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MUSEU DE L'IMPORDÀ



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MUSEU DE L'EMPORDÀ

A NEW MUSEU DE L'EMPORDÀ

With nearly 80 years of history, the Museu de l'Empordà begins a new chapter. Through a complete renovation of its current premises, the museum updates its narrative, strengthens its bond with the territory, and presents itself as a vibrant and dynamic space in constant dialogue with its audiences.



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MUSEU DE L'EMPORDÀ

A comprehensive intervention to serve a 21st-century museum

The renovation of the Museu de l'Empordà involved the adaptation of a total of 1,500 m² across four floors, with a new layout designed to optimize space use. The basement houses the auditorium, already operational since the first phase of the works. On the ground floor, the temporary exhibition space was expanded and reopened a year ago. The first two floors are dedicated to the permanent collection, and the third floor houses the accessible storage spaces, offices, and a new art restoration area.

The project also resulted in a significant improvement in the building's energy efficiency, with the installation of advanced climate control systems, LED lighting, and a photovoltaic solar energy system for self-consumption, allowing for savings of over 60%.

This intervention was made possible through a €1.7 million investment, funded by the European Union's Next Generation funds, managed by Spain's Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda, and contributions from the City Council of Figueres, the Provincial Council of Girona, and the Government of Catalonia.



A participatory process to rethink the Museum

Between 2021 and 2022, the Museu de l'Empordà carried out an extensive participatory process to rethink its collection, within the broader renovation of the building. The goal was to define a new museological strategy that integrated a wide range of opinions and needs. More than 500 people participated, including residents of Figueres and the surrounding region, as well as cultural professionals.

The methodology combined various participatory dynamics and consultation tools to ensure broad and diverse representation of the territory. The interests and concerns of participants were collected, with particular attention to their impressions, needs, and desires regarding the contents and narratives of the new museum. Focus groups were organized through in-person sessions with residents of different age groups (young people, young adults, adults, and seniors), as well as specific meetings with the technical team and experts. In parallel, street surveys were conducted with 200 participants, along with an online survey that received 217 responses.

The citizen participation process began with a presentation of the project, highlighting the key role of citizen consultation and expert panels in shaping the contents and approaches of the new museum. A preliminary analysis of potential audience profiles was shared, as well as the vision of the museum's leadership in terms of the conceptual framework, exhibition space, and visual direction.

Throughout the process, active participation was encouraged through brainstorming sessions aimed at identifying and prioritizing key messages and themes. Collective debate was used to contrast and enrich narrative proposals and to translate them into the exhibition space, with special attention to the visitor journey and experience. Suggestions were also collected regarding objects and artworks to be included in the exhibition.

The result of this process is an innovative, inclusive, and locally rooted museological proposal, built through active community participation and careful listening to its expectations.



A new inclusive and contemporary perspective on the collection, linking territory, art, and emotions

Following the dialogue with the public, the museological project was drafted, incorporating all the findings from the participatory process. The project was led by Margarida Loran, while the final museographic script was developed by Cristina Masanés and Pere Parramon, with the support of the museum team led by Eduard Bech-Vila.

The new narrative abandons the traditional chronological order and embraces an inclusive and contemporary approach, addressing themes that are relevant to the public and incorporating a wide variety of techniques and sensibilities. From the nearly 3,000 pieces in the collection, approximately 10% are on display, with a notable presence of works by women artists, representing 20% of the artists in the exhibition. The exhibition includes painting, sculpture, drawing, installations, photography, graphic art, archaeology, and clothing, spanning from antiquity to 2024.

The exhibition script is structured around **two core concepts that emerged from the public consultation: people and places**. To enrich this structure and avoid oversimplification, a nuance is added that emphasizes their interdependence: there are no people without places, and no places without people.

This connection is reflected in the titles of the two floors, PEOPLE and places and PLACES and people, graphically emphasizing the first word to engage visitors and invite them to reflect on the relationship between identity and territory.

The exhibition is built around essential notions that shape Empordà and human identity, articulated through action verbs, such as To Be, To Meet, To Persist, To Desire, To Venerate, To Celebrate, To Walk, To Wind, To Exchange, To Care, and To Be Present, reinforcing the ideas of movement, transformation, and projection. **This flexible structure allows for a non-linear visit from any of the four available entrances and facilitates future updates by section without altering the overall narrative.** In this way, the museum presents itself as a living, welcoming, and open space, where iconic works approach the visitor, avoiding the traditional notion of the untouchable object.

On the first floor, under the concept **People and places**, the exhibition explores individual and collective identity constructed through memory, generational transmission, and mutual care. The thematic areas on this floor are: To Be, To Meet, To Persist, To Desire, To Venerate, and To Celebrate.

On the second floor, with the route **Places and people**, the exhibition reflects on the relationship with the landscape, this is understood both as a shared reality and an intimate experience. The areas of this floor are: To Walk, To Wind, To Exchange, To Care, and To Be Present. Together, they offer a contemporary and inclusive perspective that links territory, art, and emotions.



The selection of works was based on criteria that respond both to the conceptual needs of the new project and to the desire to maintain a strong connection with the public. First, a coherent narrative was prioritized, in line with the results of the public consultation and expert panels. Another goal was to update the permanent exhibition, which had remained unchanged for many years.

Another key criterion was to include works from different historical periods within each thematic area, avoiding chronological rigidity and promoting an open reading of the concept of time. Most of the artists already represented in the collection remain present, though some works have been renewed, and new names added to enrich the narrative.

The selection also took into account the most representative and beloved works for the public, as well as pieces that have become icons of Empordà's heritage. Additionally, efforts were made to increase gender representation and diversify formats and disciplines, incorporating painting, sculpture, drawing, graphic work, illustration, performance recordings, and video.

Finally, alternative works were planned to ensure continuity of the narrative in case any pieces must be temporarily removed for conservation, loans, or other reasons.

A museum with nearly 80 years of history

With nearly 80 years of history, the origins of the Museu de l'Empordà's collection date back to 1876, when Joan Tutau made a donation to the future Museum of Painting at the Humanities College, now the Ramon Muntaner Secondary School. Over the years, donations from local patrons and deposits from institutions like the Museo Nacional del Prado have enriched the collection. This story is presented in an audiovisual in the storage area, now open to the public for the first time thanks to the renovation.

The renewal has enabled preventive conservation tasks, restoration of a significant portion of the collection, and overall improvements in preservation conditions.

This historical dimension is also present throughout the galleries, through a selection of 50 key works from the Empordà collection presented with extended interpretive labels.

The Museu de l'Empordà highlights with these extended labels essential artists for understanding the region's artistic and cultural heritage, from the 19th century to the present day. Among them are figures such as Salvador Dalí, Ramon Martí Alsina, and Àngel Planells, who represent the evolution of surrealism and pictorial realism, while artists like Ricard Ansón, Daniel Lleixà, or Josep Ministral reflect the strength of contemporary Empordà landscape art.

Also recognized are avant-garde creators such as Esther Boix and Bartomeu Massot, sculptors like Llorenç Cairó and Anton Casamor, and photographers such as Joaquim Fort de Ribot. The museum equally values unique careers like that of Carme Escursell, and



young artists like Eudald de Juana and Tura Sanglas, who offer new perspectives on art and identity.

Important archaeological pieces are also featured, such as Attic red-figure pottery from the 5th century BC, Italic red-figure ceramics from Apulia, or the nipple bowl from Cau Conillers, all testimonies of the region's earliest cultural forms. Other objects, such as a cinerary urn from the necropolis of Can Bech de Baix and a flat bronze axe found in Vilanant, illustrate the richness of the prehistoric and protohistoric past of Empordà.

With this selection of artists and works, the museum offers a profound and diverse reading of its permanent collection, connecting history, territory, and creativity.

The connection with the territory: the Empordà

With its new exhibition, the Museu de l'Empordà strengthens its bond with the territory and enhances both its collection and the artistic production tied to the Empordà in several ways. First, it draws on public consultation, allowing the desires, concerns, and expectations of the local community to shape a narrative that resonates with collective identity.

The conceptual structure of the exhibition, organized around the axes *People and places* and *Places and people*, establishes an inseparable dialogue between society and the Empordà landscape, emphasizing the fundamental role that both elements play in shaping local memory and culture.

The route avoids a historicist view and instead offers a contemporary and open reading, combining works from different periods to illustrate the creative and vital continuity of the territory. The selection includes historical artists such as Ángeles Santos Torroella, Salvador Dalí, or Ramon Martí Alsina, as well as contemporary creators like Eudald de Juana and Tura Sanglas, highlighting a diverse and dynamic Empordà artistic production. Additionally, the exhibition broadens gender representation and artistic disciplines, offering a rich and multifaceted vision of art tied to the Empordà, from painting and sculpture to video and performance.

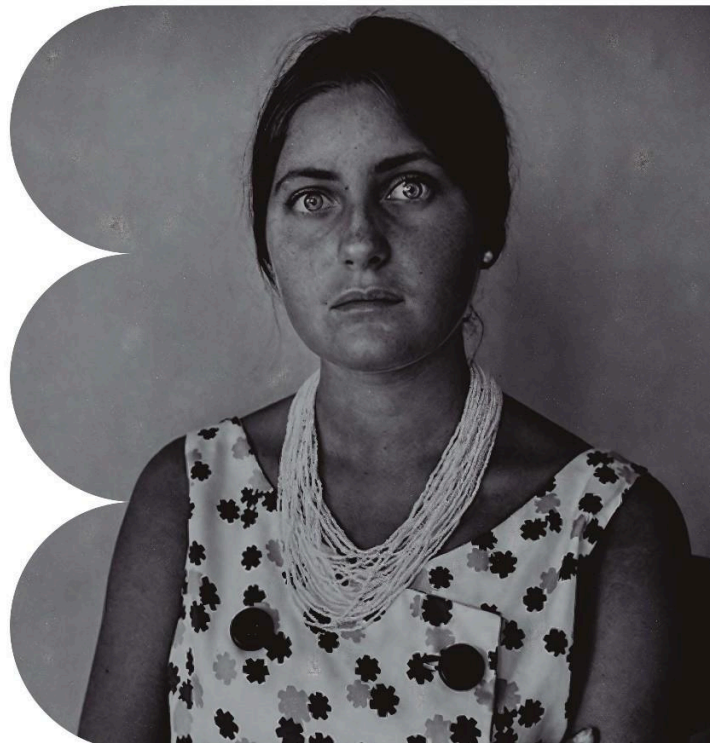
Through this new perspective, the museum not only preserves the memory of the past but also reactivates it, inviting critical and emotional reflection on the contemporary landscape and society, and positioning itself as a living space in permanent dialogue with the territory and its people.



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THE DISCOURSE AXES





Introduction

A museum, a city, a landscape, a people. At the Museu de l'Empordà, we take care of an art collection that spans across time, from contemporary pieces to objects used by the first humans to inhabit this land.

This exhibition was born from an extensive participatory process carried out in Figueres, where you asked us for a living museum that speaks about PEOPLE and places, PLACES and people, because one cannot exist without the other. A space for art that speaks to what we feel, long for, and dream, those of us who live in this richly human landscape that is the Empordà.

On the first and second floors, you will walk through our Collection guided by everything that makes us who we are. We also invite you to discover how the Museum's art collection has been shaped over time in an audiovisual piece on the third floor.

Come in, feel, and enjoy, this is your home.



The area text [First Floor] PEOPLE and places

PEOPLE and places. Stair access

The heritage passed down from generation to generation, from grandparents or distant ancestors, acts as a memory that gives shape to our time. The new and the old, those who arrive and those who leave, their experiences hold up a mirror to us. Because we are individuals, yes, but we are also family, neighbors, a town, a planet. Here in the Empordà, for many centuries, we have been both one and many, a cell and a fabric, a unit and a whole, and that is what this exhibition celebrates.

PEOPLE and places. Elevator access

Mother is one of the oldest words. It is connected to a fundamental and indispensable learning: the nurturing capacity acquired alongside our mother. This may be one of the first lessons on the path to becoming human. A healing desire we invoke when we are alone and reproduce when we're with those we love. Taking care of the one who cares for you is taking care of life itself. We are people who care for people.

Area 1: To Be

Have you ever tried to say who you are? Looking inward, as a possible exercise, a meeting place emerges between nature and culture, between what is expected of us and what we want, between impositions and the desire to endure. You'll find habits, attitudes, gestures, renunciations, and dreams. Identity is more of a journey than a destination. To be is to affirm and assert oneself, to celebrate who we are and how we want to live.

Area 2: To Meet

Connection has no age. From the original bond we form when entering the world, we carry an essential toolkit for journeying through life. These are affections. We converge when we meet, when we are not alone, when we trace a path of going and returning, when something connects us to another. Connections, bonds, links, confluences, encounters.



Area 3: To Persist

We do it every day and in every moment of time, as children when life begins, as adults when life continues, and even when we're no longer here but someone remembers us. Nature does it, life does it. From the tiniest leaf in the forest, nature persists, and we do with it. We persist when we say who we are, when we don't retreat, when we know what we want, when we don't give up.

Area 4: To Desire

I look at you. You look at me. Desire beats in the singular but explodes in the plural. We have always desired each other, here and everywhere, since we became human, and even before. It is part of human nature to approach the fire of beauty and drink from the fountain of desire, but each home does so with a different, personal, and special accent.

Area 5: To Venerate

In a place of many places like the Empordà, many have lifted their eyes to the universe or closed them to find, within, their own sky. Though we know we are small, we possess the rare ability to go beyond things, to speak the unspeakable, and to feel part of the infinite. We believe, we admire, and we often expand reality with art, culture, and thought.

Area 6: To Celebrate

We celebrate food and the table, the senses and pleasures, wine and landscape, music and night, friendship and love, art and life. We laugh when we're happy and sing when we want to share. Sometimes we grow wings and dance with an infectious lightness. We celebrate celebration itself. And we like it, and want it to last!



The area text [Second Floor] PLACES and people

PLACES and people. Stair access

The landscape, like the Tramuntana wind, lives both inside and out. It is a shared reality and, at the same time, a personal one. It is what we perceive as objective, but also what we feel and think, what we project as subjective. That's why everyone is invited to walk its ancient, well-trodden paths and to open up new ones, perhaps solitary and unrepeatable.

PLACES and people. Elevator access

Of skies and landscapes, of paths and horizons. Some geographies are left behind, others are discovered. Some territories are wounded, and others are dreamlike. Some landscapes suffer; others are empowered. There are those who fight, with an urgency that concerns us all, to preserve their dignity. This is an invitation, through art, to reflect on the landscape we want and the horizon that calls to us.

Area 1: To Walk

The mountains above, the sea at our feet, the plain inward, and the borders nearby. The Empordà landscape is a drawing of paths. And walking is not just going from one place to another, it is about learning, experiencing the route and all it offers. Whether the journey is short or long, imposed or chosen, whether it's an exodus or an odyssey, we move forward step by step. Because we don't walk to arrive or leave, we walk to be and to belong.

Area 2: To Wind

The Tramuntana is a wind that strikes from the north, from the mountains or the trans-montanus. A wind that cleans and dries, stirs and blasts, chills and blueens, whistles, moans, and howls. It makes corners creak, charges the air with electricity, drives people mad, and fuels creative fervor, and here in the Empordà, it always defines us.

Area 3: To Exchange

Between the Albera and Gavarres mountain ranges, stretching across the plain and opening onto the *Mediterraneus*, that sea "between lands", the Empordà landscape is built on exchanges. It was here, in the 6th century BC, that merchants from Ionia in distant Greece,



having passed through Massalia (now Marseille), founded Empòrion, which means “market”. Since then, this land has been a space of bridges, journeys, and encounters.

Area 4: To Care

To care is not simply to balance things, it is to find the right balance for each person, each place, and each moment. We care for others, for our heritage, and for our environment. We heal wounds and caress with strength. We love the past to build the future. We seal cracks with gold and put out fires without exhausting the springs. What gestures must we embrace to place life at the center?

Area 5: To Be Present

To dwell in a landscape and among a people. To identify what you carry from a place and how your presence resonates within it. What is a space for living? In which blue do you recognize yourself? What wind speaks to you? What horizon calls you? More than us inhabiting a place, it is the places that inhabit us. We are entangled, enmeshed, and we become part of what forms the spirit of the place.

[Third Floor] The Collection, Up Close

Every museum has a story.

How did these works of art arrive here? What donations have helped grow our collection? How was the Collection shaped? How do we care for it?

We want to share with you our journey as the Museu de l'Empordà.

We also want to let you peek into the artwork reserves, works that will one day emerge into the galleries to build new stories and new dialogues.

On this floor, you'll experience the Collection up close.



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SELECTION OF WORKS



PRESS KIT

PAINTING



Vicente Berdusán, *Saint Attila*
(1690). Oil on canvas. On
deposit from the Museo
Nacional del Prado.



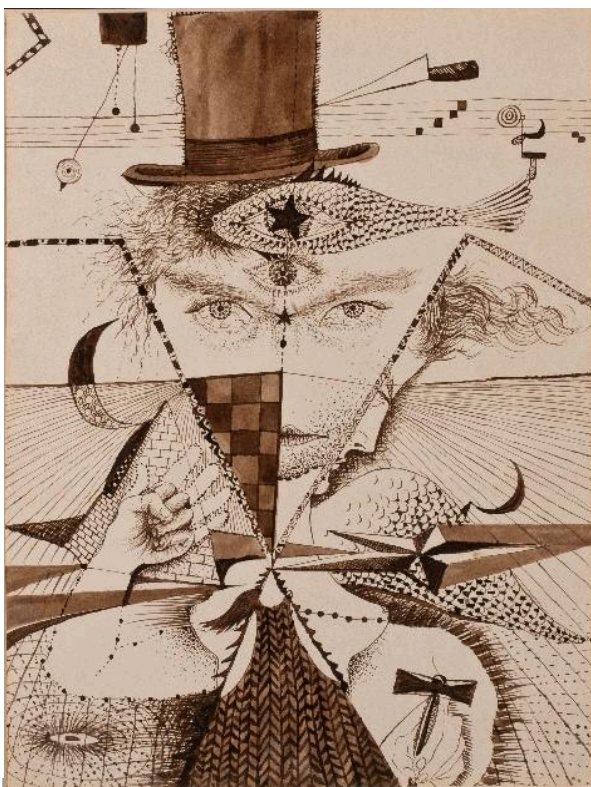
Ángeles Santos Torroella, *The Earth*
(1929). Oil on canvas.
Museu de l'Empordà.



Ramon Reig, *Pomegranates* (n.d.). Oil on wood. Museu de l'Empordà.



Joan Ponç, *Landscape* (1949). Monotype. Museu de l'Empordà.



Antoni Tàpies, *Self-portrait* (1950). Ink on paper. Museu de l'Empordà.



Evarist Vallès, *Skull and Bottle* (1956). Oil on canvas. Museu de l'Empordà.



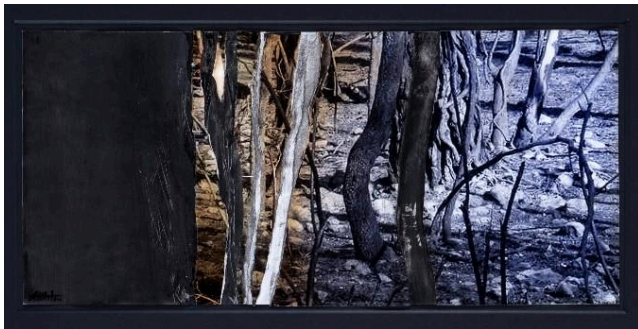
Salvador Dalí, *Saint Narcissus* (1962). Mixed media on cardboard. Museu de l'Empordà.



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Assumpció Mateu, *Stepping on Silence* (2005). Ink on paper and digital print. Museu de l'Empordà.

GRAPHIC WORK



Enric Sió, *Cadaqués* (1979). Museu de l'Empordà.

PHOTOGRAPHY



Joaquim Fort de Ribot, *Image of the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes* (1960). Museu de l'Empordà.

SCULPTURE



Eudald de Juana, *Meteor* (2019). Acrylic resin and oil paint. Museu de l'Empordà.

ARCHAEOLOGY



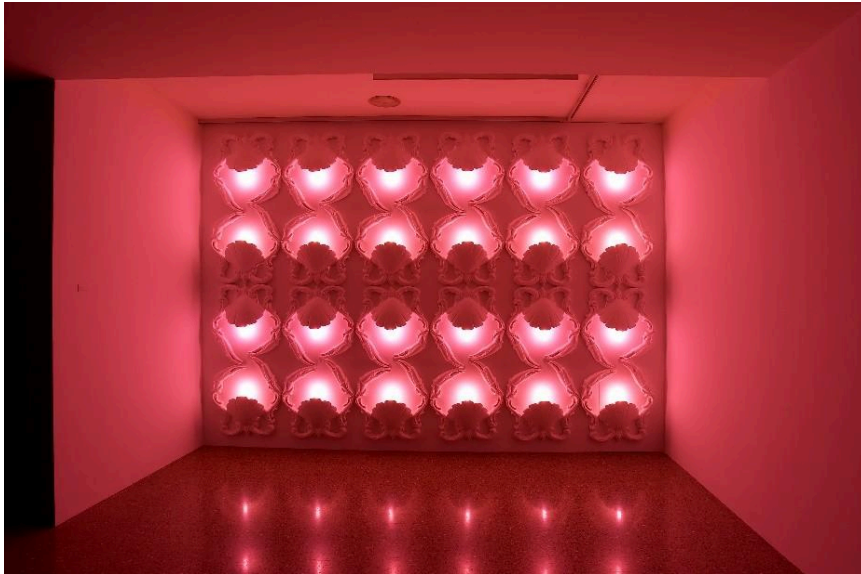
Unknown author, *Fragment of pottery* (530–320 BC). Attic red-figure ceramic. Museu de l'Empordà.



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INSTALLATION



Antoni Miralda,
Lobster dream
(2004).
Installation. Museu
de l'Empordà

CLOTHING



Unknown author, *English-style
silk dress salmon color* (c.
1770–1789). Silk. Museu de
l'Empordà.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Website

museuemporda.org

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Opening hours

Tuesday to Saturday: 10 am – 7 pm
Sundays and public holidays: 10 am – 2 pm
Closed on non-holiday Mondays

Admission

- General individual admission: €5
- Reduced individual admission: €2.50
(Youth Card, Art Circuit Card, student card, large family card)
- Free admission (with proper ID):
Under 18s, retirees, unemployed persons, ICOM members,
members of the Catalan Association of Museology Professionals



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A més mar, més vela

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