

A Short Guide to the MUHBA

The Barcelona History Museum

MUHBA 80⁺
The citizens' museum

3rd
edition



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A museum with 55 urban rooms

In the midst of a digital technological revolution, uncertain climate shifts and global geostrategic changes, cities all over the world are emerging as the great players of the 21st century shaped by the new opportunities of the digital era such as teleworking, and also by the commitment to making large metropolises more sustainable. Now, as in late medieval Europe, cities are crucial venues for bridging the gap between everyday life and the political and cultural arena, often more so than states or small communities.

Against this background, city museums can be a critical source of urban knowledge for residents and visitors alike, and the museum envisioned as a gateway to the city might become a new generation urban amenity. This is the rationale for the fresh historical urban museum approach the MUHBA is rolling out.

The Museum was the brainchild of Agustí Duran i Sanpere in 1943 in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. Duran's plan brought together the exhibition in the Barcelona Pavilion at the 1929 Expo with the heritage complex in Plaça del Rei, remodelled when Via Laietana was laid out: the new museum's foundation and site was part of the urban planning scheme designed to fashion a "Gothic quarter". Later on at the time of the Democratic Transition, the plan to enlarge Casa Padellàs took shape with the municipal purchase of the adjoining building and the plan was half completed.

Right from the outset the Museum took in other heritage sites in the old city such as the Temple of Augustus and the Roman necropolis in Plaça Vila de Madrid, while in 1963 Vil·la Joana, where poet Jacint Verdaguer spent his last days, was associated with it. Like many other European city museums, the Museum's urban organisation began to take off in the early 21st century with Park Güell, the Collections Centre, the Refugi 307 air-raid shelter and Turó de la Rovira.

What was initially a process of accumulation, and including withdrawals such as Pedralbes Monastery, has been reworked as a methodical plan to chronicle the city from its most ancient centre to its contemporary outskirts. The resulting group of heritage sites is thus not the outcome of chance but rather of seeking out opportunities to build a multi-centre museum consistent with the digital era. In recent years, efforts have been made to establish Casa Padellàs as the Casa de la Història de Barcelona, the core of the whole system, and to round off the projects included in the Besòs Heritage and Museum Trail: Oliva Artés, Bon Pastor, Fabra i Coats and the Casa de l'Aigua.

It has not been easy to organise the heritage and museum sites into a historical narrative which is both open and consistent. It is a project which has been made possible by the exhaustive and thought-provoking online work

sessions which brought the MUHBA team together while we were forcibly separated due to the pandemic. The guide is thus the outcome of extensive interdisciplinary and interpersonal work, coordinated by Elena Pérez Rubiales and Xavier Tarraubella i Mirabet, with the input of Daniel Alcubierre, Mònica Blasco, Jaume Capsada, Carmen Cazalla, Marta Iglesias, Teresa Macià, Mercè Martínez, Ramon J. Pujades, Joan Roca and Edgar Straehle.

Finding the right balance between historical narrative and heritage venues is no easy task, as the then director, Frederic Udina Martorell, pointed out in 1962 in the *Guía del Museo de Historia de la Ciudad*, summarised the following year and expanded in 1969, which is the last one published to date. At that time, the Museum already had various types of heritage venues and Udina presented the guide as "an attempt to systematise the facilities of this complex museum for the use of visitors". As now, it was the upshot of a team effort in which Anna Maria Adroer, Josep Maria Garrut and Joaquina Sol played key roles in the first 1962 edition and Margarita Tintó and Francesc-Pau Verrié in the 1969 version.

What we present here is the outline of a future, more extensive guide which shows the overall structure of the Museum. This network of eighteen museum heritage sites of varying sizes plus the Collections Centre now makes up an organised group of fifty-five rooms covering all the periods of Barcelona's history from diverse places and points of view. Each site also seeks to be a vibrant heritage facility in the neighbourhood where it is to be found.

The result meets three organizational criteria at once. Thus, the proposed order of spaces and rooms follows a chronological, thematic and territorial systematization, which promotes a historical narrative of Barcelona combined with significant thematic perspectives, in a physically plausible itinerary to tour and read the city.

The centrepiece, the House of Barcelonian History at MUHBA Padellàs, is an agora and a school, the venue for an exhibition summarising and posing questions about the city's history, and additionally the home of MUHBA's Centre for Research and Debate, a crossroads for academic institutions, cultural bodies and the public to drive research into urban history and heritage. This research is crucial to inform all the Museum's programmes whether face-to-face or virtual, including seminars, publications, filming, exhibitions, tours and urban routes.

In short, reworking the city's museum as a heritage venue for urban knowledge and building citizenship while fostering an Enlightenment for the 21st century which is both open and deep-seated is what is expected to be largely completed by 2023 coinciding with the 80th anniversary.

Joan Roca i Albert, director of MUHBA



VILLA JOANA

CASA DE L'AIGUA

TURÓ DE LA ROVIRA

PARK GÜELL

FABRA I COATS

BON PASTOR

REFUGI 307

OLIVA ARTÉS

CENTRE DE COLLECCIONS

VIA SEPULCRAL ROMANA

SANTA CATERINA

BARCINO PALAU MAJOR

EL CALL

PADELLÀS

DOMUS SANT HONORAT

TEMPLE D'AUGUST

DOMUS AVINYÓ

PORTA DE MAR

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MUHBA Padellàs

House of Barcelonian History

Casa Padellàs is a palace from the early 16th century that was removed to its present site from Carrer dels Mercaders nearly one hundred years ago as part of the project to form a “Gothic quarter” in Barcelona.

Converted into the House of History, it is now an experimental museum space that approaches the city of Barcelona from the standpoint of its urban history and its heritage within a setting for research and participatory activities:

1. *BCN Agora and Museum School*, in the Flemish Clock Courtyard. This forms the starting point for visiting Barcelona in a different way: the planetarium of cities, the historical charter, a panoramic video on the historical formation of a big city, and the citizen room.
2. *Barcelona Flashback*. A general summary exhibition that invites visitors to read the human and urban landscapes of different neighbourhoods, going on to analyse Barcelona and its options over the course of the centuries.
3. *Urban Monographs*. Temporary exhibition spaces.
4. *Centre for Research, Documentation and Debate*, a space for for the building of new knowledge, featuring a library-archive, courses, seminars, open dialogues, and two large urban viewing points.



© MUHBA / Pere Vivas

1 BCN Agora

Conceived as a gateway for visits to the city, the BCN Agora is an open space which, together with the Flemish Clock Courtyard, is designed as an extension of the street and, consequently, as an area offering freedom of movement, where visitors can find information and resources on the history and heritage of Barcelona that will help them to tour the city in a well-documented way and with a different gaze. Here they can also obtain some preliminary notions about MUHBA's content and purpose.

The audiovisual entitled *The Formation of a Capital* summarises in just a few minutes' time Barcelona's historical and urban development. People who are interested can supplement this information in the adjacent consultation space where drawings, guides, books and tools (such as the historical Charter of Barcelona) are all freely available.

The significant pieces on display in the room, reflecting four of Barcelona's major historical periods, form a programmatic showcase of the Museum's collections, with objects ranging from the time of the city's founding and its ancient period, when it was called Barcino, to the present day, as exemplified by the gearbox of a lorry of the Pegaso make, which is a piece from the contemporary collection that is currently under formation.



Barcelona Flashback proposes a reading method for questioning historical witnesses and building urban narratives. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

MUHBA! The history of the History Museum

For the purpose of explaining the how and why of the Barcelona History Museum, this room introduces visitors to the institution's history from a twofold perspective – chronological and thematic – of the Museum's development.

Starting out from a proposal for the future which takes up the forthcoming challenges and strategic lines of the MUHBA as a citizens' museum, the Museum is presented from the time of its founding in 1943, with the creation of the Municipal History Institute by Agustí Duran i Sanpere, to the development of the latest strategic plan in 2008, while highlighting the evolution of the Museum's projects involving contemporary municipal cultural policies. Likewise, issues of key importance for a city museum are presented, such as its role in research and historical outreach, the function of the permanent exhibition, and even the relation between the urban heritage and museology, that is to say, between the city itself and the museum.



Visit of the Orfeo Català to Casa Padellàs, which had been removed from Carrer dels Mercaders, 1935.
Orfeo Català Documentation Centre



Barcelona Flashback. A historical synthesis

Casa Padellàs contains the core exhibition of the network of venues forming MUHBA, with a flexible, open and inquisitive proposal on Barcelona's urban narratives:

- A) *Geographies*. A multi-scale snapshot of urban fabrics, landscapes and neighbourhoods.
- B) *Witnesses*. An analysis of witnesses, a search for precedents, the narrative of facts, contextualisation, and a comparison with other cases of urban history.
- C) *History*. Ancient Barcelona, 1st-17th centuries; modern Barcelona, 18th-21st centuries.
- D) *Futures*. Questions for rethinking the city and the world we live in.

Barcelona Flashback proposes a reading method to interrogate historical witnesses and build urban narratives.
© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

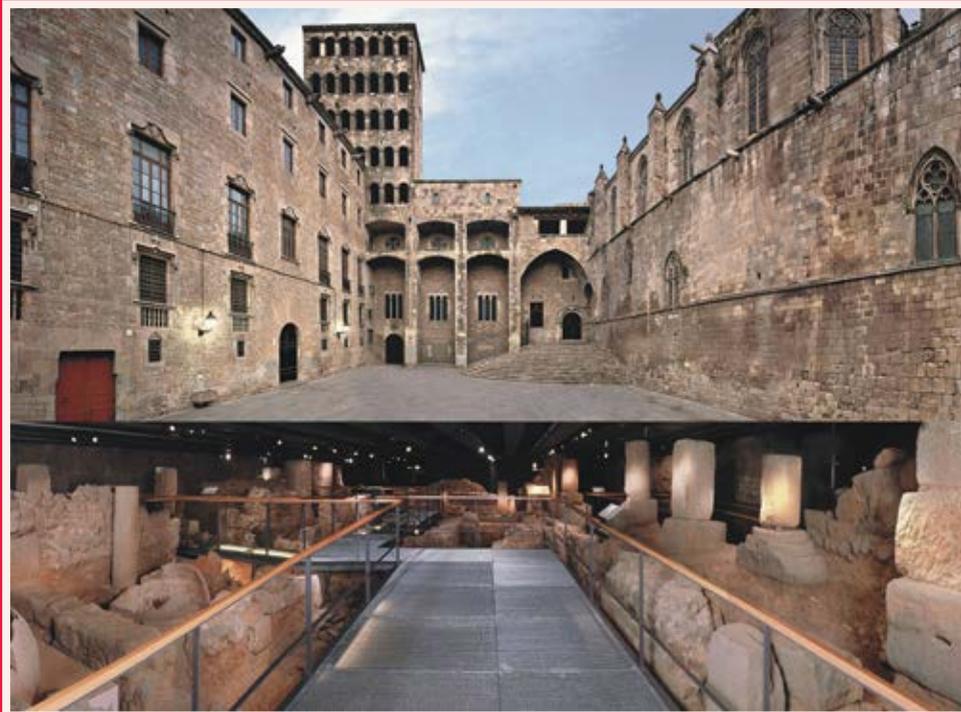
MUHBA Plaça del Rei - Barcino

Ancient city

A visit to the Archaeological Underground in Plaça del Rei allows the visitor to explore part of the *Colonia Iulia Augusta Faventia Paterna Barcino*, the founding urban centre of the city of Barcelona. This archaeological site was discovered in 1931 when Casa Padellàs was moved to its current location.

The area covers part of the Roman urban setting made up of streets, workshops, factories and public buildings. The structures date from the 1st century AD, such as the facings of the first city wall, to the 6th century and the buildings associated with the first bishopric complex.

The long timeline of the preserved remains makes it possible to see how structures and buildings were reused and overlaid. Together with the museum narrative, it provides a firsthand look at how historical processes and social, political and ideological changes altered the use of spaces and changed the city's appearance.



4 The foundation of the Roman colony

In the late 1st century BC, Barcino was founded as a colony to take advantage of the territory. Even though its urban area was small compared to other contemporary foundations, it controlled extensive and fertile land. The Via Augusta and the trade routes connected it with the rest of the empire.

The city was established with a premeditated urban layout. It included a well-defined grid of streets and structures designed to meet the basic needs of the new settlers, such as the sewage system, along with urban amenities including the temple, the forum and the city wall which gave physical shape to the Roman identity of the new settlement.



Relief of a funeral monument depicting a maenad. Montjuïc sandstone. 1st century. MHCB 4095. © MUHBA Stanislav Biel



Part of a mural depicting a horseman, recovered from the Roman domus in Carrer del Bisbe Caçador. 4th century. MHCB 18656. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

To learn more, see rooms 8 to 17 of MUHBA Temple d'August, MUHBA Porta de Mar, MUHBA Via Sepulcral Romana, MUHBA Domus Avinyó and MUHBA Domus Sant Honorat.

5 Barcino society

The colony of Barcino thrived on wine production and trade. The wealthy elite managed the city where they promoted their political careers and financed public facilities, while the lower classes were engaged in artisan and subsistence work.

The common traits this society shared with other Roman cities meant the colony attracted citizens from all over the empire and also allowed the city's elites to prosper beyond Barcino's borders. It additionally boasted some specific features such as a large number of freedmen who were able to rise up the social ladder.

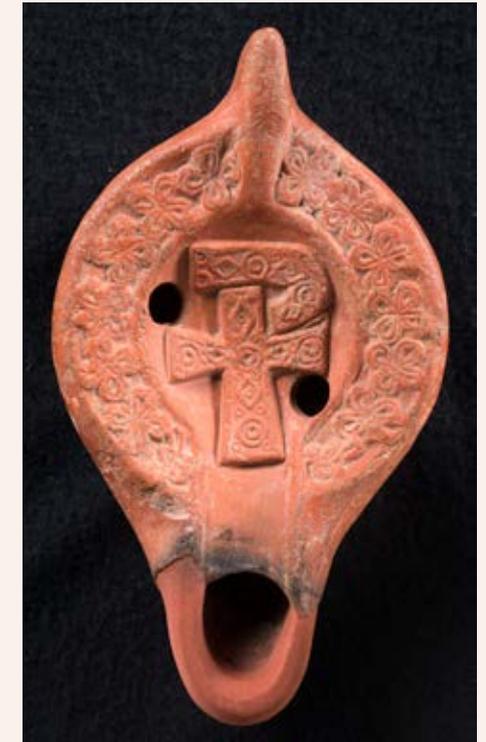
7 Christianity, the Visigoths and the city

In the early 5th century, Barcino underwent far-reaching changes. The imperial government and administration were replaced by new authorities, namely the Visigoth monarchs and the Christian Church. The Roman population and a Germanic minority lived side by side in the city and the shift in beliefs shaped its growth.

The city's small size and the robust walls standing guard over it prompted the Visigoths to choose it as a stronghold. Meanwhile, the ecclesiastical hierarchy built its own representation venues and the small city gradually became the *de facto* capital of the territory.



Seal in the shape of a cross, for stamping liturgical bread, with an inscription on the arms and the depiction of a Christogram in the centre. 5th century. MHCB 4494. © MUHBA Pep Parer



Oil lamp with a Christogram decoration on the disc and floral motifs and a bird on the border, from Tunisia. 4th-5th centuries. MHCB 102. © MUHBA Pep Parer



Structures of the Roman city of Barcino, on view at the Plaça del Rei archaeological site, © MUHBA Stanislav Biel

6 Forma Urbis. The urban structure of Barcino

The city was constantly changing. Between the 1st and 4th centuries, the Roman administration ensured the maintenance of public spaces and services while private spaces were remodelled to meet the needs of the time.

The city's structures responded to historical events. In the area near the forum, areas for services and shops were set up; the walls were reinforced in times of insecurity in the 3rd century; the great *domus* were remodelled in times of prosperity, and new public venues for worship emerged following the rise of Christianity.

MUHBA Temple d'August

Power and public space in Barcino

From the early 1st century Barcino hosted a temple for imperial worship. It was at the highest point of the city which meant it was visible from outside the city walls, thus becoming a symbol of the Romanisation of the territory.

Following the spread of Christianity and the disappearance of the imperial administration in the 5th century, it lost its role, its maintenance was neglected and it was partially dismantled. Until the 11th century part of it could still be seen and it was called a *miraculum* because of how much people admired its splendour. However, subsequent urban sprawl meant that its remains were gradually swallowed up by other buildings.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the remnants of the temple were recovered together with the Roman walls as examples of the standing and vast buildings of the city's historic centre. In 1956, a fourth column which had been in Plaça del Rei was restored and the ensemble was added as a new MUHBA site.



Male figure in tunic and toga from the second quarter of the 1st century AD, probably from the forum. MHCB 11549. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

8 Political and religious power in Barcino

The public cult of Emperor Augustus was harnessed as a political tool to organise the various peoples subjugated by Rome. This cult was associated with magistracies and offices which came with the prospect of promotion for the inhabitants of the colony. Free citizens could become *flamens* while the office of *sevir* was reserved for freedmen, both posts with priestly duties.

Access to the magistracies and offices governing the city (*duumviri* and *aedile*) was gained by a system of popular elections. Securing sufficient support to be chosen involved significant personal outlay and this forged a bond between politics and business.

9 The forum and public space in the Roman city

The Temple of Augustus presided over the forum, an arcaded square at the intersection of the main streets. It was here that the administrative buildings were sited and where political, religious, economic and social activities took place. The temple and the forum were the urban expression of the state to which the colony belonged.

The well-off made the most of public space as a stage for their political endeavours. They had statues placed on pedestals describing their careers and also made sure to leave a record on large public facilities about who had paid for them.



3D rendering of the forum. © MUHBA / CAD4

MUHBA Porta de Mar

Defence and hygiene in Barcino

The refurbishment in the late 20th century of this property on Carrer Regomir made it possible to recover a section of the Roman wall, two towers and part of the *Porta de Mar* and some public baths dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries.

This was the main one of Barcino's four gates through which goods came from all over the Mediterranean. Flanked by two towers, it had separate passages for pedestrians and merchandise and was also a tax collection point. The thermal bath complex originally covered some 1,500 m² and its cold room pool and the remains of some other rooms have survived.

In medieval times, noble families built their mansions along the city walls and towers and the city gates were turned into urban castles held by the viscounts and the bishop. This change of use led to alterations including windows, chimneys and beams which can still be seen on the walls.



Steps in the cold-water pool at the port baths. Mid 1st-early 2nd century. © MUHBA / Daniel Alcubierre

10 The thermal baths and the culture of water

Right from the outset Barcino managed its supply of water very carefully as it was a critical resource in terms of food, economics and health. The thermal baths were used for this latter purpose as facilities for bathing and personal hygiene which were also a venue for social interaction.

All the city's inhabitants could use the public baths such as the ones at Porta de Mar and in Plaça de Sant Miquel, the latter paid for by Luci Minici Natal, the Roman consul born in Barcino. However, wealthy families additionally had private bath complexes in their residences.

11 Defending the Roman city: Barcino's walls

By the end of the 3rd century, the danger posed by the incursions of the Franks into Hispania Tarraconensis province prompted Barcino to revamp its original city walls by reinforcing their facings and equipping them with seventy-seven towers. The funerary monuments running around the walls were plundered for building material to enhance the defences.

The construction work turned the small centre of the city into a fortress which was easy to defend. This added to its strategic value and meant various authorities chose it as a seat of power in the Visigothic and Carolingian periods.



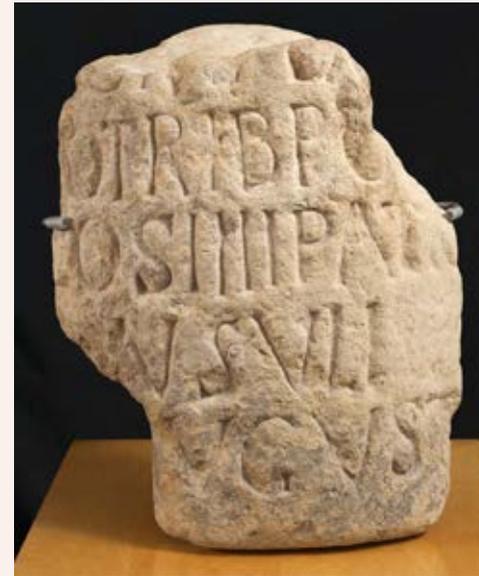
Towers and a section of the Roman wall from the late 3rd century. The upper part and the facing show the alterations made during the medieval period. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

MUHBA Via Sepulcral Romana Barcino, territory and necropolis

In Plaça de la Vila de Madrid visitors can see part of one of the burial areas of the Roman colony, in use between the 1st and 3rd centuries. This necropolis was sited along one of the roads leading into the city and outside the walled area by law on hygiene and safety grounds.

This complex is evidence of the significance of funerary rituals and remembrance of the deceased for the entire social structure as it was owned by a college responsible for burying its members who were of modest means.

Starting in the 3rd century, the burial area became overlaid by river sediments. In 1588, the convent of Saint Teresa was built there and remained in operation until the mid-20th century. Once the convent had been abandoned, the site was turned into a public square and during the construction work the necropolis was recovered and the heritage complex fitted into the public space.



Part of a milestone from the Via Augusta, found in Hostafrancs and dated to the Caracalla period between 213 and 217 AD. MHCB 9397. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

12 Barcino's roads and territory

The colony of Barcino consisted of the walled city centre and the territory it administered and worked between the Besòs and Llobregat rivers. Right from its foundation, the territory was organised into regular plots using a system called centuriation which made land distribution and tax collecting easier.

A network of roads connected the city centre with establishments outside the walls such as villas and workshops, while a branch of the Via Augusta linked Barcino with *Baetulo* (Badalona), *Iluro* (Mataró) and the empire's other towns and cities. Part of this network can still be made out in the topography of the present-day city.

13 Funerary rituals in the Roman city

Several necropolises have been found in Barcino related to the main roads leading into the city and the villas on the plain. The arrangement of the tombs along the roads made them highly visible so that passers-by would honour the memory of the deceased.

Funeral rituals were social events which included feasting and offerings. The great diversity of grave goods and tombs, which ranged from simple tegula boxes to monumental constructions with statues, show that the inhabitants of the colony had very different social and economic statuses.



Tombs outside the site, lined up next to one of the roads leading into the city. © MUHBA / Pep Herrero



MUHBA Domus Avinyó

Social representation in Barcino

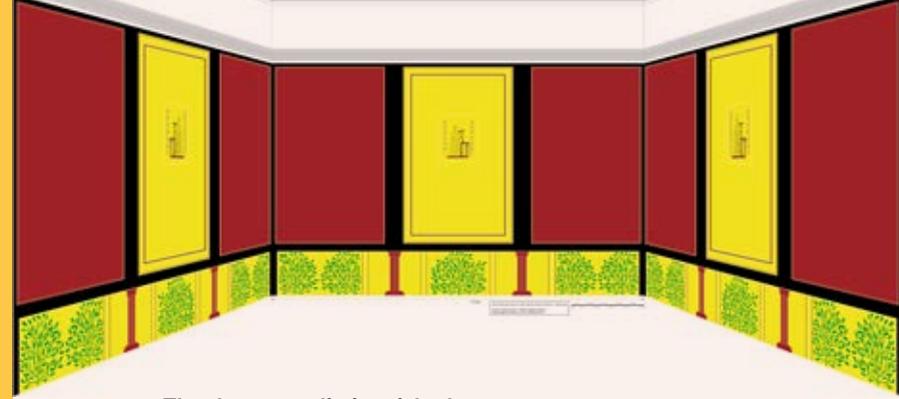
The Domus Avinyó probably covered the area of an entire *insula*, bounded by present-day Carrer d'Avinyó between Cervantes and Baixada de Sant Miquel. This means it was in the southeast quadrant of the city right next to the Roman wall where the angle is chamfered.

The domus preserved inside the walls such as this one were mainly venues for representation and power, while outside the walls in the *suburbium* there were villas with large holdings, dwellings, workshops and necropolises.

The domus in Carrer d'Avinyó was built in the Early Roman period in the 1st century and survived with various alterations until the 4th century. The excavation of this area of the city also made it possible to recover part of the city walls and a section of the *intervallum* or parapet walk where a bread oven has been identified which must have been in operation and stood on this site in the 3rd century.



© MUHBA / Oriol Clavera



Rendering of the *triclinium* pictorial decoration. Drawing: L. Suárez Escribano. © MUHBA

14 The domus, a distinguished residence

The Roman architectural remains preserved under the contemporary buildings come from the rear wall and part of two rooms of the domus which plainly reflect the social and economic status of its owner.

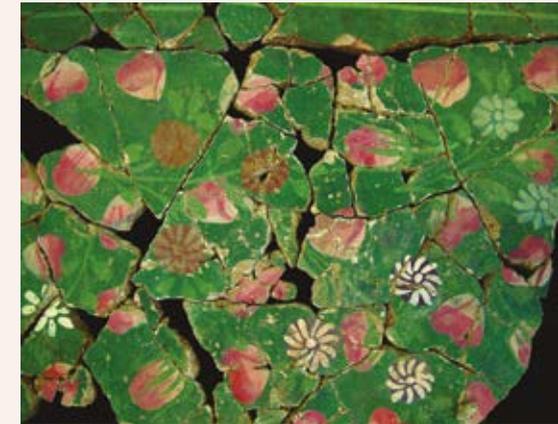
Firstly, a double-roomed *triclinium* has been preserved which was used to receive

visitors and serve banquets with the guests lying on three beds (*lectus*). Secondly, there is what might have been the daytime *cubiculum* of the *dominus* or *pater familias* where he could conduct activities which ran alongside the banquets such as literary recitals and business meetings or engage in more personal interaction. It was thus a distinguished residence.

15 Domestic décor

The domus still has a floor made of marble slabs and a mosaic of small *tesserae*. However, the most extraordinary aspect due to its high quality is the decoration revealed by the thousands of fragments of paintings recovered during the excavation of the demolition material.

This domus preserves the best and most complete decorative pictorial work in Barcino. It includes the representation of the Muses, which adorned the walls of the *triclinium*, and the depiction of the Abduction of Ganymede, which graced the ceiling of the *cubiculum*. The figurative motifs and characters related to the mythological portrayals in these paintings speak to the taste and refinement of their owner.



Detail of the decoration surrounding the central motif of the Abduction of Ganymede. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

MUHBA Domus Sant Honorat

Domestic architecture in Barcino

Between 2000 and 2003, Casa Morell was refurbished to house some offices of the Generalitat de Catalunya. This building, designed by architect Josep Oriol Mestres in 1851, was put up around the frame of the previous mediaeval manor house.

The archaeological exploration running in lockstep with the building's remodelling documented remains which furnish information about the urban evolution of this area of the city from the 1st to the 20th centuries. They include the findings of a domus from the Roman period and some large silos from a medieval house, structures that have been on display since 2010.

In the 5th and 6th centuries the house was altered by dividing up the rooms and turning it into accommodation for several families. These divisions were removed in the middle of the 7th century and the medieval constructions were built up from this level.



© MUHBA / Pep Parer



Remains of the structure and floor of one of the rooms in the domus. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

16 A house near the forum

The archaeological work uncovered a domus or stately residence dating from the 4th century. The house is arranged around a peristyle or central courtyard, which is landscaped and surrounded by porticoes, and a corridor that leads to seven large rooms or *cubicula*. The decoration of the marble painted walls and the mosaic floors together with its location next to the seat of power suggest it belonged to a wealthy family.

Possibly related to the domus, there are three *tabernae* or commercial establishments with a shop and back room opening onto a *decumanus minor*, now Carrer de Sant Honorat, close to the Forum.

17 The silos of the Jewish quarter

In the mid-13th century, this area was extensively renovated and occupied by its owner. The house was divided up and a large storage area was built including six large silos, some of which were covered with ashlar and would be at their most splendid in the 14th century.

In the late medieval period, the house, which was attached to a grain store, was owned by Massot Avengenà, Jafudà Llobell and Mahir Llobell. The riots that led to the storming of the Jewish quarter in the summer of 1391 provide the approximate date of removal of these silos, but not the space which was repurposed.



Part of two of the medieval silos. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

MUHBA - Palau Major Medieval capital

Together with the neighbouring cathedral, the Palau Major is Barcelona's oldest and most symbolic ensemble, the stone core that has presided over its entire history. Built on Roman remains, a corner from the 7th century is preserved and before 924 it had already become the seat of power in the county, which turned into royal authority in the 12th century.

The Romanesque façades and vaults from the 11th century hold up the great throne room or *Tinell*, just as the Roman wall supports the *Capella Reial*, both hallmarks of 14th-century Barcelona Gothic. In Plaça de Sant Iu, the rebirth of the Palau del Lloctinent and the rooms of the *Audiència* and the coat of arms of the Inquisition evidence the mid-16th century conversion of the Palau Major into the seat of the courts of an already absent monarchy while also providing access to the historical *Verger* orchard courtyard.

This incomparable setting makes it possible to explain the processes which turned Barcelona into a great Mediterranean capital by drawing on the abundant selection of pieces on display.



Romanesque vaults of the Palau Major, with the museography about early medieval Barcelona.
© MUHBA Stanislav Biel

18 Borderland between Muslims and Carolingians

The Visigothic civil war paved the way for an Islamic conquest which made *Barsaluna* part of the Umayyad Mediterranean empire. It was seized by the Caliphate of Cordoba in a short-lived period of rule that did little to change the local society presided over by the bishop.

The Carolingian conquest of 801 turned Barcelona into the frontier of a West which under Charlemagne dreamed of recreating the Roman Empire. The plan fell apart, leaving it under the control of the Frankish kings who ruled through the count. Benedictine monasticism and Carolingian models were put in place while the counts gained in independence until they became the new princes of Catalonia who built the Romanesque cathedral and county palace.



© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

19 The Barcelona of the Counts

The resources generated by the struggle against the Islamic *taifas* and agricultural expansion revived construction and demand. Crafts and the market flourished and immigrants poured in. This growth underpinned the power of the counts as a result of taxation and the mills on the Comtal irrigation channel. It also laid the foundations for international trade and credit with the vigorous involvement of the Jewish minority, which eventually became an *aljama* or political community.

The marriage alliance with the Kingdom of Aragon in 1137 brought the crown and enabled territorial expansion to the west and south, opening up the Ebro trade route to Barcelona and in the subsequent century the territory of Valencia as well.

To learn more, see the rooms 27 and 28 of MUHBA El Call.



Stone plaque of the pious foundation of Rabbi Samuel ha-Sardí. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

20 **New citizen elite**

In the 13th century, Barcelona played a key role in financing the conquests of Mallorca, Valencia and Sicily, followed by Sardinia in the 14th century. In return, it gained control of the south-western Mediterranean trade routes in competition with Genoa, the north-western power.

Maritime trade generated huge profits which were even greater when they

were reinvested in financial support for a monarchy weighed down by military expenditure. Thus Barcelona became home to a trading and financial elite which built up its fortune and influence symbolised by the lavishness of the city's striking Gothic mansions.

Chivalric-themed murals which adorned a large 14th-century house in the former Carrer de Basea in Barcelona. MHC B 17027. © MUHBA / Jordi Puig

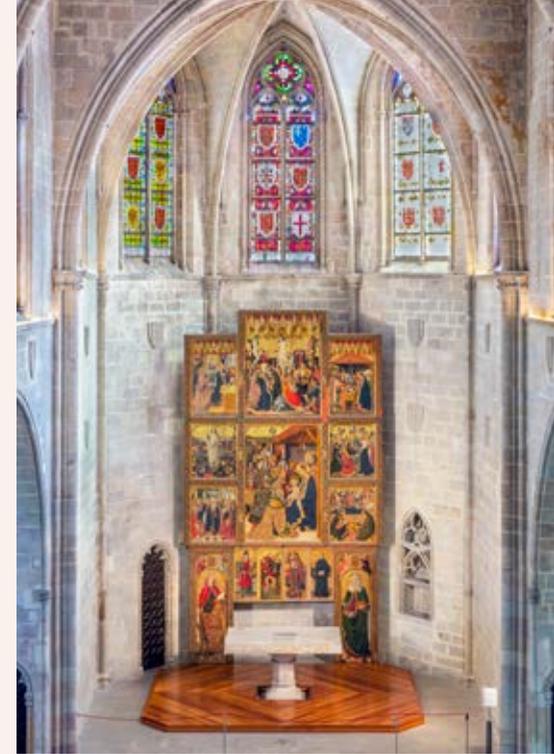


22 **Barcelona's Gothic splendour**

The graceful *Capella Reial*, known as the Chapel of Saint Agatha, was the first Gothic church to be finished in the city of Barcelona in 1310 while construction of the cathedral had only just begun. Gothic architecture spread swiftly in response to the new needs of an increasingly complex urban society.

The new style also filtered through to other artistic expressions at the height of an economic boom which brought increasing numbers of commissions and drove the consolidation of local workshops and contacts with foreign models and artists. The spectacular *Retaule del Conestable* altarpiece dating from 1464 bears witness to the final period of the Gothic inspired by Flemish influences.

Gothic apse in the Capella Reial in Barcelona's Palau Major presided over by the *Retaule de l'Epifania* (Epiphany Altarpiece) commissioned from painter Jaume Huguet in 1464. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia



21 **From beach to port**

Maritime trade was the city's main economic driving force and flourished even though it lacked a good natural or artificial harbour. Barcelona only had the relative protection of the sand bar running parallel to the coast known as Les Tasques, which shaped a coastal lagoon where vessels could load and unload in good weather. In stormy weather, ships might end up on the beach as shown by the *Barceloneta I* wreck.

In 1439, the city tried to build a breakwater but it was destroyed by storms. It was not until 1487 that it was able to complete its first artificial wharf which was then extended between 1590 and 1623 with two additional sections.



Wreckage from the *Barceloneta I*, an early 15th-century Cantabrian ship which sank on Barcelona's beach before the city's first wharf was built. © MUHBA / Mónica Martínez

**The mendicant monasteries.
The Royal Monastery of Pedralbes**

In the 13th century, the new urban monasticism of the mendicant orders came to Barcelona and the city and its surroundings were crammed with monasteries. They became extraordinarily influential in all areas including art. They were built and decorated in the new Gothic style and housed the chapels and tombs of confraternities and wealthy families. Often destroyed or relocated in the 19th century, few can convey this power today like the one at Pedralbes. Part of the MUHBA collection helps to explain it.



Royal Monastery of Pedralbes cloister. © MUHBA / Pere Vivas

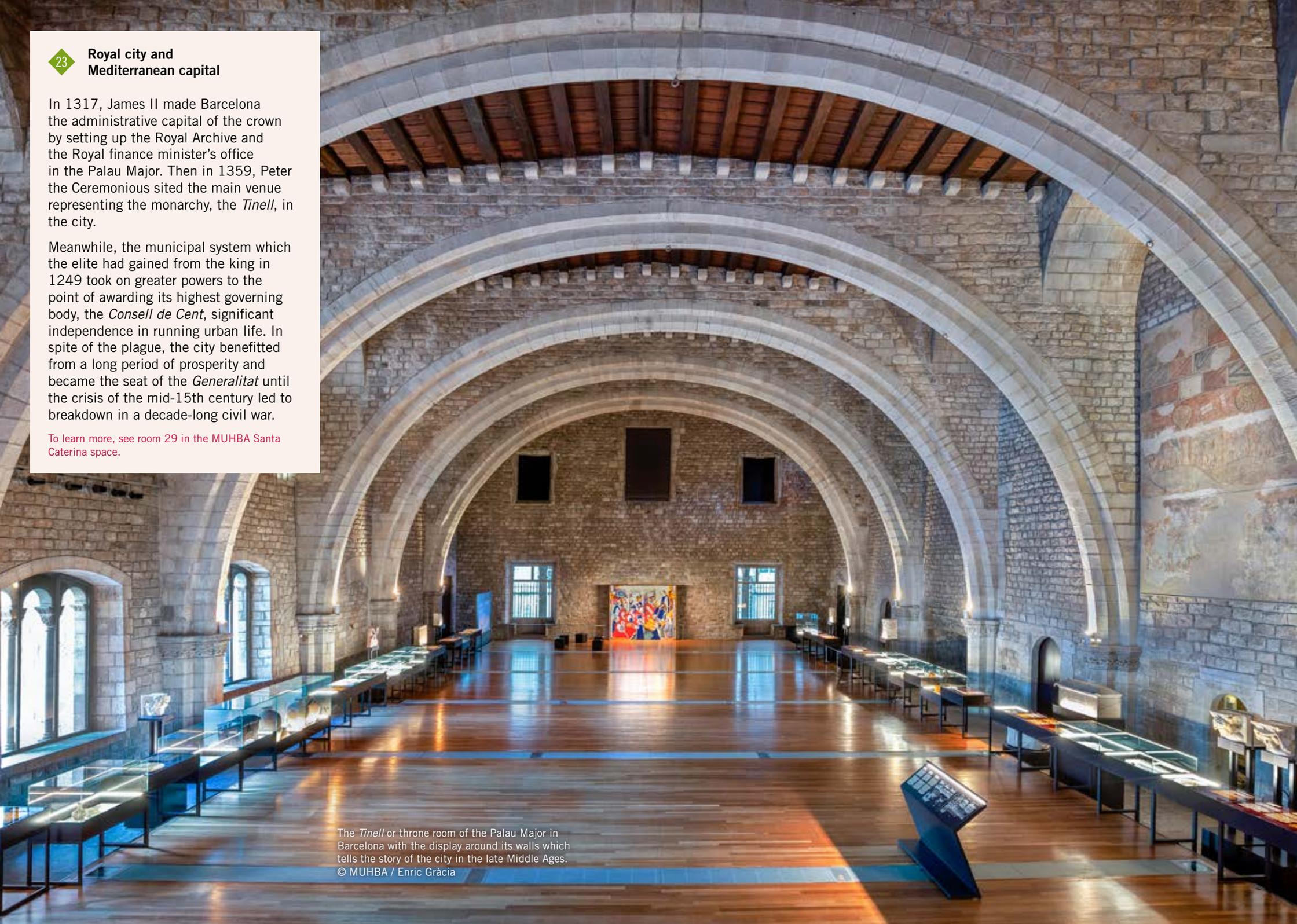
23

Royal city and Mediterranean capital

In 1317, James II made Barcelona the administrative capital of the crown by setting up the Royal Archive and the Royal finance minister's office in the Palau Major. Then in 1359, Peter the Ceremonious sited the main venue representing the monarchy, the *Tinell*, in the city.

Meanwhile, the municipal system which the elite had gained from the king in 1249 took on greater powers to the point of awarding its highest governing body, the *Consell de Cent*, significant independence in running urban life. In spite of the plague, the city benefitted from a long period of prosperity and became the seat of the *Generalitat* until the crisis of the mid-15th century led to breakdown in a decade-long civil war.

To learn more, see room 29 in the MUHBA Santa Caterina space.



The *Tinell* or throne room of the Palau Major in Barcelona with the display around its walls which tells the story of the city in the late Middle Ages.
© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia



Processional banner of the guild of locksmiths and blacksmiths, 1782. Under the royal arms are the lock and the anvil, distinctive tools of both trades. MHCB 404. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

24 **The Barcelona of the guilds**
(Under construction)

While maritime trade was the driving force of growth, manufacturing production was its lifeblood. It was conducted in family-based workshops run by a master craftsman and supplied local demand and exports alike.

To evade the constraints on association and encourage professional cooperation, the trades were grouped into pious confraternities as the 14th century progressed until they achieved representation in the *Consell de Cent* and became the basic structure of production and civic organisation. By the 16th century, many of them were already guilds with their own headquarters and enforced the protectionism typical of the early modern period through municipal regulations.



Portrait of Josep Torner, master shoemaker and sixth councillor of Barcelona in 1676, dressed in the red "gramalla" robe worn by the city's councillors. MHCB 254. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

26 **Barcelona, provincial capital in the Spanish Empire**
(Under construction)

In the 16th century, the monarchy finally withdrew from Barcelona. The city, now excluded from Spain's expansion in the Americas, became the capital of yet another province of the great Austrian empire governed by a viceroy with the advice of the *Audiència*, the country's highest court. By order of *Les Corts*, the *Generalitat* reformed the Palau Major to provide them with space and connected it to the *Sala dels Escrivans* by turning the *Tinell* around and fitting it with a large entranceway on Plaça de Sant Iu.

The *Consell de Cent* had to adapt, protecting as best it could the municipal prerogatives from growing centralism until the final abolition of the traditional order after 1714.

25 **A Catholic city**
(Under construction)

After the forced conversion of the Jews in 1391, Barcelona became an entirely Catholic city. Under the pretext of ensuring this would not change, the monarchy imposed the new Castilian-based Inquisition. However, the local authorities recognised that the intention was to lessen political freedom and held out until 1487 when they were forced to swear an oath to the new religious royal court set up in the Palau Major, known from then on as the Palau de la Inquisició.

The persecution of converts began which was then followed by hounding of Lutherans, while publications were censored and the cult of saints was promoted on walls and in public spaces. Soon the new Baroque aesthetic took hold.



Baroque carving of St Julian on horseback (17th century), patron saint of the confraternity of the "Julians" which brought together lace trim makers, bag makers, glove makers and other trades. MHCB 424. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

Defeat and the new Bourbon order.
El Born Cultural and Memorial Centre

The defeat of 1714 brought about the abolition of the *Consell de Cent* and the establishment of the Bourbon municipality under the auspices of the central power, which would soon build the Ciutadella to achieve military control over the city. The excavation of the wide strip of the Ribera neighbourhood, which had been demolished to build it, exhumed among other urban remains a large number of domestic objects from early modern Barcelona which became part of the MUHBA collections and can now be seen at El Born Cultural and Memorial Centre.



17th-century dishes in the Museum's collection from the excavations carried out at El Born. MHCB 20899. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

MUHBA El Call

The Jews of medieval Barcelona

The MUHBA El Call site, open since 2008, is in the heart of the old Jewish quarter where the house of Jucef Bonhiac, a former veil weaver, once stood. It is a medieval construction which was altered and remodelled over time and where remains from the 13th and 14th centuries are preserved.

A tour provides insight into the topography of the *Call*, including its urban layout and main buildings and heritage sites. It also takes visitors back into its history, especially the high points of the Middle Ages, and shows the splendour of the cultural legacy of Barcelona's Jews.

This venue is the best starting point for stepping into the life of the Jewish community in medieval Barcelona. The idea is not only to depict its distinctive traits but also to explore the relationship between the Jews and the rest of the city's people.



Current view of a street in the former Jewish Call.
© Cristina Morera

27 *El Call*, the Jewish quarter of the city

The Catalan word *call*, which originally meant “narrow passage” or “alley”, later referred to the Jewish community's neighbourhood and was a bounded enclosure containing synagogues, ritual baths and other facilities associated with Jewish culture.

The *Call de Barcelona* was already in place in the late 11th century and was the largest in the Crown of Aragon. The rising Jewish population led to the *Call Menor* being set up in the mid-13th century. This was followed by increasing segregation which culminated in the storming of the *Call* in 1391 accompanied by the murder of three hundred Jews and the forced conversion of the rest to Christianity.



© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

28 The cultural legacy of the aljama

During the Middle Ages, the *Call de Barcelona* was a great cultural hub and earned a reputation as a “city of sages” among the Jews. It was the seat of an internationally renowned rabbinical school and a very active centre for producing the *Haggadot*, the manuscripts setting out the ritual of the Jewish Passover meal.

Theology, science, philosophy, poetry and Kabbalah flourished in the *Call*: the multi-faceted scientist and translator Abraham bar Hiyya, the jurist and theologian Salomon ben Adret and the philosopher Hasday Cresques are three key names in the intellectual history of Catalan and European Judaism.



Room about the cultural legacy of the Call. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

MUHBA Santa Caterina

Monasteries turned into squares and markets

The Santa Caterina site is a window the MUHBA opens onto the overlapping uses in this part of the old city over the centuries.

Based on an Early Roman industrial suburb (1st-3rd centuries AD) built to the east of the Roman wall, the core of the vibrant Ribera district grew in medieval and early modern times presided over by the monastery of the new mendicant order of the Dominicans, the seat of the municipal government until the late 14th century.

The monastery stayed there until the great monastic crisis of the 19th century led to its demolition, leaving no trace of its splendour other than the structural foundations that have been found. The new Mercat de Santa Caterina, the city's first covered market, was built across most of the site in 1845. Its outer walls survive, protected since 2005 by the new roof designed by the Miralles Tagliabue architectural studio.



29 Crisis of monasticism and urban change

In the early 19th century, religious orders held a large part of the country's real estate and Barcelona, crammed with monasteries and convents, was no exception. After several frustrated attempts, the disentailment decrees promulgated from 1836 onwards prised the properties out of the hands of the Church and by exclaustation and encouraging the popular assault on the monasteries ensured that the friars could not be reinstated.

The space freed up by the destruction of large monasteries such as Santa Caterina made it possible to lay on covered markets and other modern services for a city already in the throes of industrialisation and stifled by the old city walls which were still standing.

Interior of the MUHBA Santa Caterina site, with vestiges of the apse and two pieces recovered from the old convent. © MUHBA Stanislav Biel



MUHBA Oliva Artés

A contemporary metropolis and an urban laboratory

Oliva Artés is an industrial building in the Poblenou district, a former factory and workshop built in 1920 which made and repaired machinery. The building was recovered and since 2015 has been one of the Museum's sites hosting "Questioning Barcelona; from industrialisation to the 21st century" as a permanent exhibition.

The exhibition explores Barcelona's history from the 18th century to the present day from a number of perspectives including work, demography, immigration, social conflict, the territory and industrial development.

MUHBA Oliva Artés addresses questions about the contemporary city, about the future of Barcelona as a global metropolis and as the national capital of Catalonia, in order to unpack the future of cities from a historical and Barcelona standpoint. It is a venue for citizens, both from the neighbourhood and the city as a whole.

In the future it is planned to connect the MUHBA Oliva Artés venue to the Can Ricart factory complex's power system, which has been declared a Cultural Asset of National Interest. This site, which was assigned to MUHBA, will link the Museum to Poblenou's industrial heritage fabric.



© MUHBA / Jordi Mota



Interior of MUHBA Oliva Artés featuring part of the permanent exhibition about the human and material foundations of the contemporary city.
© MUHBA / Jordi Mota

30 The human and material foundations

Industrialisation was the key factor in the city's growth and modernisation from the 18th century onwards. This was especially the case in the first third of the 20th century due to the diversification of activities resulting from innovation in power sources and technology.

Mass immigration, the outcome of rising demand for labour, posed new challenges for the city such as social and cultural cohesion and housing. Backed by its long commercial tradition, Barcelona became a great European industrial metropolis and in the late 20th century had to tackle new issues such as urban metabolism and sustainability policies.

31 Cultural and political outreach

In the 19th century, the French model of territorial organisation coupled with a centralist Spanish government led to the revival of Catalonia's linguistic, cultural and political heritage. Barcelona emerged as a modern, bourgeois and industrial city, socially highly polarised until the mid-20th century, which aspired to achieve self-rule.

Since the 1960s, economic growth and the subsequent democratic transition and expansion of services have meant that one of the main municipal policies has been to build an image of the city as a European metropolis in lockstep with the rise of critical and reformist views.



Upper part of the Catalan Art Nouveau structure of a former Sant Antoni market stall dating from 1909, an example of the modern, bourgeois city. © MUHBA / Manuel Cohen

32 **The making of a metropolis**

The area at the end of the central bay of MUHBA Oliva Artés is about the shaping of Barcelona as a great metropolis. It places the visitor in space and time to rethink the future with a historical perspective and in comparison with other cities.

An audiovisual and interactive tour takes visitors on a journey through the history and transformation of Barcelona's urban space from before it was founded two thousand years ago to the present day. The exhibition is rounded off with a shared workspace between the museum and schools where the city can be read from a young person's point of view.



Octavio Paz school lesson at MUHBA Oliva Artés.
© MUHBA / Mónica Martínez



33 **Laboratory of urban codes, the game of the city**

The museum laboratory is the core of the MUHBA Oliva Artés site, a meeting point primarily designed to be a venue for participation and collaboration. It is a place to learn about, discuss and rework the technological, economic, social, political and cultural codes of contemporary Barcelona from a historical standpoint.

As a laboratory of urban codes it seeks to foster shared work between historians, social scientists, architects, technology research centres, universities, schools, archives, cultural organisations, neighbourhood associations and people interested in the city.

Mies van der Rohe Award
2015. European Union Prize
for Contemporary Architecture.
© MUHBA / Jordi Mota

MUHBA Bon Pastor

Living in and inhabiting the contemporary city

The MUHBA Bon Pastor site shows the history of housing in Barcelona during the 20th century through the museum display of a block of cheap houses in this working-class neighbourhood, one of the four housing estates built in the city in 1929. The layout of the terraced houses giving straight on to the street is the most striking feature which fostered interaction between residents and their social and political activity.

The block is made up of sixteen houses, eight of which have been turned into museum venues: four show the struggle for housing in the city while the other four display how people lived in the Bon Pastor neighbourhood and the evolution of the interior of the cheap workers' houses between 1929 and 2017.

The venue is being fashioned in a partnership between the museum, local residents and other social stakeholders working on the ground. It has taken shape as a unique opportunity to tell the story of the city from its outskirts.



© MUHBA / Marta Delclòs



New builds in Bon Pastor, 2021. © Mónica Martínez

34 Inhabiting Barcelona. 20th century housing challenges (Under construction)

The four houses in Carrer de Bellmunt show the estages of a historical cycle which ran throughout the 20th century. It began with the large-scale arrival of immigrants in the city and the emergence of the first social housing and ended with the 1992 Olympic Games and the subsequent recession of 1997.

This process was shaped by access to home ownership for a wide range of social classes, something unprecedented and also far-reaching which substantially changed the city and its social life. It is divided into a number of stages, each with its own distinctive features: 1900-1936, 1939-1959, 1959-1975 and 1976-2000.

35 Living in Bon Pastor. House, neighbourhood and working-class world (Under construction)

The houses in Carrer de Barnola illustrate the evolution of the Bon Pastor neighbourhood and its housing between 1929, when it was built, and 2016, when the single-family houses gave way to new blocks of social housing.

The tour reveals the stages of this evolution, each with its own unique identity: scarcity (1929-1952), development (1953-1974), reform (1975-1993) and diversification (1994-2016). The restoration of the houses in each of the stages makes it possible to trace the history of the domestic interiors of the city's working classes with all their diversity and contradictions.



Street life in the houses in Bon Pastor, 1935. © Josep Domínguez / AFB

MUHBA Fabra i Coats

Barcelona, city and work

The site of the former Fabra i Coats textile factory in the Sant Andreu district is to house the 'Barcelona; city and work' museum project. It is an outstanding collection of the city's industrial heritage which furnishes physical evidence of the scale and size of Barcelona's manufacturing past during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Fabra i Coats brings together a number of aspects to interpret work in Barcelona. It draws on a cross-cutting historical perspective anchored in its heritage resources and the significance of the company's industrial achievements in the economic and social history of Barcelona, Catalonia and the world.

The resultant museum venue describes work in Barcelona in its geo-historical context, reflecting the complexity and transformation of ways of working over the centuries and providing specific insight into the industrial tradition of Sant Andreu and Fabra i Coats as an iconic factory.

36 Working in the city (Under construction)

The city is a repository of very diverse working worlds, yet at the same time it is also their fusion. Work has a number of associated attributes which can be approached from a philosophical, social, religious or political standpoint.

This room furnishes an overview of work, its historical evolution and the complexity

of ways of working in Barcelona with a gaze from the past to the present which fosters discussion. It also brings to the fore some long-standing cross-cutting themes: working times, changes in labour relations, forms of social welfare and working women.



Part of the painting *Barcelona vista des del Besòs* from 1935, which conveys the image of a vibrant, industrious city. MHC B 3021. © MUHBA / Pep Parer



© MUHBA / Manuel Cohen

37 Kinds of work (Under construction)



Tile panel *Els adelants del segle XX* showing various kinds of work. MHC B 42126. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

The forms and kinds of work in the city are diverse and complex and have changed over the centuries. They also impact urban planning, transport, housing and services.

The diversity of work in Barcelona is illustrated by a selection of the types considered most relevant or significant from the 18th century to the present day. They include industrial work and at home, jobs to feed the city, construction, maritime work, jobs in public services, professional services and government and domestic service.



38 Manufacturing Barcelona, Sant Andreu and Fabra i Coats (Under construction)

The present-day Sant Andreu district is an outstanding example for explaining work in a Catalonia historically powered by economic development on the Barcelona plain.

In this room visitors will be able to explore from the standpoint of work the manufacturing tradition of Sant Andreu and how the textile sector was the driving force behind the first industrialisation. They will also be able to learn about Fabra i Coats, the flagship company of industrialisation, and its features and working conditions. Plus they will get a glimpse of what setting up large factories in the new emerging metalworking and chemical industries entailed against the backdrop of the Second Industrial Revolution.

Fabra i Coats històries cosides panel in the entrance to the building's central bay which showcases and expresses the history and memories of Fabra i Coats. © MUHBA / Andrea Manenti

39 The power system: the Sala de Calderes at Can Fabra (Under construction)

The Sala de Calderes boiler room is part of the heritage complex at the former Fabra i Coats factory site and unique in Catalonia because it preserves the plant's complete and unaltered power system.

It was the core of the site and its size and the documentation about its history mean its recovery provides insight into the features, roles and evolution of the power system of a large textile industry facility. This evolution involved using a range of power sources depending on the period and technological breakthroughs: steam, electricity, fuel oil and gas.

One of the Babcock & Wilcox boilers inside the room. © MUHBA / Manuel Cohen



MUHBA Casa de l'Aigua

Supply and sustainability

The Casa de l'Aigua was built by the municipally-owned Barcelona firm Aigües de Montcada between 1915 and 1919 after a typhus epidemic which devastated the city in 1914 made it clear that the drinking water supply system was in urgent need of overhaul.

It is a major heritage site in the history of the city's water supply and an example of the plans to put in place a public water provision system in the 20th century. It consists of the pumping station in the Trinitat Vella neighbourhood, the underground gallery that crosses Avinguda Meridiana and which the pipe runs through, and the receiving station and treatment plant in the Trinitat Nova neighbourhood.

Museum purposes are innovatively combined with other social and cultural aspects. The exhibition content describes the features of the heritage complex together with issues in the history of water supply across the Barcelona plain.



© MUHBA



Interior of the tunnel connecting the houses in Trinitat Vella and Trinitat Nova. © MUHBA / Manuel Cohen

40 Supplying the city: water distribution and use

Control of water has been crucial in shaping the city since its foundation. Over time a wide range of techniques have made it easier to harness, convey, store and distribute water across the urban area and also to drain it away.

Ever since ancient Barcino, the city's inhabitants have needed to organise their water resources. In the two millennia between the Roman colony and the industrial society which built the Eixample from the mid-19th century onwards, Barcelona used the same gravity-fed water systems coupled with a variable supply from wells.

41 The water revolution in the contemporary metropolis

In the second half of the 19th century, the preceding technological stability was overturned with the advent of water pumping which brought about a major change in water management and use in Barcelona. The supply of water to the Eixample took shape as the main problem to be worked out and the trigger for the process.

The new technical paradigm, population growth and scientific and cultural changes, such as the hygiene movement, were key factors in water policy. Public provision yielded to a series of private initiatives which emerged in the last decades of the 19th century and eventually merged in a single large dominant company.



Laying water pipes in the vicinity of the Sagrada Família, 1917. Arxiu MUHBA

The Trinitat Nova receiving station tank is the room set aside for recovering the memory of a long tradition of using and managing locally-sourced water in the area bounded by the Collserola mountain range, the River Besòs and Montjuïc.

Locally-sourced water, meaning water which falls on the land as rain or gets there from other nearby places as runoff, has historically shaped the development of the towns and villages on the Barcelona plain, and until the industrial era it fashioned relations between society and the territory. It was a close and constant relationship given that water was crucial in many areas including food, agricultural productivity and power for the mills.



MUHBA Vil·la Joana

Barcelona and literary narratives

Ramon Miralles i Vilalta, builder and mayor of Sarrià, had a second residence put up between 1889 and 1890 in Collserola on the site of the former Mas Ferrer farmhouse. He took in Jacint Verdaguer when he was ill and it was in this house that the poet died on 10 June 1902. In 1963, some of the rooms were turned into the first museum dedicated to the writer.

From 1920 to 1973, the house was the home of the municipal schools for deaf, blind and other special needs people. For a time it also hosted the Laboratory of Studies and Research sponsored by Barcelona City Council and an international leader in its field.

Today it is a memorial and a house of literature: a venue that champions the value of the literary word through the person of Verdaguer. The poet is the centre-piece that presents Barcelona as a literary city and provides a reminder of the public significance of literature.



Tactile class for blind children in the forest. First third of the 20th century. © CREDAC

43 From farmhouse to school. Educating in Barcelona

Barcelona City Council's Cultural Committee set up schools for pupils with special needs in a setting conducive to learning in the open air at the prompting of educationalist Manuel Ainaud, who advocated a rationalist and Montessorian teaching approach. They were opened in March 1921 as a flu epidemic had prevented them from starting out at the beginning of the school year. In 1973, the City Council moved them to a new building on a neighbouring estate where they are still operating today.

The ties with researchers from Europe and America, attendance at congresses and publications reflect the results achieved and the methods used during the first years of the Vil·la Joana schools.



© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

44 Literatures

Literary words have always been embedded in people's jobs and daily lives, in the first stories of any community describing its origins, in languages, in literary characters and venues.

However, it is in the contemporary era that literature has been endowed with essential value and symbolic category and the dense meaningful fabric of cities as spaces of awareness has been revealed. It is the age of literature, made up of many literatures through which each reader traces their own unique and personal yet transferable journey.



Room where Verdaguer's worlds are described, featuring the poet's word cloud. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

His works, some forty in various genres, are significant evidence of the changes in Barcelona society in the second half of the 19th century. The poet's voice was heard in pamphlets, in the press and at public events, yet above all in the books he published in Barcelona where he had his centre of literary operations.

The scope of Verdaguer's output, his life journey and the mark he left on society made him the first great contemporary poet. The writer became a symbol for the people who identified with him, while at the same time his intellectual outlook, expressed in his writings, turned him into a critical conscience.



Illustrated collector's editions of two of Verdaguer's works: *El Canigó* by Maurici Vassal in 1931 and *L'Atlantida* by Miquel Planas in 1992. © MUHBA / Andrea Manenti



Expressions of Barcelona with the city as a literary object. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

The diverse and contradictory Barcelona of the 20th century is reflected in literature. And literature has at the same time been thoroughly appropriated, not only due to the social expansion of reading but also because of the transformational power of literary works in themselves. It is additionally a key factor in the creation of imaginaries in all artistic fields.

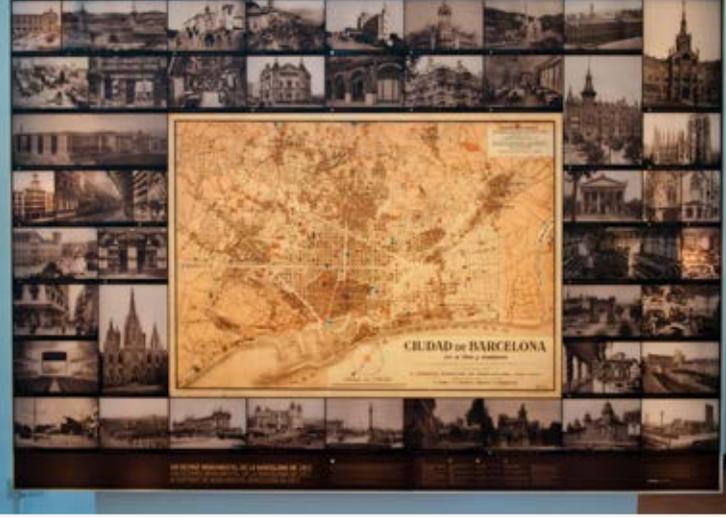
Barcelona has been the birthplace or home of creators who have conjured up the city in their literary fictions and helped to make it and understand it. The city, the hub of Catalan literature and the global capital of publishing, has been and is in itself a literary object.

MUHBA Park Güell Barcelona, European capital

The MUHBA Park Güell site in the Casa del Guarda allows the visitor to stitch together the narrative of the contemporary city in the early 20th century from the perspective of Barcelona's elites at a time when the city, home to a thriving citizenry eager for representation and reaffirmation of identity, aspired to position itself as a European capital.

Park Güell was an urban planning, architectural and landscaping project in which Gaudí deployed innovative solutions yet with traditional roots. With a prime location on the first ledge of the hills of Barcelona, it is embedded in the urban structure as an integral part of the city.

The Casa del Guarda's exhibition contents are arranged over three floors to talk respectively about the house, the park and the city; that is to say, about Gaudí's architectural uniqueness, the park's urban and natural sustainability model and its inclusion in and relationship with the city.



"A portrait of monumental Barcelona in 1917" panel on the third floor of the Casa del Guarda. © MUHBA / Pep Herrero

47 Metropolis and Catalan Art Nouveau

In the early 20th century, Barcelona was a modern, cosmopolitan, industrial metropolis of more than half a million people. With the city walls demolished half a century earlier and Cerdà's Eixample plan implemented, the city was growing rapidly, sprawling out into its industrial suburbs.

The surge of Catalan Art Nouveau coincided with a booming city, socially troubled, artistically extremely vibrant and the capital of a resurgent Catalonia, which discovered in this new artistic language for urban representation a symbol of its identity which still survives today. Park Güell was the expression of this Catalan cultural revival and for many years the stage for citizen social events.



© MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

48 Gaudí, Park Güell and Barcelona: urban planning and nature

In 1900 work began on Park Güell, a joint scheme between Eusebi Güell and Antoni Gaudí, the developer and the architect, designed as a residential condominium for sixty well-heeled families in the purest British style (hence its name with a 'k' rather than a 'c' as it would be spelt in Catalan). Gaudí's idea was a perfect symbiosis between urban planning, architecture and nature which crafted the park as an outstanding enclave in the great metropolis. However, its bourgeois character feel contrasted with the artisan character of its surroundings.

Barcelona City Council bought the park in 1922 and turned it into a public space in 1926, a real gift to the city. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984.



Park Güell, an architecture and nature project that would become part of the city's urban fabric. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

Built between 1901 and 1903 and standing at the entrance to the park as the residence of the estate's caretaker, the Casa de Guarda is one of Gaudí's few examples of modest housing. It was built following the principles of utility and interior simplicity yet with great formal and compositional refinement as shown by his use of the Catalan vault.

Learning about and comparing Gaudí's constructions in the city and elsewhere helps visitors to appreciate the architect's ability to adapt. He came up with ingenious and practical architectural, town-planning and natural solutions for various kinds of buildings and urban spaces by tapping his knowledge rooted in ancient and local traditions.



Interior of the ground floor at the Casa del Guarda with the stove on the right. © MUHBA / Pere Vivas

MUHBA Refugi 307

Citizen self-defence

Refugi 307 is one of the air-raid shelters built during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 to protect the population from the indiscriminate bombing of Barcelona.

It had three entrances from Carrer Nou de la Rambla and nearly 400 metres of tunnels, 2.10 metres high and varying between 1.5 and 2 metres in width. The shelter featured several rooms including toilets, a tap with running water, an infirmary, a children's room and fireplace.

It is one of the best examples of a shelter built in Barcelona and also a genuine memorial to the people's struggle to survive in the face of adversity and the disaster of wars. Walking through it visitors can relive the anguish of a city which in the Civil War had to cope with the new experience of bombing civilians, a military tactic which had only been tried out briefly during the First World War.



© MUHBA / Edmond Mestres



Galleries inside the air-raid shelter.
© MUHBA / Manuel Cohen

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Passive defence in the Civil War: the air-raid shelter

Barcelona was hit by several air raids during the war, some aimed at specific targets while other indiscriminate attacks were designed to frighten and demoralise the population. As it was impossible to anticipate an air raid from the sea in good time, passive defence measures were put in place for identification, prevention and rescue of citizens.

The passive defence boards oversaw the implementation of these measures including setting up early warning networks, deploying observation posts and sirens and most importantly providing or building areas to shelter the population.

MUHBA Turó de la Rovira

The city at the limit

The hill known as Turó de la Rovira, a unique location with a 360-degree view over the city, is a perfect vantage point to look out on all the events that have taken place on the plain from Iberian settlement to the present day. The drive of modern and contemporary Barcelona has shaped the landscape of the hill.

During the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War, the hill played a key role as the site of an anti-aircraft battery and several of its sections have been preserved. Three of these structures have been laid out as museum facilities and house the permanent exhibition “Barcelona to the limit: from the air war to living in shantytowns”. In the post-Civil War period, this military facility became part of the Canons shantytown which survived until 1990.

The hill bears the imprint of these pivotal processes in the history and memory of the city and the country. The general plans of 1953 and 1976 added it to a park straddling three of the hills of Barcelona’s first cornice.



© MUHBA / Jordi Mota



Gun at the Turó de la Rovira anti-aircraft battery, disabled by the retreating Republican army in 1939. © ANC

51 Active defence in the Civil War: the anti-aircraft battery

The DECA (Special Anti-Aircraft Defence Unit) was tasked with the active defence of the city during the Civil War to repel or at least hinder attacks. The fascist bombing of Barcelona was the first time in history that a large city had been massively and repeatedly attacked from the air.

The DECA saw the Turó de la Rovira as the prime strategic location for anti-aircraft guns, although the meagre Republican resources made defending the city difficult. Construction of the battery began in 1937 and it came into service on 3 March 1938, operating until it was rendered unusable in 1939.

52 The informal Barcelona of shantytowns

Starting in the early 20th century, Barcelona’s rapid growth led to the expansion of shantytowns. Housing schemes were inadequate and by the end of the 1950s shantytowns had reached their peak and were home to 7% of the city’s population.

The structures of the disused anti-aircraft battery on Turó de la Rovira were repurposed to build a new neighbourhood. The shanty-dwellers, organised since 1972 in the Carmel Residents’ Association, fought for improvements in the neighbourhood and to be rehoused along with other shanty-dwellers from the Carmel area. Finally, in 1990 many moved to the new housing estates on the outskirts.

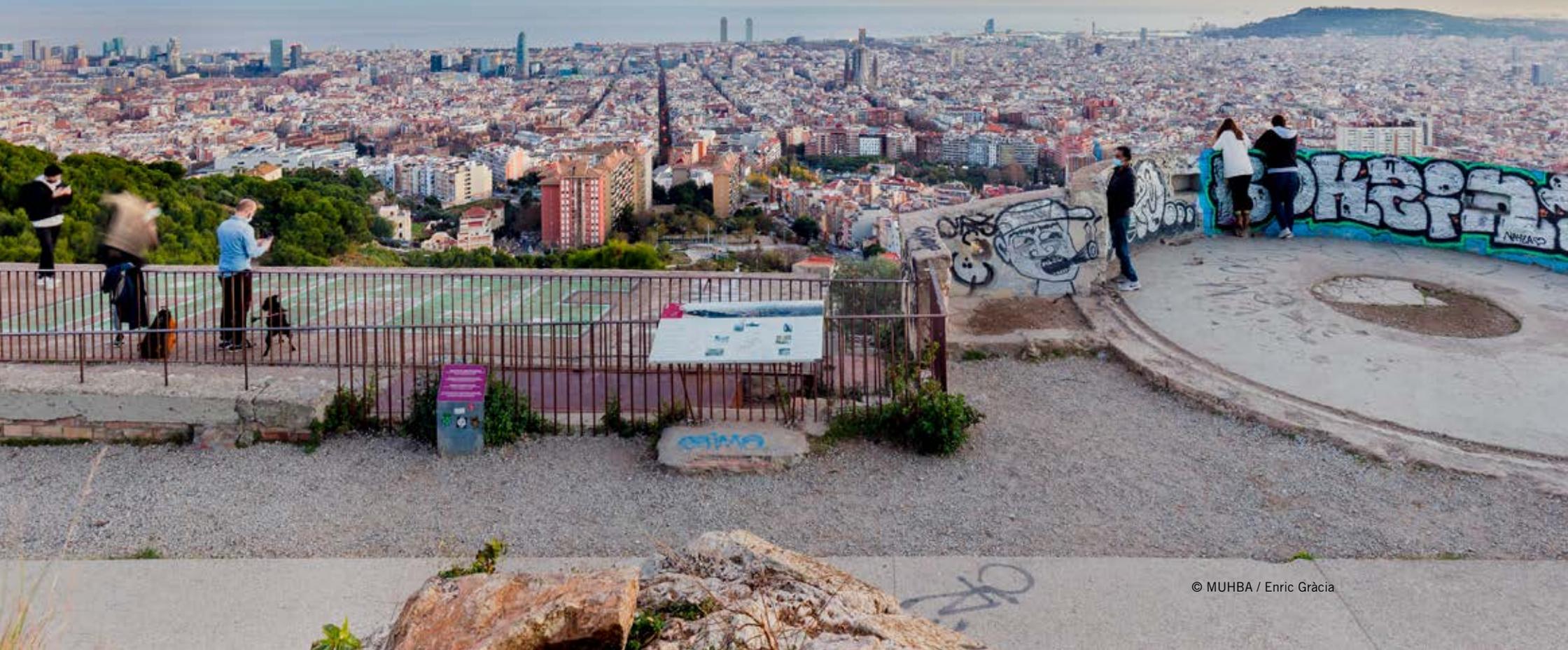


Interior of one of the sections describing the expansion of shantytowns in the city. © MUHBA / Enric Gràcia

Barcelona from a bird's eye view: the metropolitan city

The Turó de la Rovira is the city's great vantage point, a prime observatory from which to survey the physical development and changes in the built-up area. In the mid-20th century, the metropolitan city emerged with the new housing estate districts which make up an unmistakable landscape differing significantly from its 19th century counterpart.

The metropolis brought urban densification and social transformation accompanied by the rise of neighbourhood associations and struggles for better living conditions coupled with building housing and public amenities. The 1992 Olympic Games marked a turning point and urban renewal shifted to the eastern part of the city.



MUHBA Centre de Col·leccions

Heritage conservation, documentation and restoration

The MUHBA is a heritage centre which creates, systematises and studies tangible and intangible assets. Conservation and restoration are part of the essential task of managing collections and heritage sites.

The Collections Centre in the Zona Franca is the facility used for conserving, studying and disseminating the collections. It is made up of a museum depository and an archaeological archive while its reception, work and storage rooms ensure appropriate treatment, preservation and accessibility for the pieces.

It is an active venue for research and innovation in archaeology, restoration, conservation and documentation of the objects and a benchmark in promoting the collections as a source of knowledge, inspiration and enjoyment. Likewise, constant additions and improvements to the collections enhance its ability to construct narratives and intersecting viewpoints on the city's history.



Pieces of pottery from the 16th and 17th centuries which are part of the reference collection at the Archaeological Archive. © MUHBA / Pep Parer

54 Arxiu Arqueològic de Barcelona

The Archaeological Archive is the museum's facility for treating, conserving and studying artefacts exhumed from archaeological excavations conducted in Barcelona. Its purpose is to ensure they are conserved and managed by arranging spaces and uses in a twin-track approach.

The first meets the need for archaeologists and other specialists to do preparatory work prior to the final storage of the materials. The second is based on the idea of a protective building which delivers appropriate storage conditions for the material, ensures it is permanently connected with the archaeological documentation and makes viewing, studying and disseminating it easier.



© MUHBA / Verònica Moragas

55 Depository for objects and depictions of the city

The museum's collection is made up of a wide variety of objects which tell the story of the city and its people from prehistoric times to the 21st century, the past and the present, from various standpoints.

The objects come from a range of sources including archaeological interventions, heritage items safeguarded since the 19th century, City Council institutional representation objects, materials recovered from rubble generated by major urban development changes and items removed from public space in compliance with the Historical Memory Act. Work is currently underway to compile materials connected with the city's industrial past.



Storage room for ceramics found in the vaults of buildings in Barcelona. 14th-17th centuries. © MUHBA / Verònica Moragas

La Galeria de Catalans Il·lustres

The Gallery of Eminent Catalans is a collection of forty-eight portraits of outstanding personalities from Catalan life since medieval times which is part of the MUHBA collections. It was set up in 1871 under a memory policy plan sponsored by Barcelona City Council.

The Gallery has roamed over the years. Originally in the Saló de Cent at City Hall, in 1897 it was moved to the Sala Gòtica in the same building, in 1899 to the Palau de Belles Arts and in 1947 to the Museu d'Art Modern, until in 1971 it was set up in the Palau Requesens, the headquarters of the Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona.



Boardroom of the Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres featuring some portraits from the Gallery. © Jordi Vidal F.

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