

Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site

Presenting Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site



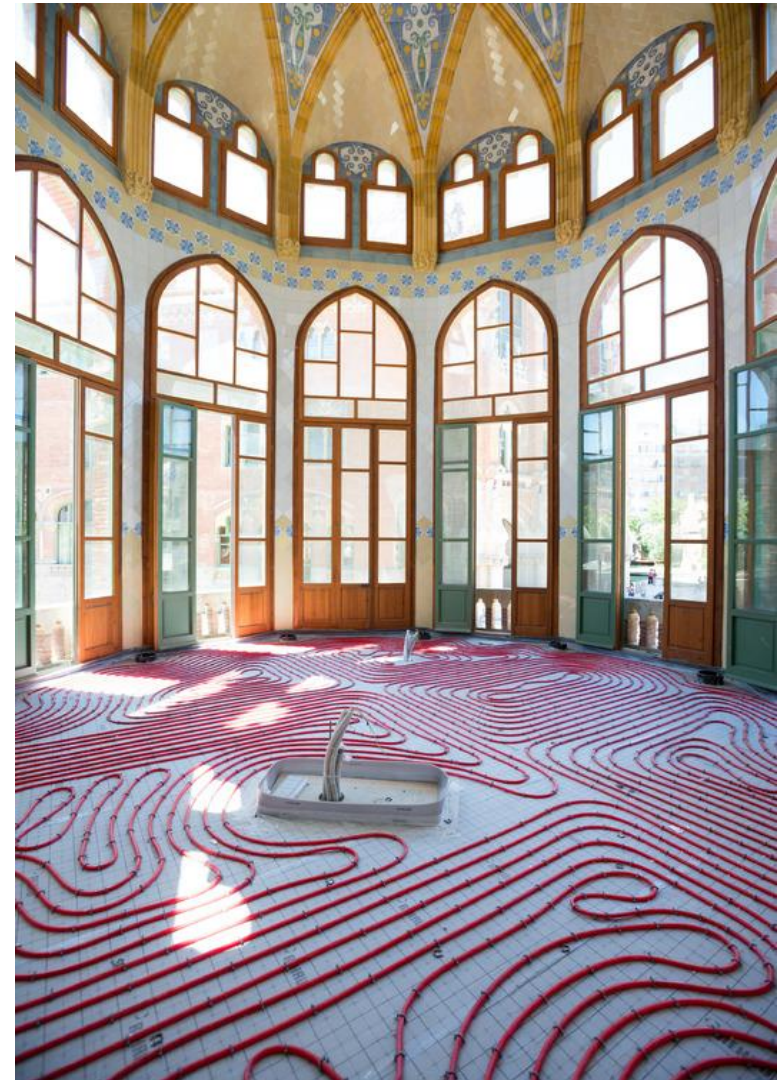
unesco
World Heritage Site

Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site: a sustainable heritage space

After serving for a hundred years as the premises of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, in 2009, once all healthcare services were transferred to the new hospital, an extensive restoration project was undertaken to recover the heritage and artistic value of Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, created by the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

Recognized for the uniqueness of its architecture and artistic splendor, the historical complex of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. Conceived as a garden city, it was built between 1902 and 1923 and consists of twelve Art Nouveau pavilions, one kilometer of underground tunnels linking the buildings, and gardens that contain forty different species of trees.

Following its rehabilitation, the Art Nouveau Site has become a landmark of Barcelona, where history and innovation coexist. Alongside its role as a showcase of architectural and cultural heritage, Sant Pau now hosts several prestigious institutions active in fields such as sustainability, health, education, and beyond.



From La Santa Creu to Sant Pau

The origins of the Hospital date back to 1401, when the six existing hospitals in Barcelona at the time were merged into a single institution: the Hospital de la Santa Creu, located in the Raval district in a building that today houses the National Library of Catalonia. By the late 19th century, this facility was in a state of decline, its infrastructure obsolete, and the need for a new hospital had become urgent.

In 1896, the Catalan banker Pau Gil passed away in Paris. In his will, he bequeathed half of his fortune for the creation of a civil hospital in Barcelona, to be dedicated to Saint Paul.

Following a period of negotiations, the administrators of La Santa Creu — the Most Illustrious Administration — and the executors of Pau Gil's estate reached an agreement to construct the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau. The chosen site, located within the boundaries of Ronda Guinardó, Carrer de Sant Antoni Maria Claret, Carrer de Cartagena, and Carrer de Sant Quintí, covered an area equivalent to nine blocks of the Eixample.



A pioneering hospital

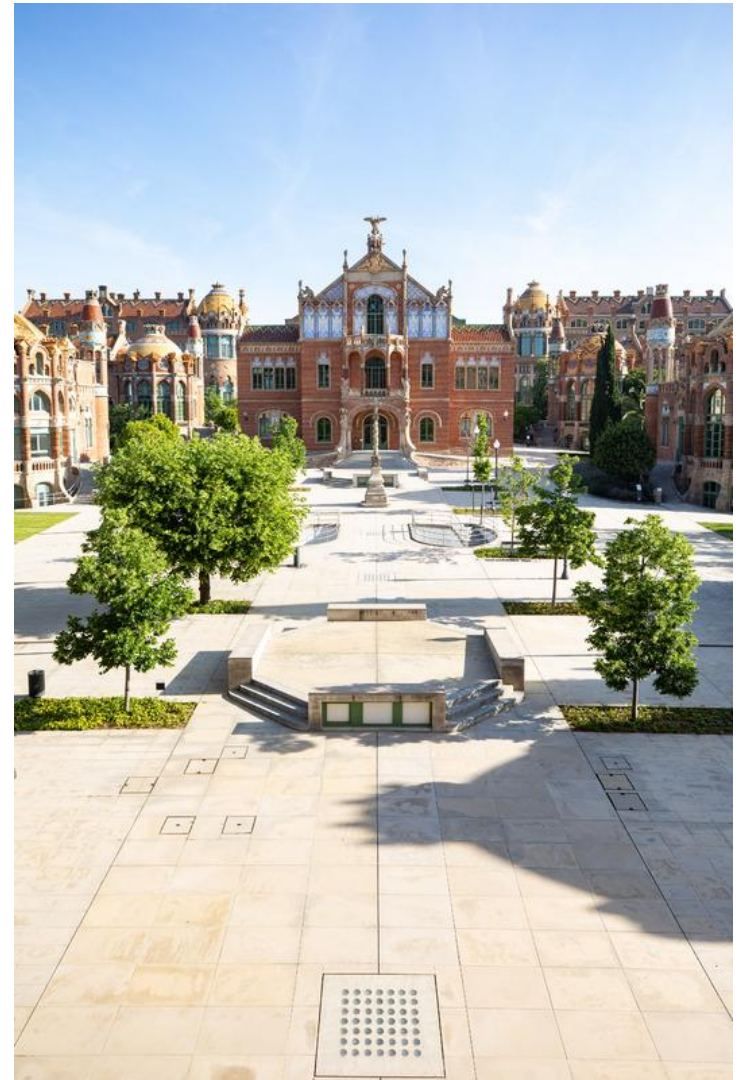
The project was entrusted to the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, a central figure of Modernisme — Catalan Art Nouveau — and the creator of iconic works such as the Palau de la Música, Casa Fuster and Casa Lleó-Morera.

In his will, Pau Gil stipulated that the new hospital should be conceived in the spirit of Europe's most advanced medical centers. To this end, Domènech travelled through France and Switzerland to study the latest innovations in healthcare architecture, influenced by the hygienist movements of the early 20th century.

The result was a design of 48 independent pavilions — though not all were built — linked by an underground network of tunnels that allowed for the distribution of supplies, food and medicine.

Like its predecessor in the Raval, the new Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau was intended for the poor. Domènech designed it with one guiding principle: the wellbeing of the patients. To appreciate the impact, one must consider the contrast between the cramped Gothic buildings in the old town of Barcelona and the new hospital, located outside the city and surrounded by countryside.

With its natural light, ventilation and carefully decorated wards, the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau became a unique institution worldwide — a pioneering model of hospital design that placed open space, air circulation and natural light at the heart of patient care.



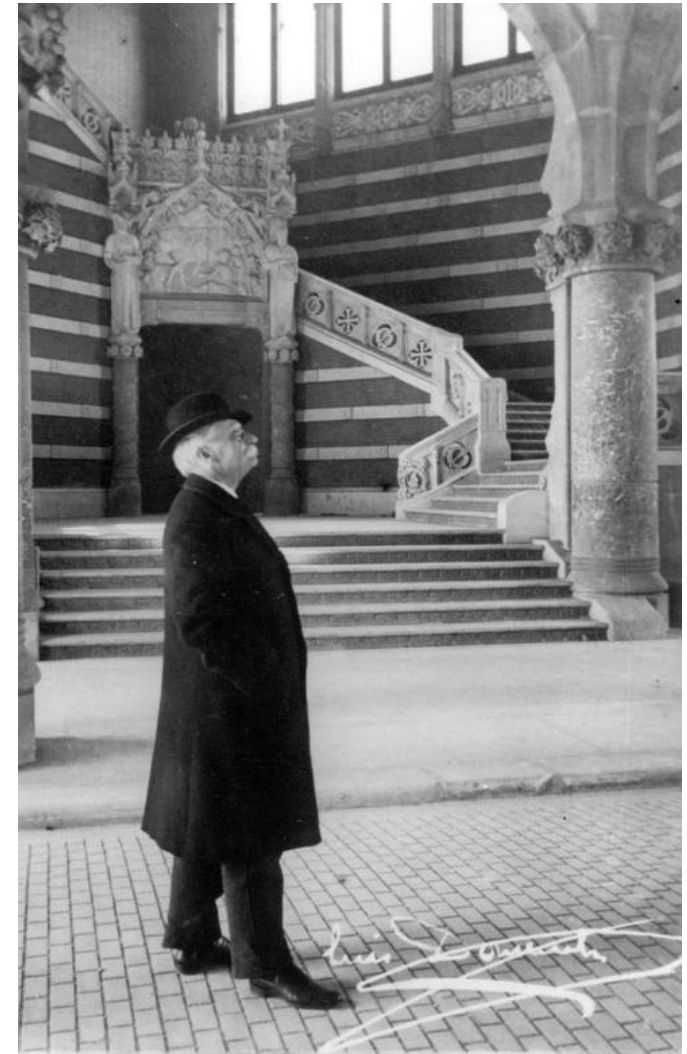
Lluís Domènech i Montaner, the total architect

Lluís Domènech i Montaner was born in Barcelona on 27 December 1849 into an enlightened and prosperous family. His father, Pere Domènech i Saló, was a renowned bookbinder, while his mother, Maria Montaner i Vila, came from an old noble family in Canet de Mar, a town in the Maresme with which he maintained a lifelong connection.

After completing his studies in Madrid, his father passed away, and in 1873 he returned to Barcelona to assist with the family's bookbinding business. In 1875 he began teaching as a temporary lecturer at the Barcelona School of Architecture, where he remained until 1920. Over fifty years, he combined his architectural practice with active participation in social, cultural, and political life.

Towards the end of his life, diagnosed with stomach cancer and disillusioned with politics and some colleagues, he delegated much of his work to his son, Pere Domènech i Roura, who completed the Art Nouveau hospital after his death in 1923, and to his son-in-law, Francesc Guàrdia i Vidal. He devoted his last years to historical studies and, above all, to heraldry.

His architectural work ranged from urban projects to monumental complexes and smaller commissions, always carried out in collaboration with a network of technicians, artisans, and industrial manufacturers, whose expertise helped shape his vision of the total artwork.

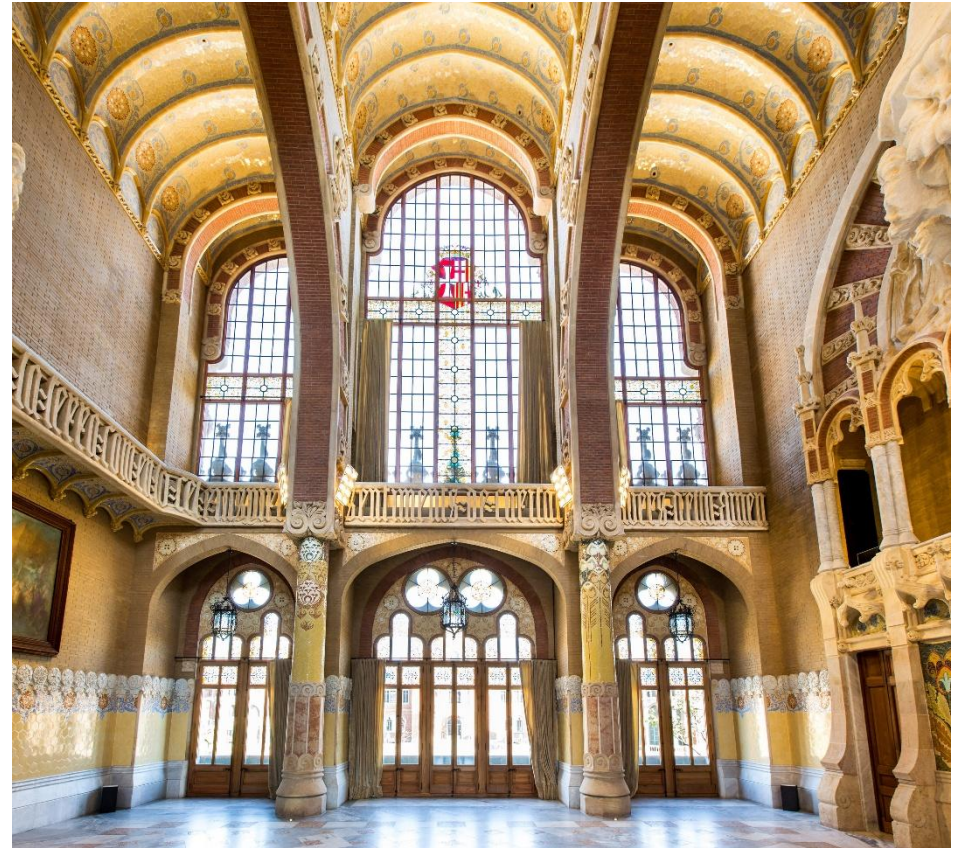


The old Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau in Catalan Modernism

Domènech i Montaner was one of the foremost promoters of Modernism in Catalonia, and the former Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau is considered his masterpiece.

Art Nouveau was an artistic movement that arose in Europe at the end of the 19th century and took on different characteristics in each country. In Catalonia, it developed as both a political and cultural movement, seeking to create a culture that was simultaneously modern, cosmopolitan, and rooted in national identity.

The movement is especially notable for the excellence of its architecture, which was conceived as a total artwork, integrating a wide variety of applied and decorative arts such as ceramics, stained glass, wrought iron, furniture, and hydraulic tile flooring. Traditional crafts were revived and combined with materials from modern industry. At the same time, new construction technologies and innovative materials such as cast iron were introduced, alongside traditional techniques like the timbrel or Catalan vault, giving equal importance to functionality and to aesthetic value.



Information and bookings

Recinte Modernista de Sant Pau
Sant Antoni Maria Claret, 167
08025 Barcelona
visites@fundaciosantpau.cat
T. 93 511 78 76

More information

<https://santpaubarcelona.org/>



Fundació
Privada Hospital
de la Santa Creu i
Sant Pau