

Was Antonio Gaudi i Cornet (1852-1926) a vexillographer?

Władysław Serwatowski

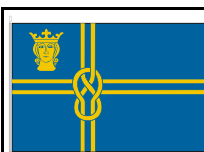
Abstract

The Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926) designed standards and banners between 1884 and 1906. Gaudi's artwork (drawings, illustrations, poster projects) were applied for: a. Standard of the Pilgrims of Reus, Catalonia, between 1878-1890, lost; b. Standard for the Mataronense Union, 1884, lost; c. Standard for the Congregation of Daughters of St. Mary, lost; d. Standard for Apostolado de la Oracion in Saint Roc, lost; e. Standard for Gremio de Carrejeros y Herreros of Barcelona, 1906, lost; f. Banner for The Sant Feliu de Codines Choral Society, 1900, existing. Władysław Serwatowski presents his investigations in Spain, Japan, USA and France related to the lost or destroyed items and describes the only of Gaudi's banners still in existence, the one for Sant Feliu Choir in the Municipal Museum Can Xifreda. This banner by Gaudi is 291 cm tall, is composed of the cross on the top, the palm leaf and the laurel in the center and the mast that holds it up. The elements are united by leather strips in the colours of the Catalan flag. Serwatowski explains translation errors of vexillological terminology influencing his opinion that Gaudi was father of the modernist vexillography. The author proposes to call Gaudi's banner for Sant Feliu Choir a vexilloid.

The development of vexillological knowledge is the scientific objective of all and each of the lectures presented during the International Congresses of Vexillology. The principal mission of the Earth Flag Center, which I represent, is to penetrate in the world of art and to discover the names of graphic designers, painters and sculptors. The Earth Flag Center exposes and promotes the artists and creative people who during their professional life made or influenced the foundation of banners, burgees, colors, ensigns, flags, gonfalons, horsetails, penances, standards and all types of vexilloids.¹ Each author of the product that attracts the attention of vexillology, can be considered as a vexillographer.²

From the perspective of the Earth Flag Center Salvador de Madariaga y Rojo (1886-1978), the Spanish diplomat and professor at Oxford University was a perfect vexillographer as well as the French graphic designer Arsene Heitz (1908-1989). They both worked together to design the actually valid European Union flag, introduced and accepted on December 8th, 1955.

As representative in Poland of the Sociedad Española de Vexilología I consider it as my duty to discover among the Spanish artists names and personalities and to present them as vexillographers.³



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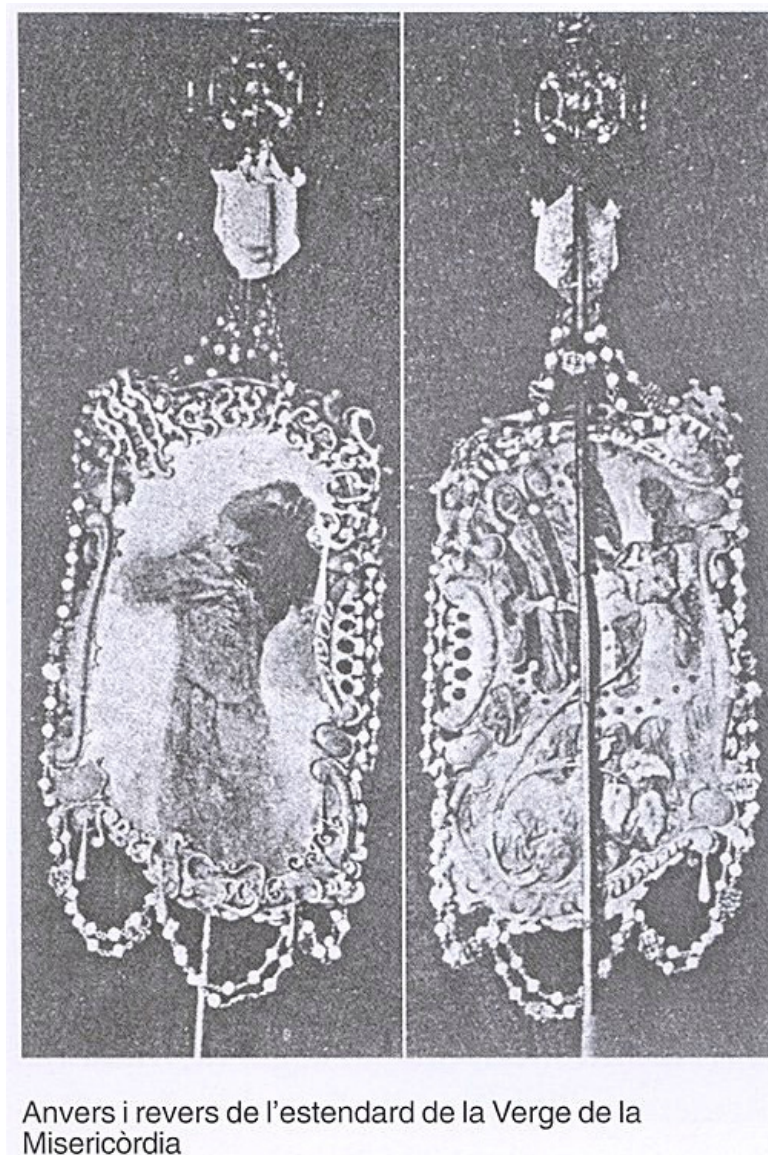
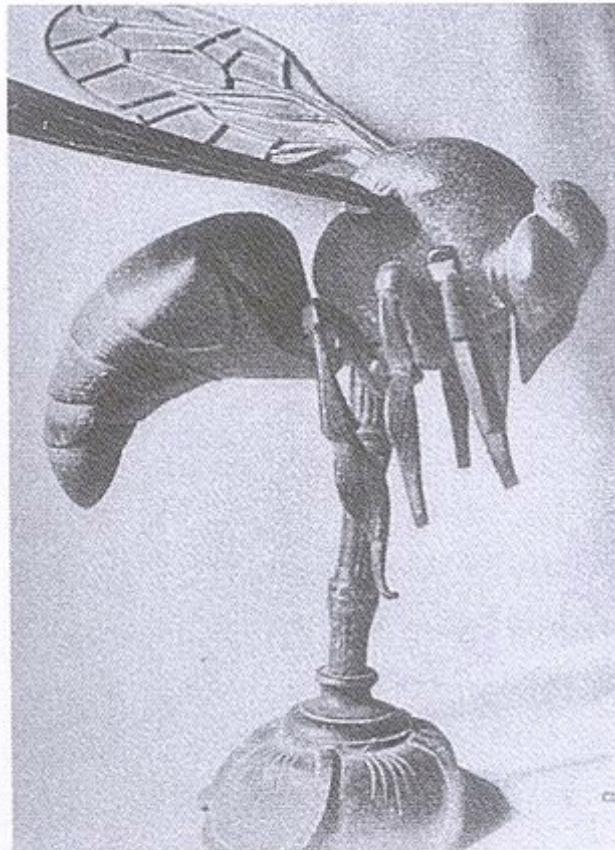


Figure 1

The aim of this study is to present to you, the research in Barcelona and Madrid during Year International of Gaudi declared in 2002 to commemorate the 150th birthday anniversary of this great architect.

I. The first, highly important factor for considering Antoni Gaudi as vexillographer, is located in the archives of Polytechnic of Barcelona, where Gaudi studied architecture. Among the documents from his years of studying and the specific courses concluded with exams by Gaudi, there are two sources of high vexillological interest:

1. “Teoria general de l’art. explicada per exposició i decoració dels edificis i de los obres civiles i hidrauliques antigues i modernes” with note – *aprovat* (approved) 1876. (General theory of art for exhibition and decorations of buildings constructed in antiquities and modern times; note: sufficient, 1876).
2. Applications de teoria de l’art a la invenció, distribució i decoració d’edifi-



L'abella que coronava l'estendard de l'Obrera Mataronesa.

Figure 2

© Juan Antonio Ramírez, 1998. © Ediciones Siruela, S.A., 1998.

cis de segon ordre – note – excellent, 1877; (Application of art theory to the inventions, repartitions and decorations of buildings of different categories; note – excellent, 1877).⁴

As the final result of his studies Gaudi designed the Pavilion of the Compañia Transatlantica⁵ for the Universal Exposition in Barcelona in 1888 with 16 flagstaves on the roof, for flags as decoration and identification. Unfortunately, from old printed photos in the only publication available it is hard to describe the details and motifs of Gaudi's flagstaves and flags design.⁶

II. The National Museum of Catalan Art opened in 2002 the exhibition “Les arts industrials als cartells modernistes”. Curators Cecilia Vidal i Maynou and Carme Pujiula i Vidal wrote an article in this exhibition's catalogue - “Antoni Gaudi and Applied Arts” illustrated with four photos of vexillological interest.⁷

1. Photo no. 1: The main side and the reverse side of the standard for Mare de Deu de la Misericordia de Reus, following the drawing of Gaudi (Fig. 1). This standard was destroyed in 1936, but a photography survived.⁸
2. Photo no. 2: The drawing by Gaudi of the standard for Cooperativa Mataronense, 1884; used first as a poster edited by Gaudi's friend, Salvador Pages, a native

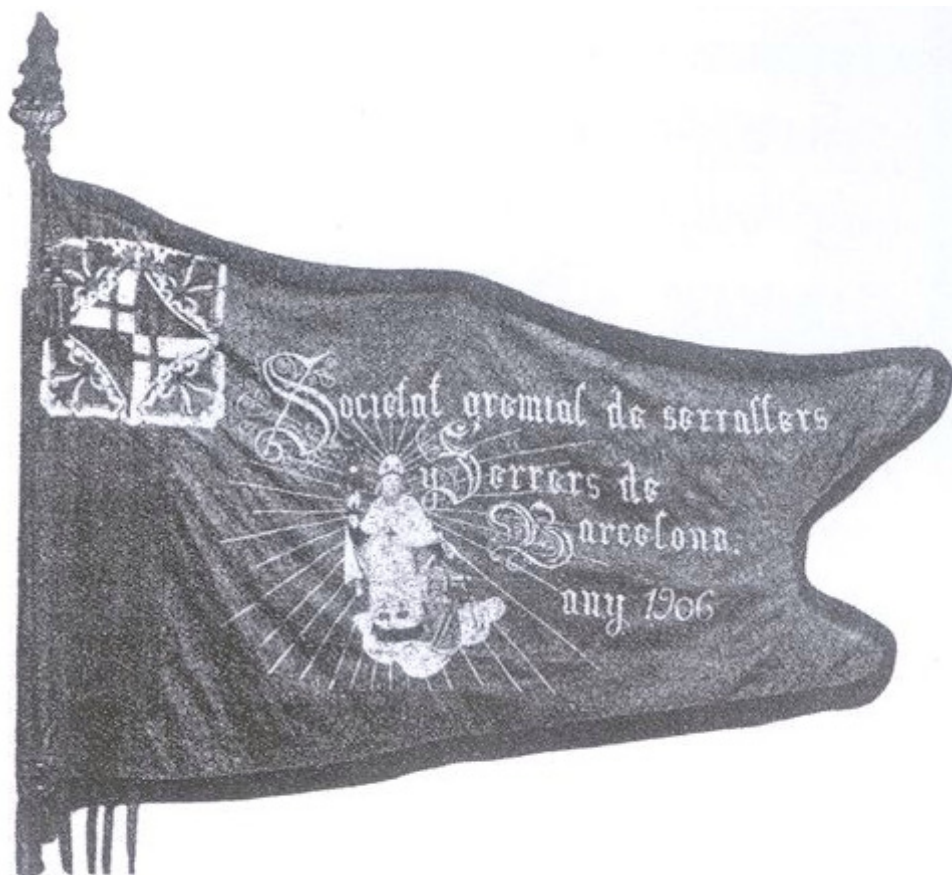


Figure 3

from Reus. This drawing is now lost, but Gaudi also drew a figure of a bee to complete the standard as a bee-shaped tip of the staff, the only item now conserved at the Museu Comarcal del Maresme in Mataro (Fig. 2). Pomes Vives J. and Rodriguez Calleja M. wrote in „L'Obrera Mataronesa, un bell i efimer somni 1864-1890” that the Cooperative Mataronese was the first factory in Spain to be owned by the workers. It seems from the verbal sources that Gaudi in fact designed several flags and emblems for guilds, which have unfortunately not survived and of which we only have accounts. Amongst these were the flags of the Sagrada Familia, that of Congregació de les filles de Maria Immaculada, that on the Apostolat de l'Oracio and that of Sant Roc .

3. Photo no. 3: In 1906 Gaudi designed the standard for the Guild of Locksmiths and Blacksmiths of Barcelona (Fig. 3), which has also been lost (Gremi of Serrallers of Barcelona). It is documented in photos and drawings when it was brought out in the Barcelona Corpus Christi procession in 1910⁹ (photo no. 4) (Fig. 4).
4. Photo no. 5: The only standard that has survived is the one for the Choral Society of Sant Feliu (Fig. 5), designed and realized by Gaudi, 1900,¹⁰ which the Museu Municipal Can Xifreda restored in 2002.

Concerning the unique standards designed by Gaudi it is important to underline that until today we had only verbal testimonials coming from the same sources. Fol-



Figure 4

lowing the art historian and expert Ramon Casale¹¹ — there were four authors reporting that Gaudi designed these standards. The names are: Joan Bergos Massó, Cesar Martinell y Brunet, Joan Matamala Flotats and Josep F. Rafols.

Ramon Casale and Francesc Garriga included in their newest publication *L'Estandard de l'Orfeo Feliua* a very special document – first hand testimonial about the standard of the Cooperative Mataronense. The regional magazine *Voz de Litoral de Mataró* ('The Litoral Voice') published in 1885 a report from a celebration with poetry and music in the Cooperative Mataronense Hall. The anonymous author reported: "... the artistic standard in the center of the festivities, with the bee as the emblem for workers and industry..." (Fig. 6: Gaudi artwork drawing by Joan Matamala Flotats).

The most interesting item from a geovexillographical perspective is the Sant Feliu Choral Society Banner. In Spain, the Choral Society was an assembly of singers



Figure 5
© Ramon Manent, 2002. © Reial Catedra Gaudi, Barcelona.

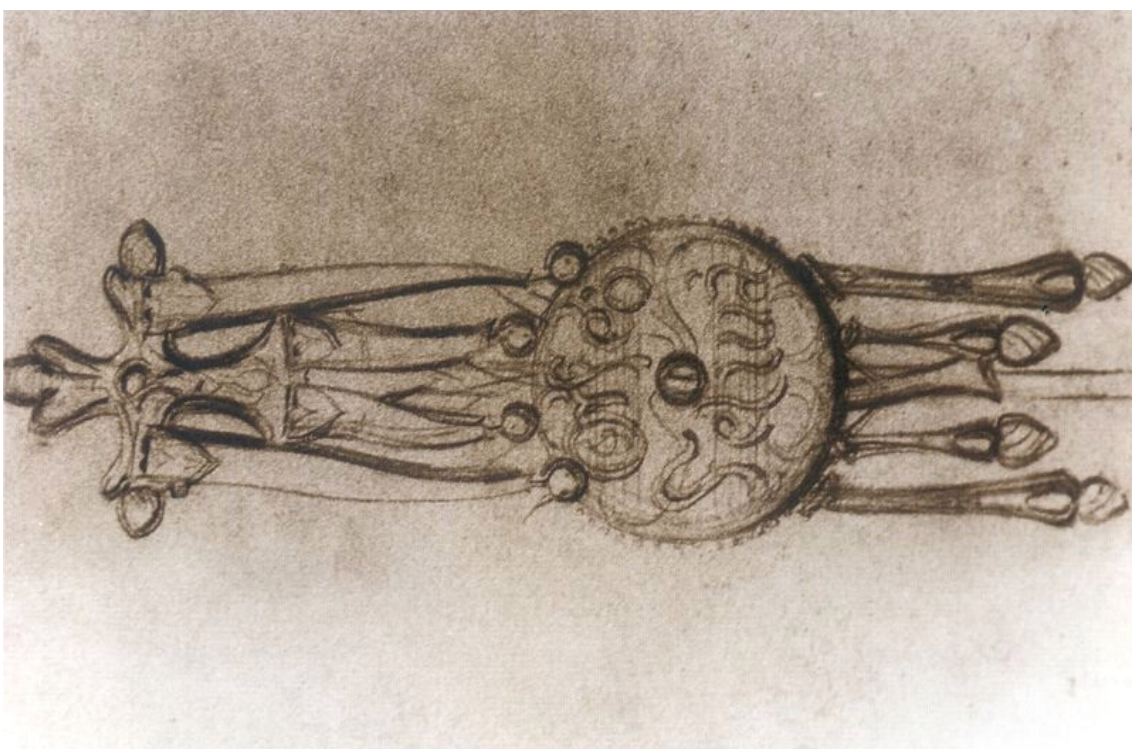


Figure 6



Placa del taller que va materialitzar el disseny de Gaudí.

Figure 7

© Ramon Casale, Francesc Garriga, 2002. © Museu Municipal Can Xifreda, 2002.

who formed a chorus without any instrumental accompaniment. The choir was forming a semicircle around the artistic director and was overhung by the banner, which came to act as the focal point for the choir.

The Choral Society at the turn of the XIX century had a banner (a term used as equivalent to *standard* by Ramon Casale and Francesc Garriga) designed by Antoni Gaudi. The Choral Society does not have official documents that certifies the author of the banner, neither the formal letter or request to Gaudi to design this standard. However the truth is coming from mouth to mouth and the style refers to Gaudi directly.

Experts in Gaudi art such as Ramon Casale and Francesc Garriga, after long investigations declared clearly that “*this banner was designed during the most original and innovative stage of Gaudi’s artistic career, after having evolved artistically, freely investigating and experimenting with the forms and volumes existing in nature. The design of the banner reflects an adventure where message, technique and creative excitement are welded together.*”

Barcelona’s authors are unable to certify the exact age of the banner but the existence of a metal plaque on the back of the mast, with the trade name Hoyos Esteva y Cia (Fig. 7) indicates it must have been made before 1905, because Claudio Hoyos, one of the owners of the workshop, died in 1905 and the company then became registered as Esteva Figuera y Sucesores de Hoyos.

Ramon Casale told me¹² a lot about relationship between Gaudi and Sant Feliu de Codines and the visits Gaudi paid in the village on several occasions and also about his friendship with Francesc Ullar, the big landowners in the village. Gaudi spent a long time at Francesc Ullar’s house during the outbreak of cholera in Barcelona.

According to Cesar Martinell it was Ullar who asked Gaudi to design the visual symbol for Sant Feliu Choral Society. The artwork was probably financed by textile industrialist Emili Carles Tolra, after the request of his aunt Emilia Carles-Tolra, marquise of Sant Esteve de Castellar, widow of Josep Tolra Avella.

The standard for the Orfeo Feliua Choral Society is one of my favorite among Gaudi art of design, because it combines the local symbols of the village and cultural tradition with the author’s personal expression.



Figure 8

This vexillum by Gaudí, as the only one fully in existence today, is perfectly conserved by the Museu Municipal Can Xifreda. This standard is 2.91 m tall. It is made up of many elements: the cross at the top, the millstone, the palm leaf and the laurel in the center, and the mast that holds it up. The elements are united by perfectly selected leather strips in colors of the Catalan flag. The cross is 60 cm high and 53 cm wide. The diameter of the disc with the modern lettering inscription “Orfeo Feliua” is 50 cm (Fig. 8).

The only one Gaudí’s vexillological object existing has been on temporary exhibition several times — in Spain and also in France, Japan and USA.

In Paris at the Palais du Louvre, the Sant Feliu Choral Society standard has been included in the exhibition “Pionniers du XIX siècle – Gaudí”. In the exhibition’s catalogue the Catalan word *estandard* (‘standard’) was translated by the commissioners Salvador Tarrago Cid and Yvonne Brunhammer as *drapeau* (‘flag’).¹³

In the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York this standard was included in exhibitions twice. In 1964 in *Gaudí Buildings in Barcelona 1876-1926* and in 1987 in the exhibition *The Catalan Spirit: Gaudí and His Contemporaries*.¹⁴ There is no information from the Museum’s press archive to note that any vexillologist saw this standard, commented on it, wrote about it or quoted his opinion to the open public.

In 1989, the Nagoya City Art Museum organized the exhibition *Antoni Gaudí And Modernisme Catala – Human Love And Design*, visited by more than 16 millions

visitors, during the “Design EXPO’89”¹⁵ in Aichi province. The exhibition’s catalogue in English and Japanese repeat the fundamental translation error. The Catalan word *estandard* Yunischi Yano and Toshiaki Tange translated as *flag* in English and again as *hata* in Japanese and not *kok-ki* as the English version suggested.

In the National Library in Madrid there is no document confirming that Gaudi was vexillographer. Eduardo Anglada Monzon from the Library Information Service declared that there is only one publication – the book of Ramon Casale and Francesc Garriga, edited in 2002. This information has been also confirmed by Elena Maria Santiago Paez, Head of the Drawings and Graphics Department in the National Library in Madrid on October 28th 2002. “*We haven’t any visual document related to Gaudi as vexillographer*”, Ms Santiago Paez wrote.

In the e-mail from the Spanish National Library, Eduardo Anglada Monzon kindly explained to me that in the National Library in Madrid, librarians prefer to have catalogues about flags rather than catalogues about vexillology. The situation is similar to that in which manuals and publications of ichthyology are not considered ichthyology itself but about fish.

From the Spanish National Library’s position vexillology is not very popular or frequent in the central or specific catalogues in Madrid. It seems, that Spaniards really prefer the letter *f* for fish or flag to the letter *v* for vexillography. But looking on the unique Gaudi standard described above I am deeply involved to declare that Antoni Gaudi i Cornet was the great father of modernist vexillography with several items on his credit. And looking from the perspective of our International Congress of Vexillology, the standard for Orfeo Feliua in Museu Municipal Can Xifreda should be considered in actual scientific terminology a *vexilloid*.

Notes

¹ Serwatowski W. – *Earth Flag Designs, Global Solidarity*, The Polish Pavilion at EXPO’92 Seville, Spain; p. 8; printed in Spain by Litografia Saenz S.A. in Seville.

² Serwatowski W. *Glosariusz angielsko-francusko-polskiej terminologii geoweksylograficznej z polskimi wyjaśnieniami i przypisami*, NEOTERM, No. 2/1994, Warszawa.

³ *Biblioteca Nacional en Madrid no tiene en sa colección ningun documento sobre Gaudi como vexilografo* – declared Eduardo Anglada Monzon from Servicio de Información Bibliografica of BN on October 25th 2002 after the investigations of EFC (durante la verificación del texto Eduardo Anglada precisa en su e-mail de 29.10.2002): *Estimado Sr. Serwatowski: Gracias por su informacion. No obstante, querria hacerle una precision, sin animo de polemizar y con la unica intencion de evitar posibles malentendidos; en el catalogo de la Biblioteca Nacional española existe una publicacion relativa a Gaudi como vexilologo, el estudio de R. Casale y F. Garriga sobre Gaudi como diseñador del estandarte de Feliua, bien conocido por Vd. y, supongo que tambien, por los estudiosos sobre Gaudi. No hay otra publicacion sobre el tema, ciertamente. Pero no es correcto afirmar, o al menos no esta correctamente expresado en castellano, que "no existe ninguna referencia en Biblioteca Nacional en Madrid - de considerar Antonio Gaudi como vexilografo", porque existe esta precisamente, la de Casale y Garriga citada, folleto de 79 con ilustraciones y 4 paginas de bibliografia y cuya ficha catalografica copio para mayor claridad:*

Autores: Casalé, Ramon y Francesc Garriga

Título: L'estandard de l'Orfeó Feliuà / Ramon Casalé, Francesc Garriga

Publicación: Sant Feliu de Codines: Museu Municipal Can Xifreda, 2002; 79 p. : il., ; 24 cm

Notas: Bibliografía: p. 75-78

Text in catalá and Spanish - Tema o materia: Gaudí, Antoni (1852-1926); Orfeó Feliuà

Banderas Sant Feliu de Codines Signaturas: BA/39756/10.

Last letter from Mr Anglada Monzon: *La materia asignada a dicho libro es BANDERAS y el nombre de lugar, porque el libro, para nosotros los bibliotecarios, no trata de vexilologia, sino de banderas, la materia de la que trata el libro. Preferimos banderas a vexilos. Un tratado teorico sobre la vexilologia si que trataria de vexilologia. Un manual de ictiologia no trata de ictiologia, sino de los peces, etc. Un cordial saludo, Eduardo Anglada.*

Ms. Elena M^a de Santiago Páez, Jefa from Servicio de Dibujos y Grabados Biblioteca Nacional wrote in an e-mail in October 28th: *Siento confirmarle que en la Biblioteca Nacional no tenemos ninguna imagen relacionada con el tema que le interesa. El archivo fotográfico de Prensa Española que publica los periódicos ABC y Blanco y Negro quizá pueda tener fotografías ique le puedan servir.*

⁴ V. Rafols Josep F. (1889 – 1965) – *Gaudi 1852 – 1926*, Barcelona 1929; 3a ed. Barcelona Aedos 1952; p. 188-189.

⁵ *Trasatlantica* – en: *Iglesia de la Colonia Guell – Santa Colona de Cervello*, Parroquia del Sacrado Corazon, Barcelona 1977.

⁶ V. Rafols Josep F – *Gaudi 1852 – 1926*, op. cit. foto p. 17; y Joan Bergos – Antoni Gaudi, *Architecte genial – vida i obra*, Biblioteca Catalana, Ed. Mille 1972, Barcelona. Also: *Iglesia de la colonia Guell, Santa Colona de Cervello*, ed. Parroquia del Sacrado Coracon, 1977; where there is the information “Gaudi diseño el Pavillon Arabe de la Compania Trasatlantica...” – inspired by Aljambra de Cordoba. v. Joan Bergos – Antoni Gaudi, *Architecte genial, vida i obra*; Biblioteca Popular Catalan, Ed. Milla, Barcelona, 1972.

⁷ The first factory in Spain owned by the workers – Pomes Vives, J. Rodriguez Calleja M. – *L’Obrera Mataronesa, un bell i efimer somni. 1864-1890*, Mataró, 1997; en: Cecilia Vidal i Maynou, Carme Pujila i Vidal – *Antoni Gaudi y las artes aplicadas*, in the catalogue *Les arts industrials als cartelle modernistes*, Barcelona 2002, p. 91.

⁸ v.: *Estandarte de los reusenses de Barcelona para la Virgen de la Misericordia* – lost – in *Iglesia de la colonia Guell*, Rafols J., op. cit.

⁹ See the journal of the Guild of Locksmiths and Blacksmiths of Barcelona, *De l’art. de la forja*, Barcelona, 5/1918, 1, p. 4

¹⁰ In some sources the date given is 1926, the presence of a plaque on the flagpole with the logo of the firm of Hoyos Esteva i Cia – a workshop producing all sorts of reproductions of works of art., located at No 4 Carrer de Cardenal Casanas in Barcelona and run by the painters Claudi Hoyos i Ayala (Havana 1875 – Barcelona 1905) and Joan Esteva i Casal (Barcelona 1874-1957) shows that it must have been done before 1905; since Claudi Hoyos, one of the partners, died that year and the firm continued under the name of Esteva, Figueras y sucesores de Hoyos; Casale R.; Garriga F.; *L’estendard de l’Orfeo Feliua, Sant Feliu de Codines*, 2002.

¹¹ Born in 1955 in Barcelona. Museologist, member of International Association of Art Historian (AICA) and International Council of Museums (ICOM); author of the Barcelona radio program “Cope” and correspondent to “La gazetta delle arti y Artin” in Italy.

¹² Exchange research data, October 2002 in Barcelona and December 2002 in Warsaw.

¹³ El catalogo editado por Musee des Arts Decoratif, Palais du Louvre – Pionnier du XIX siecle: GAUDI, exposicion 19 juin – 27 septembre 1971, redacción Salvador Tarragó, Yvonne Brunhammer:

1884 – Dessine le drapeau de la societe “La Obrera Mataronense, Mataro;

1888 – Pavillon de la Campagne transatlantique a l’ Exposition Universelle de Barcelone, in-spire de l’Alhambra;

1900 – Drapeau pour le pelerinage des habitants de Reus residant a Barcelone au sanctuaire de la Virgen de la Misericordia, Reus, conserve dans ce sanctuaire. (Palabra drapeau en frances es bandera, error de traducion – estendarte en frances es l’etendard).

¹⁴ February 17th to June 9th, 1987 in National Design Museum, Cooper Hewitt, New York.

¹⁵ The official poster for *Design EXPO’89, Nagoya, Japan* was designed by Yusaku Kamekura (1915 – 1997), Earth Flag designer in 1992; member of EFC; v. *Japanese Affiches. Modern Posters of Japan. Europalia 89, Japan in Belgium, Antwerp, 10-17.12.1989*, p. Kamekura, 14.; Serwatowski W. – (*Homage a Kamekura*) *Niewielki wzrostem, wielki duchem – pożegnanie Yusaku Kamekura 1915 – 1997*, Rzeczpospolita, Warsaw, 31.05.1997

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Yunischi Y., Toshiaki T., - *Antoni Gaudi y el Modernismo Catalan – Gaudi And Modernisme Catala – Human Love And Art Design*, Nagoya, City Art Museum & Yoshiba Co Ltd, 1988.

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Władysław Serwatowski (54), graduated from the Catholic University Lublin (1973) and Warsaw University (1978). Senior lecturer at the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw and at the Centro de Estudios Latino Americanos, Warsaw University. University Guest Speaker in Bologna, Bordeaux, Bradford, Caracas, Heidelberg, Omsk, Quebec, Wrocław and Zagreb. Founder of the Earth Flag Center in Warsaw in 1978. As Commissioner General of Poland in EXPO'92 Seville he presented *Earth Flag Designs as Global Solidarity* in the Polish Pavilion. Author of the *Earth Flag Design* album – *The Most Beautiful Book in Poland in 1992*; *Earth Flag Lexicon*, *Earth Flag Encyclopedia* and many geovexillographical publications. Organizer and curator of over 200 exhibitions of art, designs and flags worldwide. Deputy president (1995-2001) of International Organization of Experts, Ordinex in Paris. Senior expert in Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Center for International Cultural Cooperation in Warsaw. Representative of Sociedad Española de Vexilología in Poland since 2000.

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