Heritage, museums and the city

Unlike the great museums of Spain, the museums of Barcelona have been characterised historically by the active commitment of the City Council to create and develop institutions and by the private origin of many of the collections. This Central Book examines the main events in this history from the first proposals to catalogue the city’s heritage in the late 18th century to the great achievements of the 19th and early twentieth century, and ending with a detailed reference on the museum policies that were applied on the return of democracy. A substantial proportion of the articles present the major projects that are now underway, placing them in the context of modern museology and the cultural, economic and political dynamics of society, without forgetting the role of new technologies. Museums of art, science and history and archives are considered in the dual aspect of their current situation and the lines that they must follow in their future evolution.

This overview is supplemented with a discussion on the role of museums in education and tourism and an analysis of the architectural theory and practice applied to the construction of the buildings, which often become spectacular works of art in their own right.

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MUSEUM POLICY IN BARCELONA (1975-2000): AN ACCOUNT OF 25 YEARS OF PROGRAMMES
BY Ferran Mascarell COUNCILLOR FOR CULTURE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BARCELONA INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

The museum policy of the city of Barcelona over the period 1975-2000 has been structured in accordance with two basic conditioning factors. The first is specific to the Catalan scene: Barcelona is a major European metropolis and the capital of a culture, but not the capital of a state (...). The second concerns the development of the role that culture - and museums - have come to adopt in society, mirroring new economic and social trends (...).

In 1975 the Mancomunitat of Catalonia set up the Museums Board (...), which established guidelines for the creation of a system of museums that brought together the need to express the unique identifying features of Catalan culture and the conception of museums as a key element for knowledge and education at the service of the citizen. The work of the Museums Board, like that of so many other projects in this country, was cut short by the Civil War and General Franco’s dictatorship (...).

The first elected town councils were set up in 1979 (...). The White Paper on Museums was drafted to provide: (1) A tool with which to raise the city’s museums to European standards, (2) A set of guidelines for heritage preservation policy, (3) Basic facilities for popularization activities along the lines of access to culture and its democratization (...). Control over cultural policy was ceded to the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia in 1980 (...). The early governments (...) opted for a pronounced interventionism (...). The Museums Plan of 1985 (...) marked the beginning of a period of partial agreements between the City Council and the Catalan Government. First came the creation of the Barcelona Contemporary Art Museum Consortium (1988); this led to a further inter-institutional agreement for the National Art Museum of Catalonia; and subsequently an agreement was signed for the rehabilitation of its buildings in the National Palace in Montjuïc (...).

In 1985 the Catalan Parliament passed the Museums Act. The Act stipulated that the functions and tutelage of museum facilities are the responsibility of the Generalitat and included provision for the creation of the Museums Board (...). Also in 1990, the Museums and Cultural Heritage Management Centre came into operation, construction work began on the CCCB (Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture), Pedralbes Monastery was refurbished to house part of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, and we find yet another example of the important part played by civil society in the make-up of the city’s museums: the inauguration of the Tàpies Foundation.

The gestion and constitution of the Barcelona Institute of Culture (ICUB) as an independent body for the management of municipal cultural policy coincided with the last of the inaugurations of the major new cultural facilities (the CCCB in 1994 and the MACBA in 1995) and marked the beginning of the last stage in the conformation of Barcelona’s museums as it stands at present. This new period is characterized by a succession of social and economic changes, which have brought Barcelona to opt firmly for culture as a driving force for the knowledge society (...).
the museum will constitute an account of the history of art from the Romanesque to around 1950 (...). The museum has an important part to play in the network of art museums in Catalonia (...). In must somehow become the territorial backbone of Catalan art history, through its relationship with other art museums, particularly specialized museums (...). A country's obligation to explain its art, comparing it when possible with art from abroad (and this depends on its collections) is manifested here in an all-embracing project which to our mind enables us to make a coherent approach to Europe (...).

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IN FAVOUR OF A CRITICAL APPROACH TO CULTURE
BY ManueL J. Bonifa-CiUle DIRECTOR OF THE BARCELONA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

(...). The creation of the MACBA, officially inaugurated in 1995, should be seen in the context of a series of schemes carried out in Barcelona throughout the eighties and the first half of the nineties, the aim of which was the urban replanning of the city and its orientation towards an outgoing type of economy (...).

In recent decades one of the basic objectives of capitalism has been to extract formulas for producing and consuming vital experiences in their various manifestations (...). In this context, the museum runs the risk of confusion with the theme park (...). A museum of a progressive nature cannot be a mere accumulation but rather a centre for creation, and by definition it is hostile to the idea of accumulation (...). If museums want to make a break with their monumental nature they must abandon their aims and constantly espouse new ones (...).

As it stands at present, the MACBA's collection focuses on the art produced in the last 50 years, and it is articulated from a critical perspective that takes into account both its historical reality and the local context. This premise involves understanding the history of art as a construction, and not as a one-way narration (...). It is essential to move on from a discourse of the objects of knowledge to a discourse of the subjects of knowledge. And it is also important for institutions (...) to work positively to produce a specific relationship between the artwork and the spectator. It is extremely important for the museum to stop being an archaeology of modernity and to take on a post-modern praxis (...). The intellectuals must re-create a culture of rebellion (...). And in this the museum can and must play a very important part.

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THE SCIENCE MUSEUMS OF BARCELONA: AN ASSET TO DEVELOP
Carme Prats Joaniquet
DIRECTOR OF THE SCIENCE CENTRES AND MUSEUMS, BARCELONA INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

(...). Under the name “The Science Observatory of the Mediterranean City” a programme has been started up with the aim of using Barcelona’s science centres and museums to create a space for the interpreta-

tion and orientation of Barcelona with regard to heritage and science, combining the physical facilities of each museum with the virtual facet (...). The Observatory also lays open for study an issue that is of great importance for today’s society: knowledge of the city (...). In addition, there are plans to enter into agreements in the near future with institutions dedicated to tourism and leisure programmes, with a view to incorporating science culture as an added attraction (...).

As part of the projects for Barcelona as a “knowledge city”, two of the most emblematic of the city’s parks, Ciutadella and Montjuïc Parks, will constitute major focal points for the popularization of science. The activity carried out there is designed to mesh with that which will take place as of 2004 in the new cultural and leisure area to be built in El Poblenou (...). This area, which will re-house part of the Zoo premises, will complete Barcelona’s range of science facilities at the service of the general public (...).

The rationalization and updating of these centres, which are the richest in Catalonia in terms of scientific heritage, is the first and necessary step towards laying the foundations of a future Natural History Museum of Catalonia of national scope (...). Basic principles of modern science museology

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BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MODERN SCIENCE MUSEOLOGY
Jorge Wagensburg

The title is deliberately excessive. In fact these are just 13 working hypotheses drawn from the successes and failures (...) of 20 years of “museum-making” at the “La Caixa” Foundation’s Science Museum in Barcelona (...).

A Science Museum (SM) is a space devoted to arousing stimuli that tend towards scientific knowledge and the scientific method (...) and fostering scientific opinion in the layperson (...).

The target audience of the exhibitions at an SM is universal, with no limits as regards age (from seven upwards), education, cultural level or any other characteristic (...).

The priority museological and museographical element is Reality (...).

Museographical elements are used primarily to stimulate (...) three types of interactivity with the visitor: (...) manual, i.e. appealing to provocative emotion, (...), mental, i.e., appealing to intelligible emotion (...), and cultural, i.e., appealing to cultural emotion (...).

The best stimuli to make the layperson follow the scientist are inspired by the same stimuli that make scientists do science (...).

The best method for imagining, designing and producing museographical facilities is the scientific method itself (...).

Some themes are particularly museographical, while others are best dealt with by other media (...). There is a museographical rigour and scientific rigour (...).

In an SM the visitor is treated as an adult (...). The role of an MS in a democratically organized society is to serve as a common and credible setting bridging four sectors: 1) Society itself, understood as the grassroots citizen who receives the benefits of science, 2) The science community, in which scientific knowledge is generated, 3) The production and services sector, where science is put to use, and 4) Government, where science is managed (...).

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HISTORIES AND MUSEUMS
Montserrat Iniesta

(...). The Catalan museums, which grew up over the 20th century in tandem with the recovery of civic and political institutions, are today faced with the challenge of finding their place within an uncertain set of “national” cultural policies (...). The system of national museums appears to have been conceived from a backward-looking perspective, under that syndrome of the nation aspiring to statehood that is so much a part of the modern nation-states (...).

Why does Catalonia need history museums? The place to be occupied by history in the construction of the country’s collective imagination warrants in-depth public debate. One of the symptoms of the serious predicament in which Catalan society feels itself to be in is the omnipresence of historian and heritage-based discourses (...).

The museum can only survive amid the debates on contemporaneity if it is capable of transforming itself into a forum, an open space for dialogue and confrontation. This is particularly relevant to history museums, which can no longer limit themselves to conveying one-way “historical” identities or facts, and increasingly will be forced to open up to the representation of the passages, the gaps, the aborted alternatives, the conflicts that define the way societies reflect themselves in their past in order to either renew or contest a consensus (...).

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MUSEUMS, HERITAGE AND THE LOCAL
Carles Vicente Guitart
HISTORIAN, HEAD OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OFFICE OF BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

(...). In general, the activity of a museum is marked by a close link between the collections it holds and the services it offers. In the case of local museums, the cultural and natural ecosystem is the object to research, preserve and popularize (...).

Local museums can approach heritage in two distinct ways: one is the traditional, static way, which consists of using it as the refuge of the memory and storehouse of history this is the case of many of the collections and small museums scattered all over Catalonia. The other approach is a dynamic one that responds better to the needs of an active cultural policy and seeks to use the testimony of the past to try and understand the present (...).
The local museums of Catalonia are largely of public ownership, for the most part municipal. The renovation schemes of recent decades have prompted a certain amount of specialization, and a broad overview of all these museums affords an accurate national picture of Catalan heritage (...). The local museum only has any meaning in its location. It works within a region whose boundaries are administratively more indistinct, of a more biological, geographical or cultural nature. And above all, it works for a much more recognizable community with names and faces (...). Local museums represent a model for the cultural centre that is based on proximity to the interests and motivations of its citizens (...).

PRIVATE COLLECTING AND THE MUSEUMS OF BARCELONA
Lluís Monreal Director-General of the “La Caixa” Foundation

One of the features that distinguish the museums of Barcelona as a whole from those of other Spanish and European cities is the part that private collecting has played in their creation and development (...). This series of illustrious Barcelona collectors began with Eduardo Toda Güell (1855-1941). His interest in Pharaonic archaeology led him to undertake and finance digs at several ancient Egyptian sites. The objects discovered became first part of his own collection, and as of 1886, of that of the Balaguer Library and Museum in Vilamajó i la Geltrú (...). In the first half of the 20th century several major collections were created in Barcelona society. First, the politician Francesc Cambó (...) dedicated part of his fortune to acquiring paintings by the international schools, mainly those of the Renaissance and the Baroque. Other important collectors included Santiago Espona and Lluís Plandiura (...). The most conspicuous example of private collecting in Barcelona was the sculptor Frederic Marès i Deulovol (1893-1991) (...). After the Civil War he dedicated virtually the entirety of the income he received from his artistic activity to building a huge collection which in 1946 (...) became what we know today as the Marès Museum (...).

Another great Barcelona collector of the latter half of the 20th century was Francisco Godia Sales (...). His collection was installed in his home at the former Conventt or “Little Monastery”, an annex of Pedralbes Monastery (...).

A recent addition to the panorama of Barcelona museums originating from private collections is the Museum of Pre-Columbian Art, which was formed by the entrustment of part of the Barbier-Mueller collection, the headquarters of which is in Geneva. It is housed in a palace in Montcada Street (...).

One of the latest initiatives undertaken by a Barcelona private collector is the Egyptian Museum, belonging to the Clos Foundation (...). Finally, we should mention the activity of the “La Caixa” Foundation, which (...) has constituted a major collection of contemporary art starting with works produced in the 1980s and concentrating especially on the 1990s (...). As of the end of 2001, (...) it will have a permanent headquarters at the new Barcelona Exhibition Centre: CaixaForum (...).

THE MUSEUM AS AN ARCHITECTURAL EVENT
Josep Maria Montaner

(...). Within the huge range of examples that are in constant renovation in the architecture of museums, a series of dominant positions can be perceived (...). The museum as an extraordinary organism: - First of all there is the museum construed as a unique organ- ism. This is the approach that was pioneered by Frank Lloyd Wright (...). The most emblematic work that adopts this position is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1992-1997) (...). The museum as a box: - At the same time, the modern idea of the museum as a functional contain- er continues to be applied (...). The “museum museum”: - In the wake of the boom in typological criticism of the sixties and seventies, the world of museums has gravitated towards what we might call the “museum museum”, in other words, projects in which the stress is on the typo- logical tradition of the museum as such; its spatial structures. This is what Rafael Moneo has done in all his works (...).

The minimalism museum: - (...) There are those who attempt to probe beyond time and seek the archetypal idea, the essential form, of the museum: a primi- tive treasure, a sacred place, an archaeological dig, a public portal, a space of timeless light (...). The museum as a collage of fragments: (...) An emblematic case of this would be Richard Meier, author of the controversial Barcelona Contemporary Art Museum or MACBA (1994) (...). The museum that hinges on itself: - There remains the model of the introspective museum, that is, the museum that hinges on itself, in a delicate balance between the interiority of the functional layout and the exteriority of its adaptation to its surroundings (...).

The democratized museum: - Lastly, there is the media museum and that whose objective is the dis- solution of the space of the museum and the relati- vization of the presence of the original. (...)

THE MUSEUMS OF BARCELONA: AT THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN THE EDUCATOR AND THE TOUR OPERATOR
Jordi Pardo

(...). Museums and heritage stand at a crossroads of tendencies. To be more precise, this is the same confusing and disperse crossroads at which ideas and values stand in the framework of the one-way ideology that appears to be imposing itself left, right and centre: the law of the market, void of any nuance of meaning or balance. In the banal commercialization of culture, the value of work and effort, innovation and creativity, knowledge and rigour, seems to count for very little. As a result, we are faced with the danger that our heritage may end up being exclusi- vely for tourists and schoolchildren (...).

The cultural heritage is testimony to the mistakes and the successes of our past, the contradictions between felicity and penury, the counter-sense of history, and the relative value of the concepts of pro- gress and evolution. In short, museums and heritage are generators of questions (...). The result will be the fostering of scientific or artistic creation, and the furt- herance of its enjoyment; an individual experience that cannot be reduced to the cold, mercantilist counting of visitors. The measure of the success of culture-based tourist attractions should be the sum of economic viability and the evaluation of quality (...). If shopping malls take the place of city streets and squares (...) we will have replaced the forum with the superstore (...). We cannot allow museums to devel- op into culture-based shopping complexes (...).

The museums of Barcelona have the necessary con- ditions to overcome this relationship between edu- cation and tourism. All they require is a push in the right direction to become the factories of knowledge that contemporary society needs (...).