



Fortuny

Pere Gimferrer

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'[Pere Gimferrer] is a great poet and also knows everything.'-Roberto Bolaño

Scion of an artistic dynasty, inventor, photographer, and costumier of genius, Mariano Fortuny was a touchstone of the Belle Époque: he built stages for Wagner, designed dresses for Sarah Bernhardt, and was a crucial inspiration for Proust's philosophy of memory. The list of his illustrious acquaintances ranges from D'Annunzio to Chaplin, from Caruso to Isadora Duncan, and in this, the first novel by Spain's Pere Gimferrer to be translated into English, they gather like actors on a stage, in Venetian palaces, in Parisian apartments, and in the village squares of the small towns of Catalonia, forming an historical tableau of the vigor and dissipation of Europe's artistic demimonde from the end of the Third Republic to the outbreak of the second World War.

Employing the unmatched lyrical inventiveness and range that have made him recognized as Spain's most distinguished poet, Gimferrer has composed a paeon to vanished artistic grandeur, suggesting the fragility of the line dividing the real from the imagined: Whatever the eye can see dissolves into a tapestry of prose woven of light and shadow. Proust's description of Fortuny's fabrics applies equally to Gimferrer's words: 'faithfully antique but markedly original, [they] brought before the eye like a stage décor, and with an even greater evocative power since the décor was left to the imagination, a Venice saturated with oriental splendor ...'

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