

# PHOTOGRAPHERS AND MUSEUMS

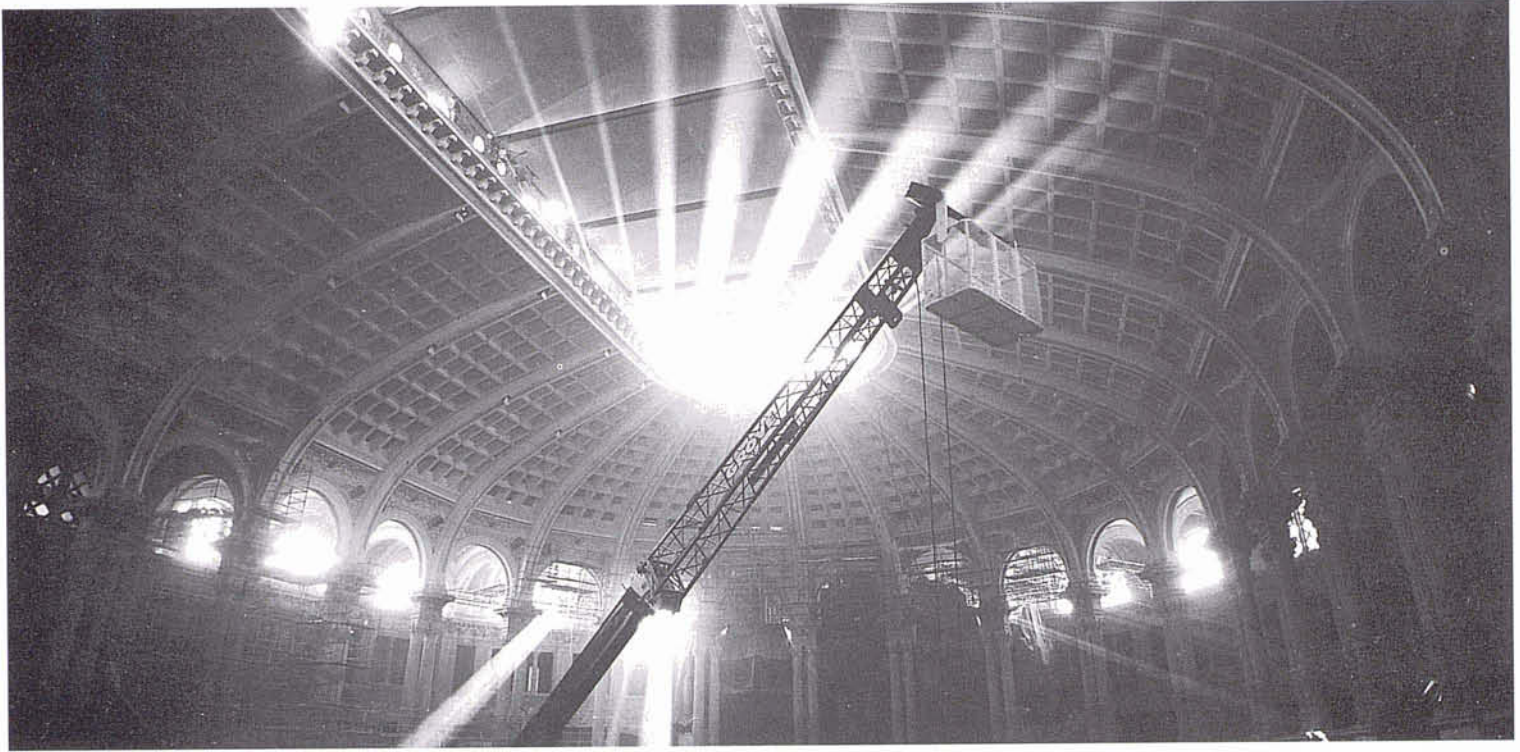


MANEL ESCLUSA (MUSEU MARÍTIM), MAR DE VITRINES, 100 x 100 CM

ONE OF THE EVENTS OF THE "PRIMAVERA FOTOGRÀFICA 92" IS THE EXHIBITION "MUSA MUSEU", WHICH CAN BE SEEN AT BARCELONA'S PALAU DE LA VIRREINA AND PRESENTS WORK BY FIFTEEN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHERS BASED ON FIFTEEN BARCELONA MUSEUMS.

CRISTINA ZELICH PHOTOGRAPHY CRITIC





FERRAN FREIXA (MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA), 100 x 200 CM

**M**usa Museu is an exhibition of work by fifteen contemporary photographers based on fifteen Barcelona museums: Gabrielle Basilico at the Fundació Miró, Manel Esclusa at the Maritime Museum, Paul den Hollander at the Botanical Institute, Mimmo Jodice at the Archaeological Museum, Humberto Rivas at the Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària, Manuel Serra at the Geological Museum, Valentin Vallhonrat at the Zoology Museum, Christian Milovanoff at the National Museum of Art of Catalonia-Museum of Modern Art, Ferran Freixa at the National Museum of Art of Catalonia-Museum of Art of Catalonia, Toni Catany at the Museu Picasso, Toni Cume-lla at the Ceramics Museum, Pere Formiguera at the Museu Marès, Joan Fontcuberta at the Ethnological Mu-

seum, Jordi Guillomet at the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat and Javier Vallhonrat at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. The exhibition curator, David Balsells, has kept each artist's background very much in mind in choosing the museum, and although you might say that a job of this sort puts a certain amount of pressure on the photographer –by previously selecting the subject matter for his creative work–, it is, at the same time, a challenge to his imagination. Nevertheless, the proposal is still a paradoxical one: asking photographers to look at the city's different museums through their work, when in fact photography is the only medium that still doesn't have a museum of its own, either in Catalonia or the whole of the Iberian Peninsula. Is a Museum of Photography something we should be

thinking about then, or should we make room for photography in our Museums of Modern or Contemporary Art? This question is an important one because it leads us once again to consider the very essence of photography. Of all the artistic disciplines, photography is the only one that depends on a reality lying outside the artist. It is one of the ironies of fate that photography taken purely as a document should have been given a place in our museums shortly after its invention. Photographs as an instrument of research or as an educational tool are common amongst the exhibits of certain types of museum, such as, for example, the ethnological, archaeological, zoological, botanical and other museums. And we mustn't forget that the wide scale diffusion of the great works of art and sculpture that are locked in





PERE FORMIGUERA (MUSEU MARÉS). 120 x 150 CM

the halls of the art museums is possible thanks to their reproduction by photographic means.

Another interesting aspect is the number of points museums and photography both have in common. Both can be looked on as the storehouses of memory and a link with the past. Both of them involve isolating fragments of reality, decontextualizing objects—in the case of museums—or cutting out a piece of the world and framing it—in the case of photography. At the same time, they involve the creation of new realities that submerge the spectator in a new universe in which the relationship between objects is decided by the wish of the museum director or the photographer.

Basically, the work making up *Musa Museu* can be grouped in three main

blocks: that of the photographers who have looked on the museum as a container, and have therefore based their visual investigation on the architectural structure of the building (Ferran Freixa, Gabriele Basilico, Toni Catany) or on the empty spaces created between the items on show (J. Vallhonrat); the second block is made up of those photographers who have looked into the relationship between the objects being displayed and the museum halls, with the intention of putting forward a new reading and breaking with the idea of a set route or the imposition of borders on the contemplation of the work (Gabriele Basilico, Manel Esclusa, Christian Milovanoff, Mimmo Jodice); and the third group includes work that has chosen specific objects and gone on to decontextualize them, isolating them from

the museum setting. In this way, objects are magnified, fragmented, serialized, reconstructed and coloured, to become elements in the creation of the photographer's poetic world (Paul den Hollander, Humberto Rivas, Manel Serra, Valentin Vallhonrat, Toni Cumella, Pere Formiguera, Joan Fontcuberta, Jordi Guillumet).

*Musa Museu* is undoubtedly a stimulus to reflection, but it also provides an opportunity to come face to face with—and, obviously, enjoy—the work of fifteen contemporary photographers. And, as Oriol Gual says in the exhibition catalogue, “museums and exhibitions must offer the public coherent, well articulated proposals. The visitor must contribute the desire. Only in this way will he be able to enjoy them. Desire is the key to everything.” ■