



English

Museum of Garrotxa

The Regional Museum of Garrotxa was founded in 1893 and is currently located on the third floor of the Olot Hospice. The Museum is the people of Olot have entrusted with managing the important and varied cultural heritage of the city. **The Museum's mission is to explain and publicise the artistic heritage of the social and industrial history of the Garrotxa region.**

The backbone of the museum is the Olot School of Drawing, founded in 1783, and its subsequent history, which includes prominent artists and artistic trends. These include the Olot school of landscape painting, featuring artists such as Joaquim Vayreda, Marià Vayreda and Josep Berga i Boix, Modernisme with artists such as Miquel Blay, and the notable painting "La càrrega" (The charge) by Ramon Casas, and the Noucentisme movement, with artists such as Josep Clarà and Francesc Vayreda.

The permanent exhibition rooms are complemented with regularly scheduled temporary exhibitions, which cover different themes related to the region.

The Olot school: Joaquim and Marià Vayreda and Josep Berga i Boix

In the second half of the 19th century in Catalonia, the rise and proliferation of painting coincided with the period of the Spanish restoration. Marked by economic prosperity, this period favoured the middle class, who in turn drove forward cultural Renaissance and Catalan nationalism. The middle class wanted realistic art, but which was also appealing, elegant and optimistic.

At the time there were several art schools in Catalonia, the most prominent of which was the Olot school. It was Catalan landscape painting school, with similarities to the Barbizon school. Joaquim Vayreda started the school, and he popularised the landscape surrounding Olot and attracted the attention of artists from elsewhere, such as Rusiñol and Ramon Casas.

The school was successful thanks to the teaching practices of the painter Josep Berga i Boix, who reinstated the tradition of students painted outside. Some of the best students include his son Josep Berga i Boada, Miquel Blay, Josep Clarà and Melció Domenge.

Marià Vayreda is the third component of the school Olot. Despite being better known as a writer and journalist, he was also a talented painter.

The Museum exhibits some of the most famous works by these artists, as well as paintings by other artists who were captivated by the countryside surrounding Olot.

Modernisme: Miquel Blay and "La càrrega" by Ramon Casas

As an institution the Museum has received important donations from artists and Olot locals, which has created what is, in many ways, a unique collection.

Miquel Blay is the most important sculptor from this period. He studied in Olot and Paris, and created works that fit into Modernisme, and perhaps lean towards Naturalism. The details on his sculptures show great virtuosity and expressiveness.

In the early 20th century the Olot businessman Manuel Malagrida donated the winning posters for two competitions that he held in Argentina to announce his brand of tobacco, called "Cigarrillos París". This allows us to display a set of original Modernist posters from 1900 and 1901, by outstanding Catalan artists such as Ramon Casas, Xavier Gosé, along with many other examples from all over Europe and Argentina.

To illustrate this Modernist period, the Museum features an important work of Catalan art: "La càrrega" (The charge, 1899-1903), by Ramon Casas. This large painting with a strong dramatic theme is reminiscent of the turn of the century changes and social tensions linked to industrialisation. The Olot artist Josep Berga Olot, sculptor, illustrator and painter, also worked in the same period.

"Noucentisme": Josep Clarà and Francesc Vayreda

The Noucentisme movement was one of the most important in the early 20th century. Architecture, literature and art were seduced by the aesthetic rigour and harmony normally found in classical Greek art.

The Olot sculptor Josep Clarà was one of the key exponents of Noucentisme in 20th century Catalonia. He began his career under the tutelage of Josep Berga i Boix, before leaving to continue his education in France. After a brief foray into Modernisme, under the influence of Rodin, he discovered the aesthetics, balance and serenity of classical Greek art through Arístides Maillol.

Other notable artists from this period include Francesc Vayreda, son of Joaquim Vayreda. Francesc rejected his father's influence in search of his own artistic language, fed by Impressionism and consolidated in Noucentisme.

The Olot School of Landscape Painting and the post-war period

During the two decades before the Civil War, work by the painters Melció Domenge, Enric Galwey and Lu Pascual was very influential in Olot. Their presence was another factor that helped identify a specific type of landscape with a defined style of landscape painting. This explains the reason why, when the Republican Regional Government restructured the artistic education system, it decided to found the Olot School of Landscape Painting. The school was, however, short-lived; it opened in 1934 and was closed permanently in February 1939. Notable teachers from this period include Lu Pascual and Xavier Nogués.

After the war, in 1942, the school was restructured to create the Olot School of Fine Arts and Crafts. The post-war period saw a return to the roots of Olot landscape painting, although a number of artists open to outside influences began to develop a more individual aesthetic. One of the most notable artists is Leonci Quera, an excellent painter and sculptor who died prematurely in a car accident aged 37. Quera left an important body of work to the Museum, progressing from a figurative to a more abstract style, and marked by austere, impulsive and vibrant qualities of the iron he worked with.