



ERICA LANSNER—BLACK STAR

**A marvel of playful sculpture and engineering: Solà-Morales's bridge**

New York's Guggenheim Museum, that introduced the Spanish public to such American artists as Richard Artschwager and helped boost the fame of Barceló, Sicilia and the Barcelona painter Ferrán García Sevilla, who were given one-man shows. Now the ministry is finishing renovations on Madrid's Reina Sofia museum of modern art, a cavernous, austere place built in the 18th century as a hospital.

Barcelona, meanwhile, is creating a museum for contemporary art, just one project in a construction frenzy leading up to the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. The fiercely independent city is keeping its proud Catalan nose up, and the national government, in the rival city of Madrid, isn't kicking in one peseta for the museum.

The design approach, typical of Barcelona, is audacious: American architect Richard Meier, handpicked by the mayor, is squeezing one of his sleek white metal-and-glass buildings into the ancient rabbit warren of narrow streets and crumbling structures of the Gothic quarter, behind an old convent.

"In Barcelona, the relationship between design and fine art has been there since Antonio Gaudí," says Daniel Giralt-Miracle, director of the new museum, talking about the mad genius of the *modernista* style—or art nouveau—who created the fantastic unfinished church, the Sagrada Familia. In that tradition of intertwining art and architecture, Barcelona has launched a hugely ambitious public-art project, teaming architects with sculptors

to create more than 100 plazas. As advising architect Oriol Bohigas has put it, Barcelona "has again undertaken the tradition of the vanguard . . . that on so many occasions its own country tried to deny."

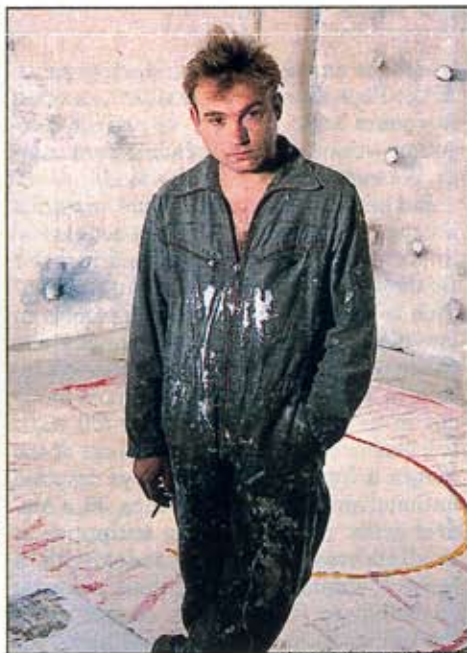
So the city is full of incredibly varied public art—new pieces by the Godfather of Catalan art, Antoni Tàpies, and the great Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida. Xavier Corberó has made a delicate marble piece of waves, sun and moon in one plaza. Apelles Fenosa's figures, "Fair Days in Pursuit of the Storm," dominates an intersection. A playful red pedestrian bridge by architect Manuel Solà-Morales, along the palm-lined esplanade he designed, is a marvel of both sculpture and engineering. And the program has become a major showcase for such emerging Catalan talents as Jaume Plensa and Enric Pladevall, 38.

**Initial euphoria:** Success for the new generation has come fast—maybe too fast. "Ten years ago, culture was a luxury," says the *Sevillano* abstract painter Juan Suárez. In the excitement "the doors were opened for mediocrity." Spain needs more serious criticism, say Mar Villaespesa and Kevin Power, editors of a new art magazine, *Arena*. And there's disillusionment among artists with all the hype and commercialism. "At first there was energy," says Juan Uslé, a painter from Santander who left for Brooklyn, N.Y., on a grant two years ago. "Later, it was the materialism of the energy." A sense of initial euphoria is over, as many artists settle down to grapple with the direction of their art. "The situation needs 10 years of growing and discussion," says Villaespesa. But that shouldn't be surprising or too discouraging. After all, as Madrid dealer Marga Paz puts it, "We are at the beginning of something after so many years of having nothing." ■

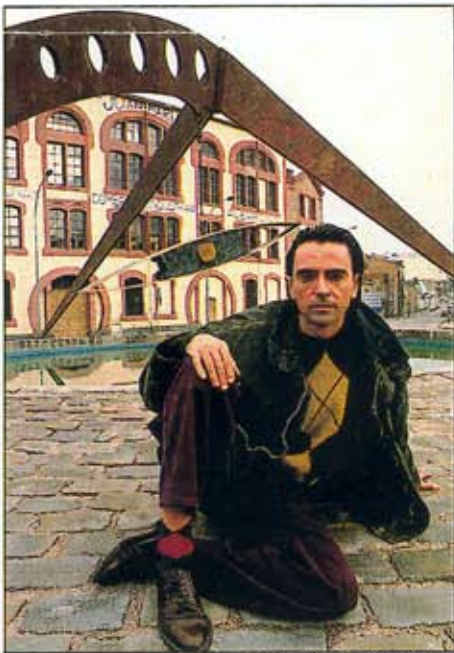


RALF-FINN HESTOFT—SABA

**When success comes calling: Solano** (above), Barceló in his Paris studio, Pladevall with one of his outdoor sculptures for a town near Barcelona



JEAN—MARIE DEL MORAL



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