During the years after the September Revolution of 1868, Barcelona experienced tremendous industrial growth and emerged as the most politically and culturally progressive city in Spain. Barcelona and Modernity examines this remarkable seventy-one-year period, when Barcelona also reigned as one of the most dynamic centers of modernist art and architecture in Europe. Focusing on the Catalan Renaixença, Modernisme, Noucentisme, avant-garde movements of the early 20th century, and artistic reactions to the Spanish Civil War, essays by an extraordinary international team of scholars offer new insights into the work of such Catalan artists as Antoni Gaudí, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, and Salvador Dalí, among others, by setting them in context with the art of their teachers, colleagues, and rivals.

With approximately 350 works in a variety of media—painting, sculpture, photography, furniture, decorative arts, and architectural design—this intriguing book also explores how Catalan artists derived inspiration from local traditions while contributing their own innovations to international modernism. Broader in scope than any previous treatment of the subject, this book is sure to alter popular perceptions of Catalonia and become a fundamental text for years to come.

My Personal Review:
The catalogue for an exhibition held at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2006 and at the Met in NY in 2007, this book is beautifully illustrated and very well written. It is a treasure trove of information on the history of Barcelona and enables the reader to discover some great and overlooked
artists like the painters Ramon Casas (a sort of Spanish Manet) and Santiago Rusiñol, or the architect and designer Josep Puig i Cadafalch and many others, responsible for the intellectual growth of this city between 1868 (the September Revolution) and 1939 (the power seizure by Franco), which is the period the exhibition covers. Obviously, the most famous personalities are not forgotten (Picasso, Miro, Dali and Gaudi whose names appear on the front cover).

Now, the organization of the book is somewhat confusing. Divided into 9 chapters, from the Rebirth (Renaixença) in the late 1860s to Modernism (seen through painting, sculpture, graphic arts, society, architecture and design) and Noucentisme (the classical renewal) up to the Avant-Gardes and the Civil War in the late 1930s, it follows a more or less chronological logic. However, the checklist of the artists, at the end of the book, is very confusing: it is very difficult to know the location of the paintings or works of art illustrated and you constantly have to refer to that list to have the dimensions of the works. Instead of a list by artists, I think a list by works displayed in the exhibition and illustrated in the book would have been more suitable.

On the whole, a scholarly publication, but a little difficult to follow.

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