

SABLOS

PEOPLE and their PLACES

READY
TO
TAKE
OFF!

•
WE TALK TO
THE WORLD'S MOST
INSPIRING PEOPLE

•
ABOUT THE PLACES
THEY LOVE IN THE
CITIES THEY LIVE



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01



Professional Opinion with Javier Marset

– Barcelona –

LIGHT TOUCH

Have you ever imagined a city through the eyes of someone's profession? We asked lighting entrepreneur **Javier Marset** to meet us for good food, fine wine and great company in the places that he considers to be the best-lit spots in his hometown of Barcelona.

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Javier Marset is the CEO of Marset, one of Spain's most creative and well-regarded lighting brands. Founded as a smelting business in 1940 by his grandfather, it was turned into a lighting company in 1979 by Javier's father and uncle. Javier and his brother, Carlos, and cousin, Dani, transformed it again in the 1990s into a global brand. Javier is known throughout the design industry for his affectionate demeanour and infectious laugh. A friend of ours for many years, we like to call Javier the "happy *jefe*" for his positive approach to design and his belief in a corporate culture that

values employees' wellbeing above all else. We spent two days bouncing around Barcelona's best-lit bars, *bodegas* and dining rooms to find out why light is often the least considered, yet most important element for changing environments in hospitality.

"The places I chose make me feel good," says Javier. "They offer excellent food and they are run by kind, funny and sometimes even crazy folks. The light should be great but that's not as important as the people. People, food, drinks and lighting – these are the elements that add up to create the perfect ambience."

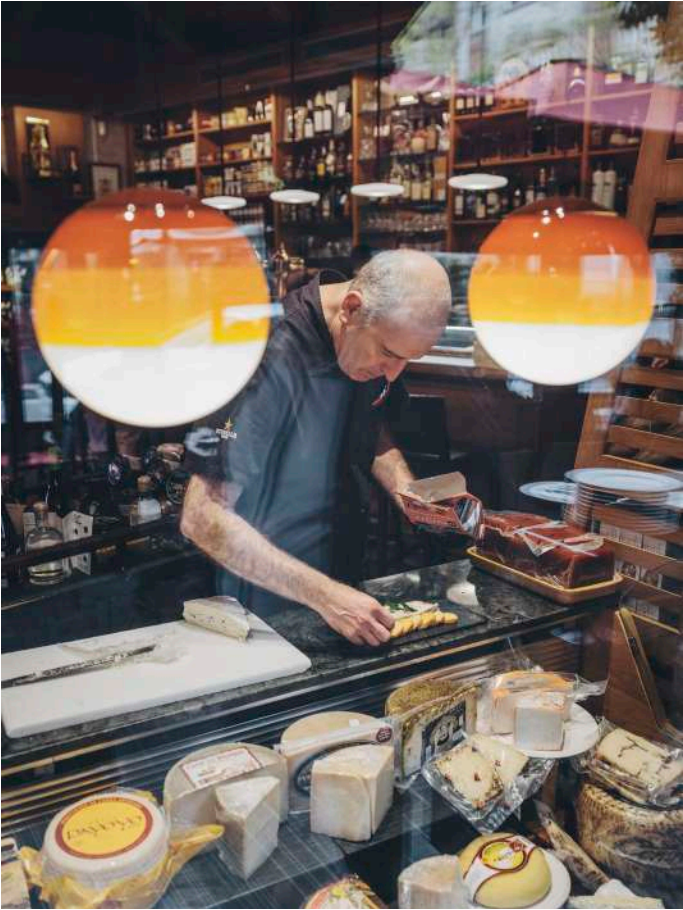
“Why does a shop have to look like a shop? Of course, it doesn’t, so we decided that it should be lit like a great residential kitchen where you would invite your friends”

“Casa Pepe is a recent project that we completed a few months ago. I have been a client here for many years. It’s a local hangout for the people of the neighbourhood where you can have a drink, an aperitivo, a fast bite at the bar. It’s also a restaurant with a beautiful menu of simple, fresh food. And it is also a grocery store with the highest quality products – it is a wholesaler of the finest producers and products, such as Cinco Jotas’ *jamón Ibérico bellota* – which are examples of the very best in Spanish gastronomy. Above all, it is a place where you could eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day of your life. I particularly enjoy the breakfasts on the weekend.

“Our approach to the lighting was first to think, ‘Why does a shop have to look like a shop?’ Of course, it doesn’t, so we decided that it should be lit like a great residential kitchen where you would invite your friends. So now it has a homely atmosphere – very easy on the eye, with a warm light. We invited local interior designer Barbara Aurell, who was delighted to help. When we told her where it was, she said, ‘Casa Pepe! Of course, my father used to go every day. When I was a kid, we would go there for dinner on Christmas Eve.’ Everyone around here has fond memories of Casa Pepe.”

casapepe.es

01	Marset Dipping Lights in the window of Casa Pepe
02	Anchovies for breakfast
03	Cinco Jotas <i>bellota</i> ham and <i>tortilla de patata</i>
04	Óscar Agustín outside the establishment



BAR
BODEGA

“Our old factory wasn’t too far from here. When I wanted to offer customers of mine a surprise and take them to a super authentic place, I would bring them here”

“El bar de los tontos!” This roughly translates as the ‘silly people’s bar’ because the previous owners sold it and no one could understand why, as it is such a goldmine. I have been coming here for years and I didn’t know that story. And we wouldn’t have found out unless we had spoken to the locals. Poblenuou is traditionally an industrial neighbourhood with a working-class population but now it has become a hub for technology and is one of the most booming places in the city. You go to Bar Bodega because it is *the* place for an aperitivo. It only opens four days a week for four hours.

“I used to come here a lot more often because our old factory wasn’t too far from here. When I wanted to offer customers of mine a surprise and take them to a super authentic place, I would bring them here. For instance, I am very good friends with Theo, Charles and Alex of US lighting firm Rich Brilliant Willing. Before they set up their company, they were designers. They came 10 or 12 years ago to develop a collection with us, and I brought them to this place. Now, every time I see them, they talk about it! It’s a place that hits you. It’s kitsch in the coolest sense. For example, the owner, Juan, decided to collect keyrings and put them on the wine barrels. Now people bring them for him and he must have 500 across the bar. And it has the original *tablao* floor because Juan’s mother is a flamenco singer and dancer. It is a very simple place with a lot of natural light but you get the best quality anchovies, olives and crisps. It’s the best aperitivo in town.”

01	The unassuming exterior of Bar Bodega
02	Best aperitivo in town with <i>vermut</i> and anchovies
03	Juan’s keyring collection adorns the barrels
04	Juan and his mother behind the bar





01 They salt the anchovies by hand in the back of the bar

02 A menu to behold on a Saturday afternoon



“Architect Jean Nouvel took inspiration from these simple wall lights for the façade of his famed Torre Agbar across town”

01	Marc Maulini in front of Jean Nouvel's inspiration
02	Oysters and a habas bean salad
03	Crunchy anchovy spines are a house delicacy



ELS PESCADORS

“I have known the Maulini-Duran family for the past 30 years and have been to their restaurant many times. If you want to have the right fish and the right rice, then this is the place. But not paella, because 99 per cent of paellas in this city are shit. I'm sure it's OK here but if you see a sign outside a restaurant in Barcelona that says, 'Best paella in town', I guarantee it will be one of the worst you will ever taste. Seriously, the food at Els Pescadors is excellent. It has some wonderful history. The interior has two completely different set-ups. One is the traditional fishermen's tavern with the marble tables up front. Then, at the back, the dining room was renovated in the early 1990s during the whole Olympic furore, a moment when everything had to be design-led. As part of the project, a bespoke light was developed for the room. Architect Jean Nouvel once visited and took inspiration from these simple wall lights for the façade of his famed Torre Agbar across town.

“In terms of natural light, the pedestrian square at the front of the restaurant, with those incredible Belambra trees where the children play, has a beautiful, dappled quality. There is a magical feeling to the *plça*. With its low, white buildings from the mid 19th century, it is one of the only remaining original squares in the neighbourhood.”

elspescadors.com





- 01 A bottle of cava is shared on the roof terrace
- 02 You can never have enough anchovy spines and *longaniza* cured sausage



If it all gets a bit much, check yourself into the Brummel Hotel around the corner from Xemei!



“Xemei is a classic that was opened by Max and Stefano Colombo, twin brothers from Venice – ‘Xemei’ means ‘twins’ in the Venetian dialect. Barcelona embraces foreign cuisine and there is a tradition of good Italian restaurants here. When they were renovating their space at the beginning, they asked legendary lighting guru Antonio Higuera to do the project. He knows that I’m a foodie too and one day he asked me to join him at Xemei for dinner to show me. He took a simple approach by hanging different lamps but it works so well. We have several of our pieces hanging here, including the very first versions of our popular Pleat Box.

“I like to see the way our lights are used in different settings. My profession is lighting and design, so if I go to a place with great food and good service, and I see that with nicer lighting the place will be better, I tell them. It might simply be changing the colour temperature or by adding lights here or there. Lighting in hospitality has improved in the past 10 years as venues have realised that a simple space can be enhanced by choosing a great light. I’m going to give you two secrets: 60 per cent of the quality of a project is achieved by avoiding glare; and the light should be put where it is needed. In a restaurant, you need the light on the table where people eat. It sounds simple but it’s so easy to get wrong.”

xemei.es

“The light should be put where it is needed. In a restaurant, you need the light on the table where people eat. It sounds simple but it’s so easy to get wrong”

01	Sharing a laugh with chef Max Colombo
02	Escalopes to start
03	An insanely good side dish of tossed peas



“Sips is a new place for cocktails in the city. There is a tradition for cocktail bars in Barcelona, dating back to when the harbour was a regular stop for the US Navy. The sailors brought the US concept of a bar with them because they wanted somewhere to drink with their mates. Nowadays, the city is flooded with bars. Of the three or four here ranked in the Top 10 of the World’s 50 Best, Sips is number three. The guys from Sips come from the galaxy of El Bulli and they use the same passion and creativity to develop their drinks. It’s really a moment for cocktails, and that’s why there’s a queue outside. I was recently in Milan for design week, where there is also a tradition of cocktails. I was queueing in the street there too!

“If Bar Bodega is tradition, then Sips is the future. I recently spoke with Marc Alvarez, the owner, and he asked me to help him upgrade the lighting. He’s someone who is obsessed with the ambience and had low-intensity candlelight on the tables. Candlelight is the nicest light you can have and it’s perfect for a cocktail bar but it can become annoying. We have designed a special battery-powered portable lamp specifically for cocktail bars. We are calling it Sips, as a little wink to the bar. It is tall – the exact height of a wine bottle – and thin, so it does not bother the patrons. The light is ideal for such an intimate setting.” ①

[sips. barcelona](#)

One of Marc Alvarez’s innovative cocktails



Francisco the bartender takes five



Marset relaxes at the end of a busy day with two of his Sips lamps

