

Homage to Catalonia's sculptor

CATALONIA is a Mediterranean state in Spain with its own language and a culture that originated a thousand years ago. But the capital, Barcelona, one of the most impressive and culturally vital cities in Europe, has been through great changes in the past decade.

Its revitalisation is almost exclusively due to hosting the 1992 Olympic Games. After the fall of Franco and the introduction of democracy in 1978, the city aimed to host the Games. Already influenced

by the eccentric architecture of Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926), Barcelona set about transforming itself.

This was done through public art commissions, many of which were awarded to famous American artists, and the marketing brilliance of the designer of the Olympic mascot, Mariscal. Among the locals to secure a

commission was Enric Pladevall, a selection of whose work is showing at Gallery 101 in Melbourne until June 28.

Pladevall grew up in Vic, a city 60 kilometres north of Barcelona, close to the fertile visual arts environment established by compatriots Joan Miro, Salvador Dali and Antoni Tapies. Pladevall was also influenced by the minimalist work of Italian artist Lucio Fontana, and his work demonstrates a keen interest in Art Povera ("poor" art).

Pladevall was selected as the only Spanish artist to produce a permanent public sculpture for the Atlanta Games (in the company of Tony Cragg of Britain and Siah Armajani of the US). The resultant piece, *Androgynous Planet*, was installed at Centennial Olympic Park. Its construc-

tion demanded high technological precision, such as laser cutting, to achieve the sophisticated finish.

The sculptor does not want his work to dictate to people. He responds to the fact that each person's experience is different, and enjoys playing with materials in ways that can trigger the imagination.

His recent work contains traces of the installation at the Miro Foundation in 1980 that started his reputation, based on memories of hand-made toys from his childhood. Some pieces, such as *Bolit II*, continue to refer to formative experiences, playing with scale and materials and their odd juxtapositions. There are also echoes of Catalan architecture and African tribal art in his forms.

— ADAM DUTKIEWICZ

Box of Ideas
(1996) in wood
and copper



Top: *Demon II* (1996) in wood and copper;
above: *Titan XIX* (1995) in stainless steel and wood



Blue Disc (1996) in wood, copper and lead



Androgynous Planet,
(1995-96) commissioned
for Centennial Olympic
Park in Atlanta