“Infrastructuring” Pleasure: Montjuïc Before and After the Lights of the 1929 Barcelona International

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Abstract
Montjuïc is a long flat-topped hill overlooking the harbor of Barcelona from the southeast border of the city. From 1915 onwards, it underwent a profound transformation turning it into the site of the 1929 International Exhibition. This article revolves around this turning point, examining the aesthetic role of infrastructures in delivering pleasure on the hill before and during the dazzling, monumental display that characterized the event. The sociocultural practices at play in Montjuïc before its re-urbanization are thus recalled and considered in terms of their environmental and bodily features, utterly different from the visual journey later offered within and around the Exhibition venue. I delve into these two regimes of pleasure by theorizing their material forms as functional to and expressive of specific ways of having fun. Consequently, this enquiry concerns the ambient conditions, sensorial landscapes and architectural elements through which pleasure took shape in Montjuïc from the mid-nineteenth century to 1936.

Keywords
Montjuïc, regime of pleasure, infrastructures, 1929 international exhibition, aisthesis, urban environment

Introduction
We have begun to bedeck the mountain with a glorious costume of gardens, these gardens that we admire so much; these flowers and trees, these ponds whose waters reflect our pristine sky and resplendent sun; and this poetry has sufficed to wipe out the ill fame that weighed so heavily on the mountain, changing it into a place that lends itself to the idealism of love and poetry. The mountain’s new beauty will irradiate all the areas of the city, where it will continue to be transformed; and as the transformation of a place also involves that of the nearby areas, before long it will make its benevolent influence felt even in the historic centre of the city of Barcelona.

Antoni Martínez Domingo (1867-1942), mayor of Barcelona from 1919 to 1922, referred in these words to the urbanistic changes that the mountain of Montjuïc had gone through from 1914 on. His speech was delivered at a city council meeting aimed at relaunching the International Exhibition of Electric Industries, which had been delayed by the outbreak of World War I. The

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hill was urbanized after Montjuïc had been chosen to host the event, which ultimately became the International Exhibition of 1929. Before Martínez Domingo’s speech, Joan Pich i Pon (1878-1937), commissioner of the fair, made a case for resuming its organization and applauded the transformation of Montjuïc, “which the inhabitants of Barcelona watched from Nou Street without daring to go there, due to the ill fame that darkened its image.” But what was this bad reputation about, and how would the “poetry” of gardens and ponds manage to leave it behind? In other words, what was not openly said but only hinted at in the public account?

The 1888 Universal Exposition had already served to revitalize re-urbanization in and around the historic center of Barcelona, creating the Parc de la Ciutadella and a pedestrian circuit through it, the Passeig de Colom, the Ramblas, Catalunya Square and the Eixample. In this respect, the main urbanistic contribution of the Exposition concerned the embellishment of the city, starting with the wooden paving and a new street lighting system. This ornamentation also included street furniture, public fountains, landscaped areas, and a number of monuments (the Columbus monument among them). Besides turning Barcelona into a source of attraction for new visitors, this remodeling reconfigured the urban space to convey “the civic values and constant desire for modernisation” of the local elites. Modernization, in fact, meant that the city recognized itself as agent of a bourgeoise culture based on innovation, technological efficiency and monumental character.

Almost thirty years later, the Universal Exposition was frequently invoked to promote, again in terms of progress and magnificence, the 1929 International Exhibition. This time, however, the urban transformation was aimed at shifting the borders of Barcelona by annexing and reshaping the mountain of Montjuïc. Despite its steep topography and isolation from the fabric of the city, the closeness of the mountain to the sea was seen as strategic to connecting the new event with Barcelona’s maritime history, on one hand, and to facilitating the entry of goods and visitors for the fair, on the other. In short, the sea afforded a horizon of transnational forces to both fuel and mirror the modernity of the project, which sought to convert Barcelona—as Martínez Domingo had said in the speech cited above—into “the greatest Mediterranean City” and at least as important as “the biggest in Spain” (i.e., Madrid).

Montjuïc is a broad shallow hill which overlooks the harbor of Barcelona from the southeast edge of the city (see Figure 1). Next to its left slope, there is the neighborhood of Poble Sec, on the other side of which Parallel Avenue runs for two kilometers from Espanya Square to the docks, forming a border with the neighborhoods of the Raval and Sant Antoni. Over the last twenty years, Montjuïc has become a big tourist attraction due to its various museums, the ’92 Olympic stadium and commanding views over the city. Most of these infrastructures were actually built for the ’29 International Exhibition. Before the dazzling remodeling which came with this event, named at first the Lights and Arts Competition (Certamen de la Luz y las Artes), Montjuïc was said to be a wild, barely accessible place. Until 1915, many press articles, political speeches and novels described it as a disreputable area, in need of an entire re-urbanization in order also to achieve moral regeneration, as if the mountain was necessarily at odds with any civilized form of leisure or life.

This hegemonic narrative, typically merging urbanism and morality, is countered in what follows (especially in the “Before the Lights and Beneath the Bad Reputation” section) by an account of the cultural practices that existed in Montjuïc before its transformation. I argue, in this respect, that the urban plan of the 1929 International Exhibition brought a set of modern infrastructures (such as gardens, pavilions, new buildings, a funicular railway, and a still-famous “magic fountain”) establishing a “regime of pleasure” that was materially and aesthetically opposed to the hill’s previous sociocultural life. Thus, I explore the role of infrastructures in providing different forms of entertainment in Montjuïc from the second half of the nineteenth century to 1936. This includes not only specific ways of practicing pleasure but also how these ways were a cultural manifestation of what the mountain was and how it could be experienced and felt.
As explained in the next section, infrastructures are urban assemblages through which the material and the cultural become “hyphenated, each closely implicated in, and part of, the other.” Also, they imply a kind of aesthetics that goes beyond Kantian and/or later modernist theories, which are principally focused on the appreciation of artworks and depend on rational, disembodied sight. Exceeding the limits of these perspectives, the aesthetic dimension of such infrastructures resonates with the Aristotelian concept of *aisthesis*, meaning both the sensory experience and sensible knowledge of the city. Stated in brief, it enables bodies to feel *and* know—the latter through the former—the urban milieu.

**Infrastructuring a New Regime of Pleasure**

Montjuïc before and after the “lights” of the 1929 International Exhibition (‘29 IE or IE from here on) was approached, felt, appreciated, enjoyed and valued through two completely different frameworks. A regime of pleasure, according to Bennet, is “not merely the forms of pleasure on offer but the system of signs and associated ideologies under which they are constructed and offered as pleasures.” In other words, entertainment is not just a set of practices that people perform but also the discourses and values which are embodied in their modes of address, themes, and material styles. This correspondence is also seen by Bennet as being embedded in a certain process of cultural hegemony, a social class-commanded modality through which a world of leisure simultaneously becomes populated and makes sense in terms of fun. Thus, it is within this sensorial and ideological regime that pleasure is codified and experienced as such, sometimes excluding and other times re-forming or coexisting with other types of regimes.

However, my approach seeks to broaden Bennet’s scope—centered on Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Lancashire, UK) during the modern era—by considering infrastructures as developers and providers of these *forms of pleasure*, which are at the same time material and aesthetic. This means that an infrastructure does not just perform a practical function. No machine simply *works*;

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**Figure 1.** View of Barcelona from Montjuïc circa 1888, with three soldiers resting next to a cannon in the foreground.  
Source: Image by Edward Theodore Compton, courtesy of the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.
it is always expressive of a particular culture. In this sense, the flowering urban landscape lovingly described by Antoni Martínez Domingo not only established but also promised a new way of moving through Montjuïc as a city-garden, thereby introducing a different relationship between walking through and looking at the city. Also, this shift was in tune with a modern ideology of order, progress, and grandiosity. In the fourth and fifth sections, this sensorial regime is theorized as immanent to the infrastructures that set it in motion, meaning that these—rather than any external force—are key in how pleasure is constructed, offered and performed.

Thus, throughout this article, infrastructures are no longer the metaphor of a system underlying and giving rise to a phenomenal world that in turn consists of cultural practices and social structures. Rather, an infrastructure is the force that gathers together the social and the technological, a socio-technical assemblage that produces an urban territory and makes it impossible to reduce any urban life to the "purely human alone." Moreover, human behaviors and affective and ethical dispositions are constantly shaped by the materiality of that assemblage. In line with this perspective, I consider practices of pleasure as arising from and being molded by a material culture that comes from specific architectures, landscapes, and atmospheres. These are in fact the direct, living result of the infrastructural forces at play in the city.

Since they are “matter that enables the movement of other matter,” infrastructures have a particular ontology stemming from “the fact that they are things and also the relation between things,” as Larkin argues. Rather than finished, static entities, infrastructures are the ongoing process of bringing together heterogeneous elements (bodies and materials, a natural milieu and buildings, practices and devices, ways of doing and visual signs, etc.) and of establishing, in so doing, concrete urban environments. In this regard, the very word “infrastructure” comes to be read as a verb rather than a noun—that is, as a doing-in-motion rather than as something already given. I draw on this recent turn in urban studies and geography to enquire into how pleasure was “infrastructured” in Montjuïc from the late nineteenth century to 1936, when the Spanish Civil War disrupted the course that the mountain had started to take during the ‘29 IE. Additionally, this endeavor pays special attention to the link between that historical process and another key infrastructure, which Montjuïc overlooks and which still connects the hill to transnational flows of people in search of pleasure: the port of Barcelona.

None of this is to say that the ‘29 IE infrastructured Montjuïc from scratch, as if the hill up to then had simply been wasteland waiting to be transformed and occupied by the event, although this was the account given by the IE board to promote the urbanistic expansion of the fair. Yet in fact the mountain had been an urban green infrastructure since the nineteenth century, in the sense of supporting and providing a wide variety of ecosystemic services and benefits such as food production, spiritual experiences, recreation, temperature regulation, mental and physical health, and sense of place and social cohesion. Therefore, the main actant at issue in the following pages is not a social group or a natural place, nor cultural activities or atmospheric forces, nor aesthetics or urban planning, but the entanglement of all these human and non-human elements as generative of pleasure and pleasurescapes.

In the next section, I elaborate on the historical bond between Montjuïc and the lower classes of Barcelona, examining the discourses that led to the hill’s bad reputation and how these narratives omitted other cultural and environmental practices taking place there, especially the popular gatherings known as fontades, held at fountains in the area.

Before the Lights and Beneath the Bad Reputation

At first, some signs of an infectious disease would appear in the city, usually associated with sailors arriving from the Caribbean and harbor workers who had been in contact with sailors coming from an infected port. Then, the first deaths would cause great alarm and wealthy
residents, including doctors and pharmacists, would leave Barcelona. Quite often, these people saw it as a chance to have fun away from the city and to organize balls in their rural vacation houses. Meanwhile, the local authorities had to deal with the resulting lack of resources for controlling the ongoing epidemic, usually setting up sanitary camps on the outskirts of the city. This sequence of events recurred several times in Barcelona throughout the nineteenth century, and Montjuïc was chosen as the regular location for one such camp.17

In 1821, for instance, an outbreak of yellow fever led to Barcelona being sealed off from the outside world, while Montjuïc sheltered the poorest inhabitants, who could neither afford to escape nor stay safely inside the city walls. They were housed in a camp called Constitución, comprising almost four thousand tents (Figure 2). As a result, and despite the threatening presence of the castle at the top,18 the mountain started to be perceived by the lower classes of Barcelona as a secure, healing place. In addition to this view, the rural Catalan immigrants who had arrived in Barcelona to work in industry, missing the open fields of their villages, turned the hill into a spot for Sunday excursions. It was only a matter of time before small picnic areas began to appear next to its many fountains, surrounded in turn by small vegetable gardens or barren land, along with a number of quarries on the western side of the mountain and the castle at the top.

Larkin argues that infrastructures shape the sensible features of urban networks and hence the ambient environment of the city’s everyday life: “Softness, hardness, the noise of a city, its brightness, the feeling of being hot or cold are all sensorial experiences regulated by infrastructures.”19 This argument is close to the Aristotle’s concept of aisthesis in the sense that this mode of aesthetics does not consist in the mental appreciation of art works but in a “bodily reaction to lived reality.”20 On Montjuïc before the lights of the 1929 IE, the infrastructures for pleasure—a humble assemblage of a fountain, a picnic area and the rural landscape around them—also had specific effects on the bodies of the visitants. In 1880, the Catalan painter, journalist, and playwright Santiago Rusiñol (1861-1931) published an article on this topic in the newspaper La Vanguardia, focusing on the “non-medicinal fountains of Montjuïc.”21 Rusiñol, who became a famous author in the theaters of Paral·lel Avenue thirty years later, describes weekend visits to the mountain as a journey for “alpinists” from Barcelona who in summer are driven by a “burning desire and sudden thirst” for water. In his report of the hike, connecting three fountains, Montjuïc is portrayed

Figure 2. Lithograph of the sanitary camp Constitución on the north side of Montjuïc (unknown author). Source: Courtesy of the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.
as cool, pastoral, and distant from the smoking metropolis. For example, he describes the **Fuente del Recreo** (Recreation Fountain, Figure 3), of which he also includes a drawing (Figure 4), in these terms:

> We are at the old recreational fountain named **den Conna**, as we can read in large Elzevirian letters at the entrance to the establishment. This is perched high (twenty metres) [and] has a park with its corresponding acacias and flower beds of plants that are rare in the tropics, its rough shelters for the enjoyment of swimmers, its outcrops of rugged stone and other comforts that make of the place a true recreation spot, as with ample reason the sign at the front boasts.

The fountains of Montjuïc at that time were primarily expressive of a regained rural existence just a small walk away from the city, which could be viewed at a distance from the mountain as a distinct landscape. Also, in these sites, many bodies—albeit not anybody22—found a form of pleasure first and foremost through *stretching* for a while and sensing the ease of that environment. On emerging from the last of the tunnels that led to Montjuïc, “the traveller’s heart swells,” Rusiñol writes. The act of looking at the “beauty” of the fountains and their surroundings was of course important, but it no longer seemed to be directly linked to the rational mind, as if the sight worked independently of the other senses. Rather, it came as part of a total sensorial experience of the world as much as of the “sensitive knowledge of it.”23 In other words, *that* Montjuïc demanded to be known through a constellation of sensations which involved touching, hearing, tasting and smelling as much as seeing. Seeing, then, was not thought of as a self-sufficient appreciation.

The Catalan journalist Avel·lí Artís-Gener (1912-2000), also known as Sempronio, refers to Montjuïc before the 1920s, which he had known as a child, as a people’s mountain at odds with

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**Figure 3.** The Fuente del Recreo or d’En Conna in 1910. This spot disappeared in 1917 due to the project of the International Exhibition of Electric Industries. Source: Image by Frederic Ballell, courtesy of the Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona.
the new one planned for the ‘29 IE. In the former, “ill-mannered boys and compliant girls, recently arrived from their villages,” used to dance waltzes and polkas at the parties that took place in the evening. Ash Wednesday celebrations at the Font dels Tres Pins fountain were a “inextricable jumble of food and families in the dusky shade of the trees,” after which guitars and accordions accompanied “proletarian idylls” of the young couples. A number of Frederic Ballell’s photos also show the slopes of the mountain covered in people picnicking on Good Friday mornings (Figure 5). But the gatherings at the fountains for dancing, eating and drinking—called fontades—were by then the main “attraction” for going to Montjuïc (Figure 6). Accordingly, the pleasure obtained from its infrastructures made bodies forget for a while the burden of everyday life in the industrial city, and probably in many cases the rhythms of the assembly lines. The atmosphere was healing and fun, free, and isolated from the city, giving rise to unexpected encounters and also to occasional fights.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a widespread account of Montjuïc insisted on its bad reputation, negating the sociocultural forms of life that we have just described. Francesc Cambó (1876-1947), co-founder and leader of the Lliga Regionalista and Barcelona city councilor from 1902 to 1906, claimed in his memoirs that the mountain was only frequented by people who owned land there or sought to hide from the law. According to Cambó, “only a very few people knew [Montjuïc], due to its ill fame and inaccessibility”; consequently, “nobody had thought of transforming the mountain of Montjuïc into a park.” This change, which came in fact with the Exhibition of Electric Industries project (later on the ‘29 IE), was therefore infrastructural as much as moral. In line with this view, the literary works of the Catalan writer and jeweler Juli Vallmitjana (1873-1937) also depict Montjuïc as an area steeped in amorality. In his novels, the hill is characterized as a rural underworld; an environment of adultery, prostitution, sexual encounters, alcohol, and crime, made up of “paths with labyrinthine false trails to lead astray the pursuer, the suspicious husband or the wife who stupidly wants to discover what her cheating
spouse is doing." Rogue behaviors thus went hand in hand with the mountain’s rambling landscape and twisting roads.

In Sempronio’s words, a “curtain of light fell” on the Montjuïc that had been infrastructured with vegetable gardens, smallholdings, tangled paths, stone quarries, workers’ shacks, stony terrains, fountains, and picnic areas. That curtain, of course, had begun to be lowered in 1915 by the future organizers of the ‘29 IE, whose infrastructural plan also aimed to bring a new regime of pleasure to the area (discussed in the following section). In the meantime, the board of what was still called the International Exhibition of Electric Industries promoted the forthcoming event by drawing on the same narrative that Cambó and Vallmitjana had spread. In December 1921, “a grand people’s festival” in “Montjuïc Park” celebrated both the urbanization of the mountain and the relaunch of the Exhibition. The pamphlet that announced the festival put the new relationship between Montjuïc and Barcelona as follows:

The mountain of Montjuïc was virtually inaccessible to the people of Barcelona. The murky story of a kind of divorce, through which all that was dangerous in the city found refuge there, was the idea formed of it by the city’s inhabitants.

To morally cleanse the Mountain, to incorporate it into the culture of the city, to put an end to this divorce between it and the city, which according to the immortal Catalan poet, had physically been born from its womb, was the great problem we had to solve and duty we had to fulfil.

This problem has been dealt with perfectly by the planned Electric Industries Exposition and General Spanish Exposition.
Turning the Mountain into a Park

The transformation of Montjuïc to host the International Exhibition of Electric Industries officially started on July 18, 1915, when Joan Pich i Pon laid the foundation stone of the project at the Passeig K avenue as part of a grand opening commencing with Japanese fireworks. This was not the first step in remodeling the mountain, however. Between 1887 and 1914, the architect Josep Amargós i Samaranch (1849-1918) had designed a plan of rural urbanization, bearing in mind—unlike Ildefons Cerdà’s 1872 project—all the topologic and population features of the hill. Although Amargós’ plan was not achieved in its entirety, it already sought to turn most of Montjuïc into an urban park, following the principles of “morality and beauty” and pursuing the aim of “morally cleansing the slopes of the mountain.” Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier (1861-1930), conservator of the promenades of the western districts of Paris and well-known for redesigning the park of Bagatelle from 1905 to 1908, was called in by the Exhibition board in 1915 to carry out the landscaping of Montjuïc, which was mostly to be centered on the classicist Laribal and Miramar gardens.

Amargós’ plan was intended to establish order over a undisciplined territory, creating several accesses and passeigs (avenues) across and around the hill, as well as preserving the green surroundings and panoramic views of Barcelona from future constructions. The aim was for Montjuïc to become, in Amargós’ words, “a place of rest and recreation, with few equals among Mediterranean cities.” The ‘29 IE took advantage of his planning to deploy a variety of infrastructures over this already prepared area: not only the parks and gardens designed by Forestier and finished by Rubió but also others such as additional passeigs (among them, a central one going from Espanya square to the Miramar garden, which overlooked the harbor); a number of

Figure 6. A dance at a picnic area of Montjuïc circa 1910.
Source: Image by Josep Brangulí, courtesy of the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.
new esplanades and squares; 15 palaces and almost 35 exhibition pavilions; hotels and restaurants, one of them at the re-urbanized Font del Gat fountain; a stadium; offices and press buildings; a funicular railway and station; a Magic Fountain; and the main avenue leading up to the National Palace, with majestic stairways, superb waterfalls, magnificent viewpoints, a series of works that, starting from Fine Arts Square, end on the higher plateau of this section and arrive at the Central Avenue, crossing the whole area of quarries and giving way to esplanades, clusters of gardens and other points of beauty that make up the splendour of the Park of Montjuïc.37

The arts, sports, and industrial technologies provided the contents for this new regime of pleasure, which Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez have defined as based on “mechanized and civilised fun.”38 Their description of Maricel Park, an amusement park that opened its doors in Montjuïc in 1930, also fits well the ‘29 IE infrastructural display: “Everything seemed to be modern, middle-class, clean, civic, streamlined, magic.”

A report on the ‘29 IE plan and inventory, completed in January 1925 by the Technical Advice Commission of the fair, refers to the Montjuïc location as “reckless” due to its topography and distance from the city center. In other words, it entailed a problem of accessibility that other infrastructures were then required to solve. Close to the Parc de la Ciutadella, the newly remodeled France train station, on one hand, was designed to receive foreign visitors attracted by the event, although this involved a long journey from there to the IE venue. The port of Barcelona provided another major but much closer point of entry for tourists, with the adjustment of some of its facilities to the needs of the Exhibition. Among other things, the port authority was asked to temporarily turn the San Beltrán dock into an area for mooring yachts and holding maritime festive events, and to move the unloading of coal away from the vicinity of the Exhibition due to the dust it produced. Therefore, the ‘29 IE not only reshaped the landscape of Montjuïc, starting by ordering nature but also altered harbor infrastructures and activities, encompassing them in a regime of pleasure essentially grounded on the consumption of goods and services.

Despite its general skepticism, the report cited above saw the closeness of the ‘29 IE location to the sea as very important, a point that Montjuïc did at least fulfill. Yet in addition to this, the mountain needed to be incorporated to the urban fabric at the same time as it become navigable according to the standards of a city. Its transformation into a park did not only consist in taming its rural scenery, turning it into a series of living panoramas for visual delectation, but also in tracing straight, walkable thoroughfares to take the place of the former tangled network of paths. In this regard, various maps of the IE project specifically focused on locating the pedestrian circulation areas and junctions. The landscaping of Montjuïc, along with most of the infrastructures that came with the event, led to a particular combination of moving through while looking at the city; a kind of urban spatio-visuality that, in the words of Giuliana Bruno, arose at the end of the nineteenth century from an emerging network of architectural forms:

The luminous aesthetics of panorama paintings and dioramas, the glass architecture of arcades, department stores, pavilions of exhibition halls, glass houses, winter gardens, the electric underground, railways, bridges, powered flight, and skyscrapers incarnated the new geography of modernity. These were all sites of transit. Mobility and light—a form of cinematics—were the essence of these new architectures. By changing the relationship between spatial perception and motion, the new architectures of transit and travel culture prepared the ground for the invention of the moving image, the very epitome of modernity.39

Completely different from the aesthetic experiences taking place on Montjuïc before 1915, the pleasure on offer throughout the IE venue was cinematic in the sense that mobility and light also
constituted its essence. As a propaganda brochure distributed in France said, “in this dazzling Exposition there is nothing that does not contribute to visual pleasure.” Moreover, in this particular account, the movie goes on as follows:

Twelve magnificent Palaces and numerous Pavilions entirely devoted to Industry offer an unparalleled survey of the latest technical advances from all across the globe. The waterworks are one of the most original attractions of this Exposition. Their effect at night is magical; never before has the field of decorative illumination gone so far in the techniques of lighting. The effects on show can only be compared to those of a firework display, but with the advantage of their silence and gentleness. Bound together and blended in constant transformations, they have something of orchestral music and of the constant stream of images found in the cinema. A veritable garden from the Arabian Nights enhanced by a modern artist in decoration.

This excerpt describes the Magic Fountain conceived by Marià Rubió and designed by Carles Buïgas (1898-1979). Still a must-see for tourists today, it epitomizes the aesthetics at work in the IE environment and demonstrates the leap from the previous, unlit Montjuïc fountains to this new form of pleasure. Buïgas’ invention aroused a kind of filmic emotion, stemming in turn from a “vast modern mobilization” that not only included “metropolitan itineraries but also landscape design and the design of memory as housed in the urban museum.” These three aspects were also interwoven in the urban fabric of the Exhibition. The Magic Fountain’s colored light show was the first stop in a longer journey, a haptic one, since seeing become the principal way of being in touch with the environment. Thus, a range of national pavilions and palaces (of Metallurgy and Electricity, Projections, Agriculture, Textile Arts and Applied and Decorative Art, among others) brought together artistic exhibitions and technological demonstrations in the course of an itinerary during which knowledge, imagination, and emotion were also entangled. Not far from these palaces, the Laribal gardens and of the re-urbanized Font del Gat combined classical or Arabian motifs, ornamental fountains and tidy Mediterranean vegetation (see Figure 7). On the eastern side of the hill, the Miramar gardens had a restaurant and panoramic views of the sea and the rest of Barcelona. But this experience, in brief, was about going and seeing rather than about staying.

In the next section, I delve into the aesthetic strategy through which the lights of the IE were infrastructured and how this form of lighting also encompassed the maritime festival that drew the event to a close on July 15, 1930.

A Dazzling Night Vision

In the spring of 1930, large signs announced the program of the still ongoing ‘29 IE at the train stations, Catalunya Square and the port station. From May to July of the previous year, a series of concerts, festivals, and sports events had livened up the first weeks of the fair, whose powerful lights started to shine in Barcelona on the night of May 20. Almost twelve months later, a maritime festival in the harbor was to finalize the event by staging the last light displays. After this closure, many palaces and pavilions would be demolished, and a long debate about the urbanistic direction that Montjuïc should take from then on—basically, whether to continue or not with the construction of residential buildings in an area close to Espanya Square—would go on until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

Although the Magic Fountain was seen as the main exponent of the IE lights from 1929 to 1930, the whole lighting system employed at the venue turned out to be a preeminent feature of the event. Furthermore, the system affords an excellent example of how urban infrastructures involve aesthetics in shaping the ambient conditions of a city, even when the former is aimed at capturing and stimulating the public’s visual attention, thereby molding an appreciative behavior. In this case, the method entailed lighting up the façades and fountains in the
“complete absence of luminous points of the usual lamp supports” throughout the illuminated areas, as a technical report on the characteristics of this “undertaking” prescribed. To this end, for instance, special reflectors, manufactured in Barcelona for the Exhibition and containing “tubular lamps with a straight 2,000-watt filaments,” were used for the illumination of the façades of the Alfonso XIII and Reina Victoria Palaces. And, in the center of this brightly-lit stage, the Magic Fountain appeared both as an “independent” feature and as a contributor to the overall light show.

Carles Buïgas, who was not only the architect of the Magic Fountain but also the person in charge of the lighting system, wished to offer in this way (see Figure 8) an “extraordinary night view of the Exhibition,” as well as “demonstrating to foreigners the vigor and technical skill and potential of Spanish work in this branch of science and art,” that is, that of “decorative illuminations and luminous fountains.” Also, artificial waterfalls and glass obelisks constantly fuelled this dazzling night display by reflecting and elevating the beams of light. The new Montjuïc park now had, besides the Magic Fountain, a “garden of luminous water in the Plaza del Universo, with its 4,000 nozzles, its flow of 1,400 litres of water per second, and its overall dimensions of 40 by 60 metres.” Moreover, the illuminations of façades and fountains were constantly shifting color—from white to blue, red, and yellow—to be “in tune with the spirit of times,” for “the era in which we live is characterized by its emphasis on speed.” According to the report, “we are accustomed to rapid changes, and our nerves will not tolerate a prolonged contemplation of the same scene, however magnificent.”

Consuming more than 4,000 kilowatts to illuminate fountains, façades, and glass obelisks, the lighting system faced a technical difficulty not directly related, however, to its power supply. In order to appear “magical and mysterious,” the illuminations could not show “how the effect is produced”; thus, the reflectors could not be seen when projecting the lights and had to be hidden by “sheets of segmented glass.” In other words, the apparatus that made the IE buildings visible after dark, while they brought astonishment and enchantment to the night, needed to stay

Figure 7. A couple and a girl staring at a fountain in the Laribal gardens in 1919.
Source: Image by Lucien Roisin, courtesy of the Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona.
off-camera. This again is like a film in which the main character is the urban as spectacle, that is, Barcelona to be admired in all its splendid, shiny new clothes, while the projector remains unseen in the booth. Before the advent of the lights, Montjuïc had demanded a bodily immersion for its enjoyment. This is not to say, however, that the gaze later called up by this kind of city symphony was disembodied, since this is impossible, but rather that vision gained prominence over the other senses in sustaining an admiring form of approaching, sensing and moving through that part of Barcelona.

Also at night, the maritime festival that brought the IE to an end once again drew on this aesthetics. The bond between the fair and the harbor was celebrated on July 15, 1930, coinciding with the festivity of the Virgen del Carmen, the patron saint of the sea. The ports of Valencia and Sant Feliu de Guixols also participated in this final event, which consisted in a procession of decorated vessels accompanied by music and all kinds of lights. Five military bands, four civil bands, two of cornet players, three choirs, and a cobla were hired for the occasion. For illumination, the harbor was filled with garlands and colored lanterns, and five firework “castles” were let off in the docks, as well as a great number of palm-like fireworks and a flaming cascade on the Miramar side of the port. In addition to this display, the Levante dock line was lit up with sparklers. Although this time, the lighting apparatus was provisional and perfectly visible, the port infrastructures thus sanctioned the illumined urban night the Exhibition had turned Barcelona into from 1929 to 1930, taking the mountain of Montjuïc as their focal point for the purpose.

**What a City Becomes**

Claiming in his memoirs to have been the main instigator of Montjuïc’s transformation, first as city councilor and later as commissioner of the IE, Francesc Cambó compares his role during the...
urbanization of the mountain to that of an artist: “I am, above all, a producer, and visual productions, especially those combining beauty and public service, are for me much more satisfying than anything else.” Montjuïc, he adds, “would not have existed without my actions.” In the “Before the Lights and Beneath the Bad Reputation” section of this article, however, we established that the hill did in fact have a sociocultural existence of its own—that is, as a green infrastructure—before 1915. Moreover, I presented this existence as materially related to forms of pleasure clearly different from, and in many senses aesthetically opposed to, the “civilized” fun that came with the monumental expansion of the ’29 IE. Cambó’s words, in any case, can be read in terms of the regime of pleasure that was established by the Exhibition. This regime arose from the attempt to turn the mountain into an urban artwork, a living picture-postcard taking its spectacular shape by means of landscaping, encircling the area with ostentatious buildings and illuminating a rugged, mostly rural environment.

Very often, this regime appealed to experiences of the beautiful, mainly provided by the “poetry” of the new modernist gardens and to a kind of sublime, provoked by the encounter with this new urban night conjured up by mass lighting and abundant waterfalls. In so doing, it clearly followed a Kantian aesthetical tradition, conceiving the eye as “a mind’s eye [. . .] whereas the rest of the senses were numbed or an-aesthetized.” Passages through the IE venue and Montjuïc park were designed to set the gaze in motion and provoke awe at the radiant infrastructures. But this could only take place after having infrastructured the hill to make it easily walkable. In the remodeled area, there were fountains and restaurants too, but they had little in common with the picnic areas where the lower classes of Barcelona had enjoyed their free time before 1915. According to Susan Buck-Morss, “the original field of aesthetics is not art but reality—corporeal, material nature.” Prior to focusing on the autonomous appreciation of cultural objects, this aisthesis entails a form of cognition achieved through the whole corporeal sensorium, a sensible way of knowing which was also mobilized by the old Montjuïc through walking, dancing, eating, drinking, listening to, touching, and, of course, seeing. The bodies which joined in the fontades, to a large extent to shake off the narrow confines of their daily lives in the industrial city, were at odds with Kant’s transcendental subject, who “purges himself of the senses which endanger autonomy not only because they unavoidably entangle him in the world, but, specifically, because they make him passive.” In contrast to this autotelic understanding, the pleasure on offer at the hill before the ’29 IE lights did not evoke disinterested judgments of taste but provided empirical, sensible experiences, which were arranged as bodily breaks in routine life.

Throughout this article, infrastructures have been approached as socio-material forces that determine atmospheric conditions, sensorial landscapes and architectural forms for pleasure. In this account, Bennett’s cultural and ideological understanding of regimes of pleasure has been recast in the light of the recent infrastructural turn in urban studies, which has started to see “trunk networks, the built environment, and public utilities and services [. . .] not only as subjects of interest in their own right, but also as matters implicated in the making of urban functionality, sociality and identity.” Therefore, the changing practices of pleasure within and around Montjuïc are not merely the consequence of discourses and/or constructed images of “progress, respectability and modernity,” as Bennett argues regarding the Pleasure Beach amusement park in Blackpool (Lancashire, UK). The ’29 IE infrastructures, similarly to Montjuïc in its entirety taken as a green infrastructure before 1915, not only molded but were also expressive of particular forms of having fun. In other words, they did not just lead people to enjoy this area of Barcelona in a certain way, but also promised a kind of joy, which was also advertised, in the case of the Exhibition, in a flood of propaganda.

Before and after the lights of the ’29 International Exhibition, the mountain of Montjuïc hosted two different types of bodily reactions to its lived environment—even if one of them essentially consisted in admiring the beauty of the new promenades. Overlooking and often
directly connected to the port, each set of practices sought to have pleasure at the same time as populating and reconfiguring the borders of Barcelona. But no pleasure takes place without the socio-material forms which attune human bodies to urban milieux, thereby shaping both and envisaging, moreover, what a city becomes.

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Notes
1. Francisco Javier Monclús and José Luís Oyón, “La ciudad como exposición. Técnicas de modernización y embellecimiento urbano en la Exposición Universal de 1888 de Barcelona,” Revista Técnica 1 (May 1988): 3-17.
2. Monclús and Oyón, “La ciudad como exposición,” 15.
3. Much later, the preparation of the 1992 Summer Olympics again drew on both the 1888 Universal Exposition and the 1929 International Exhibition to give historical arguments about the positive impact of this kind of events on the modernization of Barcelona. See Monclús and Oyón, “La ciudad como exposición,” 3.
4. Tony Bennet, “Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool,” in Popular Culture and Social Relations, ed. Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), 135-54. I am indebted to Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Alvarez for this key reference.
5. Ash Amin, “Lively Infrastructure,” Theory, Culture & Society 31, no. 7-8 (October 2014): 137.
6. Jojada Verrips, “Aisthesis and an-Aesthesis,” in Off the Edge: Experiments in Cultural Analysis, ed. Orvar Löfgren and Richard Wilk (Copenhagen: Mus. Tusculanem, 2006), 29-36.
7. Bennet, “Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool,” 136.
8. Mike Michael, Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature. From Society to Heterogeneity (London: Routledge, 2000), 36.
9. Vicent Casals Costa, “Barcelona, Lisboa y Forestier: Del parque urbano a la ciudad-parque,” Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales XIII, no. 296 (August 2009).
10. Brian Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,” Annual Review of Anthropology 42 (October 2013): 327-43.
11. Amin, “Lively Infrastructure,” 138.
12. Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,” 329.
13. Alberto Corsín Jiménez, “The Right to Infrastructure: A Prototype for Open Source Urbanism,” Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 32 (January 2014): 342-62.
14. Johannes Langemeyer, Francesc Baró, Peter Roebeling, and Erik Gómez-Baggethun, “Contrasting Values of Cultural Ecosystem Services in Urban Areas: The Case of Park Montjuïc in Barcelona,” Ecosystem Services 12 (April 2015): 178-86.
15. The term “lower classes” refers to the common people with no capital (or at least none that was significant) or political privileges: domestic servants and industrial workers, the “underclass,” artisans, small shopkeepers, and so on. During the nineteenth century, these were the “overwhelming majority in the streets of [Barcelona],” as well as being the main supporters of the most radical and progressive currents of liberalism, according to Martí Marín, “L’altra cara de la muntanya. Barcelona i Montjuïc, fins a la primeria del segle xx (els usos no militars),” in Montjuïc: Memòries en conflicte. El castell, la muntanya i la ciutat, ed. Manel Risques and Martí Marín (Barcelona: L’esfera dels llibres, 2008), 130-31. On the historiographic definition of the “clases populares” [ordinary or common people] as those deprived of social power, see Clara E. Lida, “¿Qué son las clases populares? Los modelos europeos
frente al caso español en el siglo xix,” Historia Social 27, no. 27 (1997): 3-21.

16. The documentary sources evidencing these practices are scarce, fragmentary, and often photographic. This, along with the fact that there remain no oral testimonies or living witnesses, makes it difficult to present detailed vignettes on the socio-material uses of the mountain before 1915. Press articles from this period and later helped me redress this shortage, while photos and captions by Frederic Ballell (1864-1951) and Josep Brangulí (1879-1945) give significant evidence of the places, bodies, and atmospheres that populated Montjuïc at the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to this, the ‘29 IE board produced a great number of documents, images and speeches about the fair, its infrastructures and forms of entertainment. The re-urbanization of Montjuïc was photographically recorded from the start (see in this respect Rafael Torrella, El registre fotogràfic de Montjuïc. 1915-1923. La metamorfosi d’una muntanya [Barcelona: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat, 2008]). I have consulted the Barcelona City Council archive on the ‘29 IE in depth, focusing on the pleasure on offer through its infrastructural network.

17. Marín, “L’altra cara de la muntanya,” 135-6.

18. Barcelona was bombarded several times from Montjuïc Castle during the first half of the nineteenth century, mainly to put down the riots and uprisings that broke out in the period. The castle was also a prison for anarchists, trade unionists, and revolutionaries in the last two decades of the century. Additionally, this military presence limited Barcelona Council’s freedom to remodel the mountain, delaying its urbanistic transformation until the twentieth century. See Marín, “L’altra cara de la muntanya.”

19. Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,” 337.

20. Ibid., 336.

21. Santiago Rusiñol, “Las fuentes no medicinales de Montjuïc,” La Vanguardia, August 11, 1889, 1-2.

22. Rusiñol’s article stresses that the wealthy inhabitants of Barcelona looked for “foreign waters” on their holidays, while the petty bourgeoisie went to other parts of Catalonia, or even to the Cantabrian coast, also to take a “liquid” break. Thus, for them water was a symbol of health, rest, and status (depending on the location).

23. Verrips, “Aisthesis and an-Aesthesia,” 28.

24. Sempronio, Aquella entremaliada Barcelona (Barcelona: Selecta, 1978), 153-60.

25. From 1901 to 1923, the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya (Regionalist League of Catalonia) was the dominant Catalan political party. Founded in April 1901, it was conservative and monarchic, and formed part of Barcelona city council and the Government of Catalonia several times before the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

26. Francesc Cambó, Memòries (1876-1936) (Barcelona: Alpha, 1981), 220-21.

27. Together with Joan Pich i Pon and Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956), Cambó was commissioner of the event.

28. Juli Vallmitjana, La Xava (Barcelona: Edicions de 1984, 2003), 104. Although Vallmitjana’s works are fictional, they all have a documentary basis. The author knew first-hand the Roma communities living in shacks in Montjuïc, while his essay-talk Criminalidad típica local [Typical Local Criminality] (1910) describes criminal typologies and methods like those that appear in his novels.

29. Sempronio, Aquella entremaliada Barcelona, 160.

30. In the ‘20s, the old Montjuïc was still often remembered as, for instance, “a shelter and a hideout for all the social ills.” Manuel Valldeperes, La Nau, November 11, 1928, 1.

31. “Exposició d’Indústries Elèctriques,” La Veu de Catalunya, July 18, 1915, 1.

32. Guillem Fernández González, “Els primers intents d’urbanització de Montjuïc 1887-1914,” Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d’Estudis Històrics XXI (2010): 157-175.

33. Estanislau Roca i Blanch, “La construcció de la muntanya de Montjuïc” (PhD diss., Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 1993), 365.

34. The architect Nicolás María Rubió Tuduri (1891-1981), son of the technical director of the ‘29 IE Marià Rubió (1862-1938), became Forestier’s assistant and took charge of concluding the landscaping following Forestier’s style.

35. Roca i Blanch, “La construcció de la muntanya de Montjuïc,” 373.

36. Fernández González, “Els primers intents d’urbanització de Montjuïc 1887-1914,” 167.
37. This description is taken from an Exhibition board’s internal document about the urbanization of Montjuïc from 1914 to 1921.

38. Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez, “Technological Fun. The Politics and Geographies of Amusement Parks,” in *Barcelona: An Urban History of Science and Modernity*, ed. Oliver Hochadel and Agustí Nieto-Galan (London: Routledge, 2016), 92-112.

39. Giuliana Bruno, “Architecture and the Moving Image: A Haptic Journey from Pre- to Post-Cinema,” *La Furia Humana* 34 (2008).

40. Ibid.

41. A *cobla* is a group of musicians, generally eleven, who play *sardanes*, the Catalan national dance tunes.

42. Cambó, *Memòries (1876-1936)*, 224.

43. Such poetry also took literary shape. An “historical-descriptive” collection of poems about the ‘29 IE by Ricardo García Prieto was published in 1930. The first canto of the book is dedicated to the “fountains and lights” of Montjuïc and starts with the poet’s interior monologue: “Walk slowly; stay a while / your brisk pace, anxious to arrive, / stop and witness the great and sublime / vista of things you could never dream of. / You are enraptured! Your mind rejoices! / [. . .] It is neither sorcery nor miracle-working, / it is reality.” Ricardo García Prieto, *Poema histórico descriptivo en verso de la Exposición Universal de Barcelona año 1929* (Barcelona: La Tipográfica, 1930), 15.

44. Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips, “Aesthetics,” in *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, ed. David Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 23.

45. Susan Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered,” *October* 62 (1992): 6.

46. Ibid., 9.

47. Amin, “Lively Infrastructure,” 137.

48. Bennet, “Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool,” 147.

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