

Clear vision

In a world of too-bright LED lights, respected Spanish brand Marset casts a warmer glow on the business of lamp design. We meet the enlightened makers at its new HQ.

By *Saul Taylor*
Photography *Mariano Herrera*

Javier Marset is a happy *jefe*. After a hearty welcome, the third-generation owner of the eponymous light-manufacturing firm beams in the glow of his vintage desk lamp. “I found this in a notary’s office,” says Marset. “I offered him a brand new one to take it off his hands,” he adds with a wink. “It was made by my father and uncle in the 1970s.” The chrome tube lamp is beautiful. It sits on Marset’s Jean Prouvé office desk in the family firm’s recently opened headquarters-cum-factory in Terrassa, a few kilometres north of Barcelona. The new production facility is a big step for the company; it had outgrown its previous base closer to the centre of the Catalan capital in Badalona.

Like many family businesses that have weathered generations of economic and social unrest, Marset began by doing one thing well and evolved slowly over time. The company’s current slogan, “Taking care of light”, alludes to an innate watchfulness across the whole business. During the 1940s, Javier’s grandfather, Paco Marset, set up a small smelting business in Barcelona that would furnish the city with ironmongery. In 1979, Javier’s father and uncle took that expertise and turned Marset into a lighting brand. When Javier, his brother Carlos and cousin Dani joined in the 1990s, they transformed Marset again by focusing on design, quality and retaining manufacturing in Spain.

While it is nigh on impossible to manufacture a purely “Made in Europe” lighting fixture competitively, Marset prides itself on its efforts to build a majority of its items from European parts. “It’s personal but also a business decision,” says Javier. “The quality and variety of European

components are very high. There is this mistaken belief that Europe is deindustrialised, that we are somehow postindustrial. I don’t think that’s true. We’re proud to support fellow manufacturers in the European community.”

All of the 100,000 lights it produces every year are assembled in Terrassa. This facility – based in an old works that built machinery for the chocolate industry – was retrofitted by architect Stefano Colli. He has worked with the family for 23 years on the firm’s offices, showrooms and stands. “This was the perfect occasion to gather all the values in a single space,” says Colli. “We designed the interior of the production and storage warehouses, the employee rest areas, the offices, the showroom, and the outdoor gardens with landscaper Josep Farriol. We dismantled the precast concrete façade and put up a glass window. We defined the colours and lighting. It is a large-scale identity project.”

Indeed, the Terrassa headquarters is a direct reflection of the Marset mindset of collaboration and wellbeing. Every employee is afforded their own workstation. There is plenty of natural light in both the office and the factory, and each area flows easily into the next, allowing for a workflow that follows the pathway of the entire design and production process, from planning to shipment.

Marset and Colli sought out other brands to furnish the space and took guidance from Swiss brand Vitra by installing cleanly designed furniture from Artek and Oktoberfest picnic tables from Munich in the canteen. Although the facility is larger than two football pitches, the design makes the space feel intimate.



(1) Entrance to the new HQ (2) FollowMe lamps (3) Assembling line (4) Dipping Light pendants (5) Josep Farriol’s indoor jungle (6) Brothers Carlos and Javier with Blau (7) Javier and the Milana

