

Spain: Islamic and European Influences in Spanish Art

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Introduction

As a result of both Islamic and Christian invaders fine arts in Spain have been fashioned by both Christian and Islamic influences. However, these styles are not found in their pure form but instead are reinterpreted in a distinctly Spanish manner*. This Spanish quality becomes more pronounced with the rise of nationalism in the 19th century, producing a number of highly influential and individual Spanish artists.

Chapter 1: The Fusion of Moorish Culture into Architecture and the Decorative Arts

Spain has a history of invaders, where the arts are concerned the most influential of these invaders were those who brought the Islamic traditions to the region.

By the 11th century Spain had been under Islamic rule for over 800 years and was beginning to lose its grip over its northern territories to the power of unifying Christian forces. Despite this the early era of Spain was a time of peace where Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together amicably. This is reflected in the art and architecture of the period which demonstrates a fusion of Islamic and Christian traditions. The early signs of this fusion can be seen in the Mozarabic art of Spain, which demonstrate the Islamic influences that culminated in the 11th century under Moorish rule.

Mozarabic

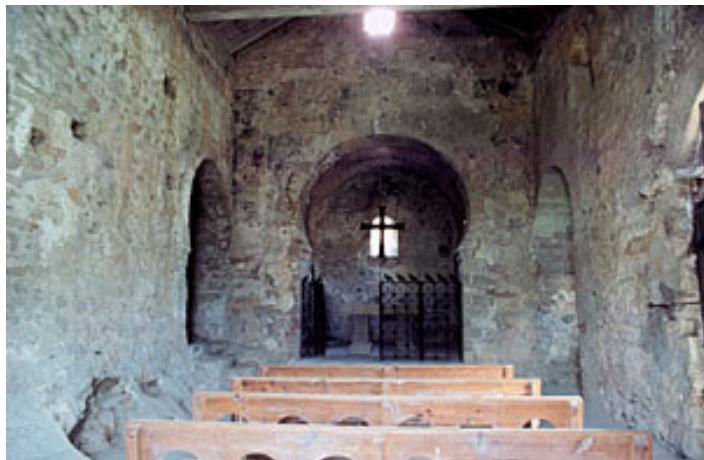
The earliest synthesising of Christian and Islamic art in Spain can be seen in art and architecture from the Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus, known as the Mozarabs. The Christians in this Muslim conquered territory (under Muslim rule from 711 to the end of the 11th century) had adopted some Arab customs while preserving their religion and some ecclesiastical and judicial autonomy.

The principal characteristics that define Mozarabic architecture are the following; Absence or sobriety of exterior decoration; diversity in the floor plans; use of the horseshoe arch in the Islamic style - very tight and with the slope being two-thirds of the radius; use of the alfiz; use of the column as support, crowned by a Corinthian capital decorated with very stylized vegetable elements; and eaves that extend outwards.

An example of Mozarabic art and architecture can be seen in the Sant Quirze de Pedret in Catalonia, Barcelona:



Interior View: View of Mural in South Apse (Apse of the Gospel) - Four Apostles. Created 1075-1100

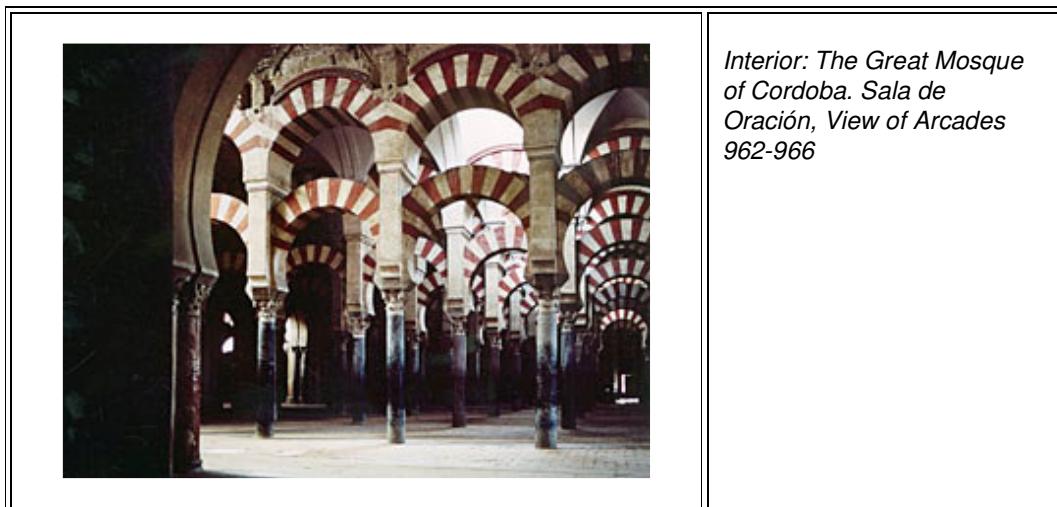


*Interior View.
Constructed 800-900*

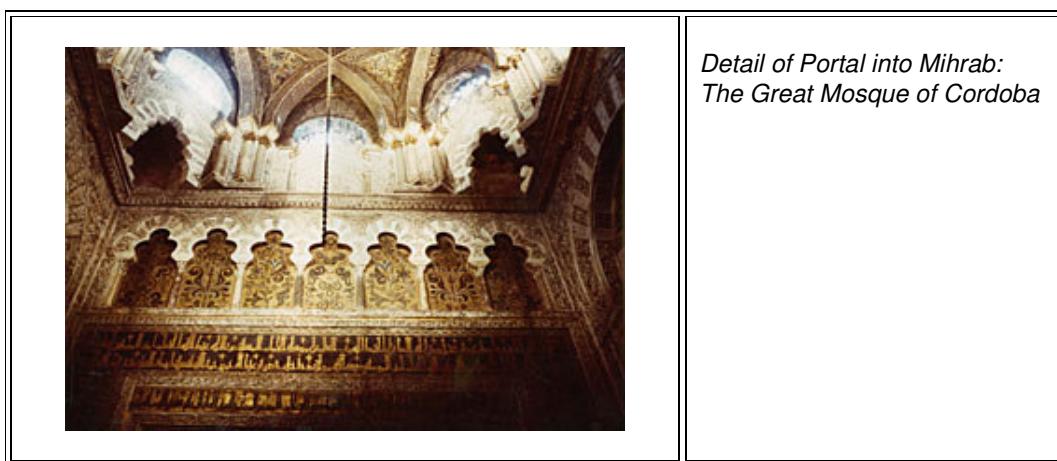
Moorish Influence

By the 11th century Islamic influences had become much more dominant in Spanish art and architecture. Moorish architecture developed as Islamic civilisations came into contact with traditions such as those as Berber, Greco-Roman and Visigothic. The art form looked backwards to masterpieces created during the golden age of Islamic rule, drawing on traditional methods, materials and forms. This is seen in architectural decoration, calligraphy and the decorative arts*. Al-Andalus became a great cultural centre for the arts as well as universities

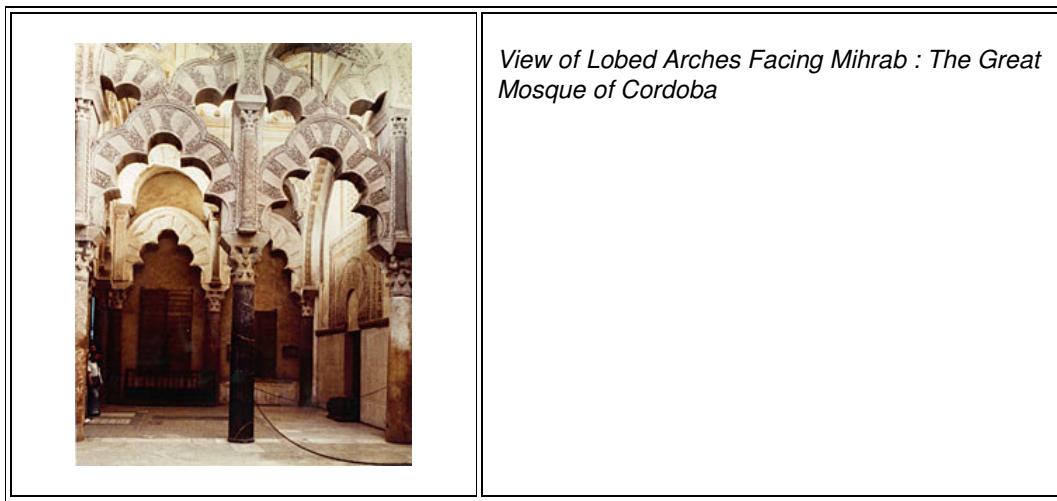
and teachings, philosophies and sciences still unknown to Christendom. The most important examples of architecture of this period include the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the city of Medina Azahara:



Interior: The Great Mosque of Cordoba. Sala de Oración, View of Arcades 962-966



Detail of Portal into Mihrab: The Great Mosque of Cordoba

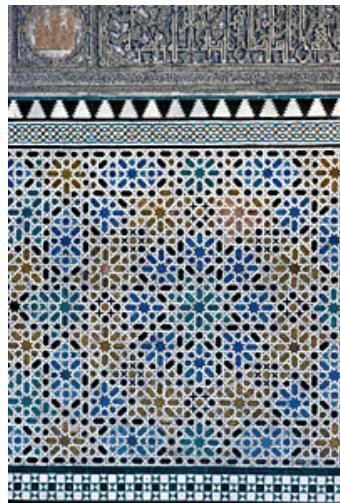


View of Lobed Arches Facing Mihrab : The Great Mosque of Cordoba

By the end of the 11th century influences from the Magrhebi entered the artworks produced. The most pre-eminent style that resulted from the peace fusion of cultures and religions was the Mudéjar Style, which developed in the 12th century. The distinctive features of this style included, complex Islamic geometric patterns, tiles, brickwork and ornamental metals. Many of these features continue to be present in Spanish architecture.



*Detail of Wood Ceiling:
Alcázar 1364-1366
Andalusia.
Seville*

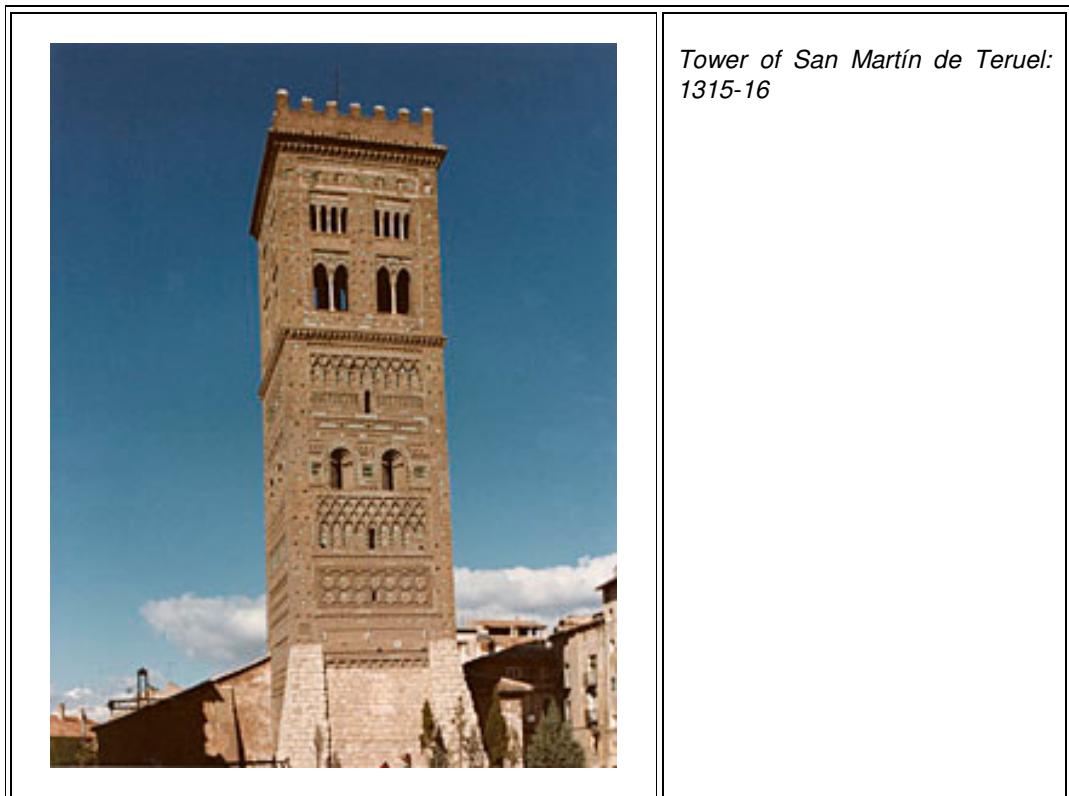


*Detail of Tile work: Alcázar 1364-1366 Andalusia.
Seville*

In particular the geometry dominant in Islamic art was reworked into tiles, woodcarvings and brickwork as well as ornamental metals. Some of the most distinctive features of this style were its use of brick and the complicated tiling patterns unsurpassable in its sophistication for the time.

The Mudéjar Style continued to reinterpret western styles throughout the 13th century, fusing the Gothic with Muslim styles. One of the clearest and most important examples of this can be

seen in the numerous imposing Mudéjar towers which were erected in the city of Teruel, including the tower of the church of La Merced, the tower of San Martín (1315), the tower of the church of San Pedro (14th C.), the tower of the church of El Salvador (12th-13th C.) and the towers of the Teruel cathedral. The square towers clearly display the characteristic glazed brick architecture and the decorative green and black azulejos (ceramic tile-work) of the Mudéjar Style*.



*Tower of San Martín de Teruel:
1315-16*



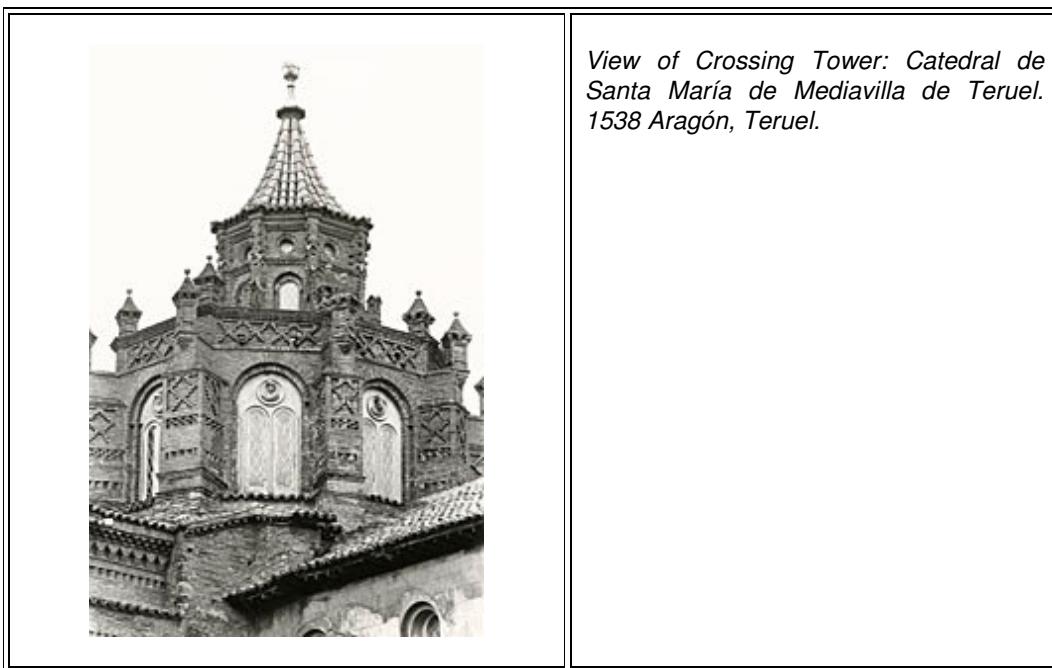
Detail of Tower



Catedral de Santa
María de
Mediavilla de
Teruel: Detail of
Wood Ceiling.
1257-1350



Catedral de Santa María de
Mediavilla de Teruel: Interior
view of nave

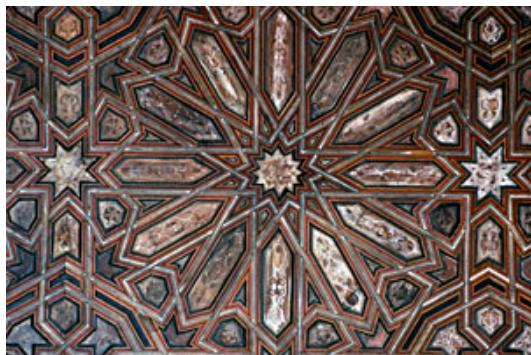


*View of Crossing Tower: Catedral de Santa María de Mediavilla de Teruel.
1538 Aragón, Teruel.*

By the 14th century the peaceful and amicable relationship between religions ended along with Islamic rule, and Jews and Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity or leave Spain. The Alhambra Palace, which was founded during this period, stands as one of the last, and most famous, Islamic monuments erected in Spain. The palace, originally conceived as a fortress, served as the palace for the last Islamic ruler on the Iberian peninsula. A refuge for both artists and intellectuals during the last days of Islamic rule the palace is a reflection of the previous 800 years of Islamic rule, displaying all the typical stylistic qualities that had developed over the centuries such as the Calliphal horse-shoe arch and the Almohad sebka, and infused with novelties such as stilted arches and the stylised column capitals (muqarnas). Likewise the decorations which covered the palace walls and ceilings were typical of what had developed of the Moorish style including calligraphy and complex geometric patterns (arabesques).



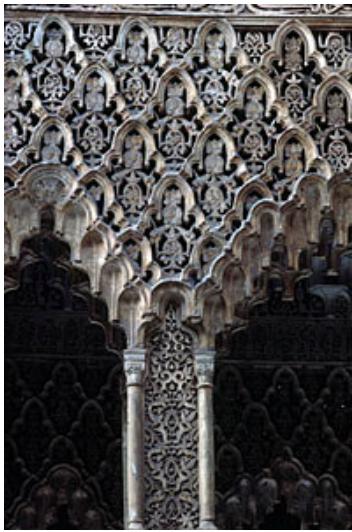
*Interior: Los Baños (Baths),
View of Sala Templada
(Tepidarium, or
Warm Water Room)*



Sala de la Barca (Hall of the Boat),
Detail of Wood Ceiling

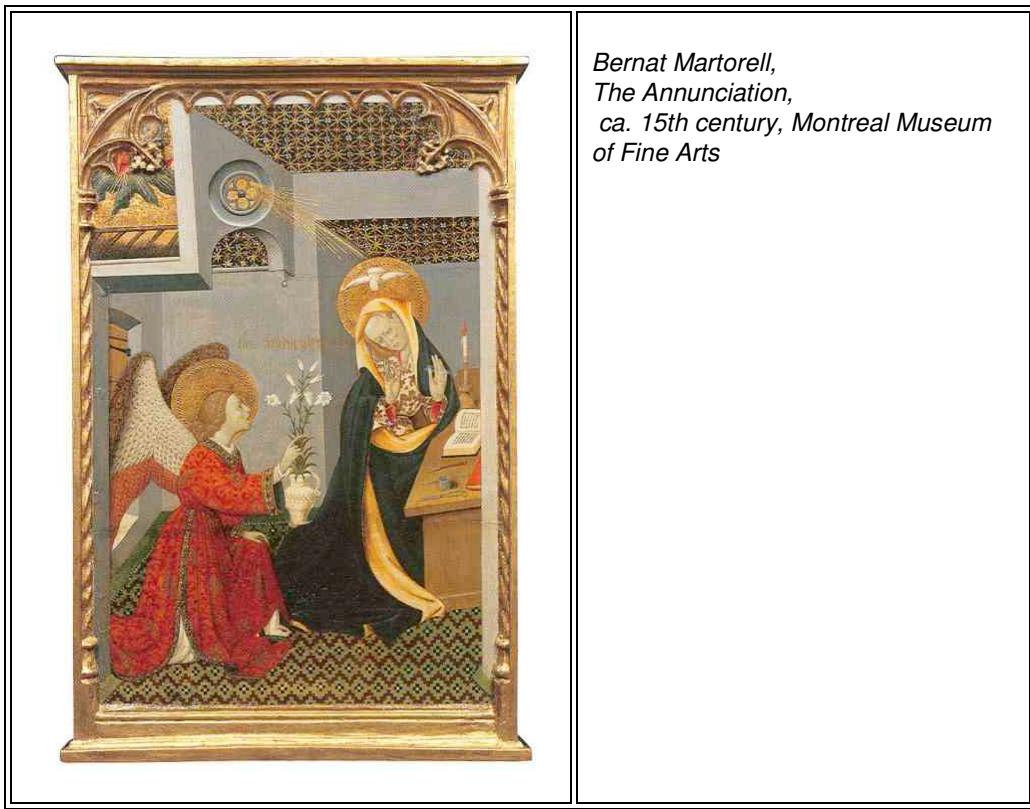


Exterior: Patio de los Leones
(Courtyard of the Lions), View of
Courtyard 1377-1391



Exterior: Patio de los Leones (Courtyard of the Lions), Detail of Arcade 1377-1391

Although these were the final examples of large Moorish structures to be constructed in Spain, the influence of Islamic design continued to surface in artworks such as the Gothic works of Bernatt Martorell. *The Annunciation* for example displays the distinct geometric patterned ceiling and floor characteristic in Mudéjar architecture:



*Bernat Martorell,
The Annunciation,
ca. 15th century, Montreal Museum
of Fine Arts*

Chapter 2: The Fusion of European Arts

As Christian influence and power spread through Spain so too did the influence of the European arts on the production of arts in Spain. This is first predominantly seen with the influence of the Romanesque in Christian dominated northern Spain and particularly in the region of Cataluña and the school of manuscript illuminators at the Court of Alfonso X of Castile (1252-82), which demonstrate influence of the early French Gothic. The predominance of European art styles grew with the Flemish influence in Catalonia, and finally, as Spain became unified into a Christian Kingdom, the full effects of the Renaissance and the Baroque were seen as Spain entered its Siglo de Oro (golden age) of art production. After this point Spanish artists themselves became more influential on the European arts scene. Although largely acting abroad, it is the works of these modern 20th century Spanish artists who give momentum to the modernist movement.

The Romanesque

In the 11th century many of the forms developed by the Romanesque schools of the south of France were adopted for Spanish churches on the pilgrimage route from France to Santiago de Compostela. Typical examples include the collegiate Church of San Isidoro at León (11th cent.), the Old Cathedral at Salamanca (begun in 1140), and the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela (11th-12th century), one of the most popular pilgrimage churches of the period and the most grandiose of the Spanish Romanesque buildings. Subsequent remodelling has obscured its original appearance*.



*Exterior: View of South Transept Portal
(Puerta del Perdón), Church of San
Isidoro at León 1125-1175*



*Exterior: View of South Portal
(Puerta de las Platerías) 1077-1211
Santiago de Compostela*



Exterior: West Façade (Portico de la Gloria), Central Portal, North Section, Jambs - Prophet

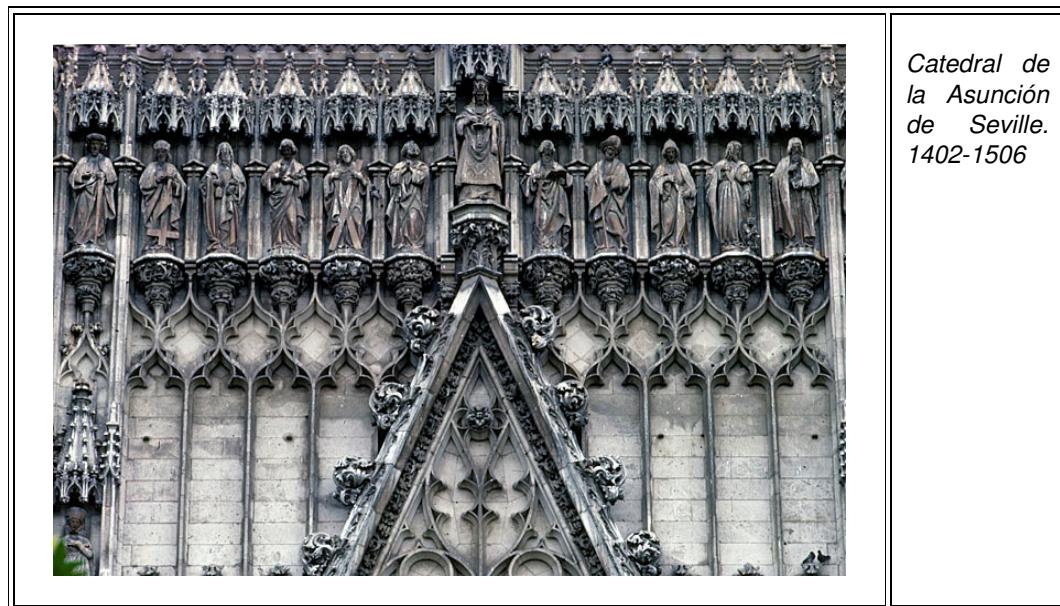
Northern Spain also produced some of the most splendid Romanesque wall paintings particularly in the region of Cataluña. The spread of the Romanesque style brought Spain into more mainstream European development. This is most dynamically expressed in the colourful church frescos*. Spanish artists favoured formal symmetrical and hieratic compositions and strong, barely modulated colours. The human form and the stiff, banded drapery that encases it became more idealised and abstracted than in other European painting of the time. At their finest, these works possess a hypnotic spiritual power.



Interior: View of Apse with Majestas Domini Fresco. Sant Climent de Taüll. 1123

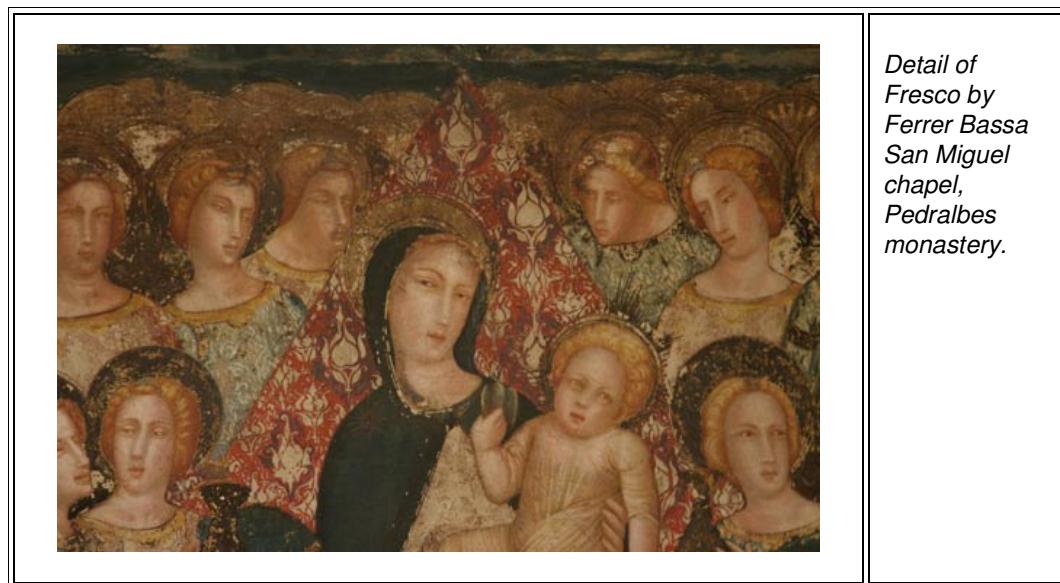
The Gothic

With the end of Islamic rule in the 14th century the Gothic style began to flourish in Spain. Fully Gothic buildings were erected based on the European style, such as Catedral de la Asunción de Seville:



*Catedral de
la Asunción
de Sevilla.
1402-1506*

The work of Ferrer Bassa is particularly important, making him Spain's first great identifiable painter and leading to his founding of the Catalan school of art:



*Detail of
Fresco by
Ferrer Bassa
San Miguel
chapel,
Pedralbes
monastery.*

The Gothic style was present in Eastern Spain until the middle of the 15th century, demonstrated in the works of Bernat Martorell and the Master of Arguis in Barcelona and Valencia.

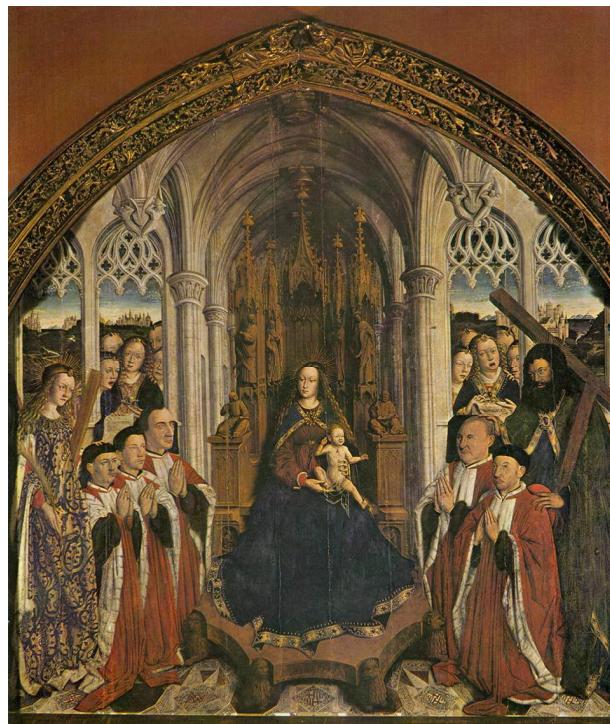


Bernat
Martorell
*The
Nativity
(detail)*
1440s
Collection
Lippmann,
Berlin
(image
from the
Web
Gallery of
Art)

The most recognised western influence which crept into Spanish art at this time is the Hispano-Flemish style which flourished throughout the century.

The work of Flemish painter Van Eyck heavily influenced the paintings of Luis Dalmau. Meanwhile in Castile the taste for northern art was spreading as Flemish art was imported by the court and works were sold at the fairs of Medina del Campo.

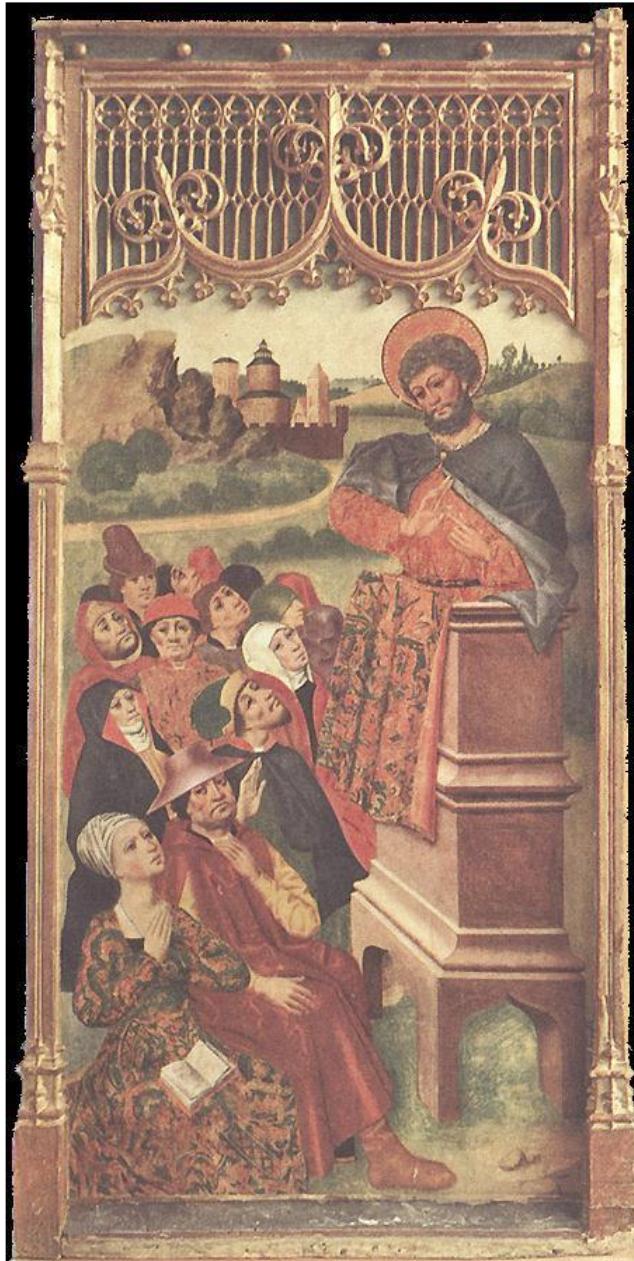
Local workshops adapted to this influx as is demonstrated in the works of Jorge Inglés (active 1450) and later Fernando Gallego (Salamanca).



Luis Dalmau Altarpiece of the Councillors, 1445



Fernando Gallego, Pietà



Jorge Ingles Saint
Preaching 1455

By the 16th Century the Renaissance brought the influences of Italy. This was a golden age or Siglo de Oro particularly in Spanish paintings and sculptures, many of which were produced for the ever-strengthening Church. Preeminent painters of this period include the first pronounced national character of Spanish art, Luis de Morales*. Dubbed 'the Divine Morales,' due to both the spirituality and realism found in his work, his predominantly religious works were influenced by Italian painters such as Raphael and Leonardo.



Luis de Morales, *Virgin and Child with the Infant St John the Baptist*, c. 1550

Towards the end of the 16th century El Greco's dramatic and expressive mannerist paintings combined western styles with Byzantine traditions. A Greek who was trained in Italy El Greco settled in Toledo in 1577 where his works were highly regarded. Outside Toledo El Greco's works fell under criticism during and in the years after his lifetime and it is only in the 20th century that they have become fully appreciated.



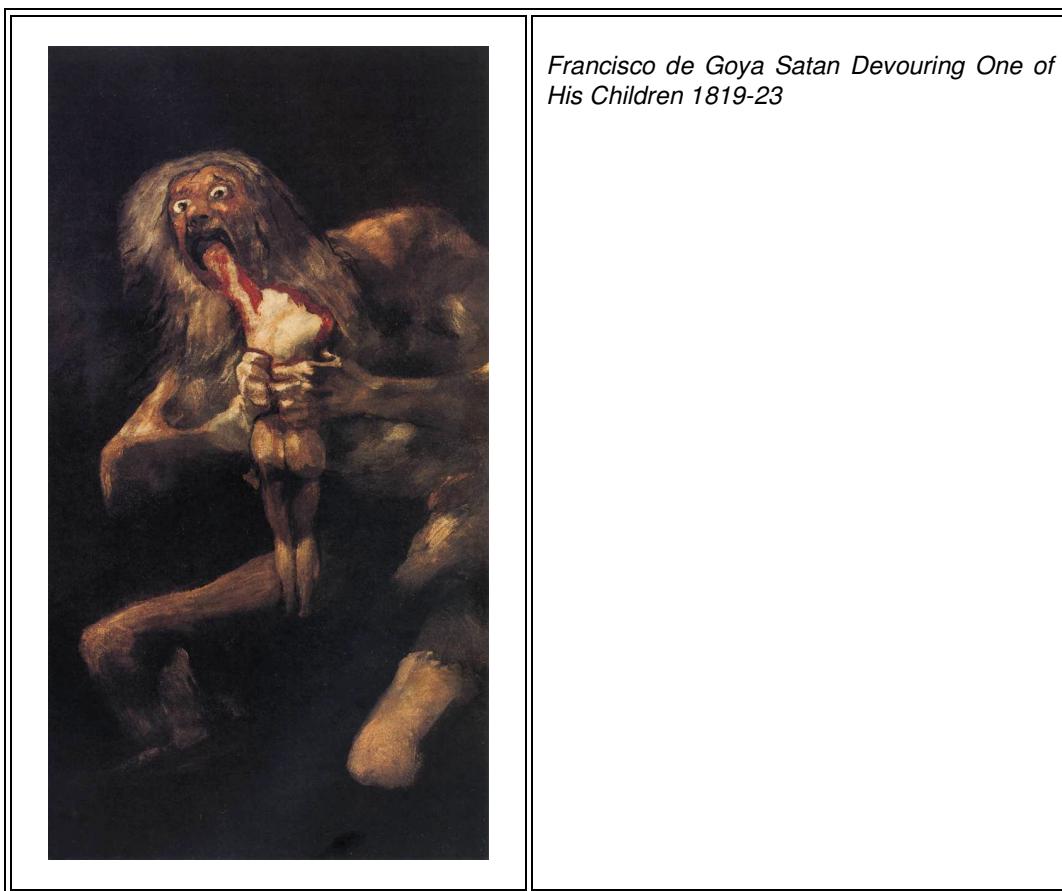
El Greco, *Altarpiece*. 1579-99

Spanish artists continued to be influenced by Italy such as Valencia based artist Francisco Ribalta (c. 1565-1628), who adapted the Italian style to produce a highly Spanish nationalistic quality, and the work of José de Ribera who heavily admired Caravaggio. Ribera however remained unique from other Spanish painters in his depiction of mythological scenes. Further Spanish adaption of the Italian, and particularly Caravaggio, schools of art can be seen in the pious images produced by Francisco de Zurbarán and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. The most obviously Baroque style work produced in Spain during this period was that of Juan Valdés Leal (1622-1690) most notably in his *Allegory of Death**

The introduction of foreign artists into the courts of the Bourbon Dynasty led to a waning of the regional development of Spanish art. The most apparent effects of this influence can be seen in the French and Italian influences on the ornate Bourbon architecture of Madrid, such as at the Royal Palace designed by Italian architects Juvarra and Giambattista Sacchetti*.

Chapter 3: Spanish Individualism

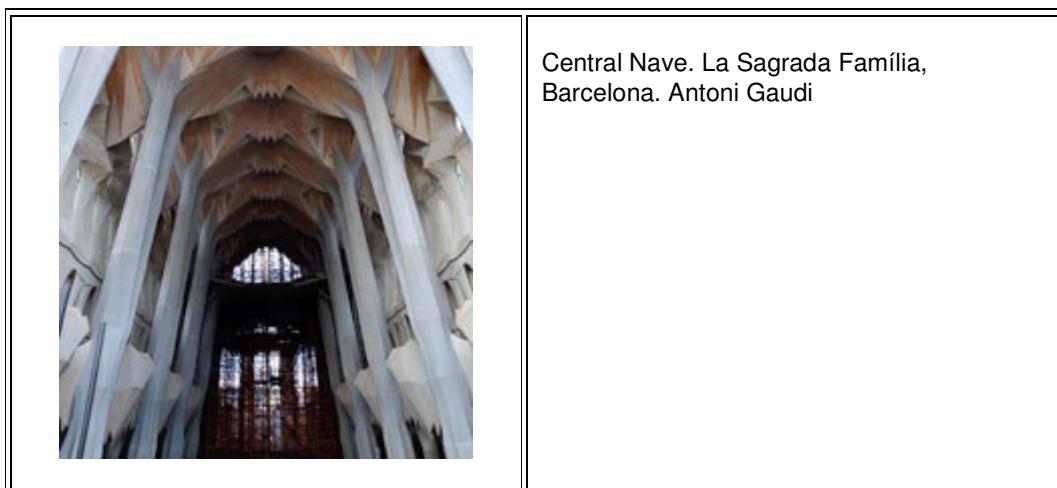
Despite the heavy influences of various invaders over the centuries, Spanish art has largely adopted styles in a uniquely Spanish way. However it is not until the 18th century that Spain begins to produce personal and independent Spanish works. Spanish individualism was reawakened in the work of Francisco Goya (1746-1828). Both a painter and printmaker his work demonstrates the first signs of expressionism. His deeply subjective depictions of internal emotion made him instrumental in the future Spanish modern artworks such as those of Picasso.



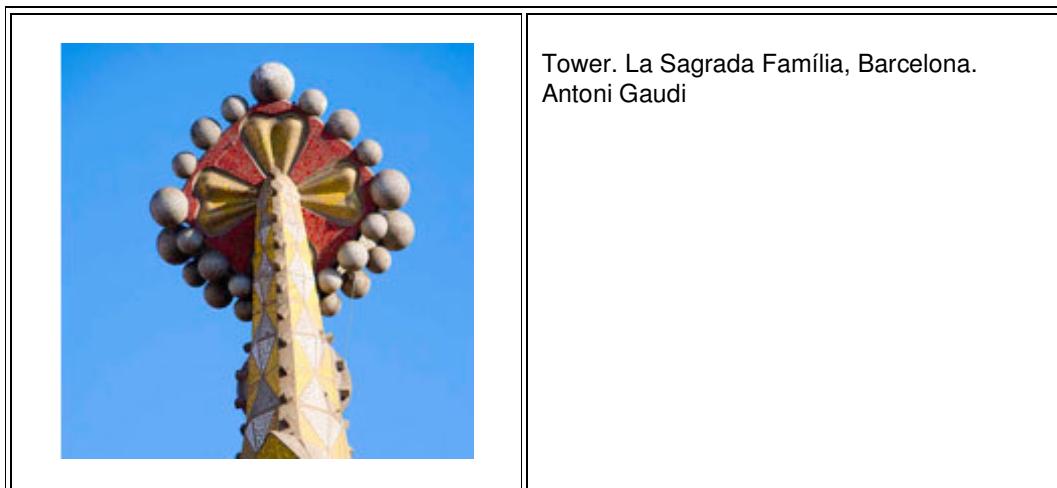
Francisco de Goya *Satan Devouring One of His Children* 1819-23

In the climate of 19th century nationalism Spain developed fine art systems free from monastic and religious powers, and a new class of patrons evolved alongside the notion of the production of art for art's sake. In this atmosphere Romanticism and the Industrial Revolution left its mark in Spanish works, and social and material changes created momentous progression in the artistic development of many Spanish regions. Some of the more experimental of these artists, influenced by Goya, led them towards similar work to that of the Impressionists*. The most famous works of this period were created by Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida whose paintings hold elements of Romanticism, concentrated in his depiction of landscapes, social and historical themes. Another important artist is Mariano Fortuny (1838-1874) whose pictures hold both elements of the Romantic interest with Orientalist themes and brushwork similar to the style that the Impressionists would later develop.

By the end of the 19th century the work of sculptor and architect Antoni Gaudí was likewise pushing the boundaries of Spanish art. His almost hallucinogenic structures pushed a brave new style of Modernism into Spain. As with previous Spanish art Gaudí's work can be seen as a fusion of European influences with those of local traditions, in particular those of the Gothic and traditional Catalan models. It was however the injection of his own unique style into this fusion which created buildings such as La Sagrada Família, a building which physically altered the city of Barcelona endowing it as the centre for modern architecture in Spain.



Central Nave. La Sagrada Família,
Barcelona. Antoni Gaudí



Tower. La Sagrada Família, Barcelona.
Antoni Gaudí



Inside Towers. La Sagrada Família, Barcelona. Antoni Gaudí



Stained Glass. La Sagrada Família, Barcelona. Antoni Gaudí



La Sagrada Família,
Barcelona. Antoni
Gaudí

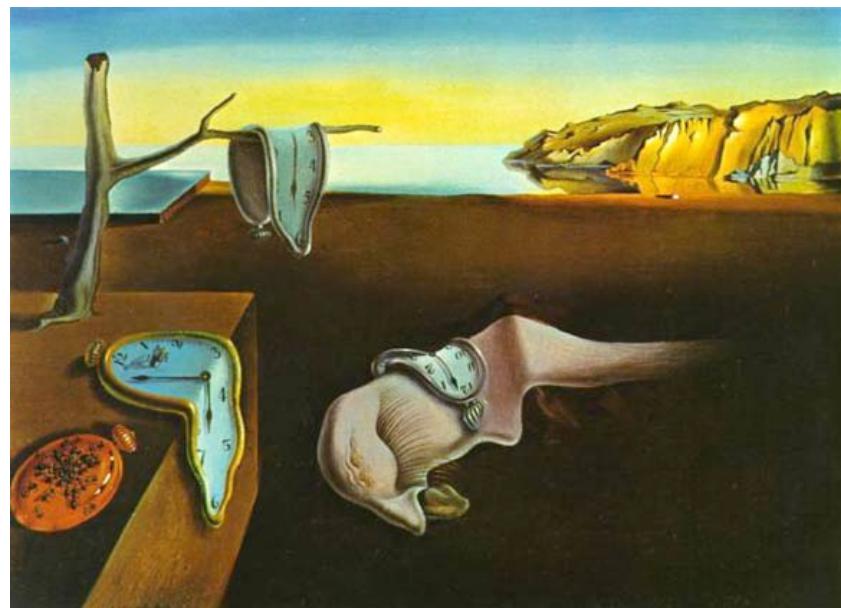
The Spanish Civil War and the oppressive dictatorship which followed meant that early 20th century Spain suffered a long period of political and economic isolation. Spanish artwork on the other hand was becoming an important force in European art, producing some of the most important figures of the century, namely the cubists Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris and the surrealists Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí.

Dividing his time between Barcelona and Paris, in the first half of the century Picasso became one of the most well known representatives of modern art. He is best known for his role in the development of the Cubist movement, the influence and evolution of which can be seen in both the other leading figures of Spanish 20th century art, Miró and Dalí.

Salvador Dalí who joined his fellow countrymen Picasso and Miró in late 1920s Paris had passed through many phases of cubism, futurism and the metaphysical to become one of the leading figures of Surrealist painting. Based on the idea of the 'unconscious', one of the most common features of Dalí's work was melting watches and burning giraffes.



*The Three
Sphinxes
of Bikini,
1947*



*The
Persistence
of Memory,
1931*