

Iconographic study

Josep Lluís Pellicer i Fenyé (Barcelona, 1842 – 1901)

Poster for the Universal Exposition

1888

Lithograph on paper

260 x 110 cm

inv. no. 556336



The figure seen on the left, dressed in Roman clothes and wearing a blue toga, is surrounded by objects connected with industrial progress. On her right, a photography camera; at her feet, an owl—the attribute of Athena, the goddess of Reason—is perched on a book; next to it is another book, this time held open by a branch of coral and a set square, probably alluding to the scientific expeditions that were being carried out since the beginning of the century. To her left, partially concealed by her clothing, there is an alembic next to an electric coil in reference to the recent arrival of electricity and possibly to the creation in 1881 of the first electricity company in Spain, precisely in Barcelona. The Universal Exposition, held in the recently created Parque de la Ciudadela, brought new life to the La Ribera neighbourhood as well as lighting to the public areas of the complex and to the main streets of the city leading towards it. Finally, we can also see an armillary sphere, used to show the movements of the stars around the Earth or the Sun.



The figure seated at the right, also wearing Roman clothing, holds a palette in her left hand, together with paintbrushes and a maulstick, while in her right hand she is holding a paintbrush allegorical to the Fine Arts. The lyre on her right alludes to music; next to it, on a small plinth consisting of an Ionic column stands a small figure of Athena, goddess of Reason, also associated with the Arts.

Barcelona was an important industrial city, and Pellicer also reflects this fact in the urban landscape seen behind the allegory of Industry. In turn, behind the allegory of the Fine Arts we can make out the silhouette of the Columbus Column, erected at the port in Barcelona and designed for the Universal Exposition by the architect Gaietà Buigas (1851-1919). The sculpture of Columbus was executed by Rafael Atché (1854-1923), and the monument also included collaborations by artists of the stature of Josep Llimona (1864-1934).



The ensemble pays homage to the city of Barcelona, a pioneer in Spain in hosting a Universal Exposition, which had a profound impact on the society of the time.