

Photography, in the hands of grandsons and granddaughters, becomes a document and proof of the crimes of the Civil War and the Franco era.

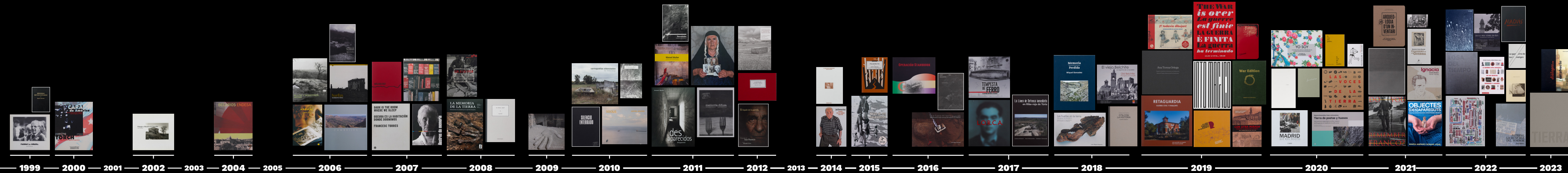
It gives a voice and a face to the victims and their family members.

It showcases, recovers and dignifies.

But it also uses silence, dislocation, and appropriations to question what memory we want to build.

ressons DE LA memòria

FOTOLLIBRES DEL PRESENT



1999 — 2000
First exhumation under scientific criteria at Priaranza del Bierzo

2004 — 2005
Congress declares 2006 Year of Historical Memory

2007
Congress approves the Law of Historical Memory (Law 52/2007)

2011 — 2012
Mariano Rajoy's government reduces the budget allocated to Historical Memory by 60%

2013 — 2014
Mariano Rajoy's government allocates zero euros to the budget for Historical Memory

2015 — 2016
In the regional elections, seven communities governed by the PP are now governed by the PSOE or progressive coalitions

2019 — 2020
Pedro Sánchez's government exhumes Franco from the Valley of the Fallen

2021 — 2022
Congress approves the Law of Democratic Memory (Law 20/2022)

— Curated by Marta Martín Núñez

— On echoes and looks

Echoes vibrate. They vibrate and emerge in photography. Over the past twenty years, photographers have started to give a voice to a muted memory that other generations were unable or unwilling to express. Despite not having experienced the Civil War at first hand, the legacy of a traumatic past resonates like an echo in their bodies. Their insights are built on a certain emptiness — that of uncomfortable family silences, institutionalised lack of memory, or the absence of inspirations — and a certain distance — that of being grandchildren who have grown up in democracy.

Their photos aren’t moments that stop time, nor they do not tell us about the past. They tell us about the present. Their photos take shape at exhibitions that transcend the ephemeral in the form of catalogues or photobooks that are passed around. And so they become devices to connect the past with the present and ask ourselves about what memory we want to build.

The photobooks collected here are just a small sample of the publications of the Archivo de Memoria Fotográfica de la Guerra Civil (Photographic Memory Archive of the Civil War), which was created at the Universitat Jaume I in 2022. It is the first archive that retrieves, classifies, analyses and gives public visibility to a series of contemporary photographic practices that highlight a way of recovering the memory of war and victims based on photographic research and artistic creation. At this exhibition, we want to bring the map that we’re building closer to the general public.

Our memory

Photographic production on the memory of the Civil War in Catalonia has been bounteous and, in some respects, pioneering. Martí Llorens’ book *Memorias revolucionarias* was the first to be published moving between fact and fiction, twenty years ahead of the formal ruptures that would later come. Francesc Torres also carries out one of the first projects on exhumations combining a documentary insight with an artistic aspiration, something that Montserrat Soto takes to the field of visual installations.

The landscapes of mass graves were addressed by Miquel González, who took the photos on the same day and at the same time as when the executions took place, while Espe Pons travels across Spain photographing the mass graves that have already been exhumed. This work comes after she revisited the spaces of repression that her great-uncle Tomàs visited, before being executed by firing squad in Camp de la Bota.

Noelia Pérez Sándex experiments with photomontage to banish the smoke and mirrors of history, and also with appropriations to dialogue from the present with the subversive gestures captured by the photographers Kati Horna and Margaret Michaelis during the war. Ignasi Prat focuses his art-based research on the upper echelons of Francoism serially documenting the world of the victors. And Anna Jornet walks and registers the C-3331/CA-8201 road, which was built by her grandfather when he was a prisoner of the Franco regime.

All these Catalan projects offer us very different views of memory and deal with the themes and approaches which, from different points of view, are developed throughout the exhibition.

Raking up soil

When soil is raked up, memory is also raked up. The first photographic projects on memory were published around the same time as the first exhumation using scientific criteria in Priaranza del Bierzo (León) in 2000. Many works have since focused on documenting the forensic works of the exhumation of bodies, where the display of bones is explicit and their photographic record acts as evidentiary value. The recovery of bodies is a human imperative needed to dignify them and for families to be able to mourn, but showing them is a protest against the impunity of crimes.

Silent landscapes

Mass graves are scattered across Spain. On the outskirts of villages, in cemeteries, or alongside main roads. Today, they are silent places, where it seems that nothing is happening, but they are burdened with a tragic history. Some of the photographic projects point them out: the photographers located them and put them on the map, photographing the places of horror, the final landscapes that victims saw. Others, however, question that silence through dislocation and disharmony between the images and the silenced texts.

The object as a link

The objects recovered from exhumations and the historical objects of the war period have today taken on a new value as links between past and present. Some, made of more resistant materials, survive the passage of time and become capsules of stories that tell us about the victims (a pencil, a thimble, reading glasses) or their improvised grave goods (a rattle, earrings, a ring). Others, such as soldiers’ helmets, become the witnesses of time.

The voice of victims

Giving a voice and putting a face to the victims has been a key task for the symbolic redress of the survivors and their families. The first projects carried out take on a collective form to retrieve the personal stories of war victims, narrated in the first person or by their descendants. Sometimes they do it looking at victims from both sides, sometimes focusing on specific geographical settings, and sometimes placing the case of Spain in a context of international enforced disappearances.

Big little stories

Over the past few years, granddaughters have taken the voice to tell little family stories, and thus help recover the memory and dignity of their grandparents. These projects are told in a photographic story, and also written, with very personal and intimate experiences, but which soon become universal stories that connect with the feelings and emotions shared by many. This type of approach, however, only emerged after more collective projects that featured multiple cases to seek a symbolic redress for the victims.

Guardians of memory

Only very recently have certain photographic projects started to value the memory of women, who have been doubly silenced: for being victims and for being women. This emphasises the acts of repression aimed especially at women, such as being given castor oil or having their heads shaved. It also highlights the different roles of women who have kept the legacy of memory alive, whether as daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, anthropologists, politicians, journalists, or photographers.

Maquis

The recovery of the memory of the anti-Franco guerrilla fighters, the *Maquis*, focuses at first on locating and portraying them, taking them out of the underground where they had fought against Francoism to tell their stories and show their faces. Ten years later, another proposal develops an aesthetic of its own to portray the sparkle in their eyes and the scars and wrinkles on their skin. And another ten years later, a third project puts woodland, their place of refuge, on centre stage. Trees here become a metaphor for guerrilla fighters who blend in with their surroundings. Three very different insights in twenty years: 2002, 2012, and 2022.

Roberto Aguirrezabala | Eloy Alonso | Toni Amengual | Art al Quadrat | José María Azkárrega | Jorge Barbi | Julián Barón García | Clemente Bernad | Lucía Boned | Susana Cabañero | José Manuel Díaz Burgos | Leticia Fernández-Fontecha | David García Fernández | María Amparo Gomar Vidal | Miquel González | Carlos Guijarro Esteban | Anna Jornet | Alfonso Legaz | Martí Llorens | Xurxo Lobato | Eva Mánez | Javier Marquerie Bueno | Salomé Moltó | Jesús Monterde | Sofía Moro | Ana Teresa Ortega | Noelia Pérez Sándex | Juan Plasencia | Espe Pons | Ignasi Prat Altimira | Paco Rangel | José Antonio Robés | Floreal Rodríguez de la Paz | Gervasio Sánchez | Montserrat Soto | Francesc Torres | Virginia Villaplana Ruiz | Javier Viver

Exhibition held at the Castell de Montjuïc from May 13th to October 13th 2024.

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Audiovisual production | Adam Brenes Dutch, Paula Giménez

Graphic design | Carlos Planes

Photographic reproductions | Juan Plasencia, Mari Carmen Blanco

Research | Grupo ITACA-UJI

Special thanks | Boned Guillot family

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