

# My Barcelona by ÓSCAR TUSQUETS BLANCA

Since 1962, Catalan architect Óscar Tusquets has built private homes, restaurants, offices, and hotels throughout Barcelona and its surrounding region. The high point of his career was the project to refurbish and extend the celebrated and remarkable Palau de la Música, built in 1906 by Lluís Domènech i Montaner. The winner of a host of prizes and awards, author of numerous essays, painter, and scenographer, the venerable Tusquets is also credited with spearheading the emergence and emancipation of Spanish design, as the founder of the famous Studio Per (dissolved in 1984), and through the design business BD Ediciones de Diseño—which still produces Dalí's fantastical, dreamlike furniture designs—founded in 1972 with Pep Bonet, Mireia Riera, Lluís Clotet, and Cristian Cirici. Tusquets is in widespread demand, from Naples—where he created one of the new subway art-stations—to Paris, where he recently remodeled the walls of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and Figueres, where he created the Salvador Dalí monument for the man he describes as “a fantastic friend.”

## ■ *A self-built man*

A native of Barcelona, Catalan born and bred, Óscar Tusquets is working to install his personal foundation in permanent headquarters at a former textile factory (the Colònia Güell), and dreams of retiring to Palma de Mallorca, “an abstract idea, between the sea and the airport.” He has lived and worked since 1992 on a unique site “ideal for someone who has no concept of Sunday,” which he built himself. A showcase for his entire design philosophy, it is a mere genuflection from the monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes where Queen Elisenda de Moncada once cloistered herself forever, and now a residential quarter of Barcelona. Far from the much-beaten tracks of the modernist architectural circuit and the feverishly touristy Barri Gòtic; far too from the region's well-worn gastronomic trails and their omnipresent experimental chefs. “I'm only moderately interested in Ferran Adrià. Everyone copies him. You see the same phenomenon in international design.”

## ■ *The Palau de la Música*

“I've been working on the rehabilitation and extension of this phenomenal gem for more than twenty-five years now. I'm like the family doctor. At the moment, I'm working to unclutter the approach to the building and open up a new perspective along one of the neighboring streets. It's like carrying out urban surgery.”

## ■ *Barcelona and the world of architecture*

“The whole world wants to build in Barcelona. For better or worse the city has become a kind of architectural gameboard. Since 2000, the Óscar Tusquets Foundation has awarded a symbolic annual prize to a fellow architect, in recognition of something they built ten years ago. The award, known as the Premio Década, is deliberately anti-novelty: it rewards work that is well-integrated into its environment—a garden, a car-park, a school, an apartment building, even a road tunnel! Each year, I invite a well-known foreign architect to sit as the sole juror for the retro-competition, and together we tour the city in a taxi, visiting the twelve works selected. In ~~May~~ 2008, with the Japanese architect Sejima, we inspected works ‘inaugurated’ in 1998. There's no media hype, it's all very low-key: the winning architect is delighted, we stick a plaque on the building in question, then we all go out to dinner, and the city goes on its way.”

## *Óscar Tusquets Blanca recommends*

**The church of Santa Maria del Mar:** It's the seafarers' church, with an unostentatious triple nave and admirable, austere Catalan Gothic architecture, destroyed and reborn many times between the earthquake of 1428 and the flames of the Civil War in 1936. *Map 2 H6.*

**The Umbracle, in the Parc de la Ciutadella:** A gigantic palmarium with a great, wood-framed clerestory, built in 1884 by Josep Fontserè. Inside, the atmosphere is shady and damp—it even rains!—which is perfect for the thousands of tropical plants and fabulous palm trees, for whom the roof is cut open to allow them to grow unfettered. It's strange and splendid, absolutely unique. *Map 1 F5.*

**The Bagués house:** The archives of the great jeweler Josep Masriera—an exceptional Art Nouveau artist—are kept and studied here. The enamels are incomparably beautiful. And the Casa Amatller, by Puig i Cadafalch, an essential influence for Catalan modernism. *Map 1 D4.*

**The Galvany market:** In the heart of the Sant Gervasi neighborhood (the former summer colony of Barcelona's richest set), less well known than the Boquería. This is an exceptional covered market from the point of view of its food, but also its cruciform architecture, like an ancient abbey with its stained glass, or a station with its central clock, which hasn't worked for years. *Mercat de Galvany. Carrer de Santaló, 65. Map 1 D2.*

**The Drolma restaurant at the Majestic, and the Forestier at the Miramar** (the latter building is by... Tusquets): the first for its hare *à la royale* and the talents of chef Fermí Puig; the second for its peaceful setting and pool, which he visits *en famille* with his three young children.

**The Vinçon design store,** of course—the outlet for furniture by BD Ediciones. **The lobby of the Omm hotel,** a fun place, always bustling, and because it's by Juli Capella whose work I value and admire.

Barcelona Design

October

Hotel

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