

Strand 2. Art Nouveau and Politics in the Dawn of Globalisation

Art and politics in 1900 Catalan Sculpture in Latin America¹

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Abstract

This paper touches on the presence of *modernista* sculpture in Latin America around 1900 and its political implications. Art Nouveau coincides in time with an era of urban changes in American cities and it is also the age of national independence movements –or else their first anniversary-. The need for prestigious monumental sculptors and plaster copies was so high that it ought to be satisfied with foreign creators. The contribution of Catalan sculptors here is remarkable, and has not been thoroughly studied yet. Some Catalan sculptors stayed in America for long periods, while others travelled just for specific projects. In other cases, their works were purchased by museums or other public institutions. This paper focuses on case studies, located mainly in the Southern Cone, in order to contribute to the comprehension of the means by which *modernista* sculpture participates in the construction or consolidation of some American national discourses.

Keywords: Sculpture, Art Nouveau, Catalan art in America, Monumental sculpture, Politics in Art

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One of our main fields of research in the past few years has been the presence of Catalan artists in Latin America, from the late-19th to the early-20th centuries. We have given a special attention to sculptors working in America, who established ateliers there and also developed teaching activities in local schools or universities. It is certainly a field of knowledge that has been historically neglected. The preference of Latinists (either from America and Europe) for Baroque and Mid-century art helps to partially explain the reasons for this situation. But we also have to admit that there is still much to do in regards to the general studies on modern Catalan sculpture. *Modernista* sculpture is highly eclectic, ranging from rodinian Symbolism to more conservative formats. This heterogeneity explains why Scholars often prefer to use the formula “sculpture during *Modernisme*” than that of “*modernista* sculpture”. All the above mentioned reasons contribute to hinder the comprehension of Catalan art abroad and its cultural and aesthetic consequences.

The research that we have undertaken has allowed for the identification and catalogue of about twenty Catalan sculptors working in Latin America at the turn of the 19th century. Obviously, there must have been more than this, whose work is still lost to time. Our aim is to continue to compile information on these artists so we can shed more light on their role in the construction of national artistic discourses, but also in relation to other topics, such as art consumption, artistic networks, or travel and art. The existing literature on the subject is scarce², but has provided a departing point and also a background for our own work.

Scholarship has often focused on a handful of popular Catalan sculptors in Latin America, whose most famous works have only been listed and described. The emphasis here has been mainly on their participation on monumental projects with no further analysis, without a real cultural perspective or a global view. However, most of the sculptors that we have accounted for through our research actually lived in America for some time, working mainly in private commissions for public work. They did so in an especially relevant moment in history, around the time when several American nations were celebrating their first century of independence from Spain, or else they were in point of fact just achieving their independence. Thus, the time lapse between 1898 (which signalled the end of the Spanish colonial empire with the loss

² Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: *Monumento conmemorativo y espacio público en Iberoamérica*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2004 <<http://www.ugr.es/~rgutierr/PDF2/LIB%20011.pdf>>. Consulted on 25/02/2018

of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines) and 1911 (a hundred years after many of the South American nations had become political realities), is extremely important in this matter.

The need for sculptors capable of undertaking artistic projects in commemoration of these events and to celebrate national identity and history must be understood within this time frame. It is certainly a peak moment in sculpture production in Latin America, as was the case in many other countries in the western world. However, in America, most of the artists entrusted to create national symbols were foreigners, born and educated in the old continent. So, as opposed to what happened in Europe, American national sculpture was not necessarily the production of a 'national sculptor'. In this essay we will discuss some case studies of sculpture made by Catalans in America during the golden age of Art Nouveau, in order to reflect on politics through style, iconography and commissions.

Where and how

19th century-Catalan sculptors worked all over the Latin American geography, in countries still belonging or else having belonged to the Spanish colonial empire. We can find their traces in Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Panama, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina.

Argentina was one of the main recipients of European artists, a country providing professional opportunities that attracted many Catalan sculptors all through the last two decades of the 19th century to the end of the 1920s. Spaniards stood in the third place in regard to commissions for public sculpture in Buenos Aires at that time, going up a 10%³. In Argentina, while the most prestigious projects were confided to Italian and French⁴, Catalan sculptors still received commissions regularly, their projects often being issued by or related to the local Spanish and Catalan communities.

This is the case of Josep Llimona i Bruguera (Barcelona 1863-1934) and his *Maiden's Fountain* (also known as *Fountain* or *Catalan Fountain*) (fig.1). In 1925 Llimona travelled to

³ María del Carmen MAGAZ: *escultura y poder en el espacio público*, Buenos Aires, Acervo, 2007. See Anexo, p. 219 and following pages.

⁴ María del Carmen CARBI (coord.): "Introducción", *Escultura argentina siglo XX*, Buenos Aires, Galería AMC, 1991, s/p.

Buenos Aires for his exhibition in the *Amigos del Arte* siege and afterwards in Rosario. The sculptor showed around twenty-two pieces in the show. Thanks to this trip, Llimona was commissioned by the Catalan community to create a public monument. The artist worked in the project the following years and the sculpture was placed in Rivadavia Park, Buenos Aires, in 1931. Although Llimona was related to the Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc of Barcelona (artistic association known for its moral and religious principles) an important part of his production are delicate female nudes, which were deemed inadequate in some contexts. The presentation of the Fountain in a public location was used by Argentineans to show the world their country as a modern and open-minded nation⁵. Paradoxically, *Fountain* was removed from its original location in 1969 because of the complaints of some neighbours on the nudity of its central figure. Two years later it was relocated to a more central space: San Martín Square. Finally, in 2009, after several renovation works in the neighbourhood, it was moved again to its original point.

Commissions obtained from Spanish and Catalan *émigré* communities and associations were one of the most important sources of work for Catalan sculptors in America, but not the only one. Pere Carbonell's *Mausoleum of Christopher Columbus* in Santo Domingo works as an example of a State commission⁶. In 1896, architect Ferran Romeu i Ribot (Barcelona, 1862-1943) and sculptor Pere Carbonell i Huguet (Sarrià, 1855-Barcelona, 1927), won the public competition for the Mausoleum that was promoted by President Ulises Heureaux through the Junta Nacional Colombina, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the island's "discovery". Carbonell was also commissioned an equestrian portrait of Heureaux. Unluckily by the time he completed it, Heureaux had been assassinated and the work remained in the Barcelona docks for several decades⁷. The Mausoleum was to be erected in the Presbytery of the Santo Domingo cathedral, the first one ever constructed by Spaniards in the New World (1514-1540).

⁵ Sonia BERJMAN: *Plaza San Martín, imágenes de una historia*, Buenos Aires, Nobuko, 2003, p. 114.

⁶ See Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO: "The 19th Century Mausoleum of Christopher Columbus in Santo Domingo", in *The Challenge of the Object*, Nürnberg, Germanisches National Museum, 2012, p. 198 - 198.

⁷ See Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO; Natàlia ESQUINAS GIMÉNEZ: "El Monumento al general dominicano Ulises Heureaux, de Pere Carbonell (1897)", in Víctor MÍNGUEZ CORNELLES (coord): *Las artes y la arquitectura del poder*, Castelló de la Plana, Universitat Jaume I, 2013, p. 1447-1460

The main objective of the Mausoleum was to host the recently discovered *true* remains of Columbus. Columbus had been laid to rest in the cathedral around 1540; but in 1795, fearing the French invasion of the island Spain decided to move the remains to neighbouring Cuba, still under their domain. In June 1877, while doing some renovation works in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, another old tomb was found in the space traditionally assigned to the burial of Columbus, very close to the niche being removed in 1795, causing a worldwide commotion. Spanish and Dominican interests collided. Both countries claimed they were the true guardians of the remains and provided documents to prove it. This discussion was shaped by local pride, prejudice and patriotism; and colonial tensions were obviously involved in the arguments of both parts. Santo Domingo had obtained the independence from Spain in 1821, and was free from Haitian control since 1844. Possessing the remains of the Admiral was indeed a matter of vital importance in the construction of the modern Dominican nation. And being able to show and preserve them in a spectacular Mausoleum helped in attaining this goal. Santo Domingo, the first island ever “discovered” by Columbus, could claim its place as the true capital of the New World. For the Spanish counterpart, Columbus was also a very a symbolic emblem, particularly at the end of the 19th Century, when the Spanish Empire was disintegrating fast. Columbus recalled the splendour of the historical past of the Kingdom and legitimated its present. Furthermore, Dominican religious interests also contributed in warming up the debate: if the real tomb of Columbus was in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, the temple itself could and should be presented as a notorious memorial site, the most important of its kind in Hispanic America.

Subsequently, the Mausoleum by Romeu and Carbonell had an extremely relevant objective, as it should recall the world the strategic cultural and historical transcendence of Santo Domingo. The iconographic programme of the Mausoleum was evidently not at all casual; on the contrary, it was carefully designed in order to fulfil its purpose: celebrating the modern nation as the Capital city of America and nationalising its founder. The episodes of Columbus’s life and those of the discovery of the island decorating the walls focused on Christopher Columbus as an individual and eluded referring to Spain’s involvement or the Spanish Kings aid in his trips. In spite of being designed by Catalan artists, the Mausoleum conveyed Dominican emotional, historic and ideological claims.

Stylistically, the Mausoleum embraces Gothic revival aesthetics, still very much in vogue in the Catalan arts during Modernisme, in line with the predominant late Gothic style of the Cathedral. The structure is made out of marble while many of the decorative items are cast in bronze. One of the most interesting parts of the Mausoleum are the allegoric statues on top and below of the baldachin. While the meaning of the latter seems clear – it would represent Santo Domingo (*Quisqueya*, in taíno language) - the first one could symbolically represent either the continent of America, or Liberty (associated to Faith – the cross- , and Law – the book-). The Mausoleum also holds several reliefs depicting relevant chapters of the life of Christopher Columbus and the Discovery of Santo Domingo. Their spatial construction and their volumetric precision are to be noted, as well as the naturalistic emphasis on the depiction of the characters.

In 1992, the Mausoleum was moved to the Columbus Lighthouse, and the 19th century tomb found in 1877 with it. The Faro was constructed to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the island. Having the Mausoleum physically transported to a civil space dispossessed it of its religious, Christian implications, but did not desacralize it. With this removal, the memory of the religious indoctrination that took place in America after Columbus's discovery is cast to shadows; probably allowing the Mausoleum to better convey the expectations of the majority of its current visitors.

The Question of National Style

It is worth noting that the 1896 competition for the Mausoleum was only addressed to contestants coming from Europe. The scarcity of Dominican sculptors at that time could justify this limitation, but there was also a clear preference for European artists and a taste for academic art all over Latin America around 1900, that was to be felt even in countries with different scenarios, where qualified local sculptors did exist. The preference for French and Italian art explains the pre-eminence of a specific aesthetic that is to be found in monumental sculpture around the continent during the second half of the 19th to the early 20th centuries. Italians were hegemonic in some countries; it is the case with Argentina but also in Cuba, where they would also take over other areas of professional practice such as carving or

funerary sculpture⁸. Most of public commissioners entrusting Spaniard sculptors expected their projects to convey Italian or French aesthetics⁹. We must take into account the fact that many of the Catalan sculptors that we have studied had travelled to Rome or Paris during their artistic trainings. Some of them even remained there for some time. Indeed, their direct knowledge of European art could have helped them obtain certain American commissions.

This would be the case with Agustí Querol i Subirats (Tortosa, 1860 - Madrid, 1909), who became a true expert in promoting his Spanish atelier as the perfect producer of sculpted national symbols for American states, taking part in numerous public competitions and creating dozens of works that are scattered all through the continent. Querol is responsible for the spectacular *Monument to the Magna Carta and to the Four Argentinean Regions*, one of the main focal points of the events commemorating the “Centenario”, the first-hundred anniversary of Argentina’s independence (Fig.2). Spain’s presence amidst the foreign countries taking part in the Centenario could not go unnoticed, with Madrid seized the chance to establish new relations with Buenos Aires and also the opportunity to recall its former colonial glory. Thus, the Centenario of 1910 was not only a cultural but also a highly political event that has already been thoroughly studied from several points of view, even in the arts¹⁰. Querol’s monument was funded by Spain, hence its popular nickname *Monument from the Spaniards*.

The creation of this monument was long an arduous. The first problem was Querol’s death just after having ended its general design. The second sculptor who was entrusted to continue the work, Cipriano Folgueras, died right after in 1911. The project seemed indeed to be doomed to fail, with the recurrent strikes of workers in the quarries of Carrara and the wreck of the ship transporting an important set of pieces for the monument from Barcelona, etc.

⁸ Marikarla RODRÍGUEZ DE AZCOITIA: *La labor de las Casas Marmoleras en el arte funerario habanero: su presencia en el Cementerio Cristóbal Colón*, BA dissertation, unpublished, Universidad de La Habana. Departamento de Historia del Arte, 2014.

⁹ Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: *Monumento conmemorativo...*, p. 21

¹⁰ See, for the Argentinean case, Genaro BEVIONI: *Argentina 1910. Balance y memoria*, Buenos Aires, Leviatán, 1961; Laura MALOSETTI: “Las artes plásticas entre el ochenta y el centenario”, *Nueva Historia Argentina, Arte, Sociedad y Política*, tomo I, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1999; Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: “Escultores españoles en las conmemoraciones argentinas”, in *El reencuentro entre España y Argentina en 1910. Camino al Bicentenario*, Buenos Aires, CEDODAL-Junta de Andalucía, 2007, p. 93-96; Jorge Manuel BEDOYA: “Tres esculturas de artistas españoles en el Buenos Aires del Centenario”, *Boletín del Instituto Histórico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*, 13, 1989.

Eventually, Antonio Moliné finished the project in 1927. It is undoubtedly one of Querol's finest works, with an impressive amount of figures, some in bulk and other in relief, in a complex array of figures from bas to haut-relief. The movement is partially spiral, always ascendant; it lightens the heaviness of the monument with its geometrical mass. It sits on a fountain with the allegories of the Argentinean regions that name the monument on each of its four corners. Interestingly, the base of the monument features bas-reliefs focusing on race as a connecting thread between Spanish-speaking nations, thus alluding to Spain as the centre of the Hispanic world. On top of it, the iconography is more conventional and refers strictly to Argentina, with an engraved fragment of its Constitution presenting the nation as a welcoming contry for foreigners and the allegory of the Nation on top¹¹.

Although funded by Spain and executed by a Catalan, Querol's monument conveys the typical 19th-century cosmopolite taste in monumental sculpture that can be found around Latin America. Paradoxically enough, European styles were used to underpin national identity and patriotism through the identification of American citizens with the highest ethos of their nations. Their sheer existence is evidence of the personal success of these sculptors as much as it is that of the European politics of that time¹².

But the quest for a national style in Latin America was very much alive at the turn of the century, as it was elsewhere in the western world. The danger posed by the omnipresence of Parisian and Italian influences was discussed in countries such as Argentina¹³, and the need to concoct a specifically national aesthetic was sometimes deemed a priority. In order to craft it, several American nations created their official Schools of Fine Arts at the turn of the century and purchased art to build national collections. However, the new professors employed in those academies were mainly European-born. We have studied some of the Catalan among them and explored their significance within their American contexts; it can be concluded that most of them were chosen *because* of their cosmopolitanism and their knowledge and respect of academic conventions. The acquisition of Miquel Blay's *The First Cold* and Agustí

¹¹ Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: "El Monumento de los Españoles", in Julián García Núñez. *Caminos de ida y vuelta*, Buenos Aires, Fundación Carolina-CEDODAL, 2005, p. 105-110.

¹² Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: *Monumento conmemorativo...*, p.138.

¹³ Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES: "El Ateneo en 1894 y las primeras discusiones acerca de la necesidad de un arte nacional", *Síntesis histórica del arte en la Argentina (1776-1930)*, [s.l.], Sur, 2003, p.99-103 <www.ugr.es/~rgutierr/PDF2/LIB%20007.pdf>. Consulted on 25/02/2018

Querol's *Sagunto* by Eduardo Schiaffino for the National Museum of Buenos Aires¹⁴ and that of Josep Clarà's *Twilight* for the National Museum of Chile are not exceptions to this rule. The reputation of Blay, Querol and Clarà was established in Paris and in Rome, where they spent several years that proved crucial for their careers. Thus, above all they embodied the prototype of the cosmopolitan sculptor, instead of that of the Iberian sculptor.

Schiaffino got in touch with Miquel Blay in 1906 in order to purchase a copy of his masterpiece *The First Cold*, currently in the Jardín Botánico de Buenos Aires. Blay travelled to Argentina two years later, to attend the inauguration of new rooms at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. It was the first time that Schiaffino showed some of the sculptures he had bought in Europe. That exhibition is one of the most important events that has to be taken into consideration when interpreting the impact of European art in Argentina. Blay took advantage of his stay in Buenos Aires to attract new projects, like the *Monument to Mariano Moreno*, on occasion of the Centenario. He was even commissioned a portrait of Mrs Schiaffino, Jeanne Coppin (today at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes). Coppin's bust recalls other portraits by Blay made for American commissioners such as Josep Artal's wife. Artal was a Catalan businessman and art dealer who had settled in Buenos Aires.

Twilight (1907-1910) is one of Josep Clarà's masterpieces, made at the turning point in his career where he was evolving from Symbolism to a more Mediterranean approach to sculpture, similar to that of Maillol or the Schnegg brothers. *Twilight* was acquired by the State after its presentation in the Spanish section of the International Exhibition of Fine Arts in Santiago de Chile, during Chile's Centenario festivities in 1910. Clarà's sculptures were featured among a range of Spanish works of art that had been selected and shipped by the Spanish authorities, which also included fellow Catalan sculptors Miquel Blay and the Oslé brothers¹⁵.

As a reaction to cosmopolite or European sculpture, around 1900 some public monuments conveyed alternative aesthetics, either rooted in the Hispanic tradition or else in the Native-

¹⁴ Victoria MÁRQUEZ: "Eduardo Schiaffino y la compra de calcos para el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Argentina)", in Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO; Irene GRAS (coords.): *Modern Sculpture and the Question of Status*, Barcelona, Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2018, Epub <<http://www.publicacions.ub.edu/ficha.aspx?cod=08812>>.

¹⁵ *Exposición Internacional de Arte. Santiago. Chile. 1910. Catálogo Oficial Ilustrado*, Imprenta Barcelona, Santiago de Chile, 1910

American past. The iconographies chosen for the former include popular characters in Spanish culture and colonial history. For instance, the 300th anniversary of the death of writer Miguel de Cervantes in 1916 constituted an excellent occasion to promote statues in memory of his contribution to universal literature in Spanish. Although not truly constitutive of a style in sculpture, this kind of subjects would fit in the so-called “hispanista” trend, which became especially important in architecture and has been thoroughly studied¹⁶. It is interesting to note here how American national identities could absorb and vindicate their belonging to a Spanish past, in spite of having fought for their independence against the colonial empire. Surprisingly, it was around 1910, around the Centenario, when “hispanism” rose in countries such as Argentina Uruguay, Mexico, Peru or Ecuador. But hispanism was first and foremost a response to US imperialism, an identity message of cultural communion that Spain also shared and promoted.

The *Monument to Alonso de Ercilla* in Santiago de Chile allows us to further discuss this matter. It was a gift to the city from the Spanish community on the occasion of the Centenario. The project was entrusted to one of the main *émigré* sculptors, the Catalan Antoni Coll i Pi (Barcelona, 1857- Santiago de Chile, 1943), who had moved to Chile in 1906 after being recruited with three other Catalan artists (Antoni Campins, Baldomer Cabré, Joan Pla) to teach in the recently created School of decorative Arts of Santiago. He would later also lecture at the School of Architecture of the University of Santiago¹⁷. Catalan architect residing in Chile Josep Forteza (Barcelona, 1863 – Santiago, 1946) also took part in the construction of the monument. Coll’s work represents Alonso de Ercilla, the Spanish renaissance writer of *La Araucana*, an epic poem describing the conquest of southern Chile by the Kingdom of Spain. The work focuses on the early stages of the war, which would come to shape the economics, politics and social life of Chile for centuries. However, the monument depicts not

¹⁶ Rodrigo GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES “Identidades españolas en américa a través del arte y la arquitectura. Escenarios de entre siglos (1890-1930) y prolongaciones en el tiempo”, *Historia y Política*, 36, july-december 2016, p. 191-210.

¹⁷ Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO; Irene GRAS: “Artistas catalanes en las universidades argentinas y chilenas a principios del siglo XX”, *Matèria. Revista internacional d'Art*, 9, p. 129 – 147 <http://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/materia/article/view/11672> Consulted on 25/02/2018 ; Claudio CORTÉS LÓPEZ, “Escultores españoles en iberoamérica. El caso de Mariano Benlliure y Antonio Coll y Pi”, in María Dolores BARRAL RIVADULLA et al (eds.): *Mirando a Clío: el arte español espejo de su historia : actas del XVIII Congreso del CEHA*, Santiago de Compostela, 2012.

the war itself, but portrays the poet as receiving creative inspiration by a young native-American female. Their weapons are no longer deadly, for Alonso's sword is on the floor and the Mapuche woman holds a cinnamon branch, sacred to local tribes. The influence of Romanticism can be felt in this *ensemble*, in clear contrast to other of Coll's more academic works in Santiago. One might wonder if the biased interpretation of the Conquest forecasted by this commission was maybe the cause of the theft of the small bronze model of the monument at the National History Museum in Santiago, back in 2007; a robbery that remains unsolved.

Several 19th-century sculptors working in America used indigenous characters and symbols as a response to the question of style. The work of Catalan sculptor Manuel Vilar i Roca (Barcelona, 1812 – Mexico DF, 1860) would show one of the earliest examples of “hybridation”, which is certainly an outdated term in today's scholarship. He arrived in Mexico around 1845, settling in the country as professor of sculpture in the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts. Vilar's significance in the evolution of Mexican arts has been already studied, and his indigenous heroes depicted in academic style are widely known¹⁸. As opposed to Vilar's case, Domènec Mora (Barcelona, 1840- San Francisco, US, 1911) remains fairly unknown, although he was responsible for an interesting production in Uruguay during the 1860s and 1870s that included “gauchos” among other stereotypical characters from the Southern Cone. Mora's *Victim of the Civil War*, awarded a prize in Chile's Centenario exhibition in 1910, shows an agonizing gaucho severely injured after a “montonera” (paramilitary razzia). The extreme pathos of the work echoes the dramatism of contemporary top sculptor from Barcelona Agapit Vallmitjana, and it shows the heterogeneity of Catalan sculpture during Art Nouveau. Mora's work is bluntly political; it showcases the complexity and ruthlessness of modern Europeanisation processes in the area, where Europe meant civilisation and Indigenous was a symbol for undesirable savagery¹⁹.

Native symbols were also used by Catalan sculptors working in America not only as main characters but also as decorative elements for their projects. Some of Torquat Tasso's monuments allow us to discuss this topic in depth. Torquat Tasso i Nadal emigrated to

¹⁸ Montserrat GALÍ: *Artistes catalans a Mèxic: Segles XIX i XX*, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, 1993; Salvador MORENO: *El escultor Manuel Vilar*, Mexico DF, UNAM, 1969.

¹⁹ Eduardo SCHIAFFINO: “*La pintura y la escultura en Argentina (1783-1894)*”, Buenos Aires, 1933, p.226-227.

Argentina at the end of the 19th century, and established in Buenos Aires as a sculptor but also as a professor, working at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Buenos Aires. Among his numerous projects, he became quite popular as executor of pedestals for monuments²⁰. This is the case with the monuments to general San Martín in Santa Fe (1902) and Corrientes (1904-1905), which mounted replicas of Louis Daumas famous equestrian portrait. Tasso's pedestals provide some originality to the *ensembles*, which would have been less engaging otherwise. In Santa Fe, the pedestal is covered in andine rocks, over a hexadecagon base (Fig.3). Far from a classical pedestal, it features organic, irregular volumes. Ornamental details are casted in stone and bronze. In order to underpin the significance and pertinence of this pedestal, Tasso used the Argentinean crest and a round-bodied sculpture of a condor. In the front, an allegory of mother-Earth partially emerges from the core of the pedestal, as if of a mountain in the Andes, with an olive-tree leaf in one hand and a laurel branch in the other one. Classic and indigenous iconography work together here. On the back side, a Minerva holds a spear by a furious Medusa.

These types of pedestals, popularly known as "Andino", later became very popular and were in widespread use especially in monuments related to the indigenous world, although synthesized during the 1920s and 1930s. Even Valencian sculptor Mariano Benlliure used it in his *Homage to San Martín* in Lima, Peru. Among Tasso's own works in the early years of the 20th century, some of them picture Andino pedestals. We must refer to those commissioned to celebrate the Centenario, such as the *Monument to Liberty* in San Andrés de Giles and Salta's *Monument to the 20th February* that was conceived in 1901-1902, but inaugurated in 1910. The latter recalls an important episode of the Independence war taking place in the area, with Belgrano and Tristán's armies. It is undoubtedly a thought-provoking project. It praises Argentinian glory and it stands over an andino pedestal, although it was made by a Catalan in a general European academic style, featuring conventional western-sculpture symbols (allegories of virtues, lions, eagles, laurel wreath, the holy cross) and representing men of arms as heroes. It is worth noting that due to its early age, this monument could have contributed to the popularization of the andino pedestal all through Argentinean early-20th century commemorative national monuments.

²⁰ Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO: *Virtual map of Torquat Tasso's works in Argentina* <<http://timemapper.okfnlabs.org/gracmonub/torcuato-tasso>> Consulted on 25/02/2018.

National Sculpture Through Subjects

Style is a relevant issue when considering national sculpture in Latin America, but subjects also allow for interesting reflexions. Catalan sculptors were no exception to the general rule; they contributed to expand a sculpted imaginary of secular heroes²¹ and foundational institutions. Urban changes in American capital cities had Paris as their rightful model, however not Art Nouveau Paris but Haussmannian Paris. New avenues and squares were the perfect scenarios for public sculpture with which to educate citizens and to arouse patriotism²². Governments, institutions and associations and even individuals, carefully chose the leaders from their post-colonial history which they considered to best embody national character.

These “próceres” (distinguished individuals, mainly political leaders, from the past or present times) are the most frequent subjects depicted in Latin-American sculpture of that time and thus also by Catalan sculptors. Frederic Homdedeu i Bonet (Barcelona, 1861- Mexico DF, 1908) is responsible for about 20 statues of próceres all around Mexico²³. He lived there shortly, from 1900 when he arrived as professor at the School of the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts to his early death in 1908. In the newly constructed and conveniently named Paseo de la Reforma, he was commissioned three of the 20 statues of próceres, which were covered by several cities and states of the country. His were inaugurated in 1902. The chosen leaders to portray are of course nothing but arbitrary: Plutarco González (1813-1857) hero of the war against the US, Pedro José Méndez (1836-1866) hero of the war against France and Juan José de la Garza Cisneros (1826-1893) Governor and legislator who also took part in the French wars. Homdedeu had lived for some time in Paris before moving overseas. This sojourn probably held a role in his recruitment, but the bohemian Art Nouveau style of his artworks

²¹ Carlos REYERO: *La escultura conmemorativa en España*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1999, p.270.

²² Leticia MARONESE, “Buenos Aires y sus obras de arte en el espacio público” in Carlos M. TOTO; Leticia MARONESE; Carlos Alberto ESTÉVEZ: *Monumentos y obras de arte en el espacio público de la ciudad de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, Comisión para la Preservación del Patrimonio Histórico Cultural de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2001, p.13-18.

²³ See Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO; Núria ARAGONÈS RIU: “Apunts sobre l’escultor Frederic Homdedeu i Bonet (Barcelona, 1861 – Ciutat de Mèxic, 1908)”, in Irene GRAS; Cristina RODRÍGUEZ-SAMANIEGO; Núria ARAGONÈS RIU (coords): *Catalunya-Amèrica. L’art entre el viatge i l’exili (s. XIX i XX) = Cataluña América. Arte entre el viaje y el exilio (s.XIX y XX)*, Barcelona, Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona; Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, en premsa

from Paris does not show in his Mexican commissions. This is even more surprising when we take into consideration his close friendship with local sculptor Jesús Fructuoso Contreras (1866-1902), who became one of the most famous artists in his time in Mexico, and who produced several Symbolist works.

Heroes from the cultural scene were also featured in public sculpture. As well as with the “próceres”, they were carefully selected to convey specific values when constructing national ideals. In general terms, monuments in memory of literary men, musicians, etc. tend to be less rigid than those in honour of politicians. Tasso’s *Monument to Echeverría* (1905-1907) in Buenos Aires features a more content and moderate attitude than what it’s usually found in his monuments to “próceres”. The focus here is on the humanity and temperament of the poet, thus portraying more effectively Tasso’s own personal style. The shift in subjects from the political leader to other characters like those coming from the cultural world represented in fact a move towards modernity in 1900 Latin American sculpture²⁴.

Ordinary heroes such as Firemen made their appearance in monumental sculpture too. They became a powerful symbol, embodying the potential fierceness of everyday men, capable of saving their nation from danger. Coll i Pi’s *Monument to Firemen* in Santiago de Chile, created in occasion of the Centenario, or Agustí Querol’s project for La Habana are examples proving the popularity of the subject. Querol’s monument stands in La Habana’s central cemetery. It is homage to the firemen who died during their duty when they tried to put out a fire that started in the warehouse of a hardware store in La Habana Vieja in 1890. Crowning the monument there is an Angel of Faith, with his eyes covered, who hold a faint fireman’s body. Bas-relief medallions all around the monument display the portraits of the firemen and also a self-portrait of Querol himself. The four female allegories, Abnegation, Pain, Heroism and Martyrdom enhance the Symbolist feeling of this monument, which was erected in 1897.

²⁴ Manuel Santiago GARCÍA GUATAS: *El siglo XIX. El arte*, Madrid, Dastin, 2003, p. 112.

Some last considerations

When analysing sculpture made by Catalans in Latin America around 1900, it is obvious that funerary sculpture is the genre where Symbolism is more noticeable. Querol's monument would be a good example. Some of the Catalan sculptors we have studied became especially prolific at this kind of production. Joan Josep Cardona i Morera (Barcelona, 1894- Mendoza, 1969) arrived in Argentina at a very early age, in 1911, when he was only a teenager. He was to join his uncle, Josep Cardona i Furró (1878 – 1922), senior sculptor who was in Buenos Aires for a short-term stay²⁵. Cardona i Morera settled in Mendoza and remains virtually unpublished today, in spite of having produced a considerable series of public and private sculpture. One of his most iconic works is a funerary *ensemble* at Recoleta cemetery in Buenos Aires. It is undoubtedly a beautiful example of Symbolist sculpture (Fig.4). The *Mausoleum of Marco Avellaneda* dates back from 1913 and it features two parts: while the back presents three bas-reliefs showing Avellaneda at his duties as judge, in the front a weeping muse holds a withered rose and cries over the tomb of the deceased, which is supported by two flying *putti*. Everything in this part of the monument, from the use of volumes to the folds of clothing and the decadent overall emotion strongly recall funerary sculpture made in Catalonia at the same time, by sculptors such as Josep Llimona or Enric Clarasó i Daudí (1857 - 1941).

The lack of Symbolist examples of public sculpture is to be noticed also in 1900 Catalonia. Only in funerary works or when applied to architecture does Catalan sculpture truly feature a direct link to Art Nouveau through Symbolism or other non-academic trends at the turn of the 20th century. Here, we would have to take into consideration Catalan sculptor Diego Masana i Majó, who worked at the Palau de la Música Catalana and then moved to Argentina settling in Rosario, where he would create ornamental works for Art Nouveau buildings²⁶

In many Latin American nations around 1900, modernity meant above all central Europe. Catalan sculptors were entrusted with the task of producing images that would help construct

²⁵ Fàtima LÓPEZ; M. Àngels LÓPEZ PIQUERAS: "L'escultor Josep Cardona i Furró", *Locvs Amænvvs*, 13, 2015, p.197 – 221.

²⁶ Florencia BARCINA, "Art Nouveau en Rosario, Argentina: diversidad en una ciudad nueva" in CDF II International Congress Proceedings, 2015

<http://www.artnouveau.eu/admin_ponencies/functions/upload/uploads/Barcina_Florencia_Paper.pdf>.

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new national visual imaginaries. Their works portrayed specific characters but also and foremost ideals and civic virtues. Although the discussion on national style was very much alive in several American countries at the turn of the century, public commissions continued to promote a European ideal in sculpture. Through this paper we have examined different projects that took place in occasion of the Centenario. Although hispanism and indigenism are an interesting phenomena and has to be considered in its rightful importance, French and Italian continued to be the main references in monumental sculpture. It is by no means fortuitous that the most successful Catalan sculptors working in Latin America by 1900 had established their studios in Paris or Rome and had shown their works in the major Salons in Europe. Their cosmopolitanism is key to their diffusion in America. American art collectors showed a clear preference for hispanism (also referred to as “regionalism”) when dealing with painting. However, sculpture collection had a penchant primarily for academic works. Academic European sculpture acted as a legitimising role for young nations. It also brought them closer to the homeland of the many émigrés having moved in the quest for opportunities during the 19th century and thus, separating these nations from their colonial links to Spain and the native-American world.

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