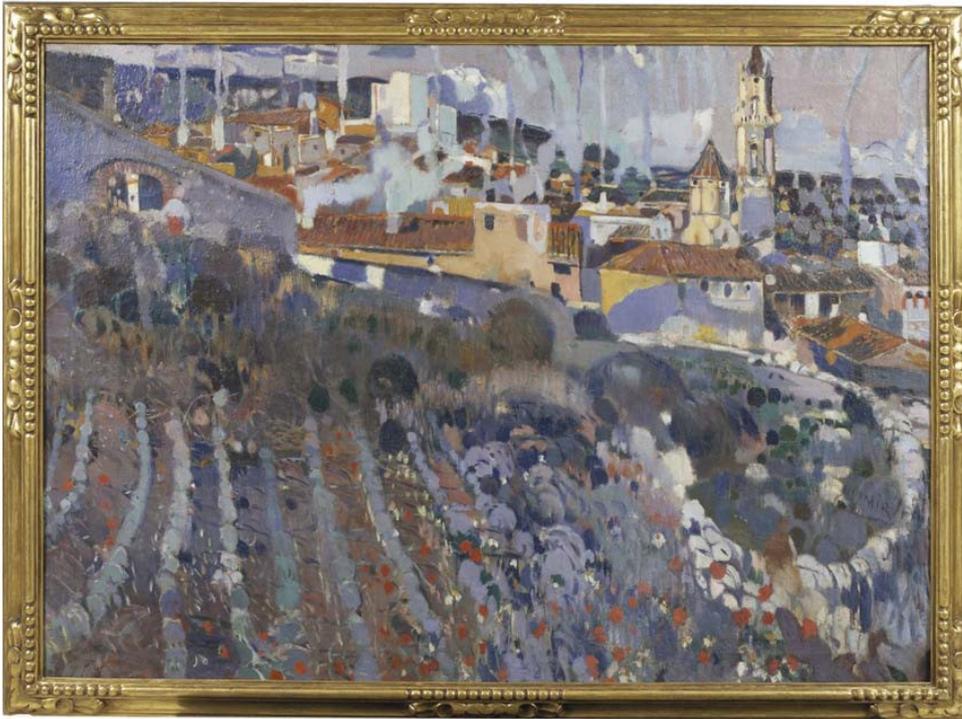


Joaquim Mir
Terraced Village

THE WITCHES OF WITCHBY

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It was morning in Witchby, a paradise full of witches, who, of course, never went out into the street during the day because they were preparing their cauldrons full of spells with secret formula. They had sprinkled a coloured magic powder all over the village so that the closer strangers got, the less they saw it. I don't know how I managed to hide away in the highest tower and see everything they were doing.

And this was how I learnt about

THE WITCHES OF WITCHBY

At night, the witches came out to pick the plants that they cultivated on the outskirts of the village: mandrake, poppies, broom, wild rosemary, camomile, maliarda, known as the sleeping plant.

They all knew the secrets of nature, the thousands of possibilities that magic potions provide; they had mastered spells.

Late at night they gathered at the castle and thought up new potions: blue to freeze people, red for amorous spells, purple for seeing through bodies, green for passing exams. They made them in all colours for all sorts of people and situations.

No birds were never seen flying in the sky as the smoke coming from the chimneys turned them into airplanes in a flash.

Oh, and these witches didn't fly around on broomsticks, they got onto the clouds to travel around the world, just like catching the bus. There was cloud number one, which took them to America, number two to Europe, three to Africa, four to Asia and five to Oceania.

Through the windows of the houses, the few, like me, who managed to get close to Witchby, had heard magical words or diabolical spells like *frinskipelinskipumpkin sum ... ivy eyesprunacadabra ... fumi clan maleficus san ... incantatorser crocodile mec ...* Or everyone's favourite: *if you want to put your nose here you'll become blurred.*

Hang on. Did I say that the witches don't go out in the daytime? Well, from here, the highest tower, I can see one in a red skirt. By the way, the red is the colour of love, isn't it? She can't want me to fall in love with her, can she? Ooh, I'm scared, I'm going to run away.

It's very difficult to see any, but just in case, you now know, boys and girls, that if one day in your city you see a woman in a red skirt it could be a witch from this unique village. Or not ...