

MUSEU NACIONAL  
D'ART DE CATALUNYA

ENG

CIVIL WAR

ART, CONFLICT  
& MEMORY

Unloading the apse of Santa Maria d'Aneu at Mas Descais in Darnius, 1937. IEC Archive. Girona City Council-CRD (Joan Subías i Galter collection)

“In January 1937, during our war,  
we put the best of our artistic heritage  
on large trucks.”

Joaquim Folch i Torres

**EXHIBITION**  
**15.07.2021**  
**— 27.02.2022**

# Museum in danger!

SAFEGUARDING AND  
ORGANISATION OF  
CATALAN ART DURING  
THE CIVIL WAR



Catalan art suffered serious consequences from the Civil War. In the face of the fascist insurrection and the subsequent outbreak of revolutionary violence, the Catalan authorities responded with an extraordinary effort to safeguard and organise the heritage.

This exhibition provides an opportunity to tell the general public about a little-known episode without which we would not have preserved some of the essential works of the Museum's collection today, nor could we enjoy the museum-related richness of the country.

The exhibition aims to recognise all the people and institutions involved in this operation, considered one of the first actions to safeguard heritage in a time of war and an international benchmark.

Those who made it possible include **Joan Subias, Josep Gudiol, Miquel Joseph i Mayol** and especially **Joaquim Folch i Torres**, the promoter and first director of the current Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and a victim of the post-war repression.

Organised by thematic area, the exhibition proposes a chronological tour of the stages of this journey in the defence of heritage. Moving away from the Museum's traditional exhibition format, original works from the collection are exhibited, including painting, sculpture and graphic work, alongside documents of great historical value, including maps, films, purge files and photographs. The latter are a real treasure for understanding the conditions in which the managers and employees had to work during the transfers.



1934

Creation of the Museu d'Art de Catalunya, currently the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, with Joaquim Folch i Torres as its first director.

1936

The fascist uprising and the outbreak of the revolutionary wave demonstrated the urgency of preserving the endangered public and private artistic heritage. The Generalitat launched a complex and delicate policy to safeguard the country's cultural heritage as a whole (art, archaeology, architecture, archives and libraries, etc.).

The authorities organised the first large gatherings of works of art and collections at the Palau Nacional, the home of the current Museum.



Admission of confiscated works of art to be safeguarded at the Museu d'Art de Catalunya. Palau Nacional, Barcelona. July 1936. AFB. Author: Joan Vidal i Ventosa

1937

1938

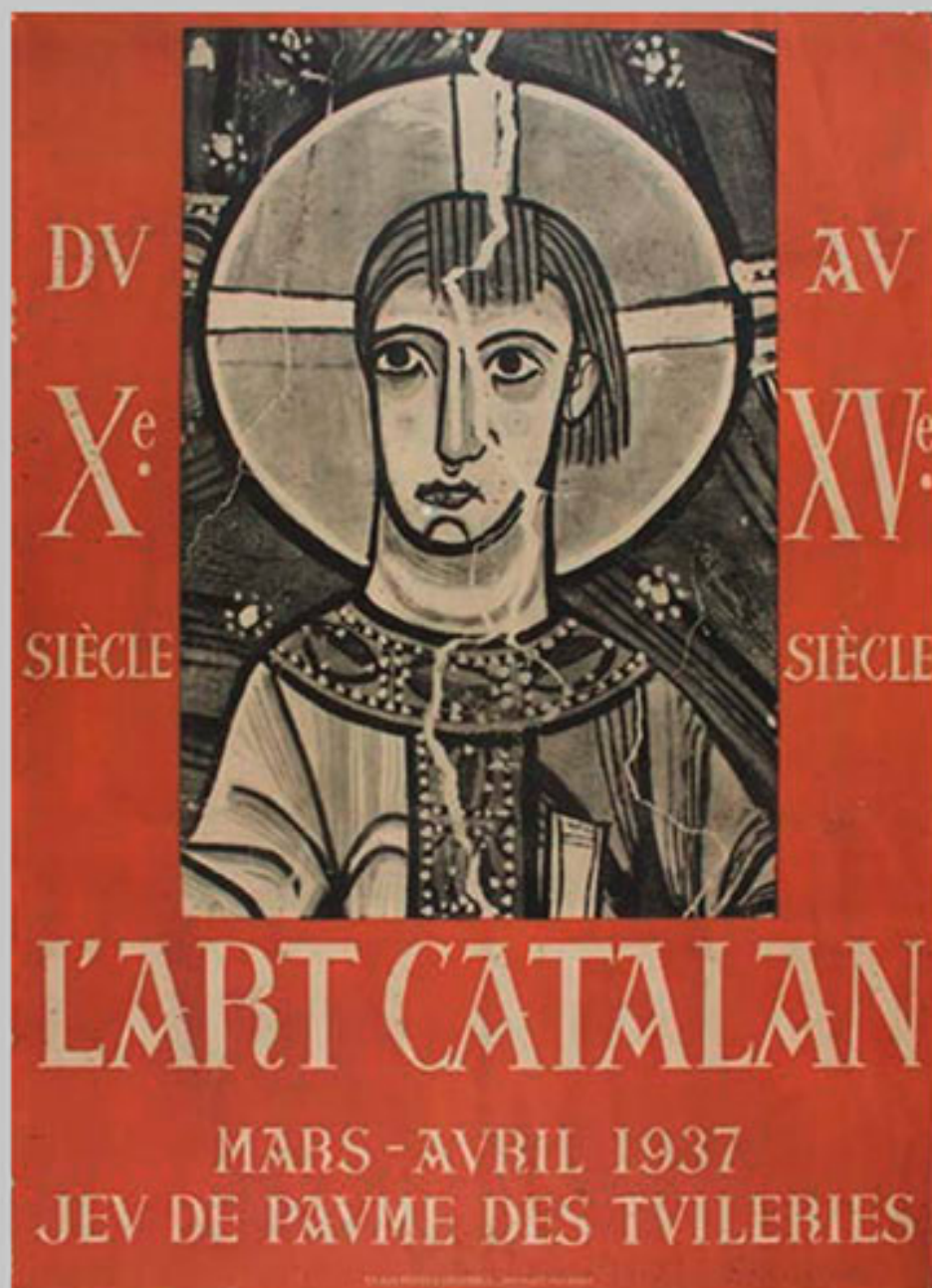
The danger of war and fascist bombing forced the organised removal of the Museum's art collections to protect them in specially prepared deposits, far from any risk.

The works and collections began to travel with departures from the Museu to Olot; some of these works went to exhibitions in Paris. During the last stage, they were transferred to the deposits in Alt Empordà.

A selection of the main works of mediaeval Catalan art was made in Olot, which would be exhibited in Paris in the show *L'art catalan du Xème au XVème siècle* (1937).







Interior of the church of Sant Esteve d'Olot turned into a large deposit for storing Catalan artistic heritage, 1936-1937. AFB.  
Author: Joan Vidal i Ventosa

Poster for the exhibition *L'art catalan du Xème au XVème siècle*. Paris, 1937. Former collection of the Cabinet of Drawings and Prints. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

1939

After winning the war, the Francoists benefitted from the Catalan authorities' work to safeguard and organise the artwork. They never acknowledged it. They limited themselves to collecting and returning the collections and to purging and punishing the professionals of the Generalitat who had preserved and protected them.

Joaquim Folch i Torres was sentenced to twelve years and one day in prison, which was commuted to three years of simple imprisonment. He was forcibly retired from the City Council and was never able to return to the Museum.



# ACTIVITIES

## Opening lecture - Online

*The Museum and the war.*

*Safeguarding and organising heritage in turbulent times*

**Starting on July 15. On the Museu Nacional's YouTube channel**

Led by Mireia Capdevila i Candell and Francesc Vilanova i Vila-Abadal, curators of the exhibition and researchers at Fundació Carles Pi i Sunyer.

## Academic seminar - Online

*Museum in Danger!*

**Thursday October 14. With prior registration on the Museum's website.**

With the participation of Arturo Colorado (UCM), Francisco Gracia and Glòria Munilla (UB), Joaquim Nadal (ICRPC) and Rebeca Saavedra (UC).

Academic coordination: Joaquim Nadal, Catalan Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (ICRPC).

## International lectures with discussion - Online

*Heritage in Times of Conflict*

**Tuesday November 16. With prior registration on the Museum's website.**

**Lectures in original languages with simultaneous interpretation.**

International lectures on safeguarding heritage in times of war to mark International World Heritage Day.

In homage to Khaled al-Asaad, director of the Palmyra site and executed by Islamic State on August 18, 2015. Experts from international organisations will participate in the tribute.

Academic coordination: Benoit de Tapol, restorer at the Museu Nacional.

Moderated by: Pepe Serra, director of the Museu Nacional.

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Further information at

[www.museunacional.cat](http://www.museunacional.cat)

Download the exhibition and activity programme

**Civil War. Art, conflict and memory** here:



And don't miss the videos on the

Museu Nacional's YouTube channel

## #ARTCONFLICTEMEMÒRIA

## #MUSEUENPERILL



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