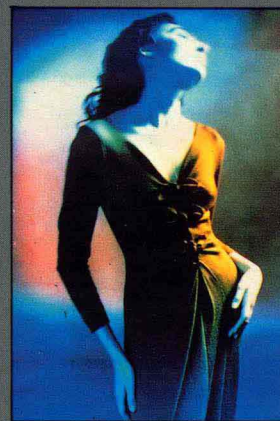
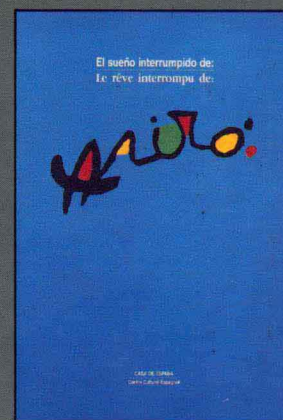


# SPANISH DESIGN

AND

# ARCHITECTURE





**SPANISH DESIGN**

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**AND**

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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**EMMA DENT COAD**

*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK

Dedicated to the late Charles Dent de Colsa and to  
Jaime Fraser-Luckie y Zuleta  
without whom this book would never have been attempted

I would like to thank those who helped me in the early stages –  
Carlos García-Calvo and Steve Braidwood – and those whose  
continued help has made this book possible: José-María Morillo;  
Kathy Edmond; Judith Watt; Lucie Young; David Blott; Janet  
McNally; Sara Navarro; Alberto Campo Baeza; Deyan Sudjic;  
Chris Turner. And special thanks to Juli Capella and Quim Larrea.

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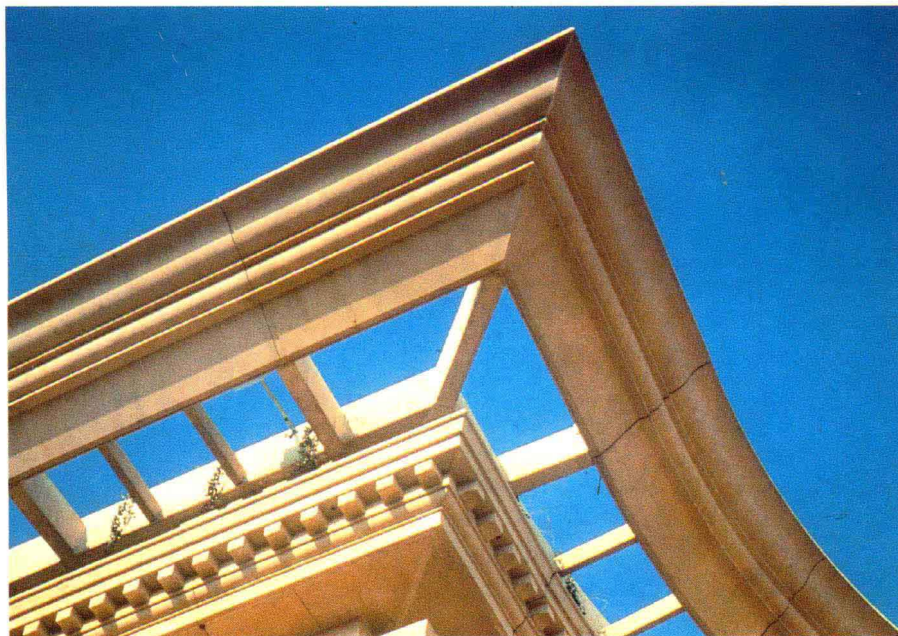
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# FOREWORD

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*Interior from the compact Casa  
Olerdola, Barcelona, by Jaume Bach  
and Gabriel Mora, 1981.*

In the last decade Spanish design, fashion and architecture have incontestably entered the front rank of the international scene. Supported by a booming domestic economy and the newly liberal climate of the post-Franco era, a distinctive Spanish style has emerged – radical, witty, confident. This book attempts to capture the essence of contemporary Spanish design and architecture but it is always important to see new work in context. Thus, where appropriate, this review begins in the mid-'70s or earlier, but the emphasis in the six main chapters is deliberately placed on the past five years, while the last is a look ahead to 1992. This is the year when the eyes of the world will be turned to Spain for the Olympics, the World Expo, and Madrid's European Cultural Capital celebrations, and the policies and achievements of the Spanish people will be laid out for all to see.

It is impossible to include everyone and everything of importance in a book of finite length. A country of 39 million people which can boast over 300 design shops has more going on than any book could hope to cover. It is also impossible to represent fairly the achievements of all the autonomous regions in their diversity and vigour. I have thus tried to give a selective and balanced view of work across the country, but if the Catalans have achieved more than their fair share of space it is because, like Dali, their excellence at self-publicity has been rewarded.

EMMA DENT COAD







# INTRODUCTION

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‘Culture thrives on morality; without, it cannot survive.’

(FRANCISCO FRANCO, 1936)

‘The real tragedy for Spain was the death of Mola; there was the real brain, the real leader. Franco came to the top like Pontius Pilate in the Creed. Spain is riddled with clerico-monarchical muck that has floated to the top.’

(ADOLF HITLER, 1937)

The rise of modern Spain from the ashes of the Civil War and the Franco years, has brought the country to the attention of the world. In 15 short years, Spain has passed through a period of economic and political growth that could have taken centuries, and with past restrictions now lifted, its culture has emerged as a virile and potent force comparable to that of many of the Western countries which have been stable for decades.

All credit is due to the Spanish, to their tremendous regional and national pride, their industriousness and eagerness to succeed in the world market. Whatever their politics, the Spanish people have that most elusive characteristic – vision. It is this that has brought about national policies encompassing economic programmes and urban planning schemes to take Spain into the twenty-first century with imaginative and efficient cityscapes that many would not dare to dream of.

The early and middle '80s were years of elation, almost euphoria, among the Spanish themselves, and this was echoed by the foreign media. Many people expected too much too soon: miracles, in this religious country, could still be believed in. But the wheels of democracy are slow. As the years have gone by and some improvements have taken longer

Soft construction with Boiled Beans; Premonition of Civil War, by Salvador Dali, 1936. In his words, ‘a vast human body breaking out into monstrous excrescences of arms and legs tearing at one another in a delirium of auto-strangulation’, the body being both Spain and Civil War itself. Inspired by the tortured sufferings of Goya’s war paintings, Dali produced a series on the subject of the looming war. Self-destructiveness, even self-cannibalism, was a frequent theme.

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than expected, while inevitably mistakes have been made, many Spaniards have become disillusioned. As the country enters the '90s, with the all-important year of 1992 looming, the Spanish people have become altogether more reflective, re-evaluating their objectives and questioning their political leaders. Some Spaniards see the planned events of 1992 – the Barcelona Olympics, the World Expo in Seville, the European Cultural Capital celebrations for Madrid, and the quinqucentenary festival for Granada – as no more than public-relations exercises, not believing there will be any long-term benefit to the country.

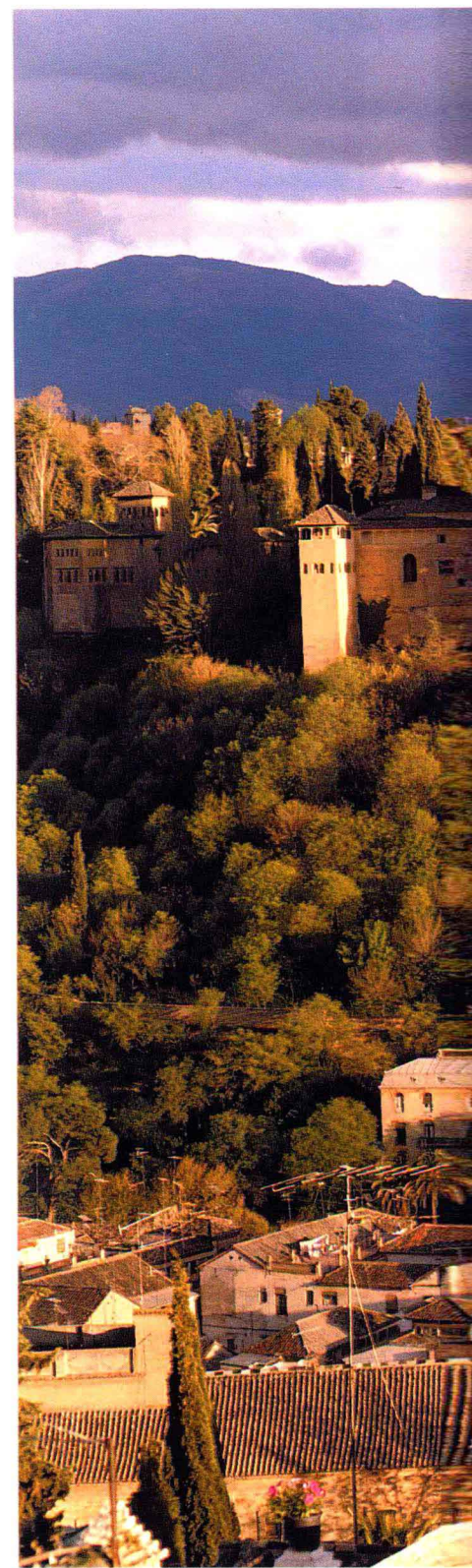
But the countless visitors who will arrive on Spain's doorstep in 1992 will see the whole picture, not just exhibitions, events and festivals. Their Spain will be a heady mixture: the enticing – if polluted – beaches of the Costa del Sol, cool moss-smelling cobbled courtyards, geraniums on windowsills, the exciting designer bars of Madrid and Barcelona, the illiterate goatherd sitting under a tree swigging from a pigskin bottle, Marxist mayors and fusty aristocrats, skinny aloof beauties and Felliniesque prostitutes. The best and worst of Spain, old and new, will be there for them to explore and fall in love with, and they will carry away an indelible impression of a rich mixture of cultures and lifestyles. Spain, with its many races and languages, invaded dozens of times over thousands of years, has absorbed a wide variety of cultures, all of which have helped to form its own spirit, hard to define but very much in evidence today.

## SPAIN'S ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Spanish civilization began in the Stone Age, and the country not only has countless fine buildings and artefacts, but has also produced a disproportionate number of the most famous painters in the world and has inspired generations of artists from abroad to create their best work. In Roman times Mérida was the centre of the country: called 'the second Rome', it produced art objects many of which equalled or surpassed those of Rome itself. Under the Visigoths, in the sixth century, Spain emerged as an independent kingdom, with Toledo as its capital, rivalling Italy in civilization, law and the sciences as well as in architecture, decoration and metalwork. Half a century after the Muslim conquest in 711 Córdoba, the glittering new capital, had a million inhabitants, and was grander than Baghdad or Byzantium. Muslim art and architecture reached their peak in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and when Seville became the capital under the Almohades, the beautiful and emblematic tower, La Giralda, now incorporated into the cathedral, was built. The Alhambra at Granada is the only secular complex to survive from the Muslim Middle Ages.

Some medieval Mozarabic art (so called from the name given to Spaniards who kept to their Christian religion and traditions under Muslim rule) is probably the closest there is to a vernacular style of the time. When Alfonso VI captured Toledo in 1085, he brought with him

*Set on a hill with precipitous slopes, the buildings which make up the Alhambra in Granada dominate the town. Begun in the eleventh century, very little of the original structures exist apart from walls restored in the sixteenth century; however, as the seat of the Sultanate for five hundred years, it contains some of the finest examples of Moorish art in the world.*







## INTRODUCTION





*Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez, 1656. The Infanta Margarita is prepared by her ladies-in-waiting to be painted by the artist in his studio in the palace, watched from behind the viewer by his patron, Philip IV, who is reflected in a mirror. Elements of luxury, formality and the grotesque are at work in this interior – some say the best in the world – painted at a time when Spain was losing both territory and power.

French artists and sculptors, and the French monastic orders who followed him also brought their own architects and craftsmen. This was the beginning of a long period during which there was no opportunity for any indigenous Spanish style to emerge.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the building of many glorious Franco-Spanish cathedrals. Queen Isabella, at the end of the fifteenth century, collected Flemish art, importing work by Gérard David, and German and Flemish architects were also invited to Spain to work on churches and cathedrals, including Seville Cathedral. An 'Isabellan' style evolved, which was a peculiar combination of Germanic and Muslim influences.

In the sixteenth century, Italy began to dominate Spanish art, architecture and design, with the Venetian influence particularly strong. This Renaissance period was a prolific one in architecture. The royal architects Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera both visited Michelangelo's Rome, bringing back a new austere style which they applied to such buildings as the Escorial, the palace built for Philip II in Madrid. Painters of the time, like Luís de Vargas, worked in a cold Mannerist style, exemplified by *La Gamba* in Seville Cathedral, but polychromed wood, disdained in Italy, once again became popular in Spain.

Philip II, with his fantastic wealth pouring in from the Americas, was a connoisseur and collector of paintings, the patron of some of Spain's greatest artists, as well as of Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese. He looked less favourably on the visionary style of the extraordinary El Greco ('The Greek'), Domenikos Theotokopolous, who adopted Spain as his country, but whose one commission from the king was rejected. Realism gradually took over from Mannerism, with its chief exponent José de Ribera influenced by Francisco Zurbarán, whose marvellous, austere paintings of monks and ascetics were executed mainly for the religious orders. Diego Velázquez and Bartolomé Estebán Murillo, both from Seville, moved to Madrid to be near Philip's new capital, bringing with them the softened mellow sunlit tones of Seville.

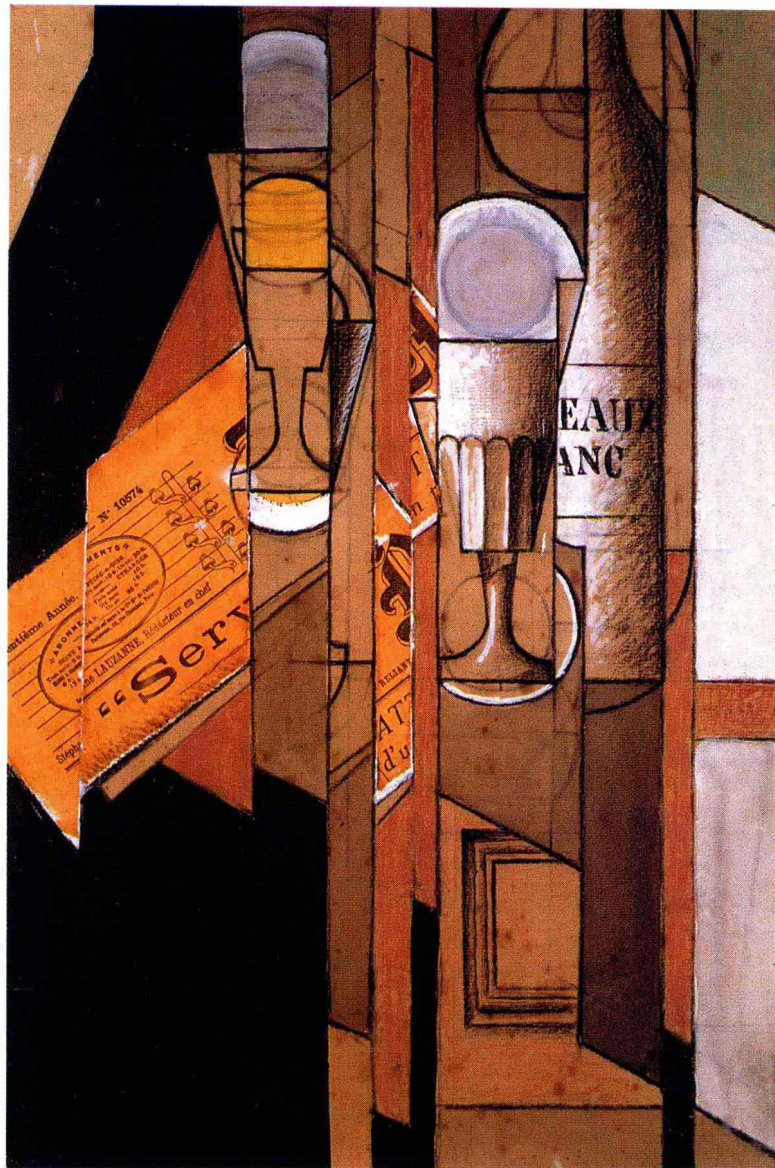
In the seventeenth century, as ever, the Spanish craftsman's empathy with wood made itself felt again. Realistic polychromed wooden sculpture became increasingly popular, at the expense of Italian marbles and the heroic figures influenced by Michelangelo. Painted-wood statues of saints were paraded on feast days on *pasos* (floats), dressed in rich costumes and decked in jewellery donated by the faithful.

In the eighteenth century the Bourbon dynasty brought in yet more foreign artists, this time the French, and the Neoclassical style began to appear in Spain. In the fine arts, the dominant figure towards the end of the century was Francisco de Goya, whose work was often critical and ironic, and whose soul-searching portraits are among the finest and most penetrating ever produced. Sensitive and highly imaginative, Goya was deeply stirred by the scenes of war and bloodshed he had witnessed, and in his later years painted a nightmarish series of pictures on the walls of his house near Madrid.



BELOW Verres, Journal et Bouteille de Vin, by Juan Gris. With Georges Braque and Picasso, Gris was one of the first Cubists, living near Picasso in Montmartre, Paris. This early collage is typical of his style and soft colouring which were so unlike that of the others. His death at the age of 40 robbed the world of a great master.

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ABOVE: Jacqueline in a Mantilla on a Red Background, by Pablo Picasso. Picasso married the model Jacqueline Roque in 1958, when he was well into his seventies and living comfortably in the South of France. With the troubled days of Guernica and the more aggressive side of Cubism behind him, he has painted a relaxed domestic portrait.

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