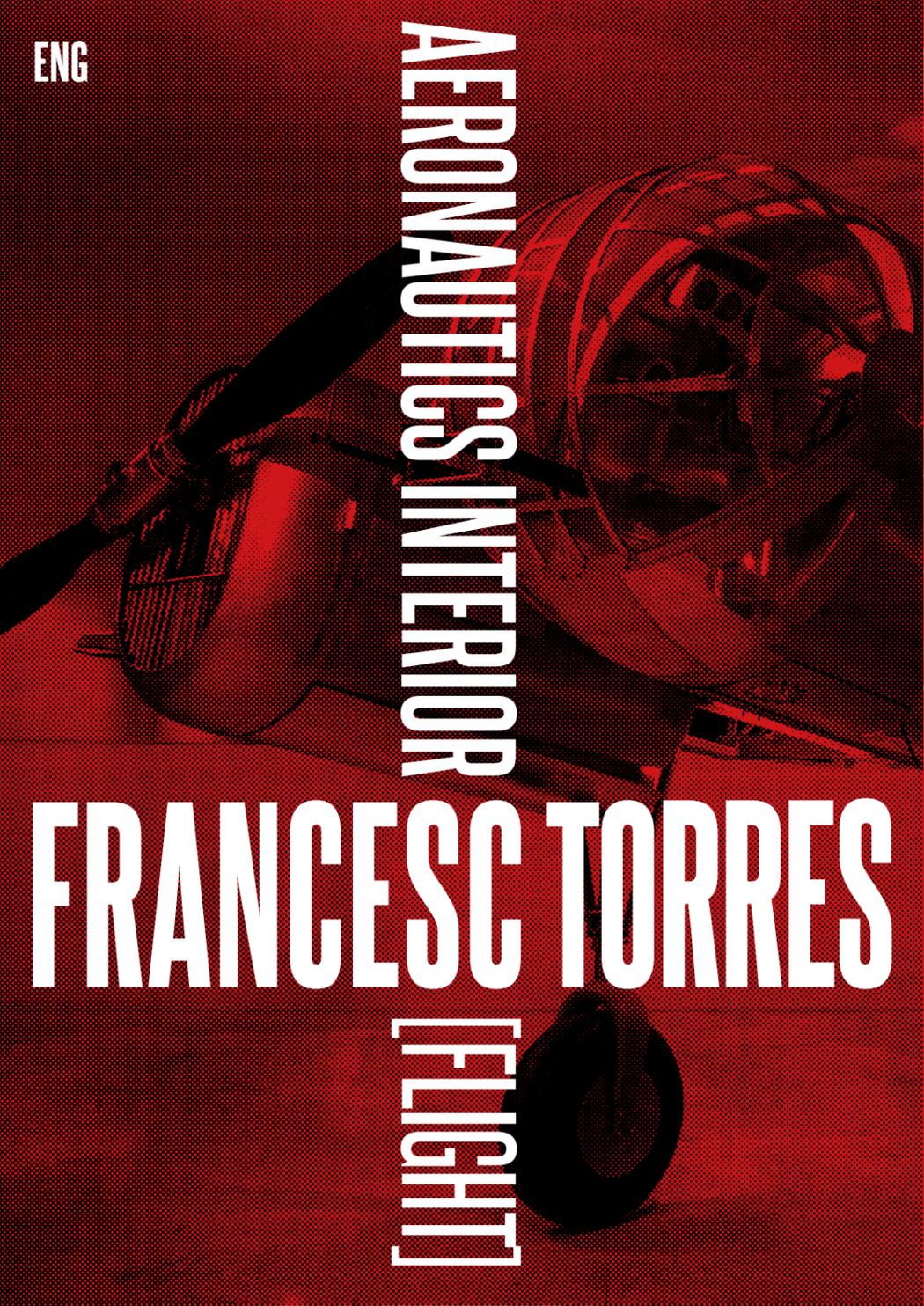


ENG

AERONAUTICS INTERIOR
FRANCESC TORRES
[FLIGHT]



CIVIL WAR
ART, CONFLICT
& MEMORY

MUSEU NACIONAL
D'ART DE CATALUNYA

”
AN AEROPLANE THAT
DOES NOT FLY
IS NOT AN AEROPLANE,
IT IS A WORK OF ART

”
FRANCESC TORRES

INSTALLATION
06.18 — 09.26.2021

Organised by



Parc de Montjuïc
Barcelona
www.museunacional.cat



Ajuntament de la Sénia



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament
de Cultura



Pere Serra. Crucifixion of Saint Peter. Detail, circa 1400, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

“The quickest way to illustrate the supreme importance of an ideal is for the price to achieve it, defend it, and keep it, to be as high as possible. No one risks their life or is killed by an abstraction devoid of physicality unless they are upheld by faith. Nor does one go to the sacrifice – that unfathomable mystery – for a mere trinket, unless the trinket is sacred, and with the relevant dose of conviction about the certainty that it is just that (...). Hence, we seem to be condemned, until proven otherwise, to the perpetual possibility of bloodshed as an integral part of human behaviour. For life to have value, it is imperative that we be mortal; it is the universal measure of everything. Mortality makes the sacrifice of life for the defence of non-negotiable principles represent the highest level of surrender that can be expected from a human being. Someone said, “Wise is nature; it makes us die so that life is worth something”. This determines that the monopolised privilege of significantly shortening the life of others constitutes the categorical hallmark of royal power under any of its many robes.

(...) In one way or another, everything religious, ideological, political, national or identity based, is built on the management of life and death, by de facto power, by the individuals that form the social body of these categories. Only that which justifies the giving of life is important, the clearest and simplest way to define the sacred, whether divine or not.”

Francesc Torres

Front: Full-scale replica of the Tupolev SB-2 bomber known as “Katuska”, created by José Ramón Bellalá. Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia, 2021. Back: Diagram of the Polikarpov I-16 fighter plane, named “Mosca”.

WOULD YOU DIE FOR AN IDEAL?

The artist Francesc Torres transforms the Oval Hall into a stage where life and death unfold. Two full-scale replicas of two Soviet aircraft that fought in the Civil War put strain on the space: a Tupolev SB-2 "Katiuska" bomber which is about to crash, and the Polikarpov I-16 fighter, "Mosca". An unprecedented, daring installation which reflects on the act of dying for an ideal.

The exhibition explores the impact of death coming from the sky in war conflicts, and the deliberate choice to sacrifice oneself in the defence of an ideal. The artist does this using an analogy of the saints martyred for their religious faith, based on iconography borrowed from the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter*, a beautiful Gothic retablo from the Museu Nacional's collection, by the master Pere Serra (14th century). This parallelism, particularly in an era in which social media easily acts as a spokesperson for our ideologies, raises the following question: **how far would we go to defend our ideals?**

Interior Aeronautics (flight) comes from a visit made by the artist to the historic La Sénia Airfield, close to what is currently the Centre d'Aviació Històrica. It is here where its director, José Ramón Bellaubí Cavaller, carries out epic full-scale recreations of historic aircraft. From this site a monumental artistic installation emerges, in which Francesc Torres takes coordinates – already explored by him on other occasions – one step further. He exposes the ambiguity between art and non-art, and the elimination of the dividing line between "exhibition", "work of art" and "installation". In the artist's own words, "an aeroplane that does not fly is not an aeroplane, it is a work of art".

With the aim of **rethinking the past from the present**, and in the framework of the exhibition projects that the Museu Nacional is this year devoting to the Civil War, art, conflict and memory, the Museum sets aside up one of its iconic spaces and remembers a sensitive and transcendental episode in our recent history. Francesc Torres, through his own perspective, uses art to move us and challenge us with issues that have affected human beings since the dawn of time.



Leocadio Mendiola (Badajoz, 1909 - Barcelona, 1998), the most famous pilot to command a "Katiuska". Photo: Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia. Ajuntament de la Sénia.

Members of the Condor Legion having lunch under an olive tree at the airfield, now in the hands of the national side. Photo: Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia. Ajuntament de la Sénia.

La Sénia Airfield. Construction of a military airfield for strategic purposes, 1937. Photo: Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia. Ajuntament de la Sénia.

The project has the participation of S4E, Solutions for Engineering.

LA SÉNIA AIRFIELD

In the midst of the Civil War, the Government of the Second Republic built a military airfield on the outskirts of the town of La Sénia, to defend itself from the rebel military coup. Ninety hectares of olive groves were expropriated, and the owners were forced to cut down around 9,000 olive trees, the main source of wealth in the area. In a short time, three runways were constructed, a building to house the officers (now the Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia) and an anti-aircraft shelter.

In September 1937, operations began with three Tupolev SB bombers and three Polikarpov I-16 fighter squadrons, made up of Spanish airmen and Russian pilots. Then in April 1938, with the occupation of Franco's troops and the war favouring the national side, the German Condor Legion settled there. This was key to the outcome of the Battle of the Ebro, due to the strategic location of the airfield and its operational capacity.

During the Civil War, more than a hundred Soviet volunteer airmen died defending the Spanish Republic.

CENTRE D'AVIACIÓ HISTÒRICA DE LA SÉNIA

The command house is currently where the interpretation centre of military aviation in Catalonia during the Civil War is located. You can see some of the planes that filled the sky of La Sénia during the conflict. They are full-scale replicas made with original pieces by the director of the airfield, José Ramón Bellaubí Cavaller.



ACTIVITIES

Ways to participate in the "Guerra Civil. Art, conflict and memory" programme.

DISCUSSION AERONAUTICS INTERIOR (FLIGHT)

Tuesday, July 6 at 6pm, the Oval Hall and online. With prior registration on the Museum's website.

Conversation between Francesc Torres, creator of the installation, and Juanjo Lahuerta, art history professor at the Barcelona School of Architecture.

Moderator: Lluís Alabern, head of community engagement and museography at the Museum

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME EDUCATING FOR PEACE

Dynamic tour *Art and commitment*. A space for reflection on war and conflict for secondary education, baccalaureate and adult learning schools.

More info on all the activities at museunacional.cat

#Aeronàutica
#ArtConflicteMemòria

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