapes (in Olot in autumn 1888 the artist painted some of his finest rural landscapes, including *Fountain of Saint Roque*, *The Hermitage Mirador* and *Cuní Wood*), and of Vayreda again and other Realist painters, such as perhaps Dionís Baixeras, in his figures of peasant girls, spinners and farmers. Yet there are aspects of his work after 1886 that indicate a naturalistic orientation, more trivial than his previous Realism, and which, as Isabel Coll says,¹ he likely picked up on his honeymoon in Paris in June 1886, during which Rusiñol visited the Paris Salon and admired the Swedish and American landscape artists. Two themes seem, for their banality, for their poverty, suited to naturalism. Firstly, the working world that particularly attracted Rusiñol, the looms, the interiors of factories and dye works, all painted from life and quite Catalan; and secondly, superficial suburban landscapes with townfolk or artisans as the main subjects (*Montjuïc Fountain*, 1886–87, *The Snail Feast*, 1887, etc.). One can also see the influence of his friendship with the Catalan 'naturalist' writers Joan Sardà, Josep Yxart and Narcís Oller, as Josep de C. Laplana notes.²

Coinciding with the 1889 Christmas exhibition at the Sala Parés, at a time when Rusiñol was already residing in Paris, pictorial naturalism emerged as a new school with Baixeras, Joan Llimona, Casas and Rusiñol as its main figures. By all this I mean that when Rusiñol arrived in Paris in September, 1889, he was already a naturalist painter. At the

thematic level, rather than portray the outskirts of Barcelona, he painted melancholy views of the courtyards and streets of Montmartre, which might have had a certain kinship with the outlying areas of the Catalan capital. At a stylistic level however, as we shall see, the changes were more fundamental. First though, one must ask why Rusiñol was not attracted to the brightness of Impressionist painting. I believe that his somewhat traditional Catalan schooling in art — with the influence of his teacher Moragas, a disciple of Fortuny's who had studied in Rome, and especially the example of Ramon Casas, who from 1881 had studied at the studio of the renowned portrait painter Carolus-Duran, who had conveyed his admiration for Velázquez to his disciples, Casas himself and the great American portraitist John Singer Sargent — steered Rusiñol away from the bright, amorphous painting of Impressionism and towards naturalist painting, which in France at the time comprised two currents, *plein-airiste* ruralist painting, with Bastien-Lepage as the leading figure, and the suburban painting of artists like Jean-François Raffaëlli.

Let us recall that in September, 1889, Casas was not in Paris, and that soon a sort of Catalan phalanstery made up of Rusiñol, Miquel Utrillo, Enric Clarasó and Ramón Canudas settled in Montmartre in a rundown building on the Rue de l'Orient. Rusiñol soon enrolled in an art academy called La Palette, the head of which was Henri Gervex, and whose assistant was Ferdinand Humbert. Rather than Gervex — who, despite a technique which belied the influence of the bright, sketchy style of Impressionism, was a mundane

painter specialising in female portraits and nudes, and who could hardly influence a naturalist painter such as Rusiñol was when he arrived in Paris — I believe, as Miquel Utrillo says,³ that some of his fellow students at the academy, such as Maxime Dethomas or Engel, had a greater bearing on the direction of his art. Maxime Dethomas was a close friend of Toulouse-Lautrec and accompanied the latter on his nightly rounds of the cafés and cabarets of Pigalle and Montmartre (which makes me think that it was Dethomas, along with Miquel Utrillo, also a great connoisseur of that world, who introduced Rusiñol to Parisian nightlife), but most of all he was a fine artist. His bold, schematic style reminds one somewhat of Forain; he was a practitioner of naturalism, drawing with great sincerity characters from life in Montmartre where he lived. Although his art is very personal and different from Rusiñol's, with his drawings Dethomas, who a few years later became Zuloaga's brother-in-law and continued to see Rusiñol often, may have been an incentive for the Barcelona artist to stick to the naturalist current. As for Engel, son of the tenor Pierre-Emile Engel, who had performed in Barcelona, he presented at the 1890 Salon du Champ-de-Mars⁴ a portrait of an old man, *Le père François*, painted outdoors, sitting on a bench in a sort of courtyard, which seems quite close in spirit to Rusiñol's contemporary portraits of isolated figures in paintings such as *Garden with an Old Man and a Girl* (1891) or *Moulin de la Galette*, with Utrillo seen from behind, pensive and alone.

Here we must make mention of the Société nationale des beaux-arts, also known as the Société du Champ-de-Mars, which was a splinter group of the official Salon des artistes français. Casas and Rusiñol joined in its first year, in 1890, which is not surprising bearing in mind that both Carolus-Duran, Casas's teacher, and Gervex were among

the eight founder members. Laplana⁵ notes that it was Utrillo who convinced Rusiñol to join the new salon, which for him represented modern art, in other words, naturalism in the pictorial field, as can be seen clearly in his reports published in the Barcelona daily *La Vanguardia* in 1890. A look at the official illustrated catalogues of the Salons du Champ-de-Mars from 1890, 1891 and 1892 shows there was a group of naturalist painters who practised an art focused on Parisian themes close to that of Rusiñol and Casas, without, in my opinion, any mutual influences, but rather shared interests and an aesthetic kinship.

In the list of people Rusiñol knew in Paris, Utrillo⁶ cites in a footnote painters who showed their works at the Société nationale des beaux-arts, including Alfred Roll, René Billotte and the Swede Anders Zorn, who was a friend of Sorolla. Alfred Roll surely influenced Rusiñol as a portrait artist and we also know that he admired him, just as he admired the work of Cazin and Besnard.⁷ All three were also founding members of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, and the latter two can be placed within the naturalist current. René Billotte interests us because he was one of the best Parisian landscape artists of his time. He specialised in misty views of the Seine, painted from the level of the water with the docks in the foreground and smoke emerging from the barges, good examples of which are *The Seine at the Quai d'Orsay*, which he showed at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1892, and *Les dernières brumes, Notre Dame*, which he showed in 1893 and which is very reminiscent of a painting of the same theme by Rusiñol, *Notre Dame, Paris*, from 1895. With this example I only suggest that the reference to Whistler when speaking of the misty views of Paris by both Casas and Rusiñol is unnecessary, and I believe even wrong, given that the Catalan artists never attained the level of abstraction and musicality of the

American painter's misty landscapes. Other painters from the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, now quite forgotten, who have a relationship with Rusiñol's Paris paintings are Norbert Goeneutte, who painted the bohemian world of Montmartre, and the brothers Victor and Adolphe Binet, whose themes — painted gardens in the suburbs and laundresses in courtyards — show that alongside the rural naturalism pioneered by Jean-François Millet and followed by Bastien-Lepage, there is, within this perhaps third naturalist generation of the early nineties, an urban and suburban naturalism which included Casas and Rusiñol.

Along with this naturalist painting of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, another likely influence on Rusiñol's paintings of customs and bohemian and satirical scenes of Montmartre is that of illustrators for Parisian magazines, as pointed out by Isabel Coll.⁸ To the magazine *Le Courrier Français*, with drawings by Heidbrinck and Lucien Pissarro, which Isabel Coll mentions, I would add other Montmartre magazines that the Catalans of the Moulin de La Galette must have known, such as *Le Chat noir* and *Le Divan japonais*, published by the famous cabarets they frequented, not to mention the songbooks, particularly those of Aristide Bruant, with artwork by Steinlen and collected in a two-volume book, *Dans la rue*, published between 1889 and 1894. Steinlen depicted the miserable world of the underclasses and rogues of whom Bruant sang in an artistic style very close to that of Casas or Rusiñol.

Much has been written of the alleged 'Impressionism' of our Catalan artists. We can immediately discount Impressionist landscape art, something which neither Rusiñol nor Casas ever practised. They never used the Impressionist technique of optical mixing of pure shades, nor the primary colours, nor did they reject black; on the contrary, as we shall see in our study of Rusiñol's

second Paris stage, that of the Île Saint-Louis. What we do indeed find is a relationship with Impressionist figure painting, particularly that of Degas. Utrillo⁹ explains that thanks to his friendship with the Venetian painter Zandomeneghi, neighbour and friend of Suzanne Valadon, who knew all the Impressionists and was a close friend of Degas, he could give the Catalan gang on the Rue de l'Orient the entire history of French painting of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Rusiñol consequently knew Degas' work, and Degas, along with Whistler, influenced him in terms of Japoniste composition. In Rusiñol's Paris oils, the framing is very free, objects and people are cropped, usually placed off-centre, asymmetrically, viewed from above and often in three-quarter length, with large blank spaces in the foreground, diagonal compositional schemes more dynamic than the symmetrical, static frontal scheme. The suggestion of space is not always achieved through linear perspective, but through overlapping planes and atmospheric perspective. All of this gives the instant feeling of surprising naturalness and life in movement that was the great lesson of the Japanese prints that Rusiñol received, in my opinion, second-hand from Whistler, Degas and probably Toulouse-Lautrec and his famous Montmartre cabaret posters.

Between 1889 and 1892 Rusiñol found his place in the Salon du Champ-de-Mars which was, it is safe to say, despite the presence of rather academic painters such as Meissonier and Gervex, the main gathering place for both French and foreign naturalist painters. Utrillo was very much aware of this fact in one of his reports, where he writes: '[...] because both Casas and his inseparable friend Rusiñol are very much at home among the artists gathered at the [Salon du Champ-de-Mars], whose credo is *art for art's sake*, and whose ideals,

much broader and more generous than those of the academics, find beauty in the humblest manifestations of all that, by the mere fact that it exists, is interesting.’¹⁰

The story of the introduction and acceptance of this naturalist painting in Barcelona and the struggle against bourgeois and moralist art and criticism is well-known from the reception given to the large group exhibitions by the trio Casas, Rusiñol and Clarasó at the Sala Parés in 1890, 1891 and 1892. Josep Maria Jordà sums it up well: ‘All that talk of Realism, of *Verismo*, of *plein air*, the faithful evocation of nature without embellishing it, without disfiguring it precisely on the excuse of embellishing it, all that talk of them coming from France wishing to make us understand a new concept of art, they [the critics] could not forgive.’

Despite the opposition of the musty, old-school critics of Barcelona, of which Miquel i Badia, critic for *Brusi*, was the leading representative, this naturalist painting of ordinary themes suffused with rarefied Montmartrian greys, and which at the time represented a modernisation and Europeanisation of Catalan art, finally won out largely thanks to the support of *La Vanguardia*, which, under the intelligent directorship of Modesto Sánchez Ortiz and with the critics Miquel Utrillo, the Paris correspondent, and especially Raimon Casellas, was truly avant-garde from the artistic point of view.

One can draw an enlightening parallel with contemporary Basque art, particularly with its renewal in the figure of Adolfo Guiard,¹² born in 1860, thus a contemporary of Rusiñol’s, who studied in Paris from 1878 to 1886, and was influenced by Degas and some of his fellow travellers and followers, including Zandomenighi and Raffaëlli, something which (and this is not mere chance) we find again in the artists admired by the Catalans of Montmartre, Utrillo, Casas and

Rusiñol. The great art critic and historian Juan de la Encina summed up perfectly Guiard’s role in Basque art, and I believe that what he says also applies perfectly to the role of Casas and Rusiñol in Catalan art in the late nineteenth century: ‘Guiard also represented his people in this, and in bringing us the art and the artistic trends that once prevailed in Paris, he also brought us an appetite for new art forms. With this he opened in our little artistic environment perspectives in all directions. All the artists who came after him [...] followed the modern paths Guiard blazed in Bilbao [...] thus he put us in continual contact with the brightest and most varied focus of artistic output. Since then, so-called Basque art has been marked by the influence of French modern art.’¹³

It is clear that the second *modernista* generation, the ‘post-Impressionists’ Nonell, Mir Pidelaserra and a very young Picasso, was far more revolutionary and went much further than the Casas-Rusiñol tandem, but without their lead, the firm orientation towards the groundbreaking art of France and the community of artists which from 1897 they created with *Quatre Gats* as their base, a sort of *montmartroise* transplant in the heart of bourgeois Barcelona, I do not believe that the way for the younger artists would have been so clear or easy.

This connection with French naturalist painting was very important, but Rusiñol went even further, not only as a painter but also as a writer, complete artist and intellectual, when he embraced the European culture of his time, the late nineteenth century, and adopted the Symbolist aesthetic.

Symbolism

In November 1893 Rusiñol, after his discovery of Sitges and Mallorca, returned to Paris and in December rented a spacious flat in the Île Saint-Louis with Jordà and the Basque painters Zuloaga

and Uranga. He painted mostly intimate scenes, a precedent for which was *The Girl with the Carnation*, done in Sitges some months earlier, portraits of young women usually dressed in black, as if in mourning — *Romantic Novel*, *La Señorita Nantas*, *Portrait of a Woman* — who give us the impression of being self-absorbed, lost in mysterious dreams. This evocative art, which allows us only a glimpse of what it seeks to express, makes a clean break with the naturalist idiom; Rusiñol delves into psychology, he wants to capture the subtleties of feelings. Here he moves away from the realism he pursued in his early works. Beyond the portrait that captures merely the appearance, the artist wanted to suggest a mood that was in fact his own, this lifelong melancholy that characterised him, his well-known sadness, that feeling of loneliness, which was also the fin-de-siècle disease, the nihilism expressed by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. A few years before, from 1891 or 1892, Rusiñol had approached the subject of the ill and disease in several paintings, *Sick Girl* (1891), *Ramon Canudas Ill* (1892), *Convalescent Girl* (1893), culminating in *Morphine* (1894), where in the portrait of a '[...] hysterical woman in a faint in bed, her head buried in a big pillow and grasping convulsively the sheets in her clenched hands [...]'¹⁴ Rusiñol alluded to his own addiction. The Catalan artist shared this morbid and decadent fin-de-siècle sensibility, which he indulged in the representation of the illness, death and loneliness of humankind. One should bear in mind that after Rusiñol's arrival in Paris in 1889, Symbolism gradually spread throughout the Parisian art scene. Rusiñol had read J.K. Huysmans, author of the first great decadent Symbolist novel, *À Rebours* (1884),¹⁵ he deeply admired Maeterlinck, as evidenced by the premiere of *Intruder*, which was the main attraction at the second *modernista* festival in Sitges on 10 September 1893, and was infused with the Symbolist painting

of Puvis de Chavannes and the sentimental, sickly, painful art of Eugène Carrière, which revealed to him a new world, a change of aesthetic register from reality to dream, a world Rusiñol calls 'black dream' in his book *Fulls de la vida* (Leaves of Life) from 1898.

To this influence of French and Belgian Symbolism, we must add that of the English Pre-Raphaelites. Rusiñol sensed the same incompatibility as the Pre-Raphaelites between art as he conceived it and the new positivist, materialist civilisation of the industrial society of the latter half of the nineteenth century; he was not at home in his time, where he felt out of place, out of step. Hence, like the Pre-Raphaelites, he returned to the primitive sources of art before Raphael, to the spiritual art of the great Italian mystical artists, as shown firstly in the diary of his visits to the Louvre, where he admired the Italian primitives¹⁶ and secondly in the copies of the Italian primitives, of Benozzo Gozzoli, of the Pisa school, of Pietro Gerini, of Giotto, of Botticelli and so on, painted during his trip to Tuscany with Zuloaga in the spring of 1894. These copies were meant for Cau Ferrat, his new house in Sitges, which he intended to enlarge and managed to do so in the summer that same year. Indeed, to decorate Cau Ferrat, his house-museum, which he conceived as a temple-haven for the arts, a shrine for followers of the religion of art, the Bayreuth, the Mecca of the Catalan *modernistes*, Rusiñol painted his most blatantly Symbolist work in 1895: the three Symbolist ogival panels of painting, poetry and music, the three sister arts that were to reign at the heart of Cau Ferrat, which surely represented, with the fusion of the allegorical figure and the idyllic landscape, this enchanted paradise of the garden, so common in British and French Symbolist painting, with the escape back to distant times, the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. The allegories of poetry,

painting and music are common in Symbolist art, perhaps even more so in Symbolist sculpture, decorative arts and graphic arts such as bookplates, for example, than in painting. And without suggesting any imitation or direct influence of the Cau Ferrat panels, we can cite as pictorial works an allegory of Music by Hébert, with the iconographic motif of the harp, two decorative paintings, *Poetry* and *Music* by Raphaël Collin (1899), and in Catalonia the two panels, *Poetry* and *Music* by Alexandre de Riquer from 1897. Thinking in terms of parallels with what was happening at the time in Europe, there is an interesting chronological coincidence between the enlargement and transformation of Cau Ferrat into a house-museum and Gustave Moreau's decision to turn his house into a museum; in both cases the works began in 1895. Here I just wish to emphasise how the artistic personality of Rusiñol was in tune with the world of Symbolism, how the artist's home became a haven and temple of art, and this in relation to the paradigmatic house-haven of the neurasthenic character Des Esseintes in Huysmans' novel *À Rebours* and the homes of Gustave Moreau or Fernand Khnopff, among many others.

There was, however, another aspect of the trip to Italy which ultimately turned out to be more important, and that was the visit to Fiesole hill, the land of Fra Angelico, from which several drawings and a story have been conserved.¹⁷ I totally agree with Guillermo Solana¹⁸ about the importance of the discovery of the iconographic and symbolic theme of the cypress during this visit, in which converge the cult of primitive painting of Fra Angelico, the spirituality of the cypress and the turn-of-the-century decadence, the cypress as the tree of the dead. The motif of the avenue of cypress trees would become a leitmotif in Rusiñol's later work and would always be spiritual in character.

In 1896 at Montserrat he painted one of his most successful paintings, *Mystical Footpath* (p. 236), where he associates the young female dreamer dressed in black of his 'intimist' period in Paris with a path lined with cypress trees seen in perspective. It is interesting to note that the female figure, which I would see as an image of loneliness and sadness, was associated by the critics of the period with neurasthenia, like the other portraits of women painted at the Île Saint-Louis, and was described by Josep Maria Roviralta as a sick girl: 'Rusiñol [...] has thrilled us with No. 95, which represents a path of cypresses at Montserrat, and in the foreground there appears sitting on a bench with a book in her hand a woman, the ever-present woman, the invalid woman of Rusiñol.'¹⁹ In the cypress-lined path, Guillermo Solana²⁰ sees an image of double meaning, at once a schematic necropolis, a *memento mori*, and an aspiration for the ideal, a path of perfection and a promise of immortality. Rusiñol wrote at the same time his collection of prose poems *Oracions* (Orations), where he explains what cypresses meant to him: 'The outlines of the cypresses are the headstones of the poor; they are the memories of the humble; they are the essence that the spirit has left upon departing the world while sparking matter back to life; they are the living grave of the last secrets of life; the sacred tree, child of the last breaths of man.'²¹

It is also significant that, according to the tradition recorded by Miquel Utrillo and repeated by Josep Pla,²² the square in El Realejo in Granada, seen by moonlight, with its bower of cypress trees, was the mother of Spanish gardens. This occurred in the autumn of 1895 during Rusiñol's memorable sojourn in Granada, where one could say that he started to explore the pictorial theme of gardens. Previously, however, in his posters, with the co-operation of his friend and companion of

many intellectual adventures Miquel Utrillo, he designed the beautiful poster for his book *Leaves of Life* (1898), which perfectly summarises the Symbolist aesthetic of Rusiñol, for whom art must reveal the soul, the essence of beings and of things, through visual correlations. The delicate and elegant silhouette of the girl looking through the book of his memoirs — the reader who escapes the world of reality through poetry and who is no longer dressed in black — blends harmoniously with the elegiac atmosphere of the French-style garden, where the fountain of life whispers, shaded by the bower of cypress trees, here more decorative than funereal, a garden that is merely the reflection of the thirst for beauty of the soul of the reader and the spirit of Rusiñol. The other work that relates to European, and especially Belgian, Symbolism is the poster for the production of Maeterlinck's play *Interior* at the Teatro Artístico (1898, p. 286), in which our artist returns to the theme of the park, in a dynamic nocturnal vision based on the interplay of curves. The curve of the pond and of the fountain in the foreground, and that of the road that winds through the trees, form a swirling composition where ghostlike characters wander. As well, there is the gathering of the most characteristic iconographic motifs of Symbolism, the fountain, the peacock, the lily in a blue composition, the colour of dreams, that includes all the poetry of the night. The motif of the illuminated yellow window that is reflected in the pond has led Isabel Coll²³ to link this poster to *The House of Mystery* and *The Pink House* (1892) by the Belgian Symbolist painter Degouve de Nuncques, where we find the same effect of an illuminated window, but much more mysterious in appearance, since it is the pink outside walls of the house that are most illuminated. I am not sure whether the Catalan painter and the Belgian painter knew each other in the late 1890s, although they did know

each other and were friends when they both lived in Mallorca in the period 1901–1902. What is certain is that Degouve de Nuncques had become the painter of the night and of its mysterious poetry with, for example, *Park in Milan* (1895) and *The Black Swan* (1896) where we again find the same blue spectrum as in Rusiñol's poster.

Another, short-lived episode from these years of the turn of the nineteenth century was the mystical paintings of the Benedictine monks of Montserrat, *Ecstasy, Paroxysm of a Novice* (p. 264), *A Novice* and *Study of a Novice*, painted in 1897, which can be included in the idealistic, anti-positivist movement of Symbolism, and the return to an occult Catholicism very much of the period, with Sâr Péladan and Huysmans, who had just converted, a movement linked to the rediscovery of El Greco, in which Rusiñol, as we know, played a key part, and which would culminate in the publication of the book *Le Gréco ou le secret de Tolède* in 1911 by the great Catholic writer Maurice Barrès. Rather than looking for parallels with other paintings from the period, I believe we should link these paintings with the Spanish Golden Age painters Zurbarán, Murillo and especially El Greco.

From his second sojourn in Granada, in 1898, we can say that Rusiñol dedicated himself to the theme of the *Gardens of Spain*, the title of the exhibition in November, 1899, at the prestigious Paris gallery L'Art Nouveau, owned by the art dealer Samuel Bing, which was shown again the following year, in November 1900, in Barcelona at the Sala Parés, and which would be the basis for the beautiful, monumental 1903 edition of the book with colour plates *Jardins d'Espanya*.²⁴ The Paris exhibition was generally well received by the French art critics. Without knowing either the painter or Spanish and Catalan *modernista* literature, the young critic of the small magazine *La Revue d'art*, Léon David,²⁵

who years later would become known as the great poet Max Jacob, captured the atmosphere of mystery, death, silence and solitude of these early gardens of Spain painted in Granada, La Granja and Aranjuez between 1895 and 1899. Needless to say, the show at the Sala Parés in 1900 was a great success, and in December the magazine *Pèl i Ploma* devoted its issue number 65 to the painter-poet. The 1903 edition has an introduction written by Rusiñol himself, which is an essential resource for understanding what the theme of the garden meant to him. There is a phrase repeated thereafter by all the critics '[...] And the thing is that gardens are landscape set in verse' — in which he expresses that his idea of beauty and happiness is founded not on untamed nature but on a built space, composed like that of a poem, where the laws of harmony and balance prevail. What dominates, however, in this introduction is a nostalgic evocation of the glorious past of the gardens of Spain and a deep concern regarding their decline at the time and their possible disappearance, which has to do with the sense of decline in the Spain of 1898. It is important to emphasise this peculiar backward-looking view that Rusiñol has of the garden which looks like a ruin, a temple, a remnant about to disappear. Hence an impression of decadence that many Catalan and Spanish poets confused with the decline of Spain and the crisis of 1898, when in fact it was a very personal trait, inherent in the nature of Rusiñol the man and in his aestheticist Symbolism. This confusion has harmed the poet-painter down to today, transforming his attempt at symbolic reproduction of a world where beauty and happiness would reign, a paradise, into an image of the decline of Spain. Moreover, eight of these poems by Mallorcan and Catalan writers were collected and published in the book *Jardins d'Espanya* and continue to accompany for ever more the

paintings of Rusiñol. Only the young Ramón Pérez de Ayala²⁶ and Juan Ramón Jiménez grasped the Symbolist dimension of this oeuvre. Pérez de Ayala was perceptive enough to see that for Rusiñol the garden was the paradigm of the internal nature of the subject, enclosed in its solitude and the silence of its inner realm. Juan Ramón Jiménez²⁷ offered the Catalan painter-poet a garden of verses as if they were a facsimile of the gardens painted by the artist. The Rusiñolian garden is reflected in the poem as if in a mirror: solitary, without human presence, with the light of sunset, dripping grotto, spurting fountain, passage of myrtles, cypress bower, and the central element, which is a rose that holds the feminine essence of the night drawing in, while a nightingale (*rossinyol*, in Catalan) sings, a clear allusion to the Catalan painter's surname.

All this shows the Symbolist dimension of Rusiñol's paintings of gardens which chimes with the contemporary European Symbolism, at no time being a copy of any of its currents. We might find some parallels with Symbolist landscape painters such as Le Sidaner, Ménard or Degouve de Nuncques, but none of these artists dedicated himself exclusively to the garden, as did the Catalan painter-poet. Rusiñol found in this theme the pictorial expression most in keeping with his natural state of mind, a genre of painting which, as Miguel S. Oliver saw it, while still being painting, is resolved in literature, in spirituality. 'It is a vague lyricism in the style of Sully Prudhomme, of Verlaine...'

Conclusions

The role of Rusiñol and Casas in modernising Catalan painting in the early 1890s as introducers of pictorial naturalism, in parallel with the literary naturalism which, as Eduard Valentí said some years ago,²⁸ was the first literary *Modernisme*, was essential in the subsequent evolution of Catalan

painting, as it would mark the collapse of academic art in Catalonia — already undermined by the Realist painting of the previous generation, that of Joaquim Vayreda and Martí i Alsina — and it would pave the way for the Post-Impressionism of the second generation of *modernista* painters, whom Francesc Fontbona dubbed the ‘post-modernistes,’ including Mir, Nonell and a young Picasso. In Europe, however, the situation of Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol was the opposite of that in Catalonia; instead of being pioneers and introducers of novel forms, they followed behind the modernisation of European painting that began in Paris, where they lived together from 1890 to 1893. They were followers of one of the pictorial currents of French painting, naturalism, which, while it represented a clean break with academicism as regards themes, on the formal level had not adopted the then revolutionary technique of Impressionism, and therefore was called in French *le juste milieu* [the happy medium], which remained thus halfway between academicism and Impressionism.

Rusiñol went further than Casas, however, and not only as a painter but also as a complete artist: a poet, intellectual and cultural force, he, together with Raimon Casellas, was one of the main figures on the theoretical level in the introduction of Franco-Belgian Symbolism in Catalonia, which he had become acquainted with first-hand in Paris, which he transplanted with great originality and which — and herein lies the great merit and modernity of Rusiñol — was the cultural movement that best and most accurately represented turn-of-the-century society. His books *Orations* and *Leaves of Life*, his ‘poematic’ play entitled *The Abandoned Garden*, and his paintings, first the Paris portraits of women — lonely, sick, neurasthenic, lost in mysterious dreams — and later the gardens of Spain, comprise, along with that of two fellow

poet-painters, Adrià Gual and Alexandre de Riquer, one of the most fertile and truest visions of Catalan Symbolism.

1. Isabel Coll, *Rusiñol i la pintura europea*. Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2006, p. 35.
2. Josep de C. Laplana, *Santiago Rusiñol, El pintor, l'home*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 44-46.
3. Miquel Utrillo, *Història anecdòtica del Cau Ferrat*. Grup d'Estudis Sitgetans, Sitges, 1989, p. 60.
4. *Catalogue Officiel Illustré de la Société nationale des beaux-arts*. Paris, 1890, p. 104.
5. J. de C. Laplana, *Santiago...*, op. cit., n. 3, p. 136.
6. M. Utrillo, *Història...*, op. cit., n. 4, p. 65.
7. J. de C. Laplana, *Santiago...*, op. cit., n. 3, p. 134.
8. I. Coll, *Rusiñol...*, op. cit., n. 2, p. 67.
9. M. Utrillo, *Història...*, op. cit., n. 4, pp. 60-61.
10. Miquel Utrillo, ‘Desde París. En el Salón de 1890. Campo de Marte’, in *La Vanguardia*, 14 May 1890.
11. Josep Maria Jordà, *Ramon Casas, pintor*. Llibreria Catalonia, Barcelona, 1931, p. 25.
12. See Javier González de Durana, *Adolfo Guiard*. Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, 1984.
13. Juan de la Encina, ‘Adolfo Guiard’, in *Hermes*, Bilbao, May 1918.
14. Josep Maria Jordà, *La publicidad*, 19 October 1894.
15. Santiago Rusiñol cites Huysmans when he speaks of the primitives in *Impresiones de arte. Obras completas* (2nd edn.). Selecta, Barcelona, 1956, pp. 1814-1815.
16. S. Rusiñol, ‘La oración del domingo’, *ibid*, p. 1814.
17. S. Rusiñol, ‘El monte de los cipreses’, *ibid*, pp. 1838-1841.
18. Guillermo Solana, ‘El camino de los cipreses’, in *Los pintores del alma*. Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, Madrid, 2000, pp. 61-62.
19. J. M. Roviralta, ‘Salón Parés’, in *Luz*, year II, no. 6, 31 January 1898, p. 10.
20. G. Solana, ‘El camino...’, op. cit., n. 17, p. 65.
21. S. Rusiñol, *Oracions. Obres completes* (2nd edn.). Selecta, Barcelona, 1956, p. 108.
22. Josep Pla, *Rusiñol y su tiempo*. Barna, Barcelona, 1942, p. 179.
23. I. Coll, *Rusiñol...*, op. cit., n. 2, p. 163.
24. S. Rusiñol, *Jardins d'Espanya*. Graf. Thomas, Barcelona, 1903.
25. See Eliseu Trenc, ‘Una crítica artística dels “Jardins d'Espanya” de Santiago Rusiñol per Max Jacob’, in *Revista de Catalunya*, Barcelona, no. 174, 2002, pp. 53-63.
26. Ramón Pérez de Ayala, *Poesías Completas* (4th edn.). Espasa Calpe, Buenos Aires, 1951, p. 89.
27. Juan Ramón Jiménez, ‘A Santiago Rusiñol, Por cierta rosa (En su libro “Jardines de España”’, in *Segunda antología poética: 1898-1918*. Calpe, Madrid, 1920-1922.
28. Eduard Valentí, *El primer modernismo literario catalán y sus fundamentos ideológicos*. Ariel, Barcelona, 1973.

The artist's condition (I): creation and image

EDUARD VALLÈS

'Picasso is the great painter that, in his Blue Period, best illustrated Rusiñol's *The Joy that Passes*.'

Salvador Dalí, 'Picasso, Rusiñol y Dalí', 1962

'What attracted him [Picasso] about Rusiñol was undoubtedly his role as a leader.'

Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, '*Rusiñol, pintor*', 1997

During the nineteen-sixties, more than thirty years after Rusiñol's death, Salvador Dalí wrote the following in an article titled 'Picasso, Rusiñol and Dalí': 'Picasso is the great painter that, in his Blue Period, best illustrated Rusiñol's *L'Alegria que passa* (The Joy that Passes).'¹ Rusiñol's play *The Joy that Passes* was one of his most popular literary works, and below we seek to provide evidence for a statement that Dalí wrote perhaps off the top of his head, surely unaware that Picasso knew Rusiñol's play and took an interest in it.

Picasso and Rusiñol shared a keen interest in creating their image as an artist and, thus, in what their place was in society. In both cases this attitude responded to personal reflections which, at different levels, would eventually inform their work. Picasso, some sixty years after the fact, actually became interested in two literary works by Rusiñol — *The Joy that Passes* and the novel *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* — both of which we deal with here, since this interest also came through in his art.

Margarida Casacuberta writes, 'to say that with Santiago Rusiñol the modern artist is born in Catalonia seems an obvious, irrefutable claim.

Rusiñol knew how to turn his love of painting into a socially recognised profession.'² One of the reasons we can define Rusiñol as a modern artist is his creation of his own image. For years he built up his image through his works of art and literature, at the service of a work that loomed above both: Rusiñol himself. Moreover, one of Rusiñol's key discourses relates to the role of the artist in society. According to Eduard Valentí Fiol, 'for Santiago Rusiñol this theme of the artist's place in the world became, from a certain point, central to his life and his work'.³ Rusiñol dealt with this theme in several literary works, including *Els caminants de la terra* (*The Earth Walkers*) and *The Joy that Passes*, both profound reflections on the artist based on symbolic parameters. All differences aside, something similar happened with Picasso, who at various points in his life pondered this question of how the artist fits into society, especially during the Rose Period — and to a lesser extent during the Blue Period — in which this question, addressed in the iconography he created, became central to his work. In fact there are considerable conceptual similarities between Picasso's painting and Rusiñol's writing insofar as

both sometimes used the same symbolic parameters to frame the figure of the artist.⁴

The Joy that Passes

The Joy that Passes is a one-act lyrical play with music by Enric Morera (p. 132). Broadly speaking, the plot revolves around a travelling circus which seeks to redeem the people of a town through 'poetry'. The town is in the grips of 'prose' and does not understand the artists' message, and in the end events come to a head that evidences the populace's incomprehension. At the same time Rusiñol establishes several dichotomies, parallel to this core idea, such as the tension between the artist and society, and that between ideals and reality. *The Joy that Passes* was much acclaimed in its day and opened just as Picasso was making his debut in the cultural circles of Barcelona. For the play, Rusiñol did a poster with a pierrot-clown standing in the middle of a road in the foreground and a wagon in the background (p. 131). One of the main characters in the play is this same clown, who in the end, after the townspeople have failed to understand the circus's message, heroically reimburses their money, all the while cursing them. This final reflection, the breach between the artist and society must have made quite an impact on a young Picasso just finding his feet in the art world. Picasso immediately identified with the story, especially with the clown, actually Rusiñol's alter ego in the play. We should not forget that Rusiñol had experienced this harsh duality in his own life, a theme he took further in *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*. According to Josep de C. Laplana, Rusiñol got the inspiration for *The Joy that Passes* from a group of acrobats he saw in Brolle, France: 'From that event came a painting and the idea for Rusiñol's best play: *The Joy that Passes*.'⁵ The painting depicts a family of acrobats in the middle of the field beside their wagons (p. 132), and Rusiñol

essentially put all this iconography into the play. *The Joy that Passes* addresses the Baudelairian idea of the artist as a clown in the tradition of works such as *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo. As Jean Starobinski posited, in the late nineteenth century the artist hid himself behind the guise of the clown or the acrobat, a character that allows him to create an alter ego and at the same time reveal the sorrow in the soul of the modern artist linked to a certain state of melancholy.⁶ The new industrial society blurred points of reference and many artists assumed the iconography of the circus as a bastion of hope and freedom. The recent shunning of classical mythology led to a subversion of the figure of the hero, whose place was then taken by exaggerated, distorted figures such as the clown. Both Rusiñol and Picasso made use of this alter ego, and it may well have been Rusiñol who, in his literary works, introduced Picasso to this device.

Picasso knew of Rusiñol's hit play, which opened in January 1899, the same month in which Picasso returned from his long stay in Horta. Soon a number of young artists, Picasso included, made the connection between Rusiñol and this world of symbolic characters as alter egos of the artist. It was no coincidence that he did a portrait of Rusiñol surrounded by Pierrots, in what was then a very logical association of ideas (p. 129). This rather eloquent portrait dates from 1899, the same year the play opened. This may be the first of the portraits in which Rusiñol appears in a pose that would later become iconic: standing stooped, pensive, hands behind his back. This portrait also coincides with the time when the Pierrot figure starts to inhabit Picasso's works, even commercial ones, such as the poster he submitted to the 1900 carnival competition, in which the clowns are identical to the ones in the portrait of Rusiñol. The final version of the poster has been lost and

we have just a few preparatory sketches (p. 128).⁷ Of course, other artists and writers used this figure, but Rusiñol was one of the leading figures in the Catalan art world at the time and we know that Picasso followed him closely. But this is not the only evidence we have to link Picasso with *The Joy that Passes*. Later, Picasso did a version of the clown in the poster for Rusiñol's play that was published in the first two issues of the magazine *Arte Joven*. In the first, preliminary issue, he illustrated an editorial-cum-declaration of intent (p. 130).⁸ It should be noted that Picasso's version of the clown is closer to the spirit of the magazine than Rusiñol's original: while Rusiñol's clown is sad and resigned, with his hands in his pockets and eyes half closed, Picasso's confronts the viewer, left hand now out and pointing directly at us, his eyes bulging. This version of the clown is in keeping with the fact that the publishers were two young men looking to make an impact in Madrid with a new magazine. The clown appears twice in *Arte Jove* at the time of greatest interest in the figure of Rusiñol, to whom the magazine made repeated reference.

Picasso, who at a very early stage adopted as an alter ego the fragile figure of the harlequin, in time would do the same with the Minotaur. As mentioned above, although it is normally associated with the Rose Period, he retained the Minotaur as an alter ego until the last years of his life. Among the most important works — perhaps the masterpiece — from the Rose Period is *The Acrobat Family*, in which Picasso appears as the harlequin on the left-hand side of the painting. However, the work closest from the discursive viewpoint is — as Josep Palau i Fabre notes⁹ — *Les Noces de Pierrette* (The Marriage of Pierrette) (p. 135). *Les Noces de Pierrette*, which lies halfway between the Blue and Rose Periods, depicts a harlequin bidding farewell to his beloved, who has chosen to marry the rich man, the bourgeois.

And we say 'bourgeois' because the iconography of this character was not, as previously believed, new to the work of Picasso. In fact, the central character in the painting is the same drawn by Picasso years before and published in the magazine *Arlequin* with the title *El buen burgués* (The Good Bourgeois) (p. 134).¹⁰ Rarely reproduced, the drawing recalls the stout, haughty character in a top hat from *Les Noces de Pierrette*. In other words, Picasso had already identified the flipside of the harlequin and in this great oil he places them in confrontation. We return to this duality in the next section, in a different context, that of *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*.

Let us go back to the beginning of this chapter. The portrait that Picasso did of Rusiñol surrounded by Pierrots, probably the first example of Picasso's interest in the theme, is quite eloquent in this regard. Picasso recognises in Rusiñol the melancholy persona (half-closed eyes, hands behind his back) surrounded by clowns. The latter figure is Rusiñol's alter ego, and in time it will likewise become Picasso's, albeit in the form of the harlequin. This discourse, taken up in France by writers such as Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Flaubert, as well as by friends of Picasso's like Apollinaire, had its precedent in Rusiñol before Picasso's move to France. Beyond these influences which Picasso would receive in France, he was already familiar with this discourse, popularised in Barcelona by, perhaps more than anyone else, Santiago Rusiñol.

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During the nineteen-sixties, in a series of works, mostly etchings, by Picasso that often recall his youth, this discourse reappears and, with it, the question of its relationship with Rusiñol's *The Joy that Passes*. We are talking about a pair of etchings, little known and rarely shown, belonging to *Suite 347*, done in May 1968. Both are given titles that are

more descriptive than identifying, in the sense of telling us something about their significance. The first is called *Travelling Actors, with Self-Portrait and Cockfight* (p. 133). In this etching the artist appears beside a wagon filled with the most outlandish characters. A few days later he did another etching, *Old Acrobats Drawing Close, with a Broken Wheel, to a Crowd of Jeering Men* (p. 133). This descriptive title broadly outlines the plot of *The Joy that Passes*. Here we are not making a claim for the lasting influence of the play — nor do we deny it — just that an idea which Picasso, through Rusiñol, came across as a young man crops up again years later in a series of etchings that often evoke his past in Barcelona.

The image of the artist

Picasso first became interested in Rusiñol around the time he left school, that is, when his mindset was no longer that of a student but that of a budding professional artist. Both the end of his academic training and the earliest known portraits of Rusiñol came in 1899. It is in this context that his interest in the figure of the artist became deeper still. The next question is: what was the prevailing model — closest at hand — when Picasso reflected on his place as an artist once he had embarked on his career? Notwithstanding any interest Picasso took in his art, undoubtedly more than anyone else that model was Santiago Rusiñol. Thus we find in Picasso's portraits, an excellent source for hints regarding the nature of Picasso's interest.

Let us take, for example, two artists also connected with Rusiñol, both probably, in technical terms, more gifted than him: Ramon Casas, belonging to the same generation as Rusiñol, and the somewhat younger Isidre Nonell. Although Picasso took an interest in the work of both, the same cannot be said of their personas. We know of very few portraits by Picasso of Casas or Nonell, and they are of a wholly

different order to those he did of Rusiñol. Overall, this indicates less interest in Casas, and it is significant that in at least three portraits he and Rusiñol appear together. It is clear that the figure of Rusiñol was much more useful to Picasso at the time because it provided him with a model that Casas and Nonell (to cite just two examples) could not: the complete package, the image of the artist.

In an article for the exhibition *Barcelona 1900* at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Teresa-M. Sala and Juan Carlos Bejarano wrote of the image of the artist: 'Both Rusiñol and Casas encapsulate perfectly the characteristic situation of the artist in the context of Catalonia. They sought to renew the structures of the art of their homeland by looking abroad (to Europe, rather than Spain), always combining local with foreign tradition, to create something different and personal [...] But the new figure of the individualistic artist, who seeks to find his own style [...] was beginning to emerge at the time, as it was in other parts of Europe...' ¹¹ Later in the article Sala and Bejarano note that 'many artists created their own self-image, perhaps out of fear of getting lost in the crowd, in the vulgarity of anonymity.' ¹² The authors then cite as a paradigmatic case Santiago Rusiñol. The desire for self-affirmation in both Casas and Rusiñol is quite evident in the portraits they did of each other. Both were well aware of the position they held within the art world and they even did a painting together of each doing the other's portrait, *Retratant-se (Portraying Each Other)*. ¹³ Two of the most significant portraits they did of each other — which they exchanged as gifts — illustrate this desire to forge an image together. In the painting *Ramon Casas, Velocipedist*, Rusiñol depicts Casas in an intentionally sketchy natural landscape out of which the artist emerges; an artist whom, in order to underscore his modernity, is shown engaging in a sport, at

the time considered a modern thing to do. Casas, on the other hand, did an oil of Rusiñol with a suitcase — a reference to his restless traveller's spirit — and a couple of paintings in the background, indicating Rusiñol's artistic inclinations (p. 137).

Picasso knew perfectly well what this pair represented, despite his preference for Rusiñol as a subject for painting. Of the three known portraits of Ramon Casas with Rusiñol, two are satirical and from the time when Picasso was moving away from Rusiñol (p. 140, 141 and 317). Rusiñol, paradoxically, despite this interest in creating a self-image, hardly did self-portraits. The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya has the painting *Female figure*, in which the artist's face appears in a mirror behind the woman (p. 136).¹⁴ Unlike Rusiñol, according to Isabel Coll, Casas 'worked harder at portraying himself than any other artist of his generation, a dedication thanks to which we can now enjoy a series of magnificent portraits that he did at different stages of his life.'¹⁵ At Cau Ferrat there is a superb self-portrait of the artist in which, from the shadows, he both hides and reveals himself (p. 138). Picasso followed the example of Casas, rather than Rusiñol, as we can see in his early portraits, where he also often hid himself, for example, leaving part of his face in darkness or disguising himself (p. 139). Later on, as we have seen, he took this escapist tendency to the extreme in the figure of the harlequin.

The other side of artistic bohemia

So far we have referred to successful artists, but in reflecting on the image of the artist both Rusiñol and Picasso took an interest in the other side — the bittersweet, as Rusiñol called it. If the antagonist of the artist could be the bourgeois, then it could, in a certain manner, also be the artist himself, namely the artist who is either unsuccessful or is

suffering a temporary setback, at a low point in his career. At different times in their lives Picasso and Rusiñol recorded depressing bohemian scenes, and, despite their differences in age and character, some of these works have similar compositions, especially as regards the recreation of sordid, closed spaces which in Picasso, in his gloomiest moments, become claustrophobic. Mireia Freixa has dealt with both men's interest in the sorrows of the artist.¹⁶ One example of this is Rusiñol's *'El meu quarto a París'* (My Room in Paris), the composition of which is similar to some drawings by Picasso, such as a sketch for the painting *Poor Geniuses* (p. 142-143). In the foreground appears the downcast subject and the background is much the same in compositional terms: the centre space is dominated by the floor and, behind, a bed and a window form the backdrop. There are several works in which Rusiñol and Picasso deal with this theme, especially during their bohemian years. While Picasso's vision is more expressionist — as in *Poor Geniuses* — Rusiñol's compositions are more naturalistic and the identity of the people is clearer. Not only the sculptor Enric Clarasó, but also friends like Miquel Utrillo and Erik Satie were the subjects of similar paintings. But perhaps the most extreme examples were the artists Carles Mani and Pere Ferran, whom Rusiñol portrayed both on canvas and in writing during one of the most difficult periods of his bohemian experience (p. 143).¹⁷

A model of the artist

It was not the work of Rusiñol and Casas that most interested Picasso, rather it was their ability to cast a shadow over their surroundings. When Picasso took inspiration from Casas in the portraits for his first show at Quatre Gats, he did so just that once, because technically speaking he was good enough to match Casas; what he still lacked was

stature, what he was really striving for. Which is why Picasso embarked on the *Arte Joven* project in Madrid, out of a desire to have a magazine he could call his own and to be its chief illustrator, like Casas at *Pèl & Ploma*. Much the same can be said of Rusiñol, who, without being the most talented artist of his time, either as a painter or as a writer, also represented something more important for Picasso. In this sense, Cristina Mendoza and Mercè Doñate write: 'What attracted him [Picasso] about Rusiñol was undoubtedly his role as a leader.'¹⁸ Beyond all the influences and similarities we refer to in this book, Rusiñol embodied a model that, in his own way and differences aside, Picasso would follow in the future. Picasso became an international figure who often helped out subsequent generations of artists and, also very much like Rusiñol, made his studios and homes places of pilgrimage for artists, scholars and others. In a very similar way, this was the role played best by Rusiñol in Barcelona when Picasso first discovered the city as a young man: Rusiñol was the undisputed model of the artist, many other artists enjoyed his support and during his lifetime he built his own shrine, Cau Ferrat, where he kept his works along with those of other artists and where he received the major figures of his day. Picasso, when he arrived in Barcelona at the age of just thirteen, had yet to discover this image of the artist. It was a new model, one which caught his attention and which he would scrutinise in twenty portraits and, in his later years, reproduce with similarities to Rusiñol as significant as the ones we have mentioned here.

1. Salvador Dalí, 'Picasso, Rusiñol y Dalí', in *El Noticiero Universal*, 6 June 1962, p. 15.
2. Margarida Casacuberta, *Santiago Rusiñol: Vida, literatura i mite*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1997, p. 5.
3. Eduard Valentí Fiol, *El primer modernisme literari català i sus fundamentos ideològics*. Ariel, Esplugues de Llobregat, 1973, p. 302.
4. For an analysis of the conceptual similarities between Picasso's Blue and Rose Periods and Rusiñol's work, see *Picasso i Rusiñol. La cruïlla de la modernitat*. Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2008, pp. 28-33.
5. Josep de C. Laplana, *Santiago Rusiñol. El pintor, l'home*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1995, p. 96.
6. Jean Starobinski, *Retrato del artista como saltimbanqui*. Abada, Madrid, 2007.
7. Probably closest to the original is the version owned by the Musée Picasso in Paris, on the back of which is another less finished sketch (MP 427r and MP 427v, respectively). Yet another sketch is owned by the Museu Picasso in Barcelona (MPB 110.883 v).
8. *Arte Joven*, preliminary issue, 10 March 1901, p. 2, and *Arte Joven*, no. 1, 31 March 1901, p. 2.
9. Josep Palau i Fabre was the first to make this connection between *L'Alegria que passa* and *Les Noces de Pierrette*. Josep Palau i Fabre, 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 265, October 1981, p. 52. Palau i Fabre subsequently developed this argument in the study *Picasso. Les noces de Pierrette. 1905*. Binoche et Godeau, Turin, 1989.
10. This drawing was published in the magazine *Arlequin* (1903) but the whereabouts of the original are unknown. The magazine was published in Madrid in 1903 and Picasso did several illustrations for it, five new ones and others that had been published previously in *Arte Joven*. This finding, by the researcher Ramón Arús, was first published in the article 'Picasso: Cinc dibuixos desconeguts a la revista *Arlequin*', in the *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi*, no. xv, 2001, pp. 101-112. In 2007 a facsimile edition was published with prologue by Francesc Fontbona and main text by Ramón Arús and Glòria Escala. Fundació Pablo Ruiz Picasso-Museo Casa Natal/Ayuntamiento de Málaga, Malaga, 2007.
11. Juan Carlos Bejarano and Teresa-M. Sala, 'La imatge dels creadors', in *Barcelona 1900* (exh. cat.). Van Gogh Museum/ Mercatorfonds/Lunberg, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 120-121.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
13. Rusiñol kept this painting for the rest of his life and it remains at Cau Ferrat in Sitges.
14. For many years this was the only known self-portrait of Rusiñol, until Isabel Coll discovered another. The painting was shown at an exhibition at Es Baluard, Palma de Mallorca, in March held to mark Rusiñol Year (2007).
15. Isabel Coll, *El ressò de l'impressionisme al Cau Ferrat*. Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 1999, p. 91.
16. Mireia Freixa, *El Modernisme a Catalunya*. Barcanova, Barcelona, 1991, p. 98.
17. Rusiñol mentioned both artists in a sort of social comment published in *La Vanguardia*, 'La pasta hidràulica', in which he highlighted the poverty in which the two artists lived in Paris. *La Vanguardia*, 28 February 1895, pp. 4-5.
18. Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, 'Rusiñol, pintor', in *Santiago Rusiñol. 1861-1931* (exh. cat.). Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya/Fundación Cultural Mapfre, Barcelona/Madrid, 1997, p. 29.

The 'imaginary museums' of Rusiñol and Picasso: between the imaginary mirror and the mausoleum of the modern artist

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On the concept of the 'imaginary museum'

Shortly after Picasso's death, André Malraux readily responded to the request from the artist's widow Jacqueline asking him to come to see her regarding problems with her late husband's bequest to the French state. The meeting at Mougins and the tour Jacqueline gave him of what had been Picasso's final home and studio, Notre-Dame-de-Vie, in order to show him the artist's earliest paintings, collected by Jacqueline herself, became the leitmotif of the essay Malraux devoted to Picasso's oeuvre entitled *La Tête d'obsidienne*.¹ Rather than the outcome of the dispute — which ended happily since the paintings Malraux refers to can be seen at the Musée Picasso in Paris — what interests us about this text is that in it Malraux applies the concept that he had devised in another essay, *Le Musée imaginaire* (1947),² to the particular case of the personal collection of the most remarkable artist of the twentieth century.

The concept of the 'imaginary museum' has to do with the series of artworks that are part of a tradition, in a very loose sense of the term, from both the temporal and cultural standpoint. The 'imaginary museum' is a concept inseparable from modern art and the modern artist, one able to embrace all those works of art which could be interpreted as such rather than as representations of nature, divinity or history. The first characteristic of modern art, Malraux says, is that it is not explanatory; thereon follow the freedom of the creative act, the rejection of the finite nature of the artwork and the refusal to imitate or conform to any ideological system. In this sense, any object

which, by the action of time, has lost its practical condition or its relationship with a particular symbolic system may become part of this vast museum if the gaze of the artist rescues it from limbo through creation itself and the affinities that determine choice. The obsidian head that serves as a title for his artistic biography of Picasso is incorporated in the artist's imaginary museum and, in general terms, the global imaginary museum through the strength of Picasso's creativity. And there need not have been any direct contact between the artist and the object; rather the advent of photography, one of the languages of modernity, leads to correlations between the one and the other, it fragments the object, underscores a detail in it, reinterprets it and lends it the status of artistic work. At once, photography enables the artist to become aware of these affinities and to establish a dialogue with works from the past. Thus, André Malraux defends the technological reproducibility of the work of art: 'photography', he writes, 'reveals singular works removed from their own civilisation. Lost in museums, in collections, they look like curiosities. Isolated, analysed, they become question marks.'³ And the question is precisely what differentiates the, shall we say, conventional museum, which is an affirmative statement, and the 'imaginary museum', a 'mental space' in which the dialogue between past and present occurs and where, as a result of this dialogue, works from the past are resuscitated, updated. The question lies at the very foundation of modern art.

Malraux also says that resuscitated works are not necessarily immortal, that they are subject to constant changes and metamorphoses, like an echo that responds to the centuries with successive voices, under the circumstances of the present world. The 'imaginary museum' can only exist in our memories. There is nothing further from an institution or an enclosed space, geographically specific and conceptually limited. It is not a Louvre: the 'imaginary museum' is a mental space that can be enlarged as works are added thanks to the new forms of technological or technical reproduction of artworks, which allow access to them through an experience of knowledge. There is an 'imaginary museum' which is a compendium of all the works that constitute the history of art, an ideal, utopian museum, the destination of all those objects that have joined the category of artwork through this dialogue with the modern artist and the metamorphosis that follows. Metamorphosis, Malraux goes on to say, is the soul of the 'imaginary museum', and, he notes, 'the multitude of works from all civilisations does not enrich the Louvre, but rather calls it into question.'⁴ The ultimate space of the 'imaginary museum' is the 'spirit' of the artists and the set of choices with which each of them individually draws works from the ruins of death. Individually because within the great whole of the 'imaginary museum' there are the imaginary museums of each person, the works with which each artist establishes a dialogue based on creation itself, the works that impact on him or her and become part of his or her most hidden background, whether they precede or are contemporary with his or her artistic practice.

In *La Tête de obsidienne* André Malraux invented Picasso's 'imaginary museum', from the coveted Matisse in the artist's private collection to the remote obsidian head to which the modern

Demoiselles d'Avignon relate. Although Malraux does not say as much, yet Alexandre Cirici and Josep Palau i Fabre suggest, the archives of the Museu Picasso in Barcelona corroborate and Eduard Vallès⁵ sustains the argument that the pictorial and literary works and especially the image of Santiago Rusiñol are also part of Picasso's 'imaginary museum' in the form of the several portraits that he did of him between 1898 and 1901, the recreation of themes and motifs previously dealt with by Rusiñol and Picasso's recovery in the early sixties of the European bourgeois iconography through the characters from the novel *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*, Santiago Rusiñol's quintessential work.⁶

Picasso in the 'imaginary museum' of Santiago Rusiñol

Despite being much younger, Picasso is also part of Santiago Rusiñol's 'imaginary museum' through five drawings hanging on a wall on the ground floor of Cau Ferrat (pp. 62-63). These five small-format works that Rusiñol bought for a pittance at *Quatre Gats*⁷ speak of the dialogue between the two artists and the presence, in the work of Rusiñol, of the seed that would germinate in Picasso's paintings. We cannot speak, in the case of Rusiñol's 'imaginary museum', of any obsidian head. However, the work of the painters previous to Raphael, the re-evaluation of El Greco's work and the collection of antique Catalan wrought ironwork amassed by *Modernisme*'s leading figure and preserved at Cau Ferrat necessarily relate to it. Without Rusiñol, Cau Ferrat, or what Rusiñol and Cau Ferrat symbolise, Picasso, as we know him now, perhaps would not exist. Thus the 'imaginary museum' posits a dialogue between past, present and future that we would do well to follow up on.

Shortly after Rusiñol's first stay in Granada, the journalist Francisco de Paula Vallada published this description of the studio-home that the artist had built for himself outside Barcelona:

'He is now settled in Sitges, in his beloved 'Cau Ferrat', surrounded by old paintings, artistic ironwork, Gothic panels, rare sculptures and art books; in his delightful museum house, through which have passed in devout pilgrimage writers and artists, archaeologists and antiquarians, poets and musicians.

In the mansion of art, Santiago Rusiñol passes the months of the year that he does not devote to his travels abroad and around Spain, always productive for the painting of his country, since regarding his impressions of everywhere he goes he has the excellent habit of writing a lot and well and of publishing it in so pleasant and widely read a newspaper as *La Vanguardia* of Barcelona, which devotes almost every day a good part of its eight large pages to matters of history, literature and art, with exquisite illustrations by good painters and cartoonists.

Two years ago, Rusiñol told us in several letters, quite exquisite in terms of the originality of the style, the frankness of assessment and colourfulness of the descriptions, of his trip to Florence, the artistic city in which the Italian Renaissance first occurred, and if we had space, we would copy in full the letter in which he describes his nocturnal stroll, his first exploration of that grandiose museum of Italian art, and which is one of the writings most worthy of reading and savouring by the distinguished man of letters, painter and archaeologist. Later, his tour of Italy; his travels to France, especially to Paris; his visits to some Spanish regions, have provided him with the opportunity to express passionate, enthusiastic, vigorous and energetic opinions, but always thoughtful, accurate, revealing his honest and noble sentiments, of love for Spain, of desires for aggrandisement and justice for all that is Spanish art and that forms a terrible contrast, in

terms of merit and interest, with the neglect and the contempt in which we generally hold what little we have left of the great artistic heritage bequeathed to us by our forebears.⁸

Cau Ferrat in Sitges is, above all else, beyond the temple of modern art and the artist, the Mecca of *Modernisme* or focus of cultural activity, the embodiment of the 'imaginary museum' of Santiago Rusiñol. On the walls, exterior and interior, in the cupboards, drawers and shelves of Cau Ferrat are conserved the traces of this peculiar imaginary museum, the traces of a life dedicated to creation and understood as a work of art in itself. Iron, glass, ceramics, pottery, fabrics, sculptures, drawings, albums of mementos, photos, postcards, letters, manuscripts, books, magazines, diplomas and medals hang from the walls of Cau Ferrat or now lie in the archives of the Santiago Rusiñol Library and the stores of the Sitges Heritage Consortium. It is no accident that certainly the most interesting and engaging works by the artist — as well as, of course, the least commercial ones: the cemetery of Montmartre, the two morphines, the novices, the first abandoned gardens, the first Sitges courtyards, the portraits with echoes of El Greco — share the space with the copies that Rusiñol and his friends did at the 'non-imaginary' museums of Italy, France and Spain that they visited on their artistic pilgrimages. From these 'modern temples' they returned loaded with images: Botticelli's *Venus*, Lucas Cranach's *Eve*, Fra Angelico's *The Coronation of the Virgin*, El Greco's *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*, Alonso Cano's *Christ* and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. Many of these copies are on the top floor of Cau Ferrat, hung on the upper part of the walls, above the array of ironwork; others came to form part of newspaper articles and were later preserved in the pages of the book *Impresiones*

de arte (1898; Impressions of Art), saved from the almost certain oblivion that would otherwise have occurred due to the short-lived nature of the ordinary press. A number of others are conserved as original drawings in the stores of Cau Ferrat and have reappeared in exhibitions such as *Aesthetics for the Eyes, Poetry for Life* or *Unknown Rusiñol*.⁹ These images are indiscernible and, to some extent, barely intelligible or not intelligible enough, without the literature that explains their context and that also has its place in the temple of art in which officiated, from 1892 to 1899, the high priest of art embodied by Santiago Rusiñol.¹⁰

The book *Impressions of Art* is a compendium of diary entries written by Santiago Rusiñol and illustrated by himself and his friends — Miquel Utrillo, Arcadi Mas i Fondevila, Macari Oller, Ignacio Zuloaga, Pablo de Uranga — during artistic sojourns in Paris, Madrid, and Florence, between 1894 and 1897. Published in *La Vanguardia*, directed by Modesto Sánchez Ortiz — a portrait of whom is found on the upper floor of Cau Ferrat (p. 91) — and lauded as a model of newspaper publishing by the most progressive Spanish intelligentsia, they endure in book form. In *Impressions of Art*, we find the literary and, to a certain extent, the theoretical reflection of Santiago Rusiñol's 'imaginary museum', which is shared, in this specific circumstance, by a much larger group of artists and intellectuals, the aesthetic, cultural and ideological project of which remains present and, thus, alive within these walls. There is a whole theory of modern art and the modern artist expounded on the walls of Cau Ferrat and in the pages of *Impressions of Art*, the same theory that Santiago Rusiñol, in those years, expounded repeatedly and which we might summarise in the following lines, taken from one of the most famous speeches he delivered at the *modernista* festivals, in this case the third, held in the summer of 1894:

'We work wielding kisses and hammers; and so here all together, all of us, without fear of being overheard by those who are strangers to art and poetry, we might find comfort in crying out what we often dare not say amidst the great flock: that we wish to be poets and that we disdain and pity those who do not feel poetry; that we prefer a Leonardo da Vinci or a Dante to a province or a village; that we would rather be Symbolists, and unbalanced, and even mad and decadent, than weakened and tame; that common sense drowns us; that prudence, in our land, there is in excess; that there is no harm in passing for Don Quixote where so many Sancho Panzas graze, nor in reading books of the bewitched where there is no reading of books of any kind.'¹¹

The model of an artist that the walls of Cau Ferrat and the pages of *Impressions of Art*, of *Orations* (1897) and of *Leaves of Life* (1898) enable us to reconstruct constitutes the option championed by a very representative part of the *modernista* movement and is a synthesis of what is represented by El Greco and the early Italian primitives, the craftsmen who worked wrought-iron in the Middle Ages, the 'unknown artists', the mystical visionaries represented in the portraits of the monks of Montserrat, the acrobats who walk the land and the bohemians who fall ill and die due to their loyalty to the artistic vocation. To all of them Rusiñol, lord of Cau Ferrat, to the bitter end committed to this same vocation and incarnation of the synthesis of the different types of modern artist, addresses the *Orations* he published in 1897, illustrated with engravings by Miquel Utrillo and music by Enric Morera. 'To the Primitives' is one of the most famous *orations* in this regard:

'Painters of the cloister, mystical souls soaring above the clouds, poets of heaven working in the codes of faith, perhaps you have been the only ones that, in

setting yourselves apart from the world, have inhabited that land with the visions of other realms.

The figures you painted and sculpted are immortal figures. The holy women you created are winged and vaguely airy; their hair is the clear colour of the moon, their foreheads are chalices, and their bodies are slender columns. The beauty you showed is the beauty that comes down from the golden fire of the great windows, stealing from those flames their crown of aureoles, the blue for their eyes, and the faded tints for their lips. The expression you reflected is the light of a seraphic gaze; the innocence of the mouth that the incense of myrrh of the Psalms perfumes, and the bath of vagueness; and the art you taught men was a neglected piece of the glory here on earth, by holy mercy.

O, seraphic primitives! The prayer to your memory is a kiss on the memory of art; it is a cry to your shadow, pleading for solace and shelter; it is a supplication for your example that guides our lives, lost and astray in the thickets of doubt.

You, sweet Fra Angelico, deified dove, tell us wherein you found inspiration, which seraphs dictated to you, which raptures you felt, which mysticisms you wept for, which raptures lifted you to give holy life to the beatific figures that with so much love you embroidered in your altarpieces.

You, Leonardo, poet and painter simultaneously, architect and musician together, tell us whence you chose the gaze of your virgins, filled with the grey of the earth and the lovely blue of the sky; of your virgins that supplicated, giving, as if their heart pearly in the sweetness of their pupils and the smile of their lips had the appeal of the kiss and the fear of virtue; of the virgins moulded and burnished with loving thoughts, without wrinkles of sufferings or brumes of disappointments. Tell us whence came that fair Mona Lisa, inspiring the confidence of a friend and the respect of a confessor; chaste and serene image for emptying the secrets of the heart, cloud rendered

woman by mysterious grace, and ideal women by virtue of your power. Tell us whence you chose the landscapes, aureoles round your serene visions, soft, soft veils caressing your work; and tell us what you prayed so that we might pray your prayers and take hope in praying them.

You, enigmatic Botticelli, lyre of the forests, poet of half tones and of lines lost, symbolist enamoured of yellowed flowers, of sickly plants, of moulded curves and blue gazes; tell us where is the grey spring that you would find and enjoy, the fragrant spring convalescing from winter and covered in dew. Tell us where falls the rain of flowers as butterflies from the heavens; those lilies of mitigated whiteness, tell us where they are, and those laurels of golden arteries, and the downy trees, and the plains of harmony. Tell us which breeze touched those fine gauzes, revealing the most virginal curves of the women most dreamt of; which incense exhaled your art, which coloured psalms they sang, which coils of myrrh, which organ harmonies, which birdsong and which heavenly choir assisted you in your dreams, to tell us what you've said in your refined works.'

'To the Primitives' is inseparable from the way in which Catalan *Modernisme* revived Italian Renaissance painting and, in general, the cultural tradition of modern Europe. A rereading of this essentially decorative painting, which makes sense in a perfectly defined architectural space, is found in the three allegorical panels painted by Rusiñol himself presiding over the main hall of Cau Ferrat (*Poetry, Painting and Music*), but also has something to do with the strategy formulated by Raimon Casellas to correct, in the late nineteenth century, the lack of a Renaissance comparable to the Italian Renaissance and to reinstate Catalonia in the European realm.¹² The presence of Fra Angelico at Cau Ferrat has much to do, however, with the

religious component of the image of the artist played by Santiago Rusiñol from 1894. Of *The Coronation of the Virgin* it is interesting to note not only the importance from the iconographic standpoint of the assumption of the *donna angelicata* as a feminine archetype (as opposed to the sensual component in Botticelli's *Venus* and an almost evil element in Cranach's *Eve*) but also the identification of the artist with a priest. The unfinished, more or less successful, copy (drawing) Rusiñol did of it, which is in the stores of Cau Ferrat, allows for an added contemporary, end-of-century reading of the many readings that have been done throughout the history of European art. Much impressed with the naive beauty of the original of this composition, Santiago Rusiñol took with him a commercial photographic reproduction as a souvenir. This reproduction might have ended up in the corresponding *Album recordatori* (album of mementos), or remained, like so many others, among the sundry autobiographical papers of the artist. But we know that between travels Rusiñol had had time to read a book that the poet-priest Jacint Verdaguer had sent him, from the letter the painter wrote to Verdaguer thanking him for his regard and expressing his enthusiasm for the trip to Egypt that Verdaguer evokes in the book. In this letter, which is not found in the archives of Cau Ferrat but rather among Verdaguer's papers held at the Biblioteca de Catalunya, Rusiñol identifies himself with the poet-priest and includes, symbolically, the abovementioned photo:

'Dear sir and most beloved friend: I have received your book and I have read it in one sitting. If you were another I would tell you how very much I liked and admired it, but I know you and shall keep quiet on this point, thinking to myself what I would say to you.

What I will of course not keep quiet about is how grateful I am to you for the dedication that you put at

the front. Reminding me of two things that I like so much, one in dreams like the Nile, and the other in memories like the [River] Ter, proves the affectionate thoughts of he who sends it and knows how to choose what most would satisfy the spirit of he who receives it.

Happy you, o hermit of La Gleva who knows how to content himself with the scenery alone! And poor us, who need this bustle and big cities to live! Every day I believe more in the beauty of solitude, with faith and thought for company, and every day I would like to leave for a solitary refuge away from the world, and every day I tarry. There are so many of us that lack strength of will! Always saying tomorrow and this tomorrow never comes.

I hope the day will come to hide away in one of the many lovely spots in my land and perhaps that voyage to Egypt of which I spoke to you on that pleasant terrace in La Gleva, and which I recall so well, will be my final journey.

Of much your book has made me think and much of it will remain with me and much it has impressed me, much more than you imagine.

I cannot resist the temptation to send you a photograph of the famous painting from the Louvre *The Coronation of the Virgin* by Fra Angelico. It is one of the works I most love, not to say the one I love most. The photograph lacks the great charm of colour, which is very beautiful and of a stunning idealness.

I live on Île Saint-Louis, where you have a home, near the Louvre and Notre Dame, two works which as I await make for good gazing and to which I often make a trip as a man who is an admirer.⁷³

Rusiñol speaks in this letter of the loneliness of the artist, of withdrawing from society and, to an extent, from life – understood in conventional, everyday terms – as a prerequisite for creation. He also speaks, significantly, of the final journey he is willing to undertake, which he sees as a being

imminent, while satisfying 'the yearnings of the spirit' through his own artistic creation. As he stresses in one of the first stories from *Leaves of Life* (1898), 'these practical advances do not console for even a moment the yearnings of the spirit; and while we await true moral advance, as soon as I can I will embark without oars and play at adventure.'¹⁴ The high priest of art sets out on a personal, wholly inner journey to explore the depths of the soul: pain, terror, mystery, death, ecstasy. His mission is to go beyond the boundaries of apprehensible reality through the bodily senses and to connect, like the blind grandfather from *Intruder*,¹⁵ with the most hidden realities. The Symbolist aesthetic Rusiñol adopts at this stage of his artistic career helps him in this, through plastic as well as literary language. There are constant correlations between his works: blue courtyards, abandoned gardens, desolate spaces, deserted roads and uprooted people, sick, marginalised, mad and clownish, appear in the paintings and stories, most of them brief, of the artist who aspires to purity. The books he published with *L'Avenç* — refined and dear — are in keeping with the idea of complete art that corresponds to the image of the complete artist, who is neither a painter nor sculptor, nor writer, but who understands art as a way of life and turns his image into his primary and most cherished creation. Rusiñol, while he officiates at Cau Ferrat for the public attending the *modernista* festivals, uses morphine to culminate the profound experience of reality. Paintings such as *Morphine* (p. 260) or *Rêverie* testify to this relationship, as well as other less explicit ones: some of the portraits Rusiñol painted during the nineties — the monks of Montserrat, the portrait of Carles Mani or the abovementioned one of Modesto Sánchez Ortiz, in the manner of El Greco¹⁶ — penetrate into the inner lives of the subjects, who

lose their 'social', 'circumstantial' identity and become uncontrollable forces of nature — madmen, geniuses, mystics, the deceived — whom the artist is able to capture by affinity, like a mirror, before they irremediably come to themselves again; or the charcoal portrait that Ramon Pichot did of a still young Rusiñol, with wavy black hair, a beard that melds with his bow tie barely visible under his buttoned-up coat, the left hand in his pocket and the right — with the thumb hidden between coat buttons — on his chest. As we have said: like the famous portrait by El Greco that Rusiñol had copied not long before at the Prado Museum and which hangs on the upper floor of Cau Ferrat (p. 200). What stands out in Pichot's charcoal is the gaze of the subject: the eyes are ringed with infinite sadness, like those of *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*, those of Modesto Sánchez Ortiz or of the novices of Montserrat; these eyes are liquid, sparkling, feverish and unfocused. Deeply disturbing, they attract and repel the viewer at once, they undermine his or her understanding just as they render him or her an intruder. They represent both the temptation and the fear of the abyss, of the *chute*, that is, the journey of no return. It is this model of the artist that interests Picasso shortly before leaving for Paris, as evidenced in the portrait in the manner of El Greco, with an unavoidable nod to Pichot (p. 199), which Picasso dedicated to Rusiñol while the latter was enlarging his 'imaginary museum' with a representative sample of the young painter's early work.

Imaginary museums, imaginary mirrors?

We know that for Rusiñol there was no 'final journey' in the sense that he hints at in his letter to Jacint Verdaguer, but also that his correspondent would soon be making that last voyage. And we should not be at all surprised that Rusiñol was fully

aware, when making the decision, that to abandon the path of solitude meant betraying the concept of art as religion and of the artist as priest which had enabled him to identify at one time with Verdaguer. To his 'ordeal', which is that of the artist, and his troubled death, Santiago Rusiñol dedicated *The Mystic*, one of his most controversial, and most popular, tragedies. This was, however, in 1903, a time when Rusiñol scarcely set foot in Cau Ferrat and was possessed with travelling round the world in search of abandoned gardens and multitudinous applause, as Picasso so pointedly showed, in that same year, in the drawing 'Glory-Critic' (*Santiago Rusiñol Sodomised*), unearthed by Eduard Vallès (p. 305). At Sitges, he left his 'imaginary museum' along with the image of the artist who, for ten intense years, he had succeeded in becoming. Cau Ferrat preserves the traces of this artist rendered, by Rusiñol Santiago himself, into part of his collection.

It has been claimed that Rusiñol Santiago barely painted self-portraits, when in fact, we could perhaps claim that Rusiñol painted nothing but self-portraits, especially from the moment he struck upon what would be his motif, the objective correlative of his work: the abandoned garden. The impact that the gardens of the Generalife and the Alhambra in Granada had on him as symbolic spaces of destruction and regeneration, life and death, the struggle between nature and culture, explains Rusiñol's obsession with gardens, the objective correlative of the gardens of the soul of the artist disposed to penetrate its mystery and offer it as a personal sacrifice. In this sense, the book-album *Gardens of Spain* (1903), with forty colour plates of paintings of gardens by Rusiñol accompanied by a foreword by the author and poems by his favourite poets (Catalan and Mallorcan), represents a mausoleum. The white covers of the album embossed in green lettering, enclose the

soul of an artist who has managed to glimpse, through his particular inner search, the path to the world beyond, the passage to death. The last of these plates is of a canvas that beckons the viewer to enter the black hole of death. If this book had been a posthumous work, we would probably speak now of Rusiñol in different terms. But at the last moment Rusiñol turned back and withdrew from the edge of the abyss in time to tell his story and, out of danger, to design himself the mausoleum of his artistic ideal. And not just through the album, but in three literary works – a one-act 'poematic' theatre play, *The Abandoned Garden* (1900), and two short stories, one in first-person, 'The House of Silence' (1901), and the other in third person, 'The Morphine Addict' (1905)¹⁷ – which comprise the climax of a literary production that would henceforth turn obsessively on the conflict between the artist and society.¹⁸

These three works were written and published immediately following his morphine cure at a sanatorium near Paris to which Rusiñol committed himself in 1899. Upon recovery of his health, the artist returned symbolically to order. In his personal life, he mended the family ties broken ten years earlier; as an artist, he embarked on a new pictorial stage in Mallorca dominated by gardens – abandoned or otherwise – and a new literary stage focusing on a quest for the general public through the cultivation of the novel, journalism, and above all the theatre. The priest-artist gave way to the shock artist who attacked the hypocrisy of 'respectable folk' with all the literary weapons in his possession, most of all irony. The criticism of Senyor Esteve (archetype of the late nineteenth-century Catalan bourgeois) grew stronger in articles such as 'The Bourgeois' (1899) and 'Sancho Panchaism' (1905) and culminated in the novel *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* (1907). Between the publication of this novel and

the premiere of the theatre version in spring 1917, there occurred two incidents that sparked the progressive and relentless mythologising of Senyor Esteve and of the values represented, according to this 'new' Rusiñol, in the character: 'good sense' and liberalism. The events of the Tragic Week in 1909 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 irremediably changed the subversive irony of the lord of Cau Ferrat into the sarcasm of the nineteenth-century individual who has lost all his points of reference and witnessed the collapse of the idea of culture and moral progress to which he aspired.

'Those who seek the truth deserve the punishment of finding it', is one of the *Màximes i mals pensaments* (Maxims and Evil Thoughts) that Rusiñol published in 1927 and that the writer Josep Pla interpreted as the 'scheme' of 'scepticism' of the author of *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*.¹⁹ If we consider Rusiñol's complete literary oeuvre, *Maxims and Evil Thoughts* is the last great *boutade* that the writer dedicates to his readers, the construction of a funfair mirror in which the only thing reflected is oneself, face-to-face with one's own vanity, with one's own misogyny, with one's own hypocrisy, with one's own fears, with one's own intolerance and one's own uncertainty. In this sense, *Maxims and Evil Thoughts* attains the universal nature of moralist literature, but not in relation to a truth but to the invalidation of the very existence of this truth. It is not the legacy of the old Rusiñol, this way of understanding the world: it is the legacy of the new Rusiñol who arises from the morphine cure and the surgery that brings him back to life with the dawn of the new century, of the artist who has enclosed his ideal in a mausoleum and who causes raw disappointment in the young Picasso. The text of *Maxims and Evil Thoughts* does not correspond to the gaze of the high priest of art, nor that of the Wandering Jew, nor that of the lord of Cau

Ferrat: it is the reflection of the unease of an artist who, having emerged from the confines of the abandoned garden, a space of both creation and death, painted for thirty years running the same garden; of the reaction of the nineteenth-century intellectual who finds himself face-to-face with the foundering of the ideal, spelt out by the destruction of the myth of cultured and civilised Europe with the outbreak of the First World War and, ultimately, the limitations of *Modernisme* before the onslaughts of modernity.

What is the significance of the fact that Picasso, late in his life, at the time of the exhibition at the Sala Gaspar in 1962 and the negotiations for the opening of a Picasso museum in Barcelona, recovered for his 'imaginary museum' the iconography of *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*? Is it a tribute to Barcelona, with all that implies in terms of the artist's assumption of the contradictions of Senyor Esteve's city? Or is it again, like Rusiñol's *Maxims and Evil Thoughts*, a funhouse mirror that distorts and demythologises the image of the artist reflected in the likewise idealising mirror of Picasso's 'imaginary museum'?

1. André Malraux, *La Tête d'obsidienne*. Gallimard, Paris, 1974.
2. See the second edition in André Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale*. Gallimard, Paris, 1952.
3. André Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire...*, op. cit., p. 98. Translated from the Catalan translation by the author of this essay.
4. André Malraux, *La Tête d'obsidienne*, op. cit., pp. 104-105. Translated from the Catalan translation by the author of this essay.
5. See Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 'Converses amb Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, year 5, no. 2 (February 1963), pp. 47-51; 'Picasso i Catalunya', in *Serra d'Or*, year 8, no. 12 (December 1966), pp. 966-977; Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso i els seus amics catalans*, Aedos, Barcelona, 1971; 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 265 (October 1981), pp. 660-662; *Picasso. Les noces de Pierrette. 1905*, Binoche et Godeau, Turin, 1985; *Estimat Picasso: 35 obres i 14 documents inèdits*. Destino, Barcelona, 1997; and Eduard Vallès, *Picasso i Rusiñol. La cruïlla de la modernitat*, Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2008.
6. On the importance of the character Senyor Esteve in Santiago Rusiñol's work, see Margarida Casacuberta, 'Les auques del senyor Esteve', in Santiago Rusiñol, *L'auca del senyor Esteve*, Barcelona, Edicions del Teatre Nacional, 1997, pp. 29-52, and 'El senyor Esteve', in Margarida Casacuberta, *Els noms de Rusiñol*, Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1999, pp. 179-187.

7. On the Picassos of Cau Ferrat, see Eduard Vallès, *Picasso i Rusiñol...*, op. cit., pp. 143-160.
8. Francisco de P. Valladar, 'Santiago Rusiñol', in *El Popular (Granada)*, 27 February 1896.
9. See the respective catalogues: *Estètica per als ulls, poesia per a la vida. El llegat de Santiago Rusiñol al Cau Ferrat*, Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2001; and *Rusiñol desconegut* (exh. cat.). Ajuntament de Sitges /Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales / Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, Sitges, 2006.
10. The process of the construction of the image of the modern artist in the autobiography of Santiago Rusiñol is analysed in Margarida Casacuberta, *Santiago Rusiñol: vida, literatura i mite*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1997.
11. Santiago Rusiñol, 'Discurs llegit a Sitges en la tercera festa modernista', in *Anant pel món* (1896). See *Obres Completes*, vol. II. Selecta, Barcelona, 1976, pp. 609-612.
12. Raimon Casellas, 'Les pintures simbòlico-decoratives', in *Ètapes estètiques*, vol. II. Societat Catalana d'Edicions, Barcelona, 1916, pp. 147-167. See Jordi Castellanos, *Raimon Casellas i el modernisme*, vol. I. Curial, Barcelona, 1983, pp. 154-159.
13. Letter from Santiago Rusiñol to Jacint Verdager (53 Quai Bourbon, Île Saint-Louis, Paris), Ms. 1198 (100) Biblioteca de Catalunya.
14. See Santiago Rusiñol, 'A l'aventura', in *Fulls de la vida* (1898), in *Obres Completes*, vol. II, op. cit., p. 64.
15. The premiere of *Intruder*, by the Belgian symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck, was the main event at the second *modernista* festival in Sitges, in the summer of 1893, and was a sort of founding event for the *modernista* group. See Jordi Castellanos, *Raimon Casellas...*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 123ff.
16. On Santiago Rusiñol's paintings in general, see especially Josep de C. Laplana and Mercedes Palau-Ribes, *La pintura de Santiago Rusiñol: obra completa*, 3 vols., Mediterrània, Barcelona, 2004; and Isabel Coll Mirabent, *Rusiñol i la pintura europea*, Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2006. For Santiago Rusiñol's relationship with El Greco's paintings in particular, see Francesc Fontbona, 'La recuperació d'El Greco per part dels modernistes catalans', in José Milicua (ed.), *El Greco: la seva revaloració pel Modernisme català*, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1996, pp. 44-51; and Isabel Coll Mirabent, *El Greco i la seva influència en les obres del Museu del Cau Ferrat*, Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 1998.
17. Santiago Rusiñol, *El jardí abandonat/El jardí abandonado*. Tip. L'Avenç, Barcelona, 1900/1902. The Catalan version appears in *Obres Completes* (3rd edn.), vol. I, Barcelona, Selecta, 1973, pp. 437-447; 'La casa del silenci', in *Pel & Ploma*, no. 80, September, 1901, pp. 103-107; and 'El morfiníac', in *El Poble Català*, no. 15, 18 February 1905, pp. 1-2. See 'Ocells de fang' (1905), in *Obres Completes*, vol. II, op. cit., pp. 199-203.
18. I proposed this hypothesis in Margarida Casacuberta, 'Santiago Rusiñol, hombre de letras', in Daniel Giral-Miracle, *Santiago Rusiñol, arquetipo de artista moderno*. Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, Madrid, 2009, pp. 145-163.
19. See Josep Pla, *Rusiñol y su tiempo*. Barna, Barcelona, 1942, p. 349.

The artist's condition (II): *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*

EDUARD VALLÈS

'For Picasso the memory of Els Quatre Gats has always remained alive, moreover, in a specific way. Indeed, in 1962, he showed me a series of paintings he was doing on the theme of *Senyor Esteve*.'

Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 'Picasso i Catalunya', 1966

'You should write an *Epic of Senyor Esteve*, but set in the present, about the Senyor Esteve of today.'

Josep Palau i Fabre, 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', 1981

Although his relationship with Rusiñol was basically confined to Picasso's youth, it was in fact revived many years later. That Picasso's interest in Rusiñol waned at the beginning of the twentieth century does not mean that he forgot him altogether; rather, like other artists, images and concepts, Rusiñol remained in the storehouse of his mind poised to resurface at anytime, as would eventually happen. The focal point of this rediscovery, as it were, was Rusiñol's most popular literary work, *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* (p. 166). Why did Picasso in the nineteen-sixties become interested in the work of an artist who had been dead for over thirty years and who in theory pertained to his youth? In our opinion, there are two aspects of the novel that would have attracted Picasso. First, as noted in the previous chapter, is the reflection on the artist's condition, which, as we have seen, Picasso discovered in his youth in another of Rusiñol's literary works, *The Joy that Passes*. The other aspect, certainly as essential as the first, is the setting of the book, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Barcelona, the Barcelona of Picasso's youth which he so often evoked. This subject we will deal with below.

The title

Between 1962 and 1964, Picasso did a series of prints freely based on *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*, using different techniques but mainly lithography and linocut. Oddly, these prints are never reproduced with the correct reference. It is rare that an error should be so often repeated — and accepted — in a series of works by Picasso and thus a brief analysis of the titles they have been given is in order.

Historically, these prints have been assigned all sorts of denominations that ignore the inspiration behind them, a fact which has been noted several times by a number of scholars as well as by Picasso himself. However, still today they are referred to as either bourgeois, Balzaquian, or 'Ingresque' scenes, or family scenes or portraits. Some publications have also claimed that they were inspired by the illustrations Degas did for Ludovic Halévy's *La Famille Cardinal*. Indeed, the abundance of titles is in itself revealing about the confusion surrounding their true origin, a problem already noted by experts like Alexandre Cirici and Josep Palau i Fabre, based on testimony from Picasso himself. Palau i Fabre mentions this in at least two of his publications

and on several occasions spoke to the author of this study of his annoyance at the recurring error.¹ Cirici also described the prints in great detail shortly after Picasso had shown and talked about them to him.² In the contemporary press, critics such as Joan Cortés and Alberto del Castillo remarked on this error, insisting that the prints were based on Rusiñol's work.³ In 1965, the Gaspar Gallery in Barcelona showed some of the prints, which were announced in the press as illustrations for *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* (p. 168).⁴ Yet none of this had any further effect, probably because of Rusiñol's relative obscurity on the international scene, but also because the drawings were free interpretations which never appeared with texts from the book. All of the above conspired to conceal their relationship with *Senyor Esteve*.

Picasso himself, in a conversation with Cirici and in the company of others who described the drawings as 'Balzaquian' or 'Louis-Philippard', confirmed that they harked back to the Barcelona of his youth: 'Picasso says they are a sort of recollection of Barcelona with city walls.'⁵ This remark fits perfectly with a point in the novel in which Rusiñol evokes a moment in the creation of what we might call 'modern' Barcelona, after the city walls were torn down: 'and, as for the Citadel, they had demolished it, and they had done well at that. First the walls fell, then the glacis were levelled.'⁶ Both Cirici and Palau i Fabre say they saw a copy of *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* at Picasso's house. Palau i Fabre is more explicit, noting that it was 'the Spanish version, and he kept it very close at hand.'⁷ That Picasso knew the book — which he was perhaps reading or had just read at the time — is evident in his encouraging Palau i Fabre, a novelist and playwright himself, to write an updated version: 'You should write an *Epic of Senyor Esteve*, but set in the present, about the Senyor Esteve of today.'⁸

The storyline

The novel *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*, published in 1907, tells, through the ironic voice of an all-knowing narrator, the story of successive generations of a family of shopkeepers.⁹ Rusiñol sets his story in Barcelona from 1830 into the early twentieth century, which includes the period in which Picasso lived in Barcelona. Senyor Esteve, the patriarch, founds a haberdashery called La Puntual, a business which continues to thrive under his son Ramon and then his grandson Esteve. The problem arises when the founder's great-grandson, Ramonet, announces his intention to become an artist, a huge blow to the family given that the future of the business is now in jeopardy. Here we should add that, of course, at the time artists were hardly considered upstanding citizens in Catalan middle-class society. Although set in the nineteenth century, the discourse is much more modern and offers a profound reflection on the relationship between the artist and society. This dichotomy is to some extent autobiographical; Rusiñol's paternal grandfather, Jaume Rusiñol, a textile manufacturer, wanted his grandson to take over the family business. After work at the mill, Santiago attended night school behind his family's back, pursuing his true wish to be an artist. In fact, he would not have been able to devote himself to art had his brother not taken over the family business upon his grandfather's death, thus freeing Santiago from his obligations. Which makes Ramonet, the artistically-inclined great-grandson, whose desire is to become a sculptor, Rusiñol's alter ego in the book. Interestingly, the story of Ramonet also parallels, in certain aspects, that of Picasso, as anyone who reads the novel will find. The young Ramonet, just like Picasso, is fascinated by the sea: 'He was always walking along the shore, where there was light, where there was blue, where he found space for his eyes

and air to fill his lungs'.¹⁰ We mustn't forget that views of the sea and the beach in Barceloneta abound in Picasso's early works from Barcelona. Like Picasso, Ramonet also studied at the School of Fine Arts, popularly known as the Llotja, the name referring to the building which once housed the stock exchange: ... *I el noi? En Ramonet? / En Ramonet anava a Llotja. / A la borsa? / A Llotja, a dibuixar.*¹¹

But perhaps the oddest of the coincidences is a particular incident that happened in both Picasso's and Ramonet's lives. Ramonet's artistic cravings drive him to doodle on a shop inventory book: 'The fact is that until one day [...] by the Holy Four Rules!, on the margin of the Inventory, of that sacred Inventory, Beginning and End of the Business, Founder of all things and upholder of Heaven and earth, they discovered a drawing of a puppet! That now was too much, gentlemen!'¹² As it turns out, Picasso also did several drawings on an inventory book now at the Musée Picasso in Paris. The book is from Barcelona from the same period and two of the drawings are portraits of none other than Rusiñol (p. 310).

In his novel Rusiñol immortalises the prototype of a practical and prosaic bourgeois who eventually comes into conflict with the artist, who, paradoxically, is one of his descendents. Rusiñol borrowed the idea for Senyor Esteve from an old Barcelona tradition whereby members of the Brotherhood of Esteves — basically metal workers — enjoyed the privilege of being buried in Barcelona Cathedral, next to the guild's chapel. Over the years, people of other professions also sought to share this honour and, according to Joan Amades, 'the custom of joining the Brotherhood of Esteves [spread] among artisans and the well-to-do who had nothing to do with any of the trades of the old guild; in this way, most of the heads of good families became Esteves, to the point that Senyor Esteve

became a stereotype of the upstanding man, calm and conservative, reserved and content, so typical of nineteenth-century Barcelona.¹³

Series of illustrations

The nineteenth-century aesthetics of the novel are reflected in Picasso's drawings, all quite similar, with only slight variations. The drawings show a main subject surrounded by his wife and a number of secondary characters that vary from piece to piece. The series, counting all the techniques used, was done over two years, from 1962 to 1964, and, as we have said, comprises primarily lithographs and linocuts. The lithographs were dated between June and July 1962 and some were later coloured. Today we know of a total of six, five of which are usually found with the title *Family Portrait* (pp. 169-171).¹⁴ The linocuts, on the other hand, are from June to October of the same year (p. 180).¹⁵ Most of the drawings are lithographs or linocuts, although Picasso used other techniques, for example in one from June 1962. The coloured lithographs that we know of are done with pencils and dated 1962 (pp. 172-179). The coloured linocuts, on the other hand, date from 1964 and are done in gouache and ink.¹⁶ Being in the habit of alternating techniques, Picasso also did several ceramic etchings. We know of several ceramic versions, all very similar, with identical composition. The material he used was white clay with a frame in relief. The series is painted with slip and, aside from slight variations in the characters, the most noticeable difference between the pieces are the colours that Picasso chose for the frames (green, yellow, pink, blue, etc.) (pp. 180-181). Undoubtedly more drawings exist but this would sum up the bulk of Picasso's work related to Rusiñol's book.

The influence of Ramon Casas's drawings

We return above, to where we were talking of processes of absorption, inconclusive or latent, which will help us to further confirm the literary origins of these drawings in *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*. Carefully analysing some of the coloured lithographs, we are reminded of what Cirici and Palau i Fabre said about seeing a copy of the novel at Picasso's home, which would explain some of the borrowed elements in the coloured lithographs. In them we find several similarities with the original illustrated version of the book, with drawings by Ramon Casas and couplets by Gabriel Alomar. Casas's twenty-eight illustrations, published in a sort of comic book, were intended as pictorial summary of the entire novel (p. 167). These small pictures, deliberately crude and naive, follow in a tradition Casas knew well, nineteenth-century Catalan ceramic tiles featuring rich and remarkably colourful artwork, often with text. Aside from having seen them in the comic-book edition of Rusiñol's novel, Picasso knew of the drawings and it is even possible that he had seen the originals on one of his visits to Cau Ferrat.

In our opinion, Picasso's drawings show two levels of influence from Casas's illustrations: one more generic and the other more specific. The first has to do with aspects of composition, atmosphere and colour. The atmosphere of the lithographs is nineteenth-century and spare, and likewise the composition, with similar frontal views, as if captured with a still camera, and only a few of the figures are seen in profile. This compositional simplicity extends to the figures themselves, all of whom are absolutely expressionless. Regarding colour, it is clear that Picasso borrowed heavily from Casas's illustrations in his lithographs, especially in the use of blue and yellow. The second level of influence is much more specific and therefore more

detailed. Some of the characters in the coloured lithographs are taken directly from Casas's panels, while others are very close interpretations. For example, the Senyor Esteve character from the first panel in the comic book appears again in one of the coloured lithographs with the same blue velvet suit, bowtie and even the same bright red cheeks (pp. 174-175). The same is true of the parents of Ramonet, the wayward artist great-grandson. In one of his lithographs Picasso depicts Ramonet with his parents, all three very similar to how they appear in Casas's panels (pp. 176-177). Another clear example is how Picasso presents the late Senyor Esteve in the same manner Casas had (p. 172). In some of Picasso's drawings, rather than as a wizened, shrunken figure, the patriarch is depicted as a haughty middle-aged man. This oddity can only be explained by Casas's illustration of the death of Senyor Esteve with a portrait of a young man, as if in some sort of flashback. To achieve the effect, Casas did the drawing in black and white with just an almost imperceptible touch of colour, an exception among the otherwise vividly colourful drawings in this comic-book series (p. 173). The couplet that accompanies the image refers to the permanence of the ideas of the deceased: "La Puntual" va fentse amunt / pels concells d'aquell difunt.¹⁷

In his illustrations Picasso features the same character, whom, due to his being both absent and present, he sets apart from the other characters — including the woman who is now his widow — with a sort of hologram. At least two coloured lithographs include this character; his posture is identical in both, and he wears the same ostentatious bowtie. The treatment of the hands is identical, down to the sharply tapering fingers (p. 173). Several lithographs have other characters borrowed from Casas's panels but they would seem rather to be

reinterpretations. This is the case with Ramonet's father Esteve as a young man and his wife Tomaseta, equally beatific in one of Casas's panels. We have found, however, that although Picasso was inspired by Rusiñol's book and he borrows from some of Casas's drawings, he does things very much in his own way, taking those elements that interest him while dispensing with order or structure. Still, the obvious similarities make it sufficiently clear what the inspiration for these drawings was and that, henceforth, they should be identified as illustrations of Rusiñol's book.

Possible autobiographical reading

Although Picasso himself acknowledged his debt to Rusiñol's book, we must qualify this because Picasso rarely failed to leave his own particular stamp on his work. In our opinion, these drawings offer a rather likely autobiographical reading, one which we cannot exclude, especially considering that on several occasions Picasso had already used this kind of mirror trick in which he melded himself with characters of his own creation. This theory would be confirmed in the image of the central character, Senyor Esteve, so close to the iconography of some of Picasso's later self-portraits in which he becomes both the protagonist and the observer of the scene. Cirici notes this possible autobiographical aspect when he identifies Jean Cocteau as one of the characters around Senyor Esteve-Picasso: 'There is a somewhat artificial character, a kind of uncle, a young man, exactly like Cocteau, explaining things with sweeping gestures.'¹⁸ We should bear in mind that these scenes are somewhat unsettling in that the main characters — the married couple — pose solemnly while the others watch them expectantly. Senyor Esteve-Picasso looks both resigned and suspicious beside the intriguing characters that accompany him. Identifying himself with Senyor

Esteve, Picasso would be expressing his current situation as an artist, a reluctant but inevitable Senyor Esteve, like someone whom many people depend on and seek out, looking exhausted but attentive at the same time. That solitary and carefree young harlequin of the early twentieth century is now a man of wealth and social status, who, moreover, has a large family with a wife,¹⁹ children, publishers, dealers, scholars, friends, fans, courtiers and so on. In other words, a book by Rusiñol based on how the artist fits into bourgeois society may well have become a sort of reflection on how Picasso in his own life also fit into the world.

Return to Barcelona

In 1962, in his article 'Picasso, Rusiñol and Dalí', Salvador Dalí made a series of observations on the recent installation of Picasso's sgraffito on the façade of the offices of the Professional Association of Architects in Barcelona.²⁰ One section links the sgraffito to Rusiñol's novel: 'without even realising it and deeply moved by his memories of Barcelona, it is Picasso himself who has just illustrated once again — sublime paradox! — *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* by that great poet and painter of ours, Santiago Rusiñol.' Dalí established a connection between two works which in principle have nothing in common, given that these concrete friezes do not illustrate Rusiñol's story. Still the friezes inside and outside the Professional Association of Architects building also have a certain comic-book structure, depicting separately different events and places in the city. Interestingly, Dalí's article was illustrated with a poster from 1917 advertising *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* with all of Casas's drawings for the original comic book. Curiously, Dalí's article was published on 6 June and the first known illustration by Picasso in this series is dated 21 June, just fifteen days later. Thus, two established artists, Picasso and Dalí,

both bring up *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* in the sixties, thus acknowledging its value as a literary symbol of the history of Barcelona.

Picasso returned to Rusiñol, an icon of his youth, in his approach to a theme that had interested him all his life, adding a possible autobiographical element. This re-reading of Rusiñol's book — attested to by witnesses and the fact that he adapted illustrations from the period — was surely in part the result of a return in his mind to Barcelona. In 1962 work was underway on the Museu Picasso in Barcelona — which opened in February 1963 — and all this would seem also to indicate that Picasso was revisiting the city of his youth. Picasso's work often reveals biographical correlations which act as triggers, and this may be one of those cases. This return to Rusiñol's novel, however, should be placed within a broader process, a process that Picasso had initiated some years previously, which also involved revisiting the history of art — in the same period he did a version of Poussin's *The Rape of the Sabine Women*. Picasso's large-scale reinterpretation cannot be understood only as an *ad extra* process — with regard to tradition — but also *ad intra*, that is, as a revision of his own foundations and models. Evidence of this is his return to Barcelona through the literature of Rusiñol and Casas's delightful illustrations, altogether nothing new for him. In short, when Picasso sees that the art world of the second half of the twentieth century — the Avant-garde, in other words — is following paths that have nothing to do with him, he does not just take refuge in a timeless historical tradition but he does so in his own tradition, what we might call the 'Picassian tradition'; he reinterprets himself; in essence because almost all of these returns had as their destination those ports-of-call Picasso had visited in the past, many of them in his early years.

1. Josep Palau i Fabre, 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 265, October 1981, p. 54, and Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso a Catalunya*. Polígrafa, Barcelona, 1975, p. 239.
2. 'At the same time as the series *Rape of the Sabine Women*, he did a series on Barcelona and the theme of Senyor Esteve.' Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 'Converses amb Picasso', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 2, February 1963, p. 50. Three years later, he again mentions this: 'The memory of Els Quatre Gats has always remained alive [for Picasso], moreover, in a specific manner. Indeed, in 1962 he showed me a series of paintings he was doing on the theme of *Senyor Esteve*.' Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 'Picasso i Catalunya', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 12, December 1966, p. 63.
3. Joan Cortés wrote in *La Vanguardia*: 'We refer, for the novelty of the theme and the perfect embedment of his intention, only to the series "Familia del senyor Esteve".' Joan Cortés, 'Picasso: La inagotable inspiración del artista', in *La Vanguardia*, 25 July 1965, p. 43. Alberto del Castillo, in the *Diario de Barcelona*, also included one of the illustrations from the series with the correct title, while adding: 'Our public will be more interested in the series of six lithographs "La familia del senyor Esteve", set in late-century Barcelona, alive in Picasso's memory. He did the etchings in 1962 and they have now been printed. They are an unmistakable testimony to Picasso's sense of humour, delightful in their composition and expression and extraordinarily clean.' Alberto Del Castillo, 'Nueva exposición Picasso, en Barcelona', in *Diario de Barcelona*, 24 July 1965, p. 15.
4. According to Joan Gaspar i Ferreras, Picasso himself said that they were illustrations of *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* and the Gaspar family still has a copy. A set of lithographs was shown at the Galeria Gaspar in 1965. See *Picasso. Pintura. Tapiz. Dibujo. Grabado*, Sala Gaspar, Barcelona, 15 July-15 August 1965.
5. Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 'Converses amb Picasso', op. cit., p. 50.
6. Santiago Rusiñol, *L'auca del senyor Esteve*. Llibreria Espanyola Antoni López, Editor, Barcelona, 1907, p. 234.
7. Josep Palau i Fabre, 'Influències de Rusiñol sobre Picasso', op. cit., p. 54.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *The Epic of Senyor Esteve* is divided into three parts with a total of twenty-seven chapters. It was published by Antoni López in 1907 and the stage version, some what modified, opened in 1917.
10. Santiago Rusiñol, *L'auca del senyor Esteve*, op. cit., p. 214.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 269. '... And the boy? Ramonet? / Ramonet was at the Llotja. / At the Bourse? / At the Llotja, drawing pictures.'
12. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
13. Joan Amades, *Històries i llegendes de Barcelona. Passejada pels carrers de la ciutat vella*, vol. I. Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1984, p. 722.
14. The lithographs were done between 21 June and 6 July. The other is entitled *Family Portrait after Ingres* (Baer 1369 and RAU 748).
15. The linocuts were done between 26 June and 2 October of the same year. They are reproduced in Baer 1331, 1332, 1333 and 1337, respectively. Baer 1332 is reproduced in two versions, the second from 4 July 1964.
16. Z xxiv, 211, 212 and 213.
17. 'La Puntual is stitching things up / with the advice of the deceased.'
18. Alexandre Cirici Pellicer. 'Converses amb Picasso', op. cit., p. 50.
19. Cirici speaks of the wife of Senyor Esteve, but in our view his description is quite similar to the position Jacqueline occupied in Picasso's life: 'arrogant [...] monumental and solid, with an air of being in command of the situation, although she allows her husband to occupy the seat of honour.' *Ibid.*
20. Salvador Dalí, 'Picasso, Rusiñol y Dalí'. *El Noticiero Universal*, 6 June 1962, p. 15.

El Greco, Rusiñol and Picasso

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘Picasso arrived in Barcelona at the height of his [El Greco’s] resurrection thanks to the efforts of Rusiñol.’

Pierre Daix, *Dictionnaire Picasso*, 1995

‘Saints, I don’t remember which ones. And they were transported across the Pyrenees on foot on a stretcher to get them back to Spain. That happened in the last century. I was only twelve years old, but the canvas-bearers, two painters from Barcelona who later became my good friends, told me about the strange pilgrimage of the El Grecos.’

Brassaï, *Conversations with Picasso*, 2002

This text is not intended to address the links between Picasso and El Greco, extensively dealt with in the historiography of art, but rather to place it exclusively within the space in which they intersect with Rusiñol. The beginning of Pierre Daix’s entry on El Greco in his *Dictionnaire Picasso* is quite eloquent: ‘Picasso arrived in Barcelona at the height of his [El Greco’s] resurrection thanks to the efforts of Rusiñol’,¹ although he also cites Utrillo and Zuloaga, about whom we will speak later. Despite the clear links between Picasso and El Greco, Daix establishes a clear connection between Picasso’s interest in El Greco’s work and the championing of the artist by Rusiñol and others in his circle of artistic acquaintances. The case of El Greco is one of the most conclusive pieces of evidence of the ‘major role’ (in Pierre Daix’s words) Rusiñol played in Picasso’s evolution as an artist. Let us explain. Many artists throughout history have championed other artists and they have done so in many different ways: imitating their style, adapting their works, incorporating elements thereof, etc. The case of Rusiñol with regard to El Greco is a major exception

basically for two reasons: firstly, for his impact on the art world due to his status as a leading figure, and, secondly, for the extraordinary intensity of this campaign in defence of El Greco, the unusual number of ventures he undertook and the means he employed, of diverse order and nature: the purchase of El Grecos, copying his works, the erection of a monument, writing about him and so on. Although it may surprise the reader who does not know the work of Rusiñol, we can state without hesitation that the reasons for Picasso’s initial, explosive interest in Greco lie basically in Rusiñol’s campaign in his favour. In short, few artists in history have shown such determination to rehabilitate the work of El Greco as Rusiñol. Vinyet Panyella, who is more knowledgeable on this subject than we are, has a comprehensive study of this elsewhere in this catalogue.

But why do we establish this direct link from Rusiñol to Picasso when El Greco was already an internationally recognised artist and it is well known that Rusiñol was not the first to champion him? Picasso had already seen the work of El Greco

and had taken an interest in it; undoubtedly in 1895 during his first very brief visit to the Prado accompanied by his father, but especially during his second stay in Madrid, in the period 1897–1898. From this stay we know of visits to two of the places most closely associated with El Greco: to the Prado once again, and to Toledo. In any event, we establish this close relationship between the two artists because there is an almost exact chronological coincidence of three events: the earliest portraits of Rusiñol, the first Grecoesque sketches and Picasso's introduction into the most conspicuous *modernista* circles, those which championed El Greco. While it is true that Picasso was interested in many artists throughout his life without the need for such explicit external stimuli, it would be hard to find another case like that of El Greco, as demonstrated by the extraordinary explosion of works and sketches after El Greco in Picasso's art in 1899–1900. Accordingly, Juan Eduardo Cirlot wrote that 'the interest in El Greco's work, revived by Rusiñol, impacts on a moment in Picasso's output'.² Cirlot had received from the then director of Barcelona's municipal museums, Juan Ainaud de Lasarte, the commission to write the book *Picasso. El nacimiento de un genio* (Picasso: the Birth of a Genius), which chiefly dealt with Picasso's donation to the City of Barcelona in 1970. For years, until the publication in 1984 of the catalogue raisonné of the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, this book served as an informal catalogue of this extraordinary gift. One of the surprises in this set of works, one which no doubt struck Cirlot as well, was to find the wealth of El Greco-inspired pieces, something which Cirlot was quick to connect with Rusiñol, as we have seen. Rusiñol is almost always mentioned when talking about Picasso's interest in El Greco, but in our opinion, his role, which was key to this extraordinary intensity, has not always been emphasised enough.

This explosion of El Greco's influence on Picasso coincided with two personal factors, without which it would not have been possible: a Picasso eager for new stimuli and endowed with an extraordinary ability for absorption and a Rusiñol overcome by a quasi-religious devotion to El Greco, even officiating at his 'beatification'. Only this confluence of forces can explain the pervasiveness of Grecoesque figures and faces in Picasso's works. This would be a first rather superficial and purely aesthetic level of Picasso receiving the lesson of El Greco. Later he would internalise and filter El Greco's message and extract from it more enduring compositional and technical lessons that largely came to their expressive climax in the Blue Period, notwithstanding the occasional example thereafter. It is not our purpose here to occupy ourselves with this influence, which would require a whole other catalogue like this one; rather what we seek to do is to establish those more or less direct links between Rusiñol's campaign to rehabilitate El Greco and its possible impact on Picasso's creative processes. With this text, our intention is ultimately to relocate at the international level Rusiñol's role as an instigator of Picasso's interest in El Greco, rather than as another of the latter's champions, as he has often been presented.

The portrait as homage: Rusiñol as *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*

Aside from a chronological coincidence between Picasso's interest and Rusiñol's efforts as an advocate, we have an outstanding document that confirms this link. It is a small drawing at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona in which Picasso renders Rusiñol as the anonymous figure in El Greco's oil painting *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast* (p. 199). Here we have Picasso once again appropriating the

work of other artists, this time El Greco, and in one of his classic fusions he took El Greco's most famous painting to highlight the figure of Rusiñol, El Greco's leading champion among the *modernistes*. In a single portrait Picasso includes an iconic image (*The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*) of the championed and the image of the champion (Rusiñol). In an attempt to link it even more closely to El Greco's original, he puts it in a frame. In calling this portrait a 'document' we have done so deliberately, because from the point of view of heritage it is no great work, in fact the portrait was done on a sheet of paper cluttered with drawings, among them three sketches of a friend of Picasso, Josep Rocarol, with a clearly Grecoesque excessively elongated head, not found in the final portrait we know of Rocarol.³ Finally, at the top centre of the paper is another of the numerous faces in the manner of El Greco that Picasso did during this period. However, we would not go as far as to consider this tribute completely original. Ramon Pichot, an artist who moved in the same circles as Rusiñol and Picasso, had a couple of years earlier painted Rusiñol in the same way: right hand flat on his chest with his ring and middle fingers together, exactly as in the original by El Greco. Pichot even accentuates the facial features of Rusiñol to further strengthen the link with El Greco (p. 200). This iconography from El Greco's most famous painting would become proverbial in Picasso's work and one of the earliest examples might just be this portrait of Rusiñol, contemporary to another lesser known piece, the drawing *Characters Stylised in the Manner of El Greco and Other Sketches* (p. 198). This iconography cropped up again years later in one of Picasso's oil paintings often identified by the generic name of 'musketeers'. This is also the case of the oil *Man*, which actually is a caricature of El Greco's famous oil painting (p. 203). That small but emblematic portrait of Rusiñol confirms

Picasso's acknowledgement of Rusiñol's role in the El Greco revival, a role he recalled again later in his life. In the nineteen-forties, talking about El Greco, Picasso stated: 'Poor El Greco! He goes on the way he began. No one wants to have anything to do with him. Fortunately, he has seen better times. Once, when he had recently been rediscovered, a Spanish patron bought two of his paintings that were in France. Saints, I don't remember which ones. And they were transported across the Pyrenees on foot on a stretcher to get them back to Spain. That happened in the last century. I was only twelve years old, but the canvas-bearers, two painters from Barcelona who later became my good friends, told me about the strange pilgrimage of the El Grecos.'⁴ When Picasso talks about 'good friends', he undoubtedly includes Rusiñol, the protagonist of this episode, who probably told him about it personally.

El Greco admirers round Picasso and Rusiñol

While this text focuses on Rusiñol, it is true that several artists and other people round him shared his passion for El Greco, though, as Francesc Fontbona points out, it was not confined to Rusiñol's circle.⁵ We will limit ourselves here to some of these people whom both Picasso and Rusiñol knew. One of the outstanding of these was Miquel Utrillo, who wrote a monograph on El Greco, a copy of which, according to John Richardson, he gave to Picasso in 1906 while the latter was in Barcelona on his way Gósol (p. 198).⁶ Pierre Daix also confirms Utrillo's influence on Picasso and even places it on the same level as that of Rusiñol: 'Miquel Utrillo was to him [Picasso] an attentive elder and a mentor who first, together with Rusiñol, initiated him into El Greco'.⁷ Let us note that Utrillo belonged to the same generation as Rusiñol and his passion for El Greco also came from his years in Paris, and, significantly, he was also a friend of one of the main

instigators of Rusiñol's passion for El Greco, the painter Ignacio Zuloaga. Zuloaga also went along with him in the whole process of buying the two paintings. Although at the time Picasso did not know Zuloaga personally, undoubtedly he had heard of him, given that he was one of the leading Spanish painters in France. Indirectly, Zuloaga also influenced Picasso; we know that he visited his home several times and there he would have seen El Greco's *The Opening of the Fifth Seal (The Vision of St John)*, a work many experts consider a possible influence on the genesis of *Les Femmes d'Alger*: 'Picasso would see it [the painting] again and again in the following years.'⁸

If people of the stature of Rusiñol and Utrillo championed El Greco, it is hardly surprising that their efforts in this direction would have had an effect on the younger generations that followed them. Picasso is a prime example, but we could also cite others such as Ramon Pichot or Hortensi Güell. Ramon Pichot was an artist very closely linked to this El Greco revival. We have mentioned how he portrayed Rusiñol as an anonymous Grecoesque subject, but he was also an active participant in the procession through the streets of Sitges of the El Grecos Rusiñol had bought. Pichot also copied works by El Greco, possibly including a copy of *An Old Man* now at Cau Ferrat, although we can only speculate that it is actually by Pichot (p. 204). Even contemporary typical and religious works by Pichot show clear traces of El Greco. As for Hortensi Güell, he was with Picasso in Madrid when the latter attended the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. In our view, Güell is particularly important here as a follower of both Rusiñol and El Greco. One of the most interesting testimonies to this passion is a book by Güell himself, published posthumously. In *Florescència (Florescence)*, Güell includes the story 'Toledo and El Greco' —

chronicling a visit to Toledo to see the original of *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* — which shows the depth of this obsession for El Greco: 'Never as on the day that I went back and forth from Toledo have I so felt the dawn and sunset, because never as on that day have I profited from the light to behold beautiful things and from the dark to dream; never have I awakened with such joy and fallen sleep with such sad yearning. To those who do not love Art, I think that on recalling or hearing mention of Toledo must come to mind the swords that can be bought from the famous factory there. But not thus for us who love it as do the five friends who anxiously went to visit the imperial city with all the eagerness of one who awaits the enjoyment of an unknown pleasure.'⁹ Later Güell tells the story of their theatrical visit to the chapel of Santo Tomé: 'Suddenly, like a lover arriving in the town where his beloved lives, we felt more strongly the desire to behold our ideal. "El Greco, El Greco!" we shouted as one and we hurried to the Church of Santo Tomé, trembling we entered, with the faith of the good pilgrim coming from far-off lands to fulfil his promise and pray at the feet of the figure which appeared miraculously [...]. My companions, pale, in pure ecstasy, said nothing. "Oh, El Greco!", exclaimed I don't know who, and then, as if we were praying, drawing near and away from the painting, we began to praise it.'¹⁰

The interesting thing about this visit is that Güell says he went there with four friends. Bearing in mind the dates and his close relationship with Güell, Picasso may well have been among them, especially given that we know that during this time in Madrid he travelled to Toledo at least once. According to Palau i Fabre, Picasso went to Toledo once with a group of students and a tutor, Moreno Carbonero, from the San Fernando Academy. According to Picasso himself, in his copy of *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* he changed the faces of the people of El

Greco's work for those of students and a tutor.¹¹ One of the people on the visit could have been the Argentine painter Francisco Bernareggi, who years later recalled copying El Greco with Picasso: 'The hours we spent admiring and studying *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz!*'¹² Also according Bernareggi, at the time copying El Greco was frowned upon: 'I remember that at the Prado Museum, because I was copying El Greco with Picasso, people and schoolmates were horrified and called us *modernistes*.'¹³ After returning from Madrid, Picasso stopped off briefly in Barcelona on his way to Horta. One of the drawings he did there bears the inscription 'El Greco, Velázquez, inspire me!', probably done under the lingering influence of that time in Madrid of intense contact with El Greco. On another sheet of drawings Picasso twice wrote 'I, El Greco', an anecdote that evidences an extraordinary level of identification. This quite explicit identification fits in perfectly with the concept of 'projection' as posited by Robert S. Lubar when he considers that both Rusiñol and Picasso projected onto El Greco their own images as artists: 'Like Picasso, Rusiñol projected onto El Greco his own image as a painter and writer, stressing primarily his artistic independence, his scorn for academic canons and, in the context of Rusiñol's own adherence to Symbolism, his exploration of the imaginary.'¹⁴ Lubar's arguments pretty much coincide with what Rusiñol and his fellow *modernista* champions of El Greco said, arguments attractive enough for a young Picasso to see his reflection in him. Picasso's early interest in El Greco was linked to the fact that he was a model of heterodoxy and anti-academicism, in other words, Picasso chose El Greco for the same reason that the Catalan *modernistes* he hung around with had adopted him as a model of modernity. Hence Güell's and Picasso's absolutely disproportionate testimonies to their passion for

El Greco. Both young artists, and they were not the only ones, got caught up in the same phenomenon of El Greco worship in which Rusiñol played the role of leader. Although Picasso did not begin to move in the same circles as people like Rusiñol until 1899 — it would perhaps be going too far to say he knew them well at that stage — once he had finished his schooling, we have no doubt that he was aware of the role that was being assigned to El Greco and of the efforts being made to rehabilitate him. In addition to Rusiñol, there was an entire network being woven around him that included many of the above-mentioned people, many of whom, as we have seen, moved in the same circles as Picasso.

From Cau Ferrat to the Museu Picasso: guardians of a passion

Cau Ferrat in Sitges and the Museu Picasso in Barcelona symbolise, broadly speaking, the origins and the fruits of Picasso's youthful passion for El Greco. Cau Ferrat is the depository of his initial rehabilitation in Catalonia, the centrepiece of which is the two original El Grecos. The Museu Picasso, holder of the largest collection of Picasso's early works, also has the bulk of his works from that time influenced by El Greco. In 1894, when the El Grecos arrived in Sitges and were borne through the streets in a procession, Picasso was not in Barcelona, but in La Coruña. In 1898, when the monument to El Greco was erected in Sitges with money from a popular subscription instigated by Rusiñol, Picasso was in Horta. However, despite his physical absence, surely he heard about all these activities sponsored by Rusiñol in El Greco's honour. In addition to Rusiñol's efforts to rehabilitate El Greco, there were the works at Cau Ferrat. Given that Picasso visited Cau Ferrat on several occasions, where the artist par excellence was El Greco, we now have another example of Rusiñol's

elliptical influence on Picasso. In our view, the contents of Cau Ferrat had three levels of possible influence on Picasso. The first would be, of course, the two original El Grecos. Although Picasso had already been to Madrid and Toledo — and had therefore seen El Grecos first hand — the presence of these works near Barcelona, in Sitges, gave him the opportunity to see them more often. The presence of those El Grecos, *The Repentant Magdalene* and *The Tears of St. Peter*, in Sitges undoubtedly sparked Picasso's interest. The second level is the diverse copies of El Greco, some of which were probably already hanging there at the time. In addition to the copy of *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast* by Rusiñol (p. 200), on the walls of Cau Ferrat also hung a pencil copy of *The Tears of St. Peter*, a drawing by Zuloaga that Rusiñol would use to illustrate his article 'El Greco en casa' (El Greco at Home), originally published in *La Vanguardia*, in which he told the story of the purchase of the El Grecos (p. 196). At Cau Ferrat there is also a copy of the aforementioned *An Old Man* belonging to the Prado Museum, an oil commonly attributed to Ramon Pichot (p. 204). Finally, the third level would be those works in the collection, by both Rusiñol and other artists, influenced by El Greco, of which there are quite a few and of different types. Some we have mentioned previously in this study, for example the portrait of Modesto Sánchez Ortiz, in which El Greco's stamp is seen in the treatment of the face; or, in terms of colour, the portrait of Carles Mani, where the yellows are very close to those used by El Greco in, for instance, *The Tears of St. Peter*. We should also mention a series of three oils of monks by Rusiñol, done during a stay at the monastery of Montserrat.¹⁵

The Museu Picasso, as we have said, has a wealth of sketches and portraits, mostly drawings but also various oil paintings, influenced by El Greco. It can be said that these works are the most eloquent

testimony to this appropriation of El Greco. Among this huge number of works, we mention just a few examples which illustrate the different types found among them. For the most part they are drawings, many of them sketches for Grecoesque portraits, for example *Grecoesque Figure*, reminiscent of *Portrait of a Man* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (p. 206-207). In most cases, the influence is confined to the iconographic elongated face, but also extends to the whole body, for example in an emblematic drawing at the Museu Picasso, *The Fool*. In other cases, however, the influence is somewhat hazier. For example the oil *Portrait of an Unknown Man*, in which the link with the work of El Greco occurs at another level, namely in the vague figures that create an odd effect of mystery (p. 210-211).

The lasting mark of El Greco

In our opinion, one of the points of greatest proximity between Picasso and El Greco came in late 1901, just a couple of years after these early Grecoesque portraits, with *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)* (p. 213). This work marks a highpoint insofar as it contains a whole series of iconographic references to El Greco, perhaps more than any other work by Picasso. In it we find elements that evoke at once several works by El Greco, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, *The Dream of Philip II*, and especially *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (p. 212), subverted — which Picasso was so fond of — to turn a scene of jubilation (the birth of Jesus) into one of sorrow (the death of Casagemas) and to exchange the heavenly creatures (angels) for such terrestrial creatures as naked women.

Calvo Serraller has pointed out two lines along which Picasso's appropriation of El Greco evolved. The first is one that was taken up in Spain as well as by various artists from other countries, who, in

his words, shared a 'very romantically purist, or at least, very "literaturised" vision of El Greco'. The second line of interpretation would place El Greco as one of the fathers of modern art, linked to, among other artists, Cézanne. In the view of Calvo Serraller, Picasso swung from the first to the second line, thus distinguishing himself from the line taken by his Spanish contemporaries.¹⁶ Although El Greco's iconography also appears in Picasso's late works, his real interest in him gradually waned and would eventually become more of a parody of the period than a recognition of El Greco's undeniable contributions to art. Picasso told D.H. Kahnweiler, his dealer for many years, that what interested him most about El Greco were his portraits.¹⁷ It is for this reason that many of Picasso's Grecoesque works in the latter part of his life are heads, done using different techniques including linocut and ceramic etchings (p. 208–209). This obsession with Grecoesque portraiture perhaps indicates that Picasso had come full circle, a circle which undoubtedly began around 1897, from when we have evidence of his interest in El Greco in a letter sent from Madrid praising some 'magnificent heads'¹⁸ he had recently seen at the Prado. Kahnweiler made the following comment: 'Picasso has lost some of his passion for El Greco. The painter from Toledo has of course wielded undoubted influence on him, but as he has evolved he has moved away from him and gradually towards Velázquez, who has now become without doubt his favourite painter.'¹⁹ Despite the differences, Picasso would undergo an evolution similar to that we have described here in his relationship with Rusiñol. In the future Picasso would continue to appreciate El Greco, who would occasionally pop up in his work; however, never again would he live in an environment that showed so much admiration for the Cretan-born artist. It was at the time when the El Grecos were paraded

through the streets as if they were saints, when he was the subject of impassioned speeches, when monuments were erected in his honour, that the mark of El Greco burst forth in the work of Picasso. It was to that time, and none other, that in the nineteen-forties Picasso was referring when he told Brassà: 'Fortunately, he has seen better times'.²⁰

1. Pierre Daix. *Dictionnaire Picasso*. Robert Laffont, Paris, 1995, p. 415.
2. Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, *Picasso. El nacimiento de un genio*. Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1972, p. 88.
3. MPB 110.435.
4. Brassà, *Conversations with Picasso*. University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 199.
5. Francesc Fontbona, 'La recuperació d'El Greco per part dels modernistes catalans', in *El Greco. La seva revaloració pel Modernisme català*. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya/Proa, Barcelona, 1996, p. 49.
6. John Richardson (with Marilyn McCully), *A life of Picasso*, vol. 1: 1881-1906. Random House, New York, 1991, p. 435.
7. P. Daix. *Dictionnaire...*, op. cit., p. 881.
8. J. Richardson, *Picasso. A life...*, op. cit., p. 430.
9. Hortensí Güell, *Florescència. Col·lecció d'ensaios literaris*. Oliva impressors, Barcelona/Vilanova i la Geltrú, 1902, p. 117.
10. *Ibid*, pp. 118-119.
11. Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso vivent. 1881-1907*. Edicions Polígrafa, Barcelona, 1980, p. 137.
12. Diego F. Pró, *Conversaciones con Bernareggi. Vida, obra y enseñanzas del pintor*. Imprenta López, Tucumán, 1949, p. 22.
13. *Ibid*, p. 21.
14. Robert S. Lubar, 'Narrar la nació: Picasso y el mito de El Greco', in Jonathan Brown (ed.), *Picasso y la tradición española*. Nerea, Guipúzcoa, 1999, p. 47. Translation from the Spanish.
15. *Un novici* (Mansuetud), 1897; *Estudi per a Un novici*, c. 1897; and *Paroxisme d'un novici*, 1897. All of these works are at Cau Ferrat in Sitges.
16. Francisco Calvo Serraller, 'Picasso frente a la historia', in *Picasso. Tradición y vanguardia*. Museo Nacional del Prado/Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2006, pp. 47-48.
17. P. Daix. *Dictionnaire...*, op. cit., pp. 416-417.
18. Excerpt from a letter from Picasso to Joaquim Bas i Gich, dated Madrid, 3 November 1897 (Fundació Palau, Caldes d'Estrac).
19. Brassà. *Conversaciones...*, op. cit., p. 307.
20. *Ibid*, p. 184.

Passages of influences and modernity: El Greco, Rusiñol and Picasso

VINYET PANYELLA

The relationship between Rusiñol and Picasso was cemented at a time when Rusiñol had established himself as the leading figure in *Modernisme*, whereas Picasso was still a wide-eyed, passionate and rebellious apprentice artist just gathering the momentum that in Paris in the first decade of the twentieth century would ultimately launch him into the forefront of modern art.

This passage in Picasso's artistic biography evolved through different stages of the personal relations between the two men, marked successively by curiosity, admiration and finally a critical stance towards Rusiñol. The key dates in this relationship fall between 1896 — when the two artists both showed work at the General Exhibition of Fine Arts and Artistic Industries in Barcelona: Picasso with *The First Communion* (p. 45), painted under the overarching influence of Arcadi Mas i Fondevila; and Rusiñol with his allegories to *Poetry* and *Music* (both 1895), imbued with the symbolism of the early masters contemplated during his trip to Italy in 1894 — and 1903, when Picasso did a scathing caricature of Rusiñol being sodomised by a critic as he grasps for glory. These are the years of the highpoint of *Modernisme* and its influence on Picasso's painting. Indeed, although Picasso would later return to Rusiñolian themes in his pictorial treatment of *The epic of senyor Esteve* — Rusiñol's novel from 1907 — and the fact that in Paris he hung out with some of Rusiñol's old friends, including Erik Satie, the core of their relationship, and likewise Rusiñol's influence on the work of Picasso, came in this period.

I have dealt with this theme previously in an article on the artistic relationship between Picasso and

Rusiñol,¹ which, with the corresponding references, outlined a number of themes: Rusiñol's influence on the themes found in Picasso's paintings (landscapes, portraits, disease and death, misery and poverty, blue nights, Paris as a setting, clowns and acrobats); El Greco's impact on Picasso's work; Rusiñol's and Picasso's relationship at Quatre Gats; the iconographic evolution of Rusiñol in Picasso's work; and Rusiñol the collector of Picassos at Cau Ferrat. I have returned to this subject in other studies, such as that on Picasso's relationship with Catalan painters and my biography of Rusiñol.² In all of this, and beyond the iconographic evolution of the young Picasso's portraiture of Rusiñol, one of the most interesting facets of their relationship is Rusiñol's role as a nexus between Picasso and El Greco, whose influence would find its way into Picasso's painting.

The mark of El Greco: Sitges, Madrid, Barcelona

Rusiñol did a great deal to promote appreciation of El Greco in the late nineteenth century when he bought two paintings in Paris, *The Tears of St. Peter* and *The Repentant Magdalene with the Cross* (p. 194–195). From that point El Greco, with Rusiñol as his greatest champion, became one of the paradigms of modernity and one of *Modernisme's* most important sources of inspiration. Rusiñol shared his enthusiasm for El Greco with a readership that included artists who followed the chronicles he sent from Paris: 'El Greco en casa'³ (El Greco at Home) evidences the high regard that he and Zuloaga — with whom he shared his flat on Quai de Bourbon — had for the works by El Greco they found in Paris.

(Some months later, on the arrival of the paintings at Cau Ferrat, during the third *modernista* festival, came their actual enthronement, borne by a procession of artists through the streets of Sitges.) This admiration was also shared by Miquel Utrillo — who first visited Sitges in the summer of 1885 and who in turn became another of El Greco's most active champions — along with Emilia Pardo Bazán and Ángel Ganivet, both of whom were seduced by El Greco's work, and Rusiñol's passion for it, on their visits to Cau Ferrat in 1895 and 1897, respectively.

Rusiñol's relationship with El Greco grew beyond a simple love of his works to aesthetic and thematic influences. On the one hand, Rusiñol borrowed his shades of yellow, seen in works such as *Morphine* (p. 260) and *The Medal* (1894-1895) or the background in *Portrait of Carles Mani* (p. 77). On the other hand, the feeling of melancholy in his mystic cycle (summer-autumn 1897) is due both to the artist's state of mind (he had developed a heavy morphine addiction to kill the pain from a necrotic kidney that was not diagnosed until 1901) and a certain sense of spirituality borrowed directly from El Greco. In the third place, the copy of *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast* that Rusiñol did in December 1897 at the Prado on his way to his third visit to Granada and which later hung on the walls of Cau Ferrat indicates a sense of emulation and admiration towards 'the great El Greco'. And beyond this aesthetic influence, Rusiñol deeply admired El Greco's persona. Indeed, on his way back from his second trip to Granada, in February 1896, stopping off at Madrid on his way to Sitges, Rusiñol announced at a tavern called the *Cervecería Inglesa* his intention to erect a monument to the artist; Utrillo, who was with him, told the story years later. The popular subscription for the monument, which Josep Reynés was commissioned to produce, opened

in 1896 and culminated in the execution of the sculpture that Rusiñol had pushed for. Rusiñol's speeches to celebrate the laying of the first stone (August 1897) and the unveiling of the monument (25 August 1898) highlighted the extent to which El Greco's exemplary commitment, dedication and work constituted one of the foundations of modern art and, at the same time, one of the paradigms of regenerationism through art.

In the autumn of 1897, amidst this artistic scenario, Picasso moved to Madrid. In El Greco he saw a shining beacon of modernity, both in his reaction against academic painting — of which Don José Ruiz Blasco, Picasso's father and tutor at the Llotja School of Fine Arts in Barcelona, was a representative and advocate, as were Moreno Carbonero and Muñoz Degrain, members of the teaching staff at the Madrid academy — and in the compositional and expressive capacity of his works. He was captivated by El Greco's 'magnificent heads' at the Prado, as Joaquín Bas wrote in November 1897; the painter Francisco Bernareggi, a companion of Picasso's during his time in Madrid, recalled that people called them 'modernistes' when they saw them copying El Greco at the Prado, and how, when he found out, Picasso's father admonished them: 'You two are headed down the wrong road'. The academy had yet to acknowledge El Greco's worth. Bernareggi later recalled the hours they spent in Toledo admiring and studying *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*,⁴ Picasso's compositional games notwithstanding. The latter was one of the most influential of El Greco's works on Picasso, in terms of both composition and concept, evident not only in the scenes of the burial of Carles Casagemas (1901) but also, much later, in the illustrated book *El entierro del conde de Orgaz* (1957-1959; *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*) and a 'sacrilegious plate' of the same title (1968).

When, on his return to Barcelona, Picasso began to frequent Quatre Gats, where he met Rusiñol, he did a series of portraits of him ranging from admiration to satire, one of which is especially significant. The frontal portrait of Rusiñol's face shows the artist with long hair and beard and wearing a soft hat, his demeanour extremely serious despite the cigar protruding from his pipe, and his hand over his chest, reminiscent of El Greco's knight. Despite the size of the sketch (p. 199) and the portraits and caricatures surrounding Rusiñol (some of which are quite Grecoesque), Picasso's intention is clearly to identify Rusiñol as an example of authenticity and modernity. In addition to this image of Rusiñol, Picasso did several other portraits and sketches along the compositional lines of El Greco: severe, elongated faces of people he knew, including his father, as well as anonymous subjects. Most of these are held at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona.

An element of El Greco shared by Rusiñol and Picasso is their use of yellows. This influence might not be as frequent in Picasso as in Rusiñol, largely due to the themes Picasso explored in the period 1899-1900, but it is apparent in *Bullfight (El Quite)* (p. 63) and some of the backgrounds in his portraits and Parisian scenes.

From lines to composition

El Greco's plastic influence on Picasso is also revealed in everything from lines to composition in other periods, as well as in his subjects' facial expressions and the backgrounds of his works from the Blue Period and even thereafter. We find two portraits of anonymous men, both from 1899, which are forerunners of the Blue Period in the background surrounding the faces but also in the air of melancholy they emanate. Severity and melancholy permeate many of the works from those

years, from the turn of the century up to *The Couple (Les Misérables)* (1904) and several renderings of acrobats and harlequins and acrobats, such as *Acrobat and Young Harlequin* and *Two Acrobats* (1905).

The compositional influence of El Greco is evident in works such as *The Two Sisters* (1902), done at a time when Picasso had permission to visit the Saint-Lazare women's prison, many of whose inmates suffered from venereal disease, a pictorial motif that Toulouse-Lautrec and others had dealt with previously. The work in question is of 'a Saint-Lazare whore and a mother', as Picasso wrote to his friend Max Jacob in July 1902, and the compositional model is one of El Greco's religious works most highly charged with femininity, *The Visitation*. In terms of composition it is almost a direct copy: two figures in profile with their arms linked, one of whom (the diseased convict) strikes a more submissive pose than the other. The fusion of themes is inevitably provocative, however, according to Richardson, rather than expressing social criticism, Picasso at the time was immersed in a kind of 'Romantic agony'.

The depictions of the suicide of Carles Casagemas, a friend since his youth, constitute one of the best examples of El Greco's conceptual and structural influence on Picasso's painting from the time. This tragedy, which Picasso, unlike Manolo Hugué, did not witness, haunted him for years, during which the figure of Casagemas appeared in several works that Picasso dedicated to him, from evocation to allegory (*Life*). And, although neither in the way they died nor in the idiosyncrasies of their characters are the two comparable, the deaths of Ramon Canudas and Carles Casagemas had a great impact on Rusiñol and Picasso, respectively, in the latter case marking perhaps the end of an age of innocence, and for both a turning point in their artistic directions.

The three versions of *The Death of Casagemas* are among the finest examples of the limits of the expressiveness of a face that 'looked like a faded El Greco saint'. Picasso juxtaposes the apparent serenity of the face — such as El Greco did with some of his ad hoc subjects — with the descriptive backdrop of Casagemas's troubled spirit (*The Death of Casagemas*, p.267) to show most graphically, sparing no details, the horror of death by suicide.

The funeral scenes depicted in two works — *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*, 1901 (p. 213), and *Les Pleureuses (The Mourners)*, 1901 — show similarities in structure, and differences in concept, with *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*. In the first, the composition clearly defines three planes; the lower one, evoking the composition in the funeral scene by El Greco with the body stretched out from left to right and the group of mourners gathered around it; immediately above this are clear allegorical secular references, where the idea of paradise mingles with sexual pleasure and procreation — two things denied the dead. The upper plane, comprising a chiaroscuro sky, returns to El Greco's skylines and backgrounds. The other work, *The Mourners*, conforms more closely to the composition in which it is inspired. Composed in a single frontal plane, crowding round the figure of the deceased is a semicircle of figures who express visually the idea of mourning and contemplation shared by people of different ages, their pose underscoring the grave, melancholy and sorrowful quality of the painting. *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* was the main source of inspiration here, but not the only one; to the right the mother standing with a child in her arms is a transposition of the St. John painted by El Greco in *The Holy Family with St. Anne and the Young St. John the Baptist* at the Prado.

Picasso continued to preserve and borrow new plastic and structural elements from El Greco,

which, over the years, cropped up again and again, as in *Man with Ruff, in the style of El Greco* (p. 208). However, we note also that over the years El Greco would come to be acknowledged as unquestionably one of the most important figures in the entire history of painting and, as such, his works became a common source of inspiration for artists in the twentieth century. Picasso's original merit lies in having incorporated El Greco conceptually and visually in his work from the point when, in his passionate and rebellious youth, he discovered him thanks to the enthusiasm and conviction of Rusiñol, who was at that time the leading figure in *Modernisme*.

1. Vinyet Panyella, 'D'Els Quatre Gats al Cau Ferrat: La relació artística entre Santiago Rusiñol i Picasso (1896-1903)', in *Picasso i els 4 Gats. La clau de la modernitat* (exh. cat.). Museu Picasso/Lunwerg, 1995, Barcelona, pp. 237-249.
2. Vinyet Panyella, *Santiago Rusiñol, el caminant de la terra*. Edicions 62, Barcelona, 2003 (Biografies i memòries; 51).
3. Santiago Rusiñol, 'El Greco en casa', in *La Vanguardia*, 8 March 1894 (see in this catalogue p. 196).
4. See in this catalogue, Eduard Vallès, 'El Greco, Rusiñol and Picasso', p. 75, notes 12 and 13.

Absorption and dialogue

EDUARD VALLÈS

In examining the links between Picasso and *Modernisme*, we cannot avoid mention of Santiago Rusiñol, given that he embodied nearly all the facets of the movement. According to Alexandre Cirici, Rusiñol is among those artists who clearly reflect the two sides of *Modernisme*, the 'white wing', more traditionalist, and the naturalistic-leaning 'black wing'. With regard to Picasso, Cirici says that Rusiñol 'exerted a powerful influence on young artists with his twin doctrines of breaking moulds and seeking out the paroxysmal aspects of reality.' The former, the 'mould-breaking' doctrine, is of a conceptual order, almost a matter of attitude; the latter, which he called 'paroxysmal aspects', relates above all to thematic areas. In Cirici's opinion, this is one of the bases of Rusiñol's influence on younger artists like Picasso: 'There is no doubt that Rusiñol's doctrines influenced the outlook of the young Picasso, who, in the name of this freedom and boldness, broke with Spanish 'academicism'. When Picasso said, at Notre-Dame-de-Vie, that in his youth he found that painting had run its course and he decided that he had to do something else, clearly he was expressing and adopting this attitude which, in his world, Rusiñol was the first to preach.'¹

Even though we have already dealt with several aspects of this connection thus far in this catalogue, we will now turn our attention to three themes

followed by Picasso in his youth, focusing on each one in a separate essay. These themes, all of them dealt with by Rusiñol, though the connection with Picasso exists at different levels, are: gardens, death and illness, and the creation of diverse atmospheres. As we shall see, these themes reflect different orders of interrelation between the two artists, ranging from direct influence to what we might call dialogue and confluence. The garden was a quintessential Rusiñol theme, as Picasso acknowledged in the portraits he did of him and in some of his adaptations of Rusiñol's works. With regard to the subjects of illness and death, Rusiñol's influence was more elliptical, though we must not forget Rusiñol was a pioneering figure as regards these themes. At another level we will deal with the use of lighting effects to create atmospheres, in particular the use of blue, a colour of considerable prominence in the work of both artists, even from the same period.

Picasso paints the gardens of Rusiñol

‘The mournful, autumnal scenes of the Retiro Park owe much to similar subjects by a man who would later become a good friend, Santiago Rusiñol.’

John Richardson, *A life of Picasso*, 1991

Around 1900 Picasso did one of his finest portraits of Rusiñol, a drawing of Rusiñol as a painter of gardens (p. 231). This portrait would be from the same period as the large, more colourful portrait of Rusiñol in the same pose in which the garden is only vaguely sketched and which belongs to the collection of El Conventet (p. 23). These two portraits, in our opinion, mark the moment of Picasso’s greatest admiration for and/or interest in Rusiñol, not only due to solemnity of the portraits but also because of the circumstances surrounding them. Below we deal with these points in greater depth.

In early 1901, Picasso moved to Madrid and, along with the Catalan writer Francisco de Asís Soler, he started a *modernista* magazine called *Arte Joven*. At one point Picasso asked Miquel Utrillo for some plates of gardens by Rusiñol for an issue devoted almost entirely to the latter. In a letter to Utrillo, Picasso wrote: ‘Dear Utrillo, I write to request a favour of you. We are doing a periodical and we want to dedicate almost the entire second issue to Rusiñol. If you don’t mind and so choose, you might send us some of the plates of gardens that you reproduced. Needless to say we are willing to return the favour.’ (p. 231) We do not know whether Utrillo sent these plates, but the fact that no Rusiñol issue of *Arte Joven* was ever published makes us think he did not.

Rusiñol: a major figure in *Arte Joven*

Notwithstanding the above, *Arte Joven* featured Rusiñol more than any other artist. Indeed, the inaugural issue included Rusiñol’s tale ‘The Blue Courtyard’, from the previously mentioned collection *Leaves of Life*. The story, which was expressly translated from Catalan (with several errors), occupied considerable space given the slimness of the magazine.² ‘The Blue Courtyard’ is about an unnamed painter — Rusiñol’s alter ego — who meets a sickly girl, and in it the author includes many of the stereotypical themes of Decadentism, including lilies, emaciation and tuberculosis. Picasso most likely learned of Rusiñol’s literary relationship with the world of gardens in another work, given that, just the previous year, Rusiñol had published *The Abandoned Garden*, a lyrical play set to music by Joan Gay, whom Picasso also knew and painted. As often happens with Rusiñol, painting and literature went hand in hand and the garden described in Rusiñol’s play seems to evoke, for instance, his painting *Palau abandonat* (Abandoned Palace) (p. 235), in which Rusiñol immortalised the garden of the Cuzco Palace in Víznar, Granada: ‘The scene shows a neglected garden, a classic garden, noble plants sickly with neglect, though still preserving the distinguishing mark that makeshift gardens do not have; a garden with a patina of beauty, shaped by the kisses of time and suffused with the sadness of ancient trees and rooted plants.’³

In the first issue of *Arte Joven* we find the portrait

of Rusiñol mentioned at the start of this chapter.⁴ This portrait takes us back again to *Leaves of Life* because the setting is the same as in the poster that Rusiñol did (with Miquel Utrillo) for his book (p. 230). Picasso depicts Rusiñol in full and in profile, leaving as a backcloth the arbour of the Generalife in Granada that Rusiñol had immortalised in some of the garden paintings he had done during his sojourns in the Andalusian city. Picasso knew these works by Rusiñol of Granada and he would have hardly been oblivious to Rusiñol's love for Andalusia — after all, Picasso's birthplace — patent in both his paintings and his writings. Different interpretations, both technical and iconological, can be made of this portrait of Rusiñol, based on a comparison with the original poster. Where Rusiñol and Utrillo had placed a melancholy girl reading, Picasso put a solitary Rusiñol, standing with his hands behind his back in a similarly melancholy pose. Nor is the monochromatic use of green (a rarity in Picasso) coincidental, likely an association with the pervasiveness of green in Rusiñol's gardens, for example, his paintings of the same surroundings, such as *Fountain at the Generalife* (1895–1898) (p. 230). All in all, this shows that Picasso's most explicit interest in Rusiñol's landscapes coincides timewise with his best portraits of Rusiñol, thus attesting to the parallel between his admiration for the persona and his following of his work.

So far we have seen that *Arte Joven* published a story by Rusiñol (his literary side) and a portrait in one of his garden settings (his aspect as a painter). Here we deal with another aspect associated with Rusiñol: criticism. In another issue of the magazine, Luis Altada wrote a favourable review of Rusiñol's works shown at the National Fine Arts Exhibition in Madrid in 1901. Entitled 'The Catalan Artists', the review talks mostly about Rusiñol and Mir,

especially the former. Given the importance of this review we quote from it here: 'It must be admitted, and nobody can convince us otherwise, that Catalonia plays a most important role at the Fine Arts Exhibition in Madrid. Santiago Rusiñol, the painter-poet, presents a collection of gardens that have attracted much attention from the connoisseurs. The Catalan artist has triumphed across the board. Rusiñol's greatest adversaries admit despite themselves that his success is indisputable. His talent prevails, and his poetry-saturated gardens stand out brilliantly and show such artistic force that they undoubtedly place him at the vanguard of Spanish art. It might be objected that Rusiñol is too literary when he paints. This is true, just as he is too painterly when he writes; but this, far from harming him, in our view enhances his works and gives them such strength and intensity as we could hardly find in anyone else. His vibrant gardens stand out amidst that hotchpotch of nonsense shown by renowned artists whom everybody knows, but which give a very poor impression of Spanish art. Mir attains immense success. He is the top landscape artist; he paints like no other, his colours are intense, and he has conquered, in spite of his youth, the place of honour. We, members the jury, do not dither. In the painting section Mir and Rusiñol set the tone. How about you, Mr. Saint-Aubin? It is up to you and your fellow jurors.'⁵ At this exhibition Rusiñol showed some of his Granada gardens, which Picasso, being in Madrid at the time, surely saw.⁶ Indeed, he also had a work at the exhibition, namely *Woman in Blue*, a painting for which he won no prizes and which he did not even bother to retrieve. It is quite probable that Picasso did some of the drawings we have referred to as versions of works by Rusiñol after seeing them at the exhibition. Rusiñol's gardens had been shown at major exhibitions before Madrid. He had had an exhibition called *Gardens of Spain*

at Siegfried Bing's gallery in Paris in 1899 and another in 1900 at the Sala Parés in Barcelona in which his Granada gardens featured large.

Gardens as a common theme

Against this background, we might ask, what is the common thread in all these appearances by Rusiñol in *Arte Joven*? The answer, unequivocally, is gardens, a theme that Rusiñol takes to extremes that few artists can match. And he did so quite intentionally, almost as an extension of his personality. Rusiñol created gardens as a metaphor of his own inner world, as a place to escape to from a world he often found insufferable. He tends to depict gardens as closed, secluded spaces artificially created by human hands. Xavier Antich writes, Rusiñol 'finally found in the reclusive space of gardens the only liveable space. The space of art, the space in between: the abandoned space for contemplation when all else is excluded.'⁷ We are not so sure that Picasso, although he followed Rusiñol in this theme in certain instances, did so from the same perspective or with the same depth.

This is not the only evidence that Picasso left us of his taste for Rusiñol's gardens. One of the most surprising findings we have come across in our research into Picasso's absorption processes is a very rare drawing, *Couple in a Garden*, of a festive couple, in which the setting is once again the Generalife gardens (p. 233). This drawing is one of Picasso's vexing works that, without knowing for sure, we suspect are appropriations. Since the drawing is little known, and given Rusiñol's relative obscurity, thus far we have been unable to discover its origin. Indeed, this is an exemplary case of Picasso's tendency for 'recontextualisation', in which he borrows a landscape from someone else, in this case Rusiñol. The arbour sits at the vanishing point where the two oblique lines of the garden converge.

The perspective in Picasso's drawing is exactly the same as in some of Rusiñol's paintings, *The Last Rays of the Sun* (1898), for instance (p. 232), shown in the exhibition in Madrid and which Picasso had the opportunity to view first hand. We might judge the presence of this couple accidental were it not for their typical Andalusian dress, which again evokes Rusiñol, and we cannot rule out that Picasso could have absorbed more than the setting. Paintings by Rusiñol such as *Gypsy from Albaicín* (p. 232), for example, recall this same female figure, of similar attire and pose, not to mention the cypress trees in the background. As we have said here, it was due to Picasso that *Arte Joven* published the story 'The Blue Courtyard', about a couple in a garden — although without a trace of folk stereotypes — and thus it would not be surprising that all these ideas would end up in this drawing.

Madrid 1897-1898

Although Rusiñol's appearances in *Arte Joven* mark the highpoint of Picasso's interest in his landscapes, already years before Picasso had followed his lead in this theme, albeit in a less explicit manner. This happened during the period 1897-1898, when Picasso went to Madrid to study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. Picasso was often absent from his classes and he left very few actual academic pieces from those days. He did a considerable number of works at Retiro Park and some of them have a dreamlike quality rarely seen elsewhere in his work. Indeed, were it not for the fact that some of these at times very Rusiñolian works were donated by Picasso himself, it would be very difficult to say they were actually his. Several Picasso experts, including Josep Palau i Fabre, John Richardson and María Teresa Ocaña, had previously noticed this appropriation of Rusiñol by Picasso during this time in Madrid. Richardson has written

that 'the mournful, autumnal scenes of the Retiro Park owe much to similar subjects by a man who would later become a good friend, Santiago Rusiñol.'⁸ Ocaña, for her part, rightly pointed out that the landscapes Picasso painted in the Retiro were 'an extension of the landscapes painted in Barcelona',⁹ given that he did not start painting these landscapes in Madrid and some of these works could have been done in Barcelona. Later on she adds that they 'show references to the first dreamlike and melancholy gardens in Granada by Santiago Rusiñol.'¹⁰

A paradigmatic case is *The Couple*, in which Picasso once again situates a festive couple in a garden reminiscent of the gardens Rusiñol did in Granada, in particular, *The Lovers' Arbour* (1895), with the common themes of love and water (p. 237). Picasso's female figure is unlike any other he ever painted; rather she is closer to some of Rusiñol's dying or sickly women, as in the oil *Mystical Landscape*, for example, also in a setting of mystical references, Montserrat, the mountain in Catalonia (p. 236). In another painting, *Man on the Bank of a Pond*, Picasso depicts the same setting as in *The Couple*, now occupied by a solitary, romantic figure (p. 236). This oil recalls one of Rusiñol's earliest works, *Man in a Park*, quite similar in both the theme and their slightly elevated perspective.¹¹ In both cases, the setting is a garden in which the human hand is very apparent, with silhouetted box trees, much in the manner of Rusiñol, although the latter tended to dispense with the human figure. Beyond the similarities between the two men's works, there is one element that is particularly striking, given that we are dealing with Picasso: the fact these works are so often based on mental constructs. In this aspect they coincide with Rusiñol, and rarely in his career do we find a Picasso so imbued with melancholy. As Isabel Coll writes, 'in these compositions,

Rusiñol seems to be closing his physical eyes in order to picture himself among the spiritual beings, to bring the inner out into the light of day,'¹² an assertion that could also be made about this unusual Picasso. In fact, Picasso not only found his classes at the academy tiring, but he also came down with scarlet fever, which perhaps accentuated the dreamlike quality of his work.

If some of these landscapes are close to Rusiñol, this likely has something to do with the influence of Hortensí Güell, a young painter and writer with whom Picasso shared his sojourn in Madrid, and whom we have mentioned in relation to El Greco. Güell was a great admirer of Rusiñol, to whom indeed both his paintings and writing show a debt.¹³ Güell, who often went out with Picasso to paint in Madrid, shows some thematic similarities with Rusiñol, in, for example, several drawings of groves of trees and gardens (p. 238). Here we might also mention Picasso's — albeit very occasional — interest in roads, a common theme in Rusiñol charged with melancholy and, as Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza say, actually a projection of his personality: 'a series of singular landscapes that show roads that disappear into the distance and cause a feeling of final uncertainty. These paintings, closer to the artist's true personality, reflect the idea of loneliness and sorrow that is a constant in his oeuvre.'¹⁴ (p. 239) One of Picasso's works in this line is the oil *Path with Trees*, owned by the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, of a shady grove with two rows of trees and the vanishing point in the background (p. 238).

The presence of two such Rusiñolian themes as gardens and roads among Picasso's works attests to his interest in Rusiñol. At San Fernando, Picasso enrolled in just two courses, one of which was Landscape (elementary), taught by his father's friend Antonio Muñoz Degraín. It is clear that these landscapes have little to do with anything Picasso

might have learned from Muñoz Degrain. Here again we find Picasso's anti-academic counterpoint, externalised in these Rusiñol-influenced landscapes, despite that fact that landscapes — let alone gardens — had never been nor would be among his true artistic interests. At the time, what he sought was to distance himself from the academic world and in Rusiñol, although hardly an avant-garde figure, he found the means to do so. As we have seen, Picasso rediscovered this theme a few years later when he reworked Rusiñol's gardens during his other stay in Madrid, in 1901: in short, two periods in his life in which, more or less directly, he drew inspiration from the gardens of Rusiñol.

1. Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, *Picasso. La seva vida i la seva obra*. Caixa d'Estalvis de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1981, p. 30.
2. Santiago Rusiñol, 'El patio azul', in *Arte Joven*, preliminary issue, 10 March 1901, pp. 2-4.
3. S. Rusiñol. *El jardí abandonat/El jardín abandonado*. Tipografía de L'Avenç, Barcelona, 1900/1902, p. 5.
4. *Arte Joven*, no. 1, 31 March 1901, p. 5.
5. Luis Altada, 'Notas de la exposición. Los artistas catalanes', in *Arte Joven*, no. 3, 3 May 1901, p. 7.
6. The exhibition opened on 29 April and ended on 24 June. Picasso was in Madrid when it opened and left the city around the end of May, before it ended.
7. Xavier Antich, 'El paisatge en vers, l'espai de la contemplació', in *Els jardins de l'ànima de Santiago Rusiñol* (exh. cat.). Fundació Caixa de Sabadell, 1999, p. 26.
8. John Richardson (with Marilyn McCully), *A life of Picasso*, vol. 1: 1881-1906. Random House, New York, 1991, p. 89.
9. María Teresa Ocaña, 'La consolidació de l'ofici', in *Picasso. Paisatges 1890-1912. De l'acadèmia a l'avantguarda* (exh. cat.). Museu Picasso/Lunweg, Barcelona, 1994, p. 74.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Josep de C. Laplana and Mercedes Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan, *La pintura de Santiago Rusiñol. Catàleg sistemàtic*, vol. III. Mediterrània, Barcelona, 2004, p. 11, fig. 1.1.
12. Isabel Coll, *Rusiñol i la pintura europea* (exh. cat.). Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2006, p. 143.
13. Assumpta Rosés, 'Hortensi Güell', in *Hortensi Güell* (exh. cat.). Museu Comarcal Salvador Vilaseca, Reus, 1992, pp. 25-53.
14. Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, 'Rusiñol, pintor', in *Santiago Rusiñol. 1861-1931* (exh. cat.). Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya/Fundación Cultural Mapfre, Madrid, 1997, p. 21.

The prestige of illness

'Rusiñol, whose more interesting works depict death or morphine addiction [...], confirmed Picasso in his morbid preoccupations.'

John Richardson, *A life of Picasso*, 1991

Rusiñol's work dealing with illness and death followed in an established European tradition dating back to Romanticism and taken to new heights by naturalistic writers like Émile Zola (p. 248).¹ The Museu Picasso in Barcelona has in its collection a portrait that Picasso did of Zola, a rarely reproduced drawing, probably a copy of an illustration that appeared in a publication from the period. Picasso's anecdotal portrait aside, we can actually make a much stronger connection between Zola and Rusiñol, a great admirer of the French writer. Likewise, in Spain in his day Rusiñol was closely associated with the above themes, and his influence in this regard was considerable. Alexandre Cirici, for one, acknowledged this role of Rusiñol's at a time when there was what he called the 'prestige of illness'. As examples he notes two works by two artists who knew Picasso: Rusiñol and Sebastià Junyent: 'Well known is Rusiñol's "The Blue Courtyard", the greatest monument to the art of illness. In the realm of plastic arts, *Chlorosis*, by Junyent, is its most eloquent parallel.'² Junyent was one of the young Picasso's greatest champions, and, as regards 'The Blue Courtyard', Picasso knew the story well, indeed he had it translated (from Catalan to Spanish) and published in the magazine *Arte Joven*. John Richardson is quite explicit in pointing out Rusiñol's influence on Picasso in the themes of death and morphine: 'Rusiñol,

whose more interesting works depict death or morphine addiction [...], confirmed Picasso in his morbid preoccupations.’³ In this, Richardson is right, notwithstanding the twenty-year age difference between the two artists.

The allegorical dimension of death

Without a doubt, one of the most intriguing works from Picasso’s early years is *The End of the Road* or *The Angel of Death* (p. 253). It is an allegorical composition in which two lines of people — one group wealthy with carriages, the other made up of the old, the poor and the crippled — approach, in like manner, death represented by an angel awaiting them at the end of a road. This allegorical Picasso is unusual in his youthful works, and the overall treatment of the drawing, with its thick-lined arabesque, relates to northern European aesthetics, but also to Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec, though this piece belongs to Picasso’s pre-Parisian period. Compositions like this can only be explained as part of a very particular prevailing atmosphere, in which Rusiñol is one of the most influential figures. In a similar allegorical mode is one of the most disturbing paintings Rusiñol ever did, *Pulvis, Cineris, Nihil* (Dust, Ashes, Nothing) (p. 252). This chilling scene depicts the burning of coffins outside the cemetery of Tarragona. While Rusiñol titled his painting in Latin, Picasso’s drawing evokes Horace’s verse ‘Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas regumque turris’ (‘Pale death knocks with impartial foot at the hovels of the poor and the towers of kings’ [*Odes*, I;4:13-14]).⁴ The two works share a similar philosophical reflection, although one — the Picasso — adds the explicit social reference, so prevalent in his work from the period and certainly in his future Blue Period.

Although we find this allegorical content in both works, we should add that this was more usual in

Rusiñol than in Picasso, in whom it is often linked to an underlying literary dimension. The contrast between life and death was habitual in Rusiñol, as seen in particular in a pair of paintings of cemeteries, *Montmartre Cemetery* (p. 249), probably among his best pieces, and *Road to the Cemetery in Tarragona* (p. 250). In the first of these two works, amidst the typical atmospheric treatment of the Paris cityscape, he adds the presence of death. Indeed, both paintings counterpoint the cemetery — place of death — and, in the upper third of the canvas, the city — place of life. Life and death coexist virtually side by side: the silent Paris cemetery a stone’s throw from the mundane and busy streets of Montmartre; the wall of the Tarragona cemetery (along the road to which originally passed a funeral carriage, later removed) near a deliberately sunny, and thus living, Tarragona. We should also point out the composition of the latter painting, in which the road cuts diagonally across the canvas, just as it does in some of Picasso’s drawings on this theme. One of the most paradigmatic of these is *Burial in the Country* (p. 251), in which the funeral procession heads towards the cemetery, also visible in the upper third of the pastel, with whitewashed walls and cypress trees behind them. *Burial in the Country* addresses a theme very common in the period and also taken up by Picasso, especially between 1896 and 1900, with many religious scenes.

Decadent Poet

In the years 1900 and 1901 Picasso did several works much in the manner of a certain type — understood as a neutral depiction rather than as a pseudo-parodic exhibition — that was closely linked to *La España Negra* by Émile Verhaeren and Darío de Regoyos, published some years earlier in the Barcelona magazine *Luz*. Once again we stress that Picasso’s processes of appropriation are ambivalent

in that he chose his influences according to his own interests. One of the most striking examples of this is the portrait of Jaume Sabartés titled *Decadent Poet* (1900) (p. 257). This portrait uses iconographic references to *La España Negra*, but Picasso twists their meaning to create a portrait satirising his friend Sabartés. Again we have a very un-Picassolike portrait in its excess, its overload. Although this not the only case of this, most of his portraits from this time were rather sparser, focusing on the subject with the rest often left unfinished. In our opinion, in conceiving the portrait Picasso once again may well have borrowed from Rusiñol's *Leaves of Life*, but on this occasion not from the promotional poster for the book but from some of its illustrations. In one of the stories from the collection, called 'Desire', Rusiñol, in a markedly decadent tone, panegyrises pools inside caves as the most apt burial place for people.⁵ The book's illustrator was Rusiñol's friend Ramon Pichot, an artist closely associated with Regoyos, and in whose footsteps he quite explicitly followed. The two illustrations Pichot did for this story are remarkably similar to the portrait of Sabartés. The first illustration, *Cemetery*, is a cemetery with crosses, fanciful fires and a wall in the background with cypress trees protruding from behind it (p. 256). This illustration was also reproduced in the magazine *Quatre Gats*, where Picasso may well have seen it, since it was published while he was in Barcelona.⁶ The other illustration shows the inside of a cave with a pool and stalactites hanging from the roof (p. 256).⁷ Thus Pichot expresses in images the idea behind Rusiñol's story. But Pichot, in his black drawings, also drew on other sources, and his engraving *Cemetery* could, we believe, be influenced by his much-admired Regoyos, in such works as *The Night of the Dead* (1886), which is similar in composition — and in some of its elements —

to Pichot's print (p. 255).⁸ In short, Picasso incorporates both settings in his portrait of Sabartés, with cypress trees in the background, crosses and reflections on water. Into this setting he drops his friend, in another exercise in recontextualisation, as he had done with the portrait of Rusiñol using the poster for the same book these illustrations came from, *Leaves of Life*. Here again, in the Sabartés portrait, is the psychological dimension: the figure holding a lily in his hand, dressed in floral crown and a cape with tippet, all of which is certainly there to make a point about his friend, at the time plagued by all sorts of fancies and whims, and his abortive attempts at poetry readings.⁹

Atmosphere of illness: morphine

Despite the examples cited above, the bulk of Picasso's youthful works on illness and death followed other paths. Picasso did a series of works within what has been called his 'Tenebrist Period', marked by his treatment of death and disease. We refer to a set of paintings and drawings from 1899–1900 which incorporate a number of Rusiñolian elements but in a more overtly expressionistic manner. The large academic composition *Science and Charity* (1897) is clearly a landmark in Picasso's approach to illness, but we would be mistaken if we took it as an indication of things to come. Quite unlike *Science and Charity*, in which the human subjects are clearly defined — as befits a work intended for a fine arts exhibition of the period — this new Picasso takes an approach that is much more modern than the traditional theme. Probably one of the most representative pieces here is *At the Patient's Side* (p. 254), but we could also cite paintings such as *Dead Infant* or *With the Deceased* (p. 261), all of them at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona. What most defines this change is the blurring of the human presence in order to highlight the atmosphere of

illness. Here Picasso recalls the way Rusiñol frequently lessens the presence of the sick person, either by hiding her or relegating her to a second plane. This treatment, a sign of modernity, sought to leave out the most obvious aspects of illness — as seen in the figure of the sick person — in order to highlight the illness itself and its effect on the setting and on other people. *Patient and Nurse* (p. 259), *Sick Woman*,¹⁰ and *The Last Prescription* (p. 258) are among the most emblematic works by Rusiñol on this theme, all with a strong naturalistic undercurrent. Another point of interest is Picasso's treatment of composition and light in, for example, *At the Patient's Side*. Comparing works such as Rusiñol's *Patient and Nurse* with Picasso's *At the Patient's Side*, we find similarities in the way they deal with atmosphere. The sickly figure is obscured while the person with her, although at the centre of the composition, is actually less prominent than the atmosphere itself. The two artists create this atmosphere with a close, dark room, which in Picasso feels even more claustrophobic. In both works there is a window in the background which casts natural light that melds with the lamplight inside. Despite these similarities, we should point out that Picasso's works, done years later, show a notable economy of colour and a greater influence of Expressionism in the thickness of his lines, in the manner of Edvard Munch.

Rusiñol explored in depth this iconography of the states of illness, and, by extension, the theme of morphine, a part of his own life given his addiction as a result of his health problems. Let us recall what Richardson says about Rusiñol's works about death and morphine addiction and how they 'confirmed Picasso in his morbid preoccupations'.¹¹ These works include *Morphine* (p. 260) and *Before Taking the Alkaloid (The Medal)*. As Isabel Coll has shown recently, Rusiñol's works often have literary origins.¹² In fact Picasso barely touched on this theme, and perhaps

he came closest in one of the most renowned oils at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, known equally by various names, *Margot*, *The Wait* or *The Morphine Addict*.¹³ Beyond the title, however, this painting has little to do with those by Rusiñol and it was not done until Picasso had arrived in Paris, where his influences multiplied considerably. As Vinyet Panyella points out, the Picasso that comes closest in approach to Rusiñol is his drawing *The Cry of the Virgins*.¹⁴ This drawing was done in Barcelona just before his first trip to Paris and, although it does not show a morphine addict, the female figure — equally obscured and similarly composed — evokes Rusiñol's *Morphine*. Picasso's drawing also has literary roots; it was done as an illustration for a poem of the same title by Joan Oliva Bridgman about the awakening of sexual desire in girls.¹⁵

The death of friends: Casagemas and Canudas

At least once in their lives, Rusiñol and Picasso each approached the theme of illness and death based on a particularly painful episode; the death of a dear friend. Picasso's friend Carles Casagemas is a well-known figure in the history of art. His suicide in February 1901 made him something of a legend but above all it moved Picasso to produce one of the most distressing thematic series in his entire career; a series which we might divide into two clearly differentiated groups, Casagemas before and after his suicide. As for Rusiñol, one of the closest friends he ever had, the sketch artist Ramon Canudas, came down with tuberculosis in Paris and eventually died in Sitges. Before his death Rusiñol did a pair of oils, *Ramon Canudas III* (p. 262) and *Portrait of the Engraver Ramon Canudas* (p. 263), the second probably done in the final moments of his life. Rusiñol wrote a last farewell to his friend, titled simply 'Canudas', which appeared in the epilogue to *From the Mill* and

later in *Leaves of Life*. In addition to this literary tribute, Rusiñol placed at the head of Canudas's tomb an Alsatian cross they had bought together in Paris and of which they were both very fond (p. 262). In a talk called 'My Old Ironworks' at the Ateneu Barcelonès, Rusiñol gave a moving account of the loss of his friend and the significance of the cross: 'He is the only true friend I have seen leave this world, and the cross the only piece of iron separated from my beloved collection.' Leaving aside the pre-elegiac tone of the portraits, we should highlight one aspect that especially applies to both Picasso and Rusiñol in their portraits of their friends. These homage-portraits have an interesting liminal component in that they show two people who are still alive but seem, in their gaze, to have already passed on. Both *Portrait of the Engraver Ramon Canudas* and *Portrait of Carles Casagemas* (p. 265) are portraits of extraordinary psychological depth, naturalistic in their execution and of an almost pseudo-psychiatric quality. It is clear that the two deaths were more sensed than anticipated, insofar as Picasso and Rusiñol were aware of the critical state of their respective friends' physical and mental health. Each artist put the *punctum* of the composition in the eyes of his friend, taking the lesson from El Greco with regard to when 'the painter [Rusiñol] strives to paint the soul that issues forth from the eyes of people.'¹⁶ Also related to El Greco, and similar to the frontal portrait of Casagemas, are paintings by Rusiñol such as *Paroxysm of a Novice*, belonging to a series of portraits that he did of religious figures at the monastery of Montserrat (p. 264). The spectral-like appearance of the face, with the head held slightly out from the rest of the body and partly in shadow provides a link between the two works. Picasso's portraiture of Casagemas — unlike Rusiñol's of Canudas — continued after the suicide of his friend, who appears in some

portraits with the fatal bullet wound in his head. In *The Suicide of Casagemas* (p. 267), done shortly after his death, Picasso decided — in contrast to other portraits in the series — to position the deceased's face vertically, which makes it even more disturbing.

1. Isabel Coll, *Rusiñol i la pintura europea* (exh. cat.). Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2006, p. 109ff.
2. Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, *El arte modernista catalán*. Aymà, Barcelona, 1951, p. 59.
3. John Richardson (with Marilyn McCully), *A life of Picasso*, vol. 1: 1881-1906. Random House, New York, 1991, p. 115.
4. Horace, *Odes I: Carpe Diem*. David West (ed. & trans.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 21.
5. 'If man could choose the ideal place for his grave, cave pools would be the ideal for sleeping in deep slumber. There the peace is everlasting; there the darkness is eternal [...] never has a grave more ornate and beautiful waited [...] Who could bury himself in that bed of sand! [...] Who, when darkness comes, could be conscious, not of the vulgar darkness of manmade niches, of a box for bones, of a chest of ashes, but of a pool of dreams, a buried pool serving us as a shroud, a pit of treasures chiselled in the blackness and a coffer for burial.' S. Rusiñol, *Fulls de la vida*. Tipografia L'Avenç, Barcelona, 1898, pp. 239-241.
6. *Quatre Gats*, no. 3, 23 February 1899, p. 3.
7. According to Pilar Vélez, these illustrations are photoengravings by J. Furnells based on originals by Ramon Pichot. Pilar Vélez i Vicente, *El llibre com a obra d'art a la Catalunya vuitcentista 1850-1910*. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1989, p. 260.
8. In fact, this painting forms part of a triptych now in a private collection.
9. A few years later, in 1903, *La Vanguardia* published a harsh review of one of Sabartés's readings: 'The reading, with regard to diction was defective, which made his prose appear irregular, somewhat long, which became tedious within the monotony of his diction.' Anonymous, 'Jacobus Sabartés', in *La Vanguardia* (evening edition), 31 March 1903, p. 2.
10. *Una malalta*, in a private collection. See Josep de C. Laplana, Mercedes Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan, *La pintura de Santiago Rusiñol*, vol. III: *Catàleg sistemàtic*. Mediterrània, Barcelona, 2004, p. 37, fig. 4.5-2.
11. J. Richardson, *Picasso...*, op. cit., p. 115.
12. With regard to the theme of morphine, aside from the works mentioned, Isabel Coll mentions two others, *The Bohemian* (Col.lecció d'art de la Vila de Sitges) and *Rêverie* (whereabouts unknown). I. Coll, *Rusiñol...*, op. cit., pp. 117-125.
13. Museu Picasso in Barcelona, 4.271.
14. Vinyet Panyella, 'D'Els Quatre Gats al Cau Ferrat: La relació artística entre Santiago Rusiñol i Picasso (1896-1903)', in *Picasso i els 4 Gats. La clau de la modernitat* (exh. cat.). Museu Picasso/Lunberg, Barcelona, 1995, p. 242.
15. Reproduced in *Juventut*, no. 22, 12 July 1900, p. 345.
16. J. de C. Laplana, M. Palau-Ribes O'Callaghan, *La pintura...*, op. cit., p. 39.

Creating atmospheres: indoor scenes and blue in context

‘So Picasso didn’t need to wait to get to Paris to be won over by blue. Perhaps it was due to his vague perception of the prevailing modernista climate in Barcelona that he acquired this proclivity towards the dictatorship of blue.’

Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, ‘Pablo Ruiz Picasso’, 1974

‘The insistence on invasive blue [in Picasso’s oeuvre] was more a proclivity of the time than any special decision of his own.

Everything was blue at that end of the century, as a reaction to the Impressionist carnival.’

Rafael Santos Torroella, ‘El azul, el rosa y las señoritas de Aviñón’, 1981

In his youth, one of Picasso’s most recurrent interests was the creation of atmospheres and the treatment of light in spaces. We have talked about this in relation to the theme of illness and death and the ‘black wing’ of *Modernisme*. Meanwhile the ‘white wing’ had as one of its favourite themes everyday indoor scenes also with an emphasis on the play of light, either natural or artificial. Rusiñol too sought to imbue his works with atmosphere and effects of light, but he was not quite the leading figure in this that he had been in earlier trends. Picasso, for a short period, around 1899–1900, did portraits concentrating on two themes: windows and his sister. Lola became for the artist a familial extension of the female models portrayed by other artists of the time. Among the best portraits of Lola there are a few in which Picasso borrows elements of composition and light, for example two oils of his sister in front of a window in a room. The first (p. 277), held in a private collection, is similar in composition to paintings like *Aux Aguets* (On the Lookout) by Ramon Casas (p. 276).¹ Here he impels us to make a sort of visual tracking shot, following the model’s gaze towards a mysterious light coming through the window in the background. The second portrait, owned by the Cleveland Museum (p. 279),

with a similar setting, looks as if it were done immediately after the former, but with different intentions. In this second oil, the model looks not into the background but out at the viewer. Picasso chooses to show her face here because now Lola is characterised as a traditional Spanish girl, draped in a black mantilla with her hair up and adorned with a flower. This theme was hardly an exception to what other artists were doing at the time, for instance, Ramon Pichot, whom Picasso knew and who was born about halfway between Picasso’s generation and Rusiñol’s. Pichot, in fact, collaborated with Rusiñol on several occasions, including doing the illustrations for *Leaves of Life*, a book we have cited extensively in this study. Surely it was due to this close relationship that Picasso included Pichot in one of the portraits he did of Rusiñol (p. 309). Around the same time as the ‘Spanish’ portrait of Lola, shortly after Picasso’s return from Horta, the cover of the magazine *Quatre Gats* featured a drawing by Pichot which is similar in terms of setting and subject but different with regard to composition (p. 278). We know of other drawings by Pichot in this mode, for example, *Una ‘juerga’ triste* (Sad Soiree), owned by Cau Ferrat in Sitges. This drawing was an illustration for a story from *Leaves of Life*, mixing

Whistlerian compositional schemes with a certain folk conventionalism that was also cultivated by Rusiñol and Casas, among other artists.

Another type of female portraiture, with natural light, was practised by various artists of the time, notably Ramon Casas (p. 280). A quite specific sub-series has the female figure dressing by a window with natural light reflecting off her skin. This type of portrait occurs only occasionally in Picasso's Barcelona works, as it does in Rusiñol's, but is worth noting for the connections between *Lola in the Studio in Riera de Sant Joan Street* by Picasso (p. 281) and *Interior with Female Figure* by Rusiñol (p. 280). The intention of both artists is to capture a particular moment, the solitude of their female subjects in private, even though in the case of Lola the room was not hers but her brother's studio. Picasso reproduces the scheme of the model in front of the window, standing, showing her whole torso, seen from a slightly elevated perspective. In both paintings, the window is so large it occupies half the canvas and the light coming through is almost blinding. All three artists are interested especially in the contrast between light and skin, except for the face, which is either rendered as a stain (Picasso) or turned in profile (Rusiñol and Casas). Despite the very particular iconography, Picasso adds his mark with Japoniste patches of colour.

In settings of artificial light, Picasso's indoor portraits show close links with the destitute bohemian ambiances we have spoken of before. These are full-length portraits of males with light from one or more indoor or outdoor sources. This is the case of the oil *Josep Cardona* (p. 283), 1899, in which Picasso follows a line represented by artists like Lluís Graner and reminds us of Rusiñol in his earlier paintings *Portrait of Utrillo by his Stove/Artist's Winter* (p. 282) and the *Portrait of the Engraver Ramon Canudas*. All three of these paintings include

artificial sources of light (a lamp, a stove), while two, the portraits of Cardona and Canudas, also have natural light coming in from windows.

For a brief time Picasso dabbled in themes related to Regoyos's and Verhaeren's *La España Negra*, coming to a highpoint during his stay in Madrid in 1901. During those months he did paintings of figures in the area around Toledo similar to Ignacio Zuloaga's Castilian peasants. From that time is the drawing *The Doorway* (p. 284),² a piece that in terms of technique and atmosphere recalls Rusiñol's magnificent drawing *Genoa Backstreet* (p. 285), in which he creates an almost unreal setting, and which is, as Francesc M. Quílez points out, very much in the manner of Zuloaga: '[...] very symbolist in style, very close to Zuloaga's most characteristic language. The dark atmosphere of the street and the blurred human figure with a spectral air in the foreground are two things that lend the work an air of unsettling mystery.'³ Picasso, in search of typical elements, places *La Celestina* in the background to indicate the profession of the figure in the foreground. Far from Rusiñol's Symbolist intentions, Picasso drives the point home by adding the number of the building, a clear sexual reference. Many of these works can only be explained by Picasso's close involvement in the thematic evolution of the time, although in many cases the works are unique in the sense that they are one of, or the last of, a kind, as is true of many of the works we have mentioned above.

Blue in context: the role of Rusiñol

Picasso's influences in the Blue Period were many. We know that the period began in Paris in the latter half of 1901 and lasted until 1904. The historiography of art often cites as influences Carrière, Puvis, Gauguin and El Greco, among others, but we would be amiss in ignoring Picasso's

debt to Barcelona artists whom he knew personally, above all Isidre Nonell. In this section, however, we focus exclusively on the colour aspect, leaving aside influences and considerations of a different order (theme, composition, etc.). For our purposes, it is best to start with the role played by Rusiñol in the use of blue in Spain, a role which was quite significant, probably greater than that of any other artist. Rusiñol's preference for this colour was proverbial and is seen in both his writing and his painting. As for Picasso, blue of course came to be associated with one of his most celebrated periods, but despite beginning in Paris, the period happened primarily in Barcelona.

As for Picasso's adoption of monochrome blue, the reasons are usually attributed to accidental events (destitution, Casagemas's death), compositional considerations (blue as the colour that helps to create closed spaces) and things of the mind (the psychological significance of blue). Although Picasso himself linked the start of the Blue Period to the death of his friend Casagemas, this is only a possible trigger, while, as Pierre Daix says, in no way can it be considered the origin of his use of blue. In fact, contextual factors have not always been taken into account, that is: what was happening in Picasso's most immediate artistic environment — Barcelona — at that time? Did blue have some sort of tradition among the artists around Picasso? We should ask these questions because the processes of absorption that we examine in this study, also with regard to blue, have to do with an elliptical influence we cannot ignore, at the centre of which sits Rusiñol. Picasso's capacity for absorption leads us to believe that his interest in blue, rather than a strictly original and personal choice, was part of a current that, without being the general practice, was not unknown among the artists of the period. We are aware that this blue 'movement' was a European

phenomenon, particularly linked to Symbolism, but for our purposes we focus on its impact in Barcelona, since that is where Picasso did most of his Blue paintings.

Our study of Picasso's work shows that the influences on this artist are almost never unidirectional and the use of blue is evidence of this. Thus we must analyse briefly the presence of this colour in his Barcelona environment around the time of the beginning of his Blue Period. Though there has been scant consideration of this subject, it is not new. In the nineteen-seventies, Lafuente Ferrari was quite clear on this point: 'So Picasso didn't need to wait to get to Paris to be won over by blue. Perhaps it was due to his vague perception of the prevailing *modernista* climate in Barcelona that he acquired this proclivity towards the dictatorship of blue.'⁴ Lafuente Ferrari is correct in that blue was important in the turn-of-the-century art world, and Barcelona was no exception. Thus, any artist involved in the Barcelona art scene of the time — including Picasso — must have been aware of this. Rafael Santos Torroella is even more explicit in this regard: 'The insistence on invasive blue [in Picasso's oeuvre] was more a proclivity of the time than any special decision of his own. Everything was blue at that end of the century, as a reaction to the Impressionist carnival.'⁵ Although Santos speaks of the 'Impressionist carnival' in broad-brush terms, this expression would be perfectly applicable to Picasso's own evolution. We should note that the Blue Period began, paradoxically, a few months after some of the most colourful and vibrant — almost pre-Fauvist — works from his career. Santos goes on to mention, among others, two examples of the influence of blue in Barcelona in Picasso's day: the Nicaraguan Ruben Darío's book *Azul* (Blue) and Rusiñol's short story 'The Blue Courtyard'. All these men had one thing

in common; they had been to *Quatre Gats*. As we have said, Picasso in 1901 published Rusiñol's story in the magazine he co-directed, *Arte Joven*, just as his Blue Period was beginning. Rusiñol described the courtyard thus: 'I had seen that courtyard while passing along the street [...] the blue wall, of an extraordinary blue, full-blown, of a violet from beyond the seas; a well, also blue, a blue staircase...'⁶ This tale, in an issue of the magazine filled with high praise for Rusiñol, is in itself a tribute to blue, but not only as a colour but also as the embodiment of a mood, an aspect which particularly interested Picasso. The colour was so prevalent at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in Madrid in 1895 that the poet Antonio M. Viergol wryly dubbed it 'The Blue Exhibition'. In a rather playful poem, Viergol described the event thus:

'Such is the name it truly merits,
for in most of its paintings,
with regrettable lavishness,
prevail colours blue in tone,
from Prussian blue, almost black,
to sky blue, almost white
passing through a thousand different shades
that the brush can interject between;
and it causes the heart bitter grief
to see that we march with giant strides
towards a monochrome dictatorship
most false and depraved in taste,
in the name of a modern Impressionism
giving it unknown new directions
in which it may plummet...'⁷

Indeed, among the works shown at the exhibition was one of several oils Santiago Rusiñol did with the same title as that of the story Picasso had translated and published in *Arte Joven*. Thus we find in 1895 — precisely the year of Picasso's arrival in Barcelona

— Rusiñol as one of the icons of blue in the Spanish art scene. Rusiñol, perhaps more than any other artist, helped to make blue an important colour in Spanish art, using it profusely in his courtyards, his landscapes, his night scenes, his portraits, his posters and in his writing. Two of Rusiñol's posters provide examples of this monochromatic use of blue, especially the one to promote *Interior* by the Belgian dramatist Maeterlinck, in which he creates an intriguing contrast between the blue outside and the light inside the building (p. 286).

In Paris in the latter half of 1901, Picasso embarked on his Blue Period, a period that would reach its high point in Barcelona, where he produced the bulk of these works in 1902 and 1903; in April 1904 he settled in France, where he brought the period to a close. At the height of his Blue Period, several artists, including some of the participants in the above-mentioned 1895 exhibition in Madrid, were still using the colour in their canvases. In 1902, Darío de Regoyos, by then living in Barcelona, did a night seascape with full moon, a theme for which he was well known, in which blue predominates (p. 288). It was from Regoyos that Rusiñol acquired his keen interest in Belgian painting, especially in the Symbolist painter William Degouve de Nuncques, whom he met in Mallorca in the period 1901-1902 and from whom he bought a canvas, now at Cau Ferrat in Sitges.

Also in 1902 Rusiñol did a painting called *Maundy Thursday in Pollença* (p. 289), in which, although not completely blue (nor were Picasso's blues strictly monochrome), the colour plays a large role in creating the atmosphere. Vinyet Panyella precedes us in rightly pointing out this dialogue between Picasso and Rusiñol with regard to blue night scenes.⁸ In *Maundy Thursday in Pollença* this relationship with Picasso's work is quite explicit in a bird's-eye view of the roofs of Pollença echoed in the urban

landscape Picasso did the following year from his studio in Riera de Sant Joan Street in Barcelona. Roland Sierra's definition of Rusiñol's oil as a 'twilight, almost spectral landscape'⁹ would also serve for one of Picasso's best blue oils, the sublime *Riera de Sant Joan, Barcelona, at Dawn* (p. 291). The two paintings not only coincide in their similar perspectives but also in the suggestive beams of light from the windows piercing the darkness, conjuring up the presence of life in scenes that are more spiritual than human. Here we should add, at a more subjective level, the element of melancholy — inherent in Rusiñol's personality — found in these night scenes. The night views of the rooftops of Barcelona are dominated by a blue which — as in numerous portraits Picasso did in the same colour — has the effect of closing the spaces. The Blue Period was precisely one of Picasso's most introspective, undoubtedly due in part to personal difficulties.

To end this section we cite another contemporary painting by Rusiñol in which blue dominates, *L'Assomoir* (p. 287). One of Zola's most important novels, and one which brought him great fame, was entitled *L'Assomoir* and dealt with the theme of alcoholism. As we have seen, Rusiñol's role in popularising blue is neither minor nor anecdotal, but rather it covers an important part of his work.

Despite the originality of Picasso's approach to blue, we must bear in mind that he was neither the first nor the only artist of his time to use it to the effects he did; rather his use of the colour fits into a tendency represented by fellow artists as noteworthy as Rusiñol. If we take into account that Rusiñol was among the leading artists of the time, that Picasso did more than twenty portraits of him, that he knew his work well and that much of his Blue Period was spent in Barcelona, we cannot rule out that he would have known this other

blue-infused oeuvre — that of Rusiñol and others — regardless of any actual influence on his work. This, in our opinion, is a factor that should not be ignored by international experts in their diverse and multifaceted analyses of what motivated Picasso in his youth in Barcelona to embrace blue.

1. Jordi Falgàs, 'Picasso's Fellows at the Tavern: Beyond Modernisme?', in *Barcelona and Modernity. Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí* (exh. cat.). Cleveland Museum of Art/Yale University Press, Cleveland/New Haven/London, 2006, pp. 96-97.
2. This drawing was reproduced in the magazine *Arte Joven*, preliminary issue, p. 3, and again two years later, as a full page spread, in the magazine *Arlequín*, no. 4, 12 June 1903, p. 4.
3. Francesc M. Quílez Corella, *Dibuixos de Santiago Rusiñol del Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2007, p. 13.
4. Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, 'Pablo Ruiz Picasso', in *Revista de Occidente*, June-July 1974, no. 135-136, p. 288.
5. Rafael Santos Torroella, 'El azul, el rosa y las señoritas de Aviñón', in *ABC*, 24 October 1981, p. 49.
6. Santiago Rusiñol, 'El patio azul', in *Arte Joven*, preliminary issue, 10 March 1901, p. 2.
7. Bernardino de Pantorba (José López Jiménez), *Historia y Crítica de las exposiciones nacionales de Bellas Artes celebradas en España*. Alcor, Madrid, 1948, p. 151.
8. Vinyet Panyella, 'D'Els Quatre Gats al Cau Ferrat: La relació artística entre Santiago Rusiñol i Picasso (1896-1903)', in *Picasso i els 4 Gats. La clau de la modernitat* (exh. cat.). Museu Picasso/Lunwerf, Barcelona, 1995, p. 242.
9. Roland Sierra Farreras, *Guia Cau Ferrat*. Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, 2007, p. 55.

From homage to satire

EDUARD VALLÈS

‘Picasso works very little now: he thinks of going to Paris, and that idea distracts him; he paints reluctantly. Like all the youths who have lived in Paris, Picasso misses [...] the fever of the big city. He thinks of himself as “passing through” here in Barcelona.’
Miguel Sarmiento, ‘Picasso’, 1904

‘In short, Picasso went to Paris to stay and triumph there, with all the consequences that decision entailed, including breaking, if not with his anthropological roots [...], then of course with the contemporary Spanish world of culture and art.’
Francisco Calvo Serraller, ‘Picasso frente a la historia’, 2006

The previous sections of this study have been intended to provide some background to what Pierre Daix meant about the ‘major role’ Rusiñol played in Picasso’s development as an artist. We have talked about a number of portraits Picasso did of Rusiñol, linking them to a range of events, themes and discourses, in describing what would be one facet of his absorptive tendencies. In this essay, we will deal with the facet of portraiture proper, given that it offers an independent narrative. Let us recapitulate.

We find a certain progression from the first portraits from 1899 — in which Picasso seems still to be studying Rusiñol — until the period 1900–1901. These early portraits share two constants not found in the second series. First, a clear desire to analyse Rusiñol psychologically, with Picasso often showing him with his eyes closed in two eventually iconic poses; frontal portraits of Rusiñol’s face and of him standing with his hands behind his back. Second, these portraits are serious, dignified, and have a certain element of homage. The climax of this series comes during Picasso’s stint in Madrid in 1901, where Rusiñol was undoubtedly spoken of as one of the most respected artists of his generation,

something that likely further sparked Picasso’s interest in him. In our opinion, 1901 is a crucial year in Picasso’s shifting attitude towards Rusiñol, as is reflected in subsequent portraits to which we refer below. In that year Picasso hardly spent any time in Barcelona (he divided it between Malaga, Madrid and Paris, with just a few weeks in Barcelona). What happened during this period? What was the cause of this change? Although he had not yet settled permanently in France, Picasso had already begun to find a home in a place that was a world apart from Barcelona, with its own hallowed artists, as well as dealers, critics and social scene; but most of all he was getting a first taste of stardom in the only city that could give him global renown, Paris. The turning point, in our opinion, occurred during Picasso’s second visit to the city, between June 1901 and January 1902, a key moment because of the length of his stay, half a year, about twice as long as his first stint there, in late 1900. During this period Picasso had his first show in France, with the backing of the dealer Ambroise Vollard, and in which two major critics had a hand: Gustave Coquiot wrote the introduction for the exhibition catalogue and

Félicien Fagus wrote a particularly favourable review. Nonetheless, after disappointing sales and a break with his dealer Pere Mañach, Picasso again returned to Barcelona, where, after January 1902, he embarked on a fresh series of portraits of Rusiñol, nearly all of them radically different in approach.

Iconographic passage: from irony to satire

From 1902 these portraits reveal a new intent in Picasso, although we have not been able to establish the exact order of execution because the works are undated and from a very early period. His aim is no longer, as it had been, to portray the artist's persona, but to narrate circumstances and incidents in Rusiñol's life. This group of portraits reveals a certain evolution, very subtle perhaps, but easily distinguishable. Of the portraits we know to be from this time, 1902-1903, there are two in which Rusiñol appears as much the same dignified figure as before. The first is a sheet of paper covered with portraits of Picasso's Catalan friends, among whom Rusiñol is the main figure (p. 314). The novelty here is that Rusiñol longer appears alone, a sign of things to come in this new series of portraits. The second is a superb portrait of Rusiñol's left profile, in which the cigar he smoked in his pipe is more evident than ever (p. 304). Notwithstanding the seriousness of the facial expression, Picasso focuses on the cigar — a detail found in subsequent portraits — but without yet giving it the prominence that would eventually turn it into something of a satirical prop. These works are similar to a series of watercolour drawings Picasso did at the same time, certainly not earlier. But in the rest of the works from this period Rusiñol appears in a broad range of attitudes, for example having a drink with Miquel Utrillo (p. 316) or in costume with Ramon Casas (p. 141). These drawings are rather casual in tone, with a theatrical touch not found in the previous

portraits. It is clear that the Rusiñol worthy of homage has, in Picasso's mind, mutated into a personage apt for caricature. These portraits might be softer-hitting than those to come, but they evidence a trend away from the first series: the gradual shedding of veneration and respect.

A further step up in this fault-finding is seen in another drawing, in which Picasso portrays Rusiñol as an artist obsessed with honours. At the time it was rumoured in Barcelona that Rusiñol might be named *sociétaire* of the French Société nationale des beaux-arts, as Rusiñol himself had implied in some circles. In the end the honour was not his but Ramon Casas's. Picasso, upon hearing the news, joined in what was likely widespread malicious gossip among artistic circles, and did a portrait of Rusiñol dreaming of an honour he had not received (p. 104). (He eventually got it in 1908.) With no little unkindness, Picasso subtitled the portrait 'What Rusiñol Believed Himself to Be', although he errs in showing Rusiñol coveting the title of *associé* — which he had got in 1892 — instead of the one he actually coveted, *sociétaire*.

Two other drawings take the ridicule yet a step further, from irony to satire. In *Miquel Utrillo and Santiago Rusiñol Smoking Pipes* both men are shown in a most undignified state of nakedness (p. 304). Written across Utrillo's abdomen is 'Pèl & Ploma' — a reference to the well-known magazine of which he was editor — while Rusiñol appears with a large belly full of strange, unidentifiable creatures. Finally we come to the most merciless, cruellest drawing, *Glory-Critic (Santiago Rusiñol Sodomised)*. In it Rusiñol is being sodomised by a critic while clutching a muse representing Glory who is holding a sack of money (p. 305). We would be quite mistaken if we interpreted this indictment as the product of Picasso's personal viewpoint alone. Rather this discourse originated in a change of generation in

which Rusiñol was, as any artistic figure of his standing would be, the brunt of criticism from all sides, especially the younger generations, of course.

The criticism of a new generation: 'The Death of The Joker'

We might find some context for Picasso's drawing in similar criticism of Rusiñol from Picasso's friend (or at least an acquaintance, given that he did at least two portraits of him), the painter and later writer Juli Vallmitjana. In his first book, *Coses vistes i coses imaginades. Recull d'impressions* (Things Seen and Things Imagined: Collected Impressions),¹ 1906, Vallmitjana launches a ferocious, cryptic attack on Rusiñol, an attack which echoed the message contained in Picasso's drawing. Following in this generational evolution of criticism, Vallmitjana's story was inspired by 'La fi d'Isidre Nonell' (The Death of Isidre Nonell)² by Eugeni d'Ors, a text art historians acknowledge as a major turning point in the *modernista* movement: 'Eugeni d'Ors, with his extraordinary sensitivity, grasped the great revolution represented by Nonell's painting against *modernista* "decorativism" and "decadentism".³ The d'Ors story appeared in *Pèl & Ploma* in January 1902, that is, at the same time as this change in Picasso's view of Rusiñol. This issue of *Pèl & Ploma* featured an exhibition by Isidre Nonell at the Sala Parés, a show which ran against the grain of current trends in Barcelona, including using gypsies as his models — something we believe, as do quite a few experts, was an influence on Picasso's blue paintings.

Although Vallmitjana's story was published in 1906, it was set earlier, while Picasso was living in Barcelona, by which time Vallmitjana had tried his hand at becoming a painter and failed. In this first literary venture, Vallmitjana decided to settle accounts with Rusiñol, the symbol of an artistic status he was quite familiar with and whom he blamed

indirectly for his failure as a painter. If d'Ors's story had as its protagonist the painter Isidre Nonell, Vallmitjana substituted him with Rusiñol. Vallmitjana nicknamed Rusiñol 'The Joker' ('El Xistós'), whom he identified the following year in another text, the novel *De la ciutat vella* (From the Old Town): 'To *Senyor Pardal* [Rusiñol],⁴ who is so witty in both his writing and his manner, that they call him The Joker. Oh so rich is he.'⁵ In 'La mort del Xistós' ('The Death of The Joker'), Vallmitjana took aim at a new direction in art that he believed Rusiñol, as The Joker, stood for. The story contains clear autobiographical references: 'All artists move on, seeking the warmth of their beautiful ideals [undoubtedly referring to Vallmitjana's alienation from painting]. Those who remained behind, soiled and mannered, exploited the apparent loyalty of their ignorant fans, selling to them at huge prices all the artistic errors of the most decadent and routine epoch, creating a purely commercial market, as if dealing in just another product, among the few our stunted little industries produced.'⁶ At one point in the story, Vallmitjana admonishes Rusiñol for his 'greed for money and glory',⁷ just as Picasso had done in his drawing from three years before. The end of the story is also inspired by d'Ors: while d'Ors had his artist killed by a raging mob, Vallmitjana's Joker comes to a more humiliating end. Having once been a wit and the source of mirth and merriment, he becomes a subject of absolute indifference, and eventually appears hanging from a tree: 'The great justice had been done: the body of the Joker, swinging in the wind, hanged from a tree by the neck!'⁸

Picasso's final sequence of portraits of Rusiñol undoubtedly forms part of this intergenerational criticism, a not unusual phenomenon in times of succession. The drawing 'Glory-Critic' (*Santiago Rusiñol Sodomised*) (whether or not it is the last chronologically) marks in our view a conceptual

end to the portrait side of Picasso's process of absorbing Rusiñol, begun years earlier. In early 1904 Picasso was tired of Barcelona, a fact reflected in the press of the time. Miguel Sarmiento wrote in *La Tribuna* one of the most eloquent accounts of his unfortunate situation shortly before finally moving to Paris: 'Picasso works very little now: he thinks of going to Paris, and that idea distracts him; he paints reluctantly. Like all the youths who have lived in Paris, Picasso misses [...] the fever of the big city. He thinks of himself as "passing through" here in Barcelona.'⁹

Indeed, on previous trips Picasso had come into contact with French intellectuals who broadened his horizons; for some time he had had his mind on Paris, hence Sarmiento is correct in an observation most likely based on what he had learned from the artist himself. In our opinion, these satirical little drawings in which Picasso puts Rusiñol together with Casas and Utrillo reflected a certain weariness of the cultural world created by these men. None of the three is the subject of admiration, as was the case in his early portraits of them. Moreover they are now portrayed in pairs (in only one drawing do all three appear together), and even the support on which he did them, mostly business cards, is striking in its modesty. In other words, the portraits of Rusiñol become the perfect paradigm for explaining Picasso's attitude towards two aspects of the artistic world of Barcelona: the situation in art in general and its leading figure. Here we must not forget that Rusiñol was twenty years older than Picasso, and from the time their lives first crossed paths the gap between them had never ceased to widen.

The Cubist period

Indeed, the distance between them grew, and this is especially evident with regard to Cubism. Rusiñol, like other artists, critics and collectors in Barcelona,

did not understand so radical a turn in the direction of Picasso's art. Miquel Utrillo, author of the first noteworthy review of Picasso, was among the most belligerent about the first Cubist exhibition outside France, at the Sala Dalmau (Barcelona) in 1912. Although Picasso did not show any works there, the headline for Utrillo's piece in the newspaper *La Publicidad* made his position quite clear: 'Cubist Attack on Barcelona.' Nor was Rusiñol particularly sympathetic towards the Cubists' propositions, as we might gather from a review he published the following year in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*. Speaking with wryness but evident alienation, he wrote: 'It would be very sad, though curious, to see a town in which the bell tower was twisted as in the paintings, where the windows were triangles and the roofs tottered as if there had been an earthquake. Some things are well painted, but not well built. Within a painting one must live, but inside a house that totters not even a Cubist can live. And it would be a great misfortune if, just as Dr. Ox oxygenated a city, the Orphists and those of the cube should turn the lovely Céret into a prismatic town [sic].'¹⁰ Despite his distaste for Cubism, Rusiñol did not lack praise for Picasso: 'There are others who say that the master of the cube, at Céret, was Picasso, the restless Picasso, also ours and also brilliant, aside from a fine person and a great artist.'¹¹ Rusiñol maintained this attitude of respect throughout his life, albeit clearly drawing the line between Picasso's talent and his direction as an artist. In short, the fact that Rusiñol's avant-garde years were far behind him did not mean that he did not acknowledge artistic talent. Indeed, years later when asked to name artists he liked, he always included Picasso: 'Now people paint in jest. But all that is in jest is not bad. Picasso paints in jest and, moreover, he's a great painter.'¹²

Despite what we might gather from the above-mentioned final string of portraits, the somewhat

languishing personal relations between Picasso and Rusiñol were always courteous and they even shared a certain camaraderie. Picasso told Josep Palau i Fabre that his relationship with Rusiñol was 'strong enough that, every time they ran into each other, they would stop to chat for a while.'¹³ We have several references to this from 1917, also a key year in Picasso's links with Barcelona. In January, Rusiñol had four of the Picasso drawings he owned published in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*. Also in January, Picasso spent several days in Barcelona, on the first of two visits he made to the city that year. We also know that in 1917 the two met again by chance on the street in Madrid while the Ballets Russes was on a tour stop there.¹⁴ Earlier in this study we also noted how Rusiñol was one of the few among the audience who clapped loudly at the performance of the ballet *Parade* at its premiere in Barcelona.

Return to Cau Ferrat

Although Picasso's interest in Rusiñol is limited mainly to the turn of the twentieth century, we know that at certain times it was rekindled. In 1933, two years after Rusiñol's death, Picasso made a short visit to Barcelona, staying there for about a week. Interestingly, he took a full day out his week to visit Sitges and we believe there can be just one explanation for this: Picasso was keen to see Cau Ferrat, his friend Rusiñol's private museum, again. We have reached this conclusion because the visit came just four months after Cau Ferrat's opening as a public museum, Rusiñol having bequeathed his home and art collection to the town of Sitges. There was much talk of this donation in art circles and undoubtedly Picasso, who kept up on everything that happened in Catalonia, would have been curious to see the museum.

The visit took place on 22 August 1933 and, according to the account of Joan Ainaud de Lasarte,

Picasso 'personally showed and commented on the collections to his wife, his son Pablo, and his nephews [by his sister Lola].'¹⁵ The press also noted his visit: 'Yesterday evening [Picasso] was in Sitges, whence he returned delighted.'¹⁶ Evidently, Picasso could 'show and comment on' the works at Cau Ferrat with authority because he had known Santiago Rusiñol personally, as he had many of the other artists whose works hung there. This museum, perhaps like no other, recalled his youth because Cau Ferrat has the merit of encapsulating time, taking us back to a past that also had been part of Picasso's life. If, as Gijs van Hensbergen puts it, Cau Ferrat was 'the first and last Zeitgeist',¹⁷ it is clear that this condition of a place that seeks to safeguard the spirit of a time had an appeal strong enough to bring Picasso back. Van Hensbergen emphasises the range of Rusiñol's interests as a collector seen at Cau Ferrat and he posits this in terms very close to the concept of juncture we have referred to, when he says that Rusiñol 'is the typical case of an artist whom we use as the perfect model to express the concept of Zeitgeist, being displaced by the very concept that he illustrates so well.'¹⁸

The rise and fall of the myth

Beyond his youth, Picasso became interested in Rusiñol in at least two other periods: in the thirties, when he visited Rusiñol's private museum, and in the sixties, when he revisited his most popular literary work, *The Epic of Senyor Esteve*. That is to say, Rusiñol crops up again and again throughout his life. Still, the relationship was at its strongest around the turn of the century. That juncture in time marked the beginning of Picasso's meteoric career and, for Rusiñol, a new direction in both his personal life and his art. Rusiñol wrote more and more while his painting focused on the theme of gardens. Regarding Rusiñol's new direction in painting in this period

the jury remains hung, and the divisions among his experts run along several lines.

It is not our task or the intent of this study to judge Rusiñol's works — there are enough reputable experts who do that — but we can draw a conclusion from it: Rusiñol ceased to be what he had been for years, a role model for new generations. The status Rusiñol once held has been attested to by one of Spain's great intellectuals, Eugeni d'Ors: 'It is difficult today, now at some distance, to grasp what the presence of that personality once meant in the artistic realm and even in the social realm of Catalonia. In many ways, and in his time, Santiago Rusiñol was the innovator par excellence in the local sphere. For years and years, many young souls saw in him something of a symbol of idealism, at war with the vulgarity of that realm, and in his name of a kind of symbol of freedom and sincerity.'¹⁹

For our purposes, we take the concept of the 'Rusiñol myth' as defined by Cristina Mendoza and Mercè Doñate in 1997 in a catalogue for a major Rusiñol exhibition organised by the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.²⁰ What they regard as the last period of the construction of the 'Rusiñol myth' roughly coincides with the time span in which Picasso did his portraits of him. Seen in this way, Picasso's varied Rusiñol portraiture has the virtue of furnishing us with information about how Picasso saw this myth, that is, how one of the greatest artists in history interpreted the figure of Rusiñol, and he left his views behind in a sort of permanent document. Just as Rusiñol had spent years building his image, it was now the young Picasso who was beginning to create his: and in doing so he copied, portrayed and damned Rusiñol, the leading artist in his home city, Barcelona. Picasso's approach to Rusiñol was absorptive, and we believe this to be one of the first examples of a process that would mark his entire career, always at the service of building

his own myth, the Picasso myth. But even when the Avant-garde took other paths, the Picasso myth remained solid. It was during the last decades of his life that Picasso, aside from his other pursuits, took refuge in his status as a living legend, revisiting and ranking himself alongside artists he now considered as equals in the history of art, at the same time as the new generations hurled diatribes at him similar to those he in his youth had cast at Rusiñol.

1. J. V. Colominas (Juli Vallmitjana), *Coses vistes y coses imaginades. Recull d'impressions*. Egisto Bossi, Barcelona, 1906.
2. Eugeni d'Ors, 'La fi d'Isidre Nonell', in *Pel & Ploma*, no. 84, 1 January 1902, pp. 248-253. The Spanish version of this story appeared in *La muerte de Isidro Nonell seguida de otras arbitrariedades y de la oración a Madona Blanca María*, published in Madrid by El Banquete, 1905. According to Julià Guillamon, this was the edition Vallmitjana used.
3. Mireia Freixa, Juan Miguel Muñoz Corbalán, *Les fonts de la història de l'art d'època moderna i contemporània*. Universitat de Barcelona (Departament d'Història de l'Art), Barcelona, 2005, p. 247.
4. TN: *Pardal*: Literally 'sparrow', but implying cunningness.
5. J.V. Colominas (Juli Vallmitjana), *De la ciutat vella*. Llibreria de S. Durán i Borí, Barcelona, 1907, p. 157. Vallmitjana hides behind an alter ego, Fermí Peralta, the novel's protagonist. Probably discouraged by his failure as a painter, he decided to take out his revenge on the leading figures in art of the time, and there appear in the work several other people, including Picasso. Rusiñol (*Senyor Pardal, The Joker*) was not the only target of his criticisms, which also included, among others, Miquel Utrillo (*Don Cyril*), Ramon Casas (*Boy from the Rich House*) and Joan Baptista Parés (*Don Baptist*), the proprietor of Sala Parés.
6. J. V. Colominas (Juli Vallmitjana). *Coses...*, op. cit., p. 81.
7. *Ibid*, p. 85.
8. *Ibid*, p. 86.
9. Miguel Sarmiento, 'Picasso', in *La Tribuna*, 24 March 1904, cover. This article was brought to light by Francesc Fontbona in 'Picasso. Aspectes desconeguts de la seva joventut', in *Serra d'Or*, no. 262-263, July-August 1981, p. 55.
10. Santiago Rusiñol, 'La Meca dels cubistes', in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 8 August 1913, p. 538.
11. *Ibid*.
12. Juan M. Mata, 'El dia de... Don Santiago Rusiñol', in *ABC*, 5 October 1930.
13. Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso i els seus amics Catalans* (2nd edn.). Galàxia Gutenberg /Cercle de Lectors, Barcelona, 2006, p. 110.
14. *Ibid*, p. 183.
15. Joan Ainaud de Lasarte, 'El món artístic no convencional', in *Picasso a Barcelona. 1881-1981* (exh. cat.). Ajuntament de Barcelona/Ministerio de Cultura, Barcelona, 1981, p. 148.
16. Anonymous, 'Picasso a Barcelona'. *La Publicitat*, 23 August 1933, cover.
17. Gijs Van Hensbergen, 'El Cau Ferrat, el último y el primer Zeitgeist', in *Santiago Rusiñol, arquetipo de artista moderno*. Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, Madrid, 2009, p. 296. (Proceedings of the symposium *Santiago Rusiñol, arquetipo del artista moderno*, Sitges, 26-28 January 2007.)
18. *Ibid*, p. 298.
19. Eugeni d'Ors, *Cincuenta años de pintura catalana*. Quaderns Crema, Barcelona, 2002, p. 153.
20. Mercè Doñate, Cristina Mendoza, 'Rusiñol, pintor', in *Santiago Rusiñol. 1861-1931* (exh. cat.). Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya/Fundación Cultural Mapfre, Barcelona/Madrid, 1997, p. 30.

Rusiñol as seen by Picasso

EDUARD VALLÈS

P. 307. These portraits are on the front and back of a single sheet. The first — on the back— is a preparatory sketch for the portrait on the front, with the subject facing in the opposite direction. Picasso has caught Rusiñol in a fleeting moment, as if by surprise. Given their still tentative quality, it is likely that these are among the first portraits Picasso did of Rusiñol. Like the portrait on page 309, the definition here is still rough, but they anticipate the series of portraits of Rusiñol in pensive pose with his hands behind his back, culminating in the portraits on page 313.

P. 308. Although this portrait did not appear in the Museu Picasso's 1984 catalogue as a portrait of Rusiñol, in our opinion, there can be no doubt regarding the identity of the subject. From an examination of the iconography, we have come to the conclusion that the quite specific approach here is one Picasso took only with Rusiñol. The presence of Pierrots evidences Picasso's identification of these symbolic figures with Rusiñol, author of *The Joy that Passes*, a work that made enough of an impression on Picasso for him to do an adaptation of the Pierrot in Rusiñol's own promotional poster for the play. Chronologically, we find that the date of execution in the records of the Museu Picasso — 1899 — coincides with the appearance of Picasso's first portraits of Rusiñol and with the premiere of *The Joy that Passes*.

P. 309. This portrait is one of the series of portraits in which Rusiñol appears with his hands behind his back, although, like the portraits on page 307, it does not belong to the series with clean definition. Surrounding Rusiñol are several other drawings: to the left, an unfinished sketch of his face; and just above, inverted, a caricature of the artist Ramon Pichot, whom Picasso depicts as some sort of griffin or foxlike creature. The iconography of Pichot's face is similar to several contemporary portraits, including one in the Gaspar-Farreras brothers' collection in Barcelona and another at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Pichot's proximity to Rusiñol in this sketch is certainly not a chance occurrence: although younger, he was among the artists closest to Rusiñol, with whom he collaborated on several occasions, for example illustrating Rusiñol's book *Leaves of Life* from 1898.

P. 310. All these portraits were done on the pages of an inventory book that now belongs to the Musée national Picasso in Paris. The second is a very simple preliminary sketch for the first, a left profile of Rusiñol. The third is one of only three known portraits — along with those on pages 317 and 318 — in which Rusiñol appears alongside Ramon Casas. All of these portraits — as well as the other drawings in the book — remained unpublished until 1990, as this book belongs to the donation resulting from the succession on the death of Picasso's widow Jacqueline. The book is

called *Carnet de Barcelona* (Barcelona Notebook), both because it was made in Barcelona and because that was where in the winter of 1899–1900 Picasso did the sketches in it. Among the drawings it contains are portraits of other friends of Picasso, including Pere Romeu, Carles Casagemas and Alfons Maseras.

P. 311. In the lower central part of this sheet of paper filled with drawings is a portrait of Rusiñol characterised as El Greco's *The Knight with His Hand on His Breast*. Thus here Picasso acknowledges Rusiñol's role as one of the pioneering champions of the Cretan-born artist. The remaining drawings also bear the mark of El Greco. Top centre, there is a typically Grecoesque elongated head, many of which were done by Picasso during this period. We also find three sketches of the face of the painter and stage designer Josep Rocarol. These are preliminary sketches for the final version of the portrait of Rocarol, in which, interestingly, the spirit of El Greco no longer seems to haunt Picasso to the same extent, given that the face is not so elongated.

P. 312. The third portrait is the most polished version of the iconographic series of frontal views of Rusiñol's face. We can include in this series four more portraits: the two shown here and the previous two. The first two may be preparatory sketches for the more complete third portrait, given their format and execution. These three portraits show increasing complexity in terms of technique: the first is done only in ink, whereas the other two include watercolour. Picasso did several portraits in this same format — small and nearly square — most of them signed at the bottom and framed by a thick black line, typical of *Modernisme*. It is a format that lends itself to publication in the press, and indeed the third portrait appeared in the magazine *Pel & Ploma* (no. 65, 1 December 1900, p. 4). This portrait, like most of those in this very specific

series in which Picasso immortalised a range of figures from turn-of-century Barcelona, is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It is possible that the third portrait, along with some of the others in the series, may have been shown in Picasso's first solo exhibition, held in February 1900 at *Quatre Gats*.

P. 313. These two portraits form part of the iconographic series in which Rusiñol is rendered in clean lines, standing with his hands behind his back, his customary pose in Picasso's portraits of him. The two images are closely linked to Rusiñol's well-known predilection for the theme of gardens. The second portrait is the most explicit, with Rusiñol standing in front of the arbour of the Generalife in Granada, a place Rusiñol painted often. This portrait was published in the magazine *Arte Joven* (no. 1, 31 March, 1901, p. 5). Despite the obscure background, the first also seems to conjure up a garden behind the subject. In our opinion, the two portraits were done one shortly after the other, if not consecutively. However, the second could have been done in Madrid, since while he was there Picasso took a great interest in Rusiñol's gardens and visited the National Fine Arts Exhibition in 1901, where Rusiñol showed several oil paintings of Granada gardens.

P. 314. On this sheet of paper filled with portraits, Rusiñol appears alongside other Catalan friends of Picasso's: Miquel Utrillo, Sebastià Junyer-Vidal, Ricard Canals, Pere Mañach and Octavi Canals. Octavi Canals — whose face appears right at Rusiñol's feet — was the son of Ricard Canals, a great friend of Picasso's; they grew closer in 1904, after Canals moved to Paris. Picasso would become Octavi Canals's godfather, and did several other portraits of him, mostly between 1904 and 1905. This sheet of drawings, however, dates from

1903, as recorded, along with the names of the subjects, by Picasso himself on a photograph in the personal archives of the artist's daughter Maya Ruiz-Picasso. The photo was taken during Picasso's lifetime, though the date is unknown, and on the back it bears the stamp of the Thannhauser Gallery in Berlin. We do not know whether these portraits were done in Paris or Barcelona, the two cities where Picasso resided in 1903.

P. 315. Zervos believes that this portrait of Rusiñol in profile was done in 1899, although several subsequent publications give the date 1900. In our view neither of these dates is correct. This drawing was undoubtedly done later, during the period 1902-1903, though we are inclined to believe 1903. First, the treatment of the face and hair is almost identical to the portrait on the previous page which we know for sure was done in 1903. In addition, the style of the drawing bears no relation to Picasso's work of 1899-1900 and is far more akin to that of 1902-1903, particularly a series of erotic watercolour drawings that are similar in technique and colouring. The signature is much later than the actual execution of the work.

P. 316. Zervos dates this drawing from 1901 but there are a number of indications that it might actually have been done during the period 1903-1904. An iconographic comparison of the faces of Rusiñol and Utrillo with others from the same time confirms this dating, which also coincides with the parodic intent of the drawing. Moreover, in 1901 Picasso was hardly in Barcelona at all, a few weeks at most, which makes placing any given work of his there and in that year somewhat doubtful. According to Miquel Utrillo, Jr, the girl selling newspapers is Júlia Peraire, the future partner and later wife of Ramon Casas. If that is true, this sketch was probably done somewhere around the square Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona, where, according to

Isabel Coll, the girl's family had a lottery franchise. Ramon Casas did numerous portraits of Júlia Peraire, all of them after this one by Picasso. According to the Rusiñol expert Mercedes Palau-Ribes this drawing would have been done in 1903.

P. 317. This is the only drawing we know of today in which Ramon Casas, Miquel Utrillo and Rusiñol — who were considered the 'Holy Trinity' of Catalan art — are portrayed together. According to Palau i Fabre, Picasso did at least one other group portrait of all three, an advertising poster in which he pokes fun at them. As Vidal Ventosa told Palau i Fabre, when Picasso lived at number 17 on the street Riera de Sant Joan a grocer commissioned him to do a poster to promote eggs from the town of Vilafranca. Picasso portrayed all three figures with an egg in one hand and the other deep in their trouser pocket, by their genitals. An ambiguous caption read: 'The largest ones are from Vilafranca'. It seems that Casas, none too happy, tore up the poster. This is the only one of twenty portraits of Rusiñol in which he poses with a brush in his hand, indicating that he is a painter. This drawing was done on a business card from the yarn shop of the Junyer-Vidal brothers. The signature was added much later over an earlier apocryphal signature that had been rubbed out, as can be seen in Zervos's reproduction.

P. 318. We have no evidence that this drawing relates to any particular event in the lives of Rusiñol and Casas, but no doubt it reflects their notorious fondness for masquerading. We know of several incidents of this sort, some quite amusing, including one from Carnival in Paris in 1891. The two artists showed up at the Folies-Bergère dressed as 'chulas' or 'Manolas' (Madrid wenches) — as Casas described their farce in a letter — for a dance held by the Société des Artistes Incohérents. On another occasion, in 1890, to celebrate

Rusiñol's twenty-ninth birthday, the pair received their friends dressed as tourists, a reference to the celebrated carriage trip they had taken together some years before. These two anecdotes suffice to recall the two friends' love of fancy dress, something of which Picasso was undoubtedly aware and had likely witnessed. This drawing is done on a business card from the Junyer-Vidal brothers' yarn shop. The signature was added much later over an earlier apocryphal signature that had been rubbed out, as can be seen in Zervos's reproduction.

P. 319. This drawing shows Rusiñol bowing solemnly as he receives from a muse representing Art a laurel wreath with the inscription 'Associé'. Underneath Picasso wrote 'What Rusiñol Believed Himself to Be'. The drawing refers to an incident in which Rusiñol boasted that he was about to receive the title *sociétaire* (and not *associé*, as Picasso wrote) from the French Société nationale des beaux-arts. In the end he did not get the award, and thus Picasso's parodic portrait. Instead of Rusiñol, it was Ramon Casas who was awarded the title of *sociétaire*, as announced in the press at the time (*Pèl & Ploma*, June 1903, p. 192, and *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 5 June 1903, p. 364). Since Picasso did not return to Paris until some ten months later, the portrait must have been done in Barcelona and the date of execution would be after the award was given, i.e., during or after June 1903. Just as he had previously associated Rusiñol with El Greco, here Picasso links him with another artist whom he had championed widely and with whom he had had a close personal relationship, Puvis de Chavannes. The muse, the laurel wreath and the idea of dreaming are iconographic references to Puvis's work. This drawing is done on a business card from the yarn shop of the Junyer-Vidal brothers and the signature was added much later.

P. 320. This parodic drawing of Rusiñol and Utrillo, depicting them in exceedingly abject nakedness, is the fourth portrait of the two friends together (the other three are on pages 314, 316 and 317). On Utrillo's belly is inscribed 'Pèl & Ploma', in reference to the magazine of which he was editor-in-chief. *Pèl & Ploma* was probably the most successful *modernista* magazine and Picasso was an avid reader, even while in Paris. Thanks to Utrillo *Pèl & Ploma* published several illustrations by Picasso, including a number of portraits: one of the painter Joaquim Mir, one of the writer Eduard Marquina; and one of Santiago Rusiñol (on page 312). We find it harder to arrive at a reading of this characterisation of Rusiñol, his bulging gut inhabited by strange creatures. Once again, this drawing is done on a business card from the Junyer-Vidal brothers' yarn shop and the signature was added much later. This double portrait was purchased in 2008 by the Museu Picasso in Barcelona at auction at Christie's in New York.

P. 321. This drawing reflects Rusiñol's fall from grace among young artists such as Picasso. The characters flanking Rusiñol symbolise concepts that the artist labelled, respectively: 'Glory', a completely nude female figure holding a bag of money; and 'review' or 'critic', represented by a character who is writing — a review, presumably — as he sodomises Rusiñol. It is impossible to tell whether Picasso meant to write 'crítico' (critic) or 'crítica' (review), since his own correction of the last letter renders it indecipherable. However, his intention is clear, and similar to that in the previous portrait, in which we see a marked degradation in the characterisation of Rusiñol: totally naked and abject in the previous one and again naked and now sodomised in this one. This drawing, like the previous four, is done on a business card from the Junyer-Vidal brothers' yarn shop and the signature was added much later.

