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National Museums in Spain: A History of Crown, Church and People

José María Lanzarote Guiral

Summary

The present report provides an overview on the history of national museums in Spain as well as an analysis of a selected set of case studies. In the first part of this report, a historical outline of the creation and evolution of museums is provided from the point of view of the enlarging scope of the concept 'national heritage'. The choice of national museums in the second part exemplifies the role played by different categories of heritage in the construction of national master narrative in Spain, including fine arts (*Museo del Prado*), archaeology (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*) and nature (*Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales*). The study of the Museum of the Americas (*Museo de América*) allows for the exploration of the complex relationship between Spanish national identity and the imperial past, whereas the Museum of History of Catalonia (*Museu d'Història de Catalunya*) leads reflection to the competing nationalist projects within the state. Finally, the case of the Museum of the Spanish Army (*Museo del Ejército Español*) is considered in the light of the contemporary debates on 'historical memory' that have marked its recent renovation.

Summary table, Spain

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
Prado Museum <i>Museo Nacional del Prado</i>	1819	1819	Crown, Spanish state	Royal (1819-68) State (1868-)	Fine Arts (painting and sculpture)	Spanish and universal	Classical to Neoclassical (sculpture) Middle Ages to beginning 19 th c. (painting)	Originally purpose-built for Museum of Natural Sciences (1785-1819), Neo-Classical in style, centre of Madrid.
National Archaeological Museum <i>Museo Arqueológico Nacional</i>	1871 1895 (new premises)	1867	Crown, Spanish state	Spanish state	Archaeology, History (Ethnography in its origins)	Spanish and universal	Prehistory to 18 th c.	Purpose-built (1866- 1892), 19 th c. historicism, centre of Madrid.
<i>National Museum of Natural Sciences Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales</i>	1815 1910 (new premises)	1815	Crown, Spanish state	Royal (1815- 1838) Spanish state (1838 -).	Natural Sciences	Spanish and universal		Purpose-built as palace of national exhibitions (1881), 19 th c. eclecticism, centre of Madrid.
Museum of the Americas <i>Museo de América</i>	1941 1962 (new premises)	1941	Francoist dictatorship, Spanish state	Spanish state	Archaeology, Anthropology, Aistory	Americas (particularly Spanish speaking territories)	Prehistory to today	Purpose-built for this museum (1943-1954). Historicist, inspired by Baroque monastic architecture Madrid.
Museum of History of Catalonia <i>Museu d'Història de Catalunya</i>	1997	1996	Catalan Autonomous Government	Catalan Autonomous Government	Catalan History	Catalan	Prehistory to today	Former customs house in Barcelona harbor, 19 th c. Industrial architecture, Barcelona.
Museum of the Spanish Army <i>Museo del Ejército Español</i>	1841 2010 (new premises)	1803	Spanish army, Spanish state	Spanish state	Spanish Military History	Spanish	Prehistory to today	Castle of Castilian and Spanish kings, 16 th c. Renaissance in style, Toledo.

Introduction

National museums are complex institutions: they are places for arts and sciences where knowledge is created and disseminated, but they are also institutions with a political dimension where collective identities are visualised and negotiated. Starting from the working definition provided by the Eunamus project (*national museums refer to those collections and displays claiming, negotiating, articulating and representing dominant national values, myths and realities*), the aim of this report is to provide an overview on the history of national museums in Spain, as well as an analysis of several selected case studies. The exploration of how those ‘national values, myths and realities’ are presented in museums, by whom and for whom, constitutes the main objective of this paper.

In 2009, the Spanish Ministry of Culture created the Network of Spanish Museums (*Red Española de Museos*). This network originally consisted of thirty-six ‘state museums’ (*museos estatales*), that is, those *de titularidad y gestión estatal*, both owned and administered by the Spanish state, divided into two categories: the first group is made up of a list of twenty-two ‘national museums’ (*museos nacionales*), whereas the second group comprises the rest of the ‘state museums’. Therefore, the number of national museums, according to the official definition by the Spanish Ministry of Culture, amounts to twenty-two institutions: starting with the Prado Museum, it includes displays devoted to several fields of knowledge (arts, archaeology, sciences, anthropology and ethnography), and more than half of them are located in Madrid. Nevertheless, these are not the only museums within the country that use the word ‘national’ in their official name, nor are they the only ones that claim to represent a ‘nation’ or a ‘people’, and therefore, the official definition provided by the Ministry of Culture only partially reflects the complexity of the Spanish case.

The historical evolution and the location of those national museums classed by the Ministry reflects a definition of Spain as a centralised and homogenous state, a political project started by the monarchy in early modern times and developed by the liberal state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The continuity of this project, since the *Ancient Regime*, finds its correlate in the main national museums, which have inherited collections and spaces created before the advent of modernity. For this reason, in the last two centuries, Spanish cultural policies have striven to nationalise that ‘inherited heritage’, from the royal collections to the patrimony of the Catholic Church. This process has been complemented with other initiatives oriented towards the recognition of the role of the people(s) in national history, and has been characterised by conflicts and turning points; Crown, Church and People constitute three vectors in this complex cultural cartography, which do not always point in the same direction.

The aim of the first part of this report is precisely to understand the evolution of national museums in Spain in the light of those continuities and ruptures, by taking as guidelines the enlarging scope of the concept ‘national heritage’. The gradual recognition of different kinds of heritage and their institutionalisation in museums are approached here as processes of interaction between specialists, politicians and the public, crossed by tensions created by opposing political projects and/or the dialogue (or the lack of it) between centres and peripheries. For this reason, competing uses of heritage provoked by the circulation of cultural items (inside or outside Spain), or museum display policies will be considered in some detail.

The chosen approach allows to gauge the role of different fields of knowledge / kinds of heritage and their success or failure in representing the national community: whereas fine arts museums (the Prado in particular) remain until today the most successful strategy of Spanish national culture and international projection, other attempts to foster national narratives through museums of archaeology, nature, anthropology, and military history have been promoted in different historical moments, but they have not managed to provide real competition with the centrality of fine arts displays. Indeed, this model, which elevates arts museums as the 'national museum' par excellence, has also been reproduced in the territories that aspire to national self-determination (for instance, *Museu Nacional d'art de Catalunya* in Barcelona or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao). In turn, the case of ethnography, the art of the people, shows the failure of a field of knowledge to get consolidated in a Spanish national museum and thereby to occupy a place in the official production of national narratives.

The selection of case studies for the second part departs from this reflection on the use of different kinds of heritage; given their role in the creation of a Spanish national master narrative, five national museums of Spanish representation are considered: *Museo Nacional del Prado*, *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, *Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales*, *Museo de América* and *Museo del Ejército Español*, all of them located in Madrid, with the exception of the last one, which has recently been transferred to Toledo, in the vicinity of the capital. The discussion of a further case, the *Museu d'Història de Catalunya*, located in Barcelona, exemplifies the role of conflicting national identities within the country; even if it does not have the word 'national' in its official name, a national master narrative on Catalan history inspired its creation and display.

As opposed to the first four case studies devoted to particular areas of knowledge, the last two focus on a kind of museum in which the historical narrative is put at the centre of the display. The Museum of History of Catalonia uses a wide range of new museology devices in order to present a national master narrative in which Catalonia is defined as an essential reality and unitary discourse from prehistory until the present day, avoiding conflicting or problematic definitions. In turn, the renovated Museum of the Spanish Army, also inspired by an essentialist national narrative that stresses unity and continuity, had to confront in the last years the conflict-generating potential of the writing of Spain's recent history, particularly related to the Civil War and the Dictatorship. For their specific focus on history and their relevance, these two case studies allow the analysis of the negotiation processes between different social actors that converge in the creation of national museums.

Dealing with 250 years of history of national museums in Spain in less than 30 pages is not an easy task. It implies considering numerous factors and processing and summarising a large amount of information, but also selecting and omitting; the responsibility of these choices is entirely mine. This reflection has benefitted from the existing literature on the field and particularly from the comprehensive overview penned by María Bolaños (1997; extended edition in 2008), as well as some general accounts on the history of heritage recognition and protection in Spain (Alegre 1994, Hernández 1998, López Trujillo 2006). In order to understand the history of museums in its socio-political context, I drew on recent literature on the field of nationalism studies, in particular the historiography of Spanish nationalism (Riquer 1994, Fox 1997, Forcadell 1998, Serrano 1999, Núñez Seixas 1999 and 2006, Pérez Garzón 2000, Fusi 2000, Boyd 2000, Álvarez Junco 2001, Wulff 2003, García Cárcel 2004, Taibo 2007, Kamen 2008), as well as the

bibliography on Catalan (Riquer 2000, Canal 2005) and Basque nationalism (Corcuera 2001, Granja 2003). References to concrete studies on particular topics are to be found throughout the text.

Expanding national heritage: An overview of the history of museums in Spain (1750-2010)

1750-1800: Collections and museums on the eve of modernity

The history of national museums in Spain is rooted in the history of early modern collections. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spanish elites, starting with the monarchs, benefited from the circulation of artists and objects within a large empire that included both European and overseas territories; when Philip II (1556–1598) merged a royal palace, a monastery and a dynastic pantheon in *El Escorial*, he chose paintings and sculptures by Italian and Flemish masters to decorate it and selected manuscripts and prints for a library that also included a collection of coins, medals and curiosities. In turn, the Catholic Church acted as the main patron for local artists, and the silver and gold from the New World contributed to the splendour of the Baroque liturgy that aimed at the spiritual conquest of the faithful (Morán & Checa 1985).

Another example of the iconographical display of power is provided by the palace of *El Buen Retiro*, created by Philip IV (1621–1665) at the gates of Madrid. This complex of gardens and buildings was not only conceived for the amusement of the court, but was also a carefully designed theatre celebrating the glory of the Hispanic Monarchy, particularly in a room that constituted the centrepiece of the complex, the Hall of Kingdoms (*Salón de Reinos*). Presided over by Velasquez's portraits of the king, queen and crown prince, and adorned with paintings of victorious battles and mythological representations, this space celebrated the role of the Habsburg dynasty in holding together the kingdoms that composed the Crown, and which were represented by their coats of arms on the vaulted ceiling (Brown & Elliot 2003). Only a few years after its completion, events ran counter to this self-congratulatory vision: in 1640 Portugal and Catalonia revolted against the king and in 1648, the independence of the Netherlands finally had to be recognised.

The transition to the eighteenth century was marked by a reorganisation of the state. After the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1715), the European territories were lost to the monarchy, while in turn the states of the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic islands) were subjected to Castilian laws and government. Philip V (1701–1746) thus began a policy of modernisation of the political structures of the country driven by the principles of centralisation and homogenisation on the French model. This goal was also pursued through the promotion of culture, and particularly through the creation of the Royal Library (1716) and several academies, such as the *Real Academia Española*, for Castilian/Spanish language (1713), and those devoted to History (1738) and Fine Arts (1752). The aim of those institutions was the establishment of a patriotic culture through its language, arts and history, which set the foundation on which nationalism was built on the nineteenth century.

Moreover, in the eighteenth century the state enacted the first measures to protect (and define) the Spanish art tradition; in 1779 Charles III (1759–1788) issued a ban on the export of paintings by 'well known deceased masters', and authorised the Academy of Fine Arts to decide

which paintings matched this definition. Another Royal Decree in 1803 established that every discovery of antiquities in the kingdom should be communicated to the Academy of History, the official body in charge of writing the country's history. Moreover, those institutions created their own collections of objects, such as the Cabinet of Numismatics in the Royal Library and the Cabinet of Antiquities in the Academy of History. Even if access was restricted to noblemen and a few learned scholars, those cabinets constituted the precedents of museums in as much as they were permanent collections conceived for the promotion of knowledge.

The cultivation of natural sciences was another of the key cultural policies implemented by the Bourbon dynasty, as part of their support for a more efficient and centralised administration of the colonial empire. Natural and ethnographic samples from the American territories and the Pacific were gathered in the Royal Botanical Garden (1755) and the Cabinet of Natural History (1771). In 1781, Charles III ordered the transfer of those institutions to the *Prado*, an area between the walls of Madrid and the royal palace of *El Buen Retiro*. This area, that started to be known as *Salón del Prado* (Hall of the Prado), was planned as a showcase for the king's patronage of arts and sciences. Although the new 'museum' built on the site never hosted the natural collections for which it was designed, in subsequent centuries it became a focal point of Spanish culture: the Prado Museum.

1800-1833: Royal museums for a new national public

The creation of the first 'national museum' ensued from the emergence of the 'nation' as an ideology and political programme. Whilst in Spanish historiography the start of the Napoleonic occupation of the peninsula (1808–1814) marks the end (albeit not the definitive one) of the *Ancien Régime*, 1812 has been considered the founding moment of Spanish nationalism. In that year, representatives of the self-organised Spanish resistance met in the city of Cadiz, the main colonial port of the Peninsula for colonial trade, and proclaimed the 'Spanish nation', which they defined as the 'reunion of all Spaniards from both hemispheres' (referring to the citizens of both the metropolis and the overseas territories). However, this first liberal experience in Spain was hampered by the war against the foreign occupation and the imposed king, Joseph Bonaparte (1808–1813).

It was precisely Bonaparte's government that took the initiative to create the first public museums in Spain. The objective was to promote the instruction of the people, but also to legitimise the new regime at a time of fighting and looting by the French troops. For instance, Napoleon requested from Paris a selection of paintings by Spanish masters to be exhibited in the *Musée Napoléon* (Louvre), and General Soult (1769–1851) confiscated more than thirty paintings by Murillo, from the convents of Seville, for his personal collection. In 1809, Joseph I decreed the creation of a national museum of fine arts, the *Museo Josefino*, which would display works of art from the royal collections and from the suppressed convents (Antigüedad del Castillo 1999). Similarly, a Royal Museum of Natural History was projected in 1810, but both initiatives shared the same fate: their opening was delayed, hindered, and finally cancelled by the war.

When the Bourbons regained the throne in 1814, the political structures of the *Ancien Régime* were restored. Nonetheless, the Crown was weakened, not just by the war's destruction but also by the process of independence of the American territories. Cultural policy, particularly the promotion of arts and sciences, was one of the means left to the monarchy to affirm its role in

definition of the national community: drawing on previous initiatives, Ferdinand VII (1814–1833) created the Royal Museum of Natural History (*Real Museo de Historia Natural*) in 1815 and the Royal Museum of Paintings (*Real Museo de Pinturas*) in 1819. Moreover, in 1830 the Royal Academy of History proposed the creation of a Museum of Antiquities (*Real Museo de Antigüedades*), using its own collections and those of the Royal Library; the project only materialised in 1867 when the *Museo Arqueológico Nacional* was established.

1833-1868: The nationalisation of the past

The death of Ferdinand VII in 1833 allowed for the definitive consolidation of liberalism in Spain; the new state centralised the administration, replaced the ancient kingdoms with a new territorial unit, the *provincia* (Forcadell & Romeo 2006), and promoted reform of the legal and economic structures of the country. In the name of the nation, the properties of the Catholic Church were seized by the state and subsequently auctioned; as a result of this transfer of property the liberal regime weakened its enemies while at the same time created a new class of landowners. However, these measures affected not only the lands owned by monastic orders, but also their buildings and cultural assets. Although the nationalisation acts excluded from public auction, those ‘monuments’ with ‘historical or artistic significance for the nation’, the very difficult situation of the Treasury and the on-going civil war between absolutists and liberals, urged completion of the process, regardless of the consequences for the arts (Bello 1997).

When some members of the intelligentsia protested against the loss of ancient buildings and artworks, the idea of a ‘national heritage’ started to emerge: they considered those ‘monuments’ and ‘artistic treasures’ to be testimonies of the Spanish ‘genius’, and asked the nation to assume their custody. As a result, the state created in each province *Comisiones de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos*, under the coordination of the *Comisión Central de Monumentos*. Among other responsibilities, their members were entrusted with visiting the suppressed monasteries, gathering the most significant works of art and depositing them in provincial museums of fine arts (*Museos Provinciales de Bellas Artes*). As a result of this official policy, and of the decisive initiative of some local academies of fine arts, arts museums were created in Seville, Cordoba, Cádiz, Valencia, Zaragoza and Valladolid during the 1840s (Géal 2003; Kurtz & Valadés 2006; Bolaños 2008: 205-223, López 2010). Similarly, provincial archives and libraries were created for the safekeeping of archival and bibliographic records. The transfer of those objects from the sacred realm into the state institutions implied their secularisation and transformation into scientific sources of national history.

This was the aim of the first ‘national museum’ created in Spain: the *Museo Nacional de Pintura y Escultura*, better known as *Museo de la Trinidad* (from the name of the convent in Madrid where it was installed). Its collection, consisting of religious artworks from suppressed convents of the capital and the neighbouring provinces, was organised by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Although it was officially inaugurated in 1838, it only opened its doors to the public four years later. In spite of its very rich collection in Castilian masters, the Museo de la Trinidad was always secondary to the Royal Museum (Prado): it suffered from economic under-endowment and was criticised for the conditions in which works were displayed and conserved. Finally, in 1872, it was officially closed when its collections were merged with those of the Prado (Álvarez Lopera 2009).

At the same time as the *Museo Nacional* languished in Madrid, religious artworks from the Spanish convents flowed to other European countries, and particularly to Paris, where they formed *Gallerie Espagnole* in the Louvre, inaugurated in 1838 by king Louis Philippe of France (1830–1848) and dismantled ten years later. Those artworks, depicting scenes of martyrdom and saints in ecstasy, nurtured the romantic image of Spain that foreign travellers to the Peninsula contributed to create (Luxenberg 2008). They visually reaffirmed the myth of a backward country, in which intellectual development had been allegedly suppressed by centuries of religious zeal and inquisitorial control, as had been described by Enlightened thinkers. Drawing on similar perceptions, writers and travellers completed the picture by portraying a colourful and picturesque land of bandits and gypsies, like the one described in Mérimée's *Carmen*.

Meanwhile, partly assuming those historical interpretations and partly reacting to the stereotypes, Spanish scholars, writers and artists cooperated to shape a national culture, which took expression in historical painting (Reyero 1989, Díez 1992), commemorative sculpture (Reyero 1999, Lacarra & Giménez 2003) or the restoration of ancient monuments (Ordieres 1995). One institution in particular, the Royal Academy of History, centralised the writing of Spain's history and promoted the critical analysis of the sources. In 1856 it created the School of Diplomats (*Escuela Superior de Diplomática*) for the training of professional archivists, and museum specialists, called *anticuarios* in the administrative language until 1900 (Pasamar & Peiró 1995). The director of the school, historian Modesto Lafuente (1806–1866), stands out for this role in the shaping of a national master narrative based on an essentialist and teleological interpretation of Spanish history (Fox 1997, Álvarez Junco 2001). It was this interpretation of national history that was staged when a national museum of archaeology was created one year after his death.

Yet, although monuments and antiquities were important for the nation's definition, they were still fragile and the press of the period featured articles denouncing the destruction of ancient buildings, the deficiencies of state museums, and cases of the exportation of cultural items. The lack of effective measures to protect national treasures became evident following the export to the Parisian *Musée de Cluny* of a hoard of gold jewels (crowns, liturgical elements) discovered in Guarrazar (Toledo) in 1858. Some of those items, dated to the seventh century A.D., bore the names of the Visigoth kings of Hispania, and were therefore highly symbolic for the national history. After an unsuccessful petition to the French government, in 1860 the Parliament promoted the drafting of a law on antiquities. However, the project failed and this aspiration was not fulfilled until the first third of the twentieth century (López Trujillo 2006: 255-298).

1868-1900: National identity in the age of colonialism

In 1866 Queen Elisabeth II (1833–1868) laid the foundation stone of the Palace of National Museums and Library (*Palacio de Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*). This building, projected by the architect Francisco Jareño (1818-1892), intended to unite the main repositories of national culture, namely the National Library and two newly-created institutions: the National Historical Archive (*Archivo Histórico Nacional*) and the National Archaeological Museum (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*: MAN) (Layuno 2004). Nevertheless, in October 1868 a revolution dethroned the queen in the name of democratic principles. This did not imply a break in cultural policy: on the contrary, the governments of the six-year revolutionary period (*Sexenio Revolucionario*, 1868–1874)

promoted national museums in order to pursue, from a progressive political standpoint, the nation-state building process developed in the previous decades. Various political regimes were experimented with during the *Sexenio*: firstly, a parliamentary monarchy under the Italian Prince Amedeo of Savoy (1869-71) and secondly the First Republic (1871-72). The failure of the republican governments to control the country, afflicted by a federalist uprising and a traditionalist revolt, led to a military coup d'état that paved the way for the restoration of the Bourbons in 1874.

In 1868, the new revolutionary government nationalised all Crown properties, such as the *Museo Real de Pinturas*, as well as all artworks, libraries and archives belonging to the Catholic Church. Even if the latter measure was not fully implemented, it allowed for the confiscation of artefacts to be exhibited in the MAN, inaugurated in 1871. The *Sexenio* was also a period of the diffusion of new philosophical ideas, in which the scientific associations played a leading role. One of those, the Spanish Anthropological Society (*Sociedad Antropológica Española*), was responsible for the creation of the *Museo Antropológico* (today *Museo Nacional de Antropología*). Like many museums in the nineteenth century, it was designed by the architect and politician Francisco de Cubas (1826-1899), according to the language of classical architecture, as the temple for a discipline –anthropology–, which affirmed the new religion of scientific progress. Opened in 1875, the museum and its collections were purchased by the Spanish state after the death of its founder, Dr Pedro González de Velasco (1815–1882) (Romero de Tejada 1992).

At a time when national prestige was measured in colonial capacity, cultural policy reflected it. Yet, after the independence of most of Spain's overseas territories, only the Caribbean islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico) and the Philippines remained of the former Spanish empire. In 1887, the *Exposición de las Islas Filipinas* celebrated the civilising role of the metropolis, and as a result, the Museum-Library of the Overseas (*Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*) was established in Madrid. In 1892, a double exhibition commemorated the fourth centenary of the arrival of Columbus in the New World: *Exposición Histórico-Americana* and *Exposición Histórico-Europea* (Bernabéu 1987). It was for this occasion that the *Palacio de Bibliotecas y Museos* was completed and endowed with its iconographic programme of patriotic allegories and great men of national arts and letters, which reflected the efforts made by the conservative Restoration regime, in particular the statesman Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828-1897), to foster the writing of national history (Peiró 1995). After the end of the exhibitions, the MAN transferred to its new premises, which were inaugurated in 1895.

All these events celebrating the colonial past, present and future of the Spanish nation were promoted by the state in a period of instability marked by the uprisings for independence in Cuba and the Philippines. Moreover, the events in Madrid had to compete with those promoted by two 'young' nations: the united Italy (with the Exhibition organised in Genoa in tribute to Columbus) and the USA. The Columbian Exhibition of Chicago (1893) was intended to show the world the rising power of the North American union. Only five years later, in 1898, the United States decided to intervene in the anti-colonial war that had broken out in Cuba in 1895, and in a brief battle its navy defeated the antiquated Spanish fleet. One year later, with the Treaty of Paris, Spain signed the liquidation of its overseas empire: Cuba gained independence whereas Puerto Rico and Philippines came under USA control. Almost immediately afterwards, in Madrid the

government decreed the closure of the *Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*, symbolising the end of the colonial project.

While Spain acknowledged its secondary role in the concert of nations on the eve of a new century, it also seemed to reaffirm its romantic image as a backward country, alluring and picturesque, wealthy in art and poetry. During the same year as the military defeat in Cuba, the son of a US American tycoon, Archer M. Huntington (1870–1950) was travelling in the Peninsula. In 1904 he created the Hispanic Society of America in New York as a museum of Hispanic civilisation (Hispanic refers here to both Spain and Portugal and their colonies in the Americas), exhibiting its arts, crafts, archaeological and bibliographical treasures (Coddington 1999). As a metaphor for the new hegemonic power in the Americas, the cultural legacy of the bygone Spanish empire was displayed in New York, the economic capital of the nation. In 1898 a further scandal concerning the export of antiquities emerged; on this occasion, an outstanding piece of sculpture from the Iberian period (fourth century B.C.), the so-called ‘Lady of Elche’, was shipped to the Musée du Louvre, only a few days after it had been unearthed.

1900-1936: The quest for national identities

The colonial crisis of 1898 was perceived as a blow to Spanish national identity. The idea of the decadence of the national body obsessed a generation of intellectuals, who proposed scientific improvement and patriotism to regenerate the political, social and economical structures of the country. According to those thinkers, the essence of the nation had to be sought in the soul of its people. For this reason the history of Spain and the Hispanic Empire was redefined as the evolution of a civilisation, based on a common language and tradition, particularly in the work of the historian Rafael Altamira (1866–1951). These ideas informed a strong process of renovation of the country’s cultural and scientific structures in the first three decades of the century, which has been named the ‘Silver Age of Spanish culture’ (Varela 1999).

This early twentieth-century Spanish nationalism continued to consider the country’s history as a process of centralisation and homogenisation of its different territories, in which the Castilian language and tradition constituted the ‘backbone’ of the national identity (Esteban de Vega & Moya 2009). For this reason, the writers and scholars of this generation played particular attention to a city, Toledo, which represented the essence of Castilian culture, arts and history. Among other initiatives, the *Casa-Museo de El Greco* opened there in 1910, devoted to El Greco (1541-1614) an artist of Cretan origin who had been elevated as a master of the Spanish school of painting. The idea behind the museum was not just to pay tribute to his artistic genius, but also to recreate his life in a space that allowed the visitor to travel through time to the ‘imperial’ Spain of the sixteenth century. The museum was promoted by the marquis of Vega-Inclán (1858–1942), chairman of the official Tourism Board (*Patronato de Turismo*), who fostered other initiatives, such as the *Museo Romántico* (today *Museo Nacional del Romanticismo*) in Madrid, devoted to nineteenth-century history and lifestyles, and the *Casa-Museo de Cervantes* in Valladolid.

Moreover, the creation of a framework for the protection of the national heritage became one of the priorities of this period. The Ministry of Public Instruction began to compile inventories of national monuments (*Catálogos Provinciales de Monumentos*) and drafted a law on national heritage. After 1900 several bills were proposed, but they all of them failed to gain approval in the Parliament, partly because they addressed a highly controversial issue: the right of the Catholic

Church to sell its artistic assets (López Trujillo 2006). Owing to those difficulties, the legislators decided to proceed gradually: in 1911 the Archaeological Excavations Act (*Ley de Excavaciones Arqueológicas*) was passed and in 1916 the National Monuments Act (*Ley de Monumentos Nacionales*) (López Trujillo 2006: 209-33). The same year a Royal Decree envisaged the protection of natural areas through the creation of national parks (*Parques Nacionales*).

The interest in the manifestation of popular culture inspired new initiatives; in 1915, two leading anthropologists started to gather materials for an Ethnographic Museum of Hispanic Cultures (*Museo de etnografía de las culturas hispanas*). Although the celebration in Madrid of the 1925 Exhibition on Regional Costume (*Exposición del Traje Regional*) provided a collection and a new impetus for its creation, this initiative lacked official support and only materialised many years later. This project partially overlapped with another institution born in those years: the National Museum of Applied Arts (nowadays *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas*), officially established in Madrid in 1912. This museum was the inheritor of several nineteenth-century initiatives, such as the National Industrial Exhibitions, and the short-lived *Museo Industrial*, opened in 1871. Since the museum's principal purpose was to provide examples for the development of national industry, it gathered collections of popular handicrafts, such as pottery and ironwork (Cabrera & Villalba 2004).

In the last third of the nineteenth century nationalist movements emerged in Catalonia and the Basque country, the most economically dynamic regions of the country. In both territories language was affirmed as the main element of collective differentiation vis-à-vis Spain, but the two projects differed in other respects: whereas Basque nationalism framed its main identity claim in the racial discourse, Catalan nationalism affirmed the cultural origins of Catalonia in the openness to the Mediterranean, from the Classical Time to the Middle Ages. These choices determined scientific and cultural policy; whereas Catalan nationalists promoted the archaeological excavation of Ampurias, the only ancient Greek settlement to be found in the Iberian Peninsula, Basque nationalism found in physical anthropology and ethnographic collecting the means to scientifically affirm the Basque race (Lanzarote 2011).

Consequently, Basque nationalism promoted institutions for its display, such as the *Museo Arqueológico de Vizcaya y Etnográfico Vasco* (nowadays the Basque Museum: *Euskal Museoa/Museo Vasco*), created in Bilbao, the economic capital of the region, in 1921. As opposed to other cities, neither Barcelona nor Bilbao had developed a relevant museum of fine arts in the nineteenth century that would satisfy the cultural demands of its citizens and elites. For this reason, the development of museums in Barcelona was one of the key policies of Catalanism from the turn of the century, and motivated the creation of the *Junta de Museus* (Museum's Board) by the city council in 1902. This institution gained relevance when in 1914 the *Mancomunitat*, a sort of autonomous government was instituted in Catalonia. In the same year, the Museum of Fine Arts (*Museo de Bellas Artes*) opened its doors in Bilbao thanks to private initiative.

The rise to power of nationalism in Catalonia, combined with the tensions provoked by a new colonial war in Morocco and by the workers' movement, destabilised the regime. Arguing that national unity and social stability were at stake, the military staged a coup in 1923 with the agreement of king Alphonse XIII (1900–1931). The dictatorial government led by General Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) dissolved Catalan institutions, suppressed the workers' organisations and affirmed Spanish nationalism. The dictator also enforced a regulation on cultural heritage that

liberal governments had not managed to pass; the 1926 Royal Decree of National Artistic Treasure (*Real Decreto-ley relativo al Tesoro Artístico Arqueológico Nacional*) severely limited the possibility of exportation of artworks and antiquities. Moreover, the regime sought to instil patriotism by organising events such as the international exhibitions of Seville and Barcelona, both in 1929.

While the *Exposición Ibero-Americana* celebrated in Seville stressed the links between Spain and its former Latin-American colonies, the *Exposición Internacional* in Barcelona was conceived for a European audience as a showcase for the industrial modernity of the country, but also its touristic potential. Although some attempts to display a differentiated Catalan identity were restricted by the central government, Catalan elites led the planning and development of the event. Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867–1956), a Catalan architect and politician who was president of the *Mancomunitat* between 1917 and 1923, did the general layout of the exhibition on the hill of Montjuïc. The focal point of his project was the *Palacio Nacional*, constructed in an eclectic style reminiscent of Spanish Renaissance. The building hosted a temporal exhibition, *El Arte en España*, which offered a general overview of Spanish civilisation through the development of fine arts in more than 5000 artworks, from prehistory to the early twentieth century (Solá-Morales 1985).

Puig was also the mind behind one of the main attractions of the exhibition, *Pueblo Español*, a fabricated Spanish town composed of reproductions of selected examples of vernacular architecture. Its name, which plays with the word *pueblo*, both ‘people’ and ‘village’ in Spanish, was imposed by the dictatorship, and substituted the one proposed by Puig: *Iberona*. In between an open-air ethnographic museum and a fair attraction, *Pueblo español* presented a picturesque Spain through the diversity of its regions: surrounded by medieval walls, it featured a Catalan Romanesque monastery, an Aragonese parish church, Andalusian narrow streets with grilled windows and flower pots and a big main square (*Plaza Mayor*). This square was used during the Exhibition to organise ‘fiestas’ and traditional spectacles, and the houses hosted regional restaurants and shops selling traditional handicrafts. Although it was to be dismantled at the end of the event, its popularity worked in favour of its preservation (Bohigas & Carandell 1989; Storm 2010).

The social unrest provoked by the 1929 economic crisis precipitated the fall of the dictator. The defeat of monarchic candidates in the 1931 elections, led to the resignation of the king and opened the second republican period in the history of Spain (1931–36). The democratic governments set out to foster national culture, and in 1933 the Parliament approved the National Artistic Treasure Act (*Ley del Tesoro Artístico Nacional*); it insisted on the public function of museums and affirmed the role of the state in protecting the national heritage, which was defined in broad terms: natural, artistic, archaeological, ethnographical and historical (García Fernández 2009). The Republican authorities made an effort to favour popular instruction; *Misiones pedagógicas* were sent to rural areas with reproductions of the masterworks of the Prado. The process also involved revaluing the popular forms of art; in 1934 Republican authorities created the Museum of the Spanish People (*Museo del Pueblo Español*) to display the collection of ethnographic materials gathered over the previous years. Its opening, scheduled for summer 1936, was impeded by the outbreak of the Civil War (Bergés 1996).

The proclamation of the Spanish Republic in Madrid in 1931 was replicated in Barcelona by the proclamation of the Catalan Republic. From 1932 onwards, Catalonia developed an autonomous government, and its newly established executive power, the *Generalitat*, fostered the creation of museums for arts and archaeology. In 1934 the *Museu d'Art de Catalunya* (Museum of Art of Catalonia) was installed in the *Palacio Nacional*, which had been the core of the 1929 International Exhibition, and the *Museu d'Archeologia* has occupied, since 1935, another of the pavilions built for the Exhibition. After several failed attempts, an official law for the creation of an autonomous government in the Basque country (*Estatuto vasco*) was passed in October 1936, in a country already divided by the Civil War.

1936-1975: Francoism, the cross and the sword

During a Civil War (1936–39) that resulted in half a million deaths, both the destruction of cultural items and initiatives to protect them took place. Whilst on the Republican side religious art was systematically destroyed by the revolutionaries, the authorities also endeavoured to safeguard the collections of the national museums, and especially the masterpieces of the Prado, which were transferred to Geneva with the help of the League of Nations (Argerich & Ara 2003; Colorado 2008). The destruction of religious symbols by the Republican side was exploited in the 'National' side's propaganda and reinforced the idea of the self-proclaimed 'crusade' against the enemies of religion and Spanish tradition, as well as against separatism (meaning regional autonomy). The end of the war in April 1939 confirmed the leadership of General Franco (1939–1975); after some years of international isolation, the dictatorship promoted itself as a bulwark against communism in the context of the Cold War and gained the support of the USA.

Already by the end of 1939, Franco's government had achieved the return from Geneva of the Prado's masterpieces. At the same time, it started negotiations with the French authorities, overseen by the Nazi occupiers, to obtain certain art works of Spanish origin preserved in Parisian museums. The negotiations were successful, and in 1941 Francoist propaganda hailed the 'repatriation' of those heritage items 'lost to Spain' in different historical times as 'reparation' for old offences. The list of the items is a catalogue of what was considered the 'national heritage' at the time: Murillo's *Inmaculada de Sout* (a painting confiscated by the French general in Seville during the Napoleonic occupation), a collection of diplomatic records from the Simancas Archives (transferred to France in the same period), the Hoard of Guarrazar, and finally a set of Iberian sculptures, among them the Lady of Elche. While the archival records returned to their original location in Simancas, the artefacts were distributed among the national museums in Madrid. Unlike the other archaeological items, which were sent to the MAN, the Lady of Elche was put on display in the Prado, the symbolic temple of Spanish culture, detached from its archaeological context, but elevated as an artistic icon of the original Iberian race that it came to represent (Olmos and Tortosa 1997).

However, although important, during the dictatorship, archaeological past never enjoyed the very central role in the discourse on national identity occupied by late Middle Ages. The kingdom of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Kings, represented the political and religious unification of the country and the discovery of the Americas, the two founding myths of Modern Spain. This interpretation had been already developed by liberal historiography in the nineteenth century, but under Franco's regime acquired a propagandistic dimension evinced by the fact that the personal

emblems of the Catholic Kings, the yoke and the arrows, became one of the symbols of the dictatorship. The regime invested in the restoration of historical sites, such as the medieval town of Sos (Saragossa), the birthplace of King Ferdinand of Aragon, in order to recreate Spanish past (Casar & Esteban 2008). The imperial myth was further exploited when in 1941 the *Museo de America* was created to commemorate and celebrate Spain's role in the colonisation and evangelisation of the New World.

Nevertheless, the dictatorship also drew on the rhetoric of economic modernisation to foster national pride. In 1952, the Museum of Contemporary Art (*Museo de Arte Contemporáneo*) was created on the initiative of a group of young artists. This museum thrived during the 1960s and 1970s, in a period when the effects of the efforts to modernise Spanish economy had started to bear fruit (Lorente 1998b). Finally, in the later period, further initiatives were undertaken in order to come to terms with neglected areas of Spain's past, in particularly the Sephardic Museum (*Museo Nacional de Arte Hispanojudío y Sefardí*) established in Toledo in 1964. Installed in what used to be one of the synagogues of the city until the expulsion edict issued by the Catholic Kings in 1492, its collections show the life of the Sephardic Jewish community both before the expulsion and in the Diaspora.

1975-2008: The museums of democracy

The death of General Franco in 1975 opened the way for political reform under his designated successor, king Juan Carlos I. The construction of the democratic state, inaugurated by the 1978 Constitution, was based on a policy of reconciliation that presupposed amnesty for crimes committed by both sides during the Civil War and also during Francoism. Although the constitution declared 'the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common, indivisible land of all the Spanish people', the democratic state inherited unresolved issues such as the nationalist question in Catalonia and the Basque Country, exacerbated by terrorism in the latter case. Moreover, it also had to deal with other lingering questions, and particularly the consequences of the appropriation of Spanish nationalism and its symbols by Francoism, which make them another source of tension between left and right and between centre and periphery. On account of those limitations, democratic governments have promoted loyalty to the constitution and the monarchy in order to foster patriotism (Balfour 2007).

The return of democracy to Spain was symbolically enacted by the arrival in Madrid of Picasso's *Guernica* from the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1981. The painting, commissioned during the Civil War by the Republican Government for the Spanish Pavilion of the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, received its name after the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by Nazi aircraft, under Franco's offensive. According to Picasso's will, it was kept in deposit in New York's MoMA until democracy prevailed in Spain. The *Guernica* was not just a cry against the cruelty of war actions against civilians, it was also a testimony to the division of the country that had caused the Civil War; a division that the young democracy aimed to overcome. First displayed in the Casón del Buen Retiro, then a dependency of the Prado, *Guernica* was transferred in 1992 to the new premises of the Museum of Contemporary Art, renamed *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*.

The democratic governments promoted modernisation of the country and integration into the European Union, which was achieved in 1986. New museums were created as a service to

society, such as the National Museum of Science and Technology (*Museo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*) in 1980. Efforts to offer a new dynamic image of Spain to the world crystallised in 1992 with several international events: Barcelona hosted the summer Olympic; a World Exhibition in Seville celebrated the fifth centenary of Columbus arrival to America; and Madrid became European Capital of Culture. In that year the *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza* was inaugurated in the *Paseo del Prado*, thus reaffirming the highly symbolic value of that urban area, as well as the central role of fine arts museums in Spain's cultural policy. If the Reina Sofia and the Thyssen were the priorities in the 1980s and early 1990s, the new conservative cabinet launched the renovation of the Prado after 1996; finally, as a collateral effect, this decision involved the relocation of the Museum of the Army (*Museo del Ejército*) to Toledo.

Democratic governments resurrected an old project, the national ethnographical museum. In 1986 its collections were dusted off for an exhibition to be put in storage again until 1993, when they became part of the *Museo Nacional de Antropología*. Finally, in 2004 the National Museum of the Dress (*Museo Nacional del Traje - Centro Investigación del Patrimonio Etnográfico*) was inaugurated; focusing on the history of clothing, the display privileges the evolution of elite fashion, while ethnographic garments are explained as a popular renderings of general international trends. For this reason, the current *Museo del Traje* subverts the original aims behind the Museum of the Spanish People, namely to enhance the value of popular manifestations of arts and crafts. Moreover, in 2008 the Ministry of Education announced the creation of the National Museum of Ethnography (*Museo Nacional de Etnografía*) in Teruel (Aragon). According to this plan, the *Museo del Traje* was to be divided: whereas a section of the clothing collection would remain in Madrid in a new Centre for Fashion, the bulk of the ethnographic materials would be put on display in Teruel. Justified by the Ministry as a means to decentralise culture and provide cultural institutions to Teruel (Spain's second least populated province), this decision instead evinces the secondary relevance of ethnography to official Spanish cultural strategy (Fernández de la Paz 2008).

One of the most important characteristics of the new Spanish democracy was the creation of the *estado autonómico*, a quasi-federalist system (or rather 'federalising', given the progressive nature of the decentralisation process), which also affected cultural policy. In 1985 the Historic Heritage Act (*Ley del Patrimonio Histórico Español*) established that the management of state museums could be transferred to the autonomous communities (*comunidades autónomas*). As a result, the management of most provincial state museums has been transferred, whereas the property of collections and buildings remains in state hands (Álvarez 2001). In turn, national museums are owned and managed directly by the Spanish state, and since 2006 they are integrated in the Network of Spanish Museums. Decentralisation has affected museum geography in different ways; for instance, some provincial archaeological museums, such as those of Tarragona or Mérida were elevated to the category of national museums due to the importance of their collections. In the second case the newly acquired status was highlighted by the construction of new premises by the internationally renowned architect Rafael Moneo.

Since the restoration of democracy, the autonomous regional governments have developed their own political agendas in the realm of culture and identity building (Roigé & Arrieta 2010). For instance, the Museum of the Galician People (*Museo do Pobo Galego*), created in 1976 in Santiago de Compostela, has become the hub of the network of ethnographical museums in

Galicia. In Catalonia, in 1990 the autonomous government (*Generalitat*) created the National Museum of Art of Catalonia (*Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*), intended to become the flagship of the Catalan museum system. This museum resulted from the merger of some previously existing collections owned either by Catalan institutions (*Museu d'Art de Catalunya*), or by the Spanish state, such as a selection of old master from the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection (Carbonell 2001). The Basque country has also developed an intense policy in this field; in 1991 the autonomous government supported the establishment of the Museum of the Basque Country (*Euskal Herria Museoa / Museo Euskal Herria*) in Guernica (Biscay). In 1993 the Museum of Basque Nationalism (*Euskal Abertzaletasunaren Museoa / Museo del Nacionalismo Vasco*) opened its doors in Artea-Arratia, a small town in the province of Biscay; it pays particular tribute to Sabino Arana (1865-1903) and the origins of Basque nationalism. In April 2011 plans have been announced to move this museum to the centre of Bilbao.

On top of these initiatives, in the 1990s, the Basque autonomous government negotiated with the New York Guggenheim Museum to create a branch of this institution in Bilbao: as a centre of contemporary art, the new museum does not host a permanent collection but is designed to mount temporary exhibitions and to receive loans from the mother institution. The aspirations of the policy-makers to create a landmark known worldwide were satisfied by the building designed by architect Frank O. Gehry, which was inaugurated in 1997 (Esteban 2007). The role of contemporary art centres as cultural promoters had been successfully tested since the opening of the *Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona* (MACBA) in 1995, and has been emulated by other regional governments, such as the *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León*, inaugurated in 2005.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century the central government has also endeavoured to renovate national museums and to found new ones. In 2006 the newly-established Ministry of Housing (*Ministerio de la Vivienda*) of the Socialist cabinet proposed the creation of the National Museum of Architecture and Urbanism (*Museo Nacional de Arquitectura y Urbanismo*). As announced in 2008, the museum will be divided between three venues: Madrid (a centre of documentation), and two exhibition centres in Barcelona and in Salamanca. It does not seem coincidental that in 2006 the Socialist cabinet had taken a decision that opposed those two cities, when it decreed the restitution of the archival records confiscated by Franco's regime to the *Generalitat* at the end of the Civil War, and preserved ever since in the Archive of the Civil War in Salamanca. Its restitution to Barcelona had been a claim of the *Generalitat* since the beginning of the democracy, but it was opposed by both the city council and the regional government of Castile and Leon, both ruled by the conservative party.

The restitution was the consequence of concrete political agreements but also of a general process of coming to terms with Spanish conflict-driven twentieth century history; since the mid-1990s, the debate had been fostered by different social and institutional actors, including political parties, regional governments, the Catholic Church and the Armed Forces, so that the concept of 'historical memory' (*memoria histórica*) moved to the forefront of the public debate (Aguilar 2008; Boyd 2008). In 2007, the Parliament passed the Historical Memory Act (*Ley de Memoria Histórica*), which requires the removal of the symbols of the division of the country and supports initiatives to open historical records and the mass graves of the repression. This has motivated a political debate on the legacies of the dictatorship and their future in democratic society, such as the

monumental mausoleum built by Franco, the *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen), and has particularly affected the recent renovation of the Museum of the Spanish Army, inaugurated in July 2010.

Case studies

The crowning of the masters: Museo del Prado and the ‘Triangle of Art’, Madrid

In terms of the number of visitors that it receives every year, the Museo del Prado is Spain’s foremost museum; and it is also so according to its central position in Spanish cultural imaginary (Gaya Nuño 1977, Portús 1994, Bettagno et al. 1996). Indeed, for most of their history, Spain’s fine arts museums, –the Prado in particular– have fulfilled the task of representing national identity. As a landmark of Spanish culture and its international projection, this museum is both universalistic in orientation and nationally rooted; it is intended to highlight Spain’s contribution to the development of the Western art tradition. Moreover, since its origins, and owing to the provenance of its core collections, the Prado is closely bound to the role of the Spanish monarchy as a patron of culture (Anes 1996). By attracting the most important artists of their times, Spanish rulers promoted the arts in order to represent their military achievements and their universal aspirations.

The opening of the royal collections to the public was attempted for the first time by King Joseph Bonaparte; emulating the example of the *Musée Napoléon* in Paris, his government created the *Museo Josefino* in 1809. Works of art from the royal collection and the suppressed convents were gathered in Madrid but the project was hampered by the war circumstances. Upon the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in 1814, Ferdinand VII opened the *Museo Real de Pinturas y Esculturas* in 1819 and installed it in the *Museo del Prado*, which had suffered damage during the occupation, as had the rest of the complex of *El Buen Retiro*. The display included more than 300 paintings from the royal collections, mainly by Spanish artists, as well as original examples of ancient sculpture and plaster casts. Conceived as an institution for the training of artists and for the aesthetic enjoyment of the arts by the public, it also responded to a propagandistic endeavour by the Crown to affirm its role in the country’s culture.

The development of the Prado as a museum for the public was accelerated in 1838 when the painter José de Madrazo (1781–1859) was appointed its director. Madrazo was the first artist to hold this position and under his directorship, the museum expanded with new rooms devoted to Italian and Flemish masters (Géal 2005). Two of his sons also played a crucial part in the development of the museum: Federico de Madrazo (1815–1894), also a painter, served as its director in 1860–68 and again after the Revolution in 1881–94; and in 1843 Pedro de Madrazo (1816–1898), compiled the catalogue of the museum, which was subsequently corrected and re-edited every few years until the twentieth century. Thanks to their extensive scholarly and artistic networks within Spain and abroad, the members of this family shaped not only the evolution of the Prado but also the artistic and cultural life of Spain for most of the nineteenth century (Bolaños 2008: 163-205).

The Royal Museum became an instrument used by the monarchy to display its magnificence as well as to recount the history of the country through its kings, by associating the new-born idea of the Spanish nation with the history of the country’s ruling dynasties. In 1853, the central

room of the museum (the Oval Room) was renamed *Salón de la Reina Isabel* and a selection of what were considered the masterpieces of the collection was displayed, in emulation of the *Tribuna* in the Uffizi or the *Salon Carré* in the Louvre. The selection included works by Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck, Velasquez and Murillo, and the central position of the room was reserved for Raphael's *Christ Falling on the Way to Calvary*. Other Spanish masters such as El Greco or Zurbaran were less represented, and Goya was excluded (Géal 2001).

The Prado was nationalised by the revolutionary government after the fall of Queen Elisabeth II in 1868. Subsequently, it received the collection of the *Museo Nacional de Pinturas*, better known as the *Museo de la Trinidad*. Nevertheless, only 83 works from that collection were displayed in the rooms of the Prado, whereas the rest were distributed as loans to provincial museums or to other official institutions (Álvarez 2008). It was at around this time that the name 'Museo del Prado' started to become official when it appeared on the cover of the 1873 edition of Madrazo's Catalogue. In 1875, the painter Ceferino Araujo (1824–1897) produced one of the first critical accounts on the situation of museums in Spain and particularly the Prado. He criticised the gaps in the collection of the national museum (Dutch, English and German schools were particularly underrepresented), as well as the 'decorative criteria' used in the presentation of the works. According to Araujo, an overload of works should be avoided and paintings should be carefully selected and displayed according to scientific criteria: "by nations, by periods and by masters" (Araujo 1875).

The Prado has contributed to the creation and dissemination of the idea of the Spanish School of painting and to the consecration of its masters (Afinoguénova 1999; Géal 1999). It did so especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century when several artists (El Greco, Velasquez) were elevated to national cult figures. This was done in parallel to the reappraisal with Cervantes, and the affirmation of the Golden Age of Literature and Arts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the occasion of the third centenary of Velasquez's birth in 1899 the central Oval Room was transformed into the Velasquez Room. At the same time, a statue to the master was erected in front of the main entrance to the museum. By placing Velasquez and concretely his *Las Meninas* in the centre of the museum and thus in the symbolic centre of Spanish cultural geography, the Prado affirmed the importance of 'inherited heritage' for national identity; in the background of the painting, the mirrored gaze of King Philip IV reminds the viewer of the history of the Spanish monarchy (Portús 2009).

The consecration of the art museum as the focal point of national culture continued in Spain throughout the twentieth century. When Picasso's *Guernica* arrived from New York in 1981, it was installed in the *Casón del Buen Retiro*, an annex of the Prado, to be later transferred to the newly created *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*, devoted to twentieth-century art. The name of the queen was thus used to associate the values of democratic freedom and cultural modernity with the restored monarchy. During the 1980s, the Spanish state fostered the Reina Sofía at the same time as it negotiated the purchase of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection. This acquisition was justified on the grounds that it filled the gaps in the Prado and the Reina Sofía with regards to international modern painting (impressionist and twentieth century art in particular). When the Museo Thyssen was inaugurated in 1992, the press began to call those three museums the 'Golden Triangle of Art', an imaginary figure that encompasses precisely the Salón / Paseo del Prado (Holo 1999).

Whilst the social-democrat governments under Felipe González (1981–96) favoured the Reina Sofía and the Thyssen Museum, the conservative cabinet led by José María Aznar (1996–2004) undertook the reform of the Prado. The extension and modernisation of its installations were intended to remedy the deficiencies of Spain's first museum (Tusell 2004). The project, designed by the architect Rafael Moneo, increased the display area for the permanent collections and for temporary exhibition. It also created a new entrance as well as all the facilities required by a modern museum: conference rooms, gift shop and restaurant. As part of the same project, the *Casón del Buen Retiro* was also restored and adapted to host the *Escuela del Prado* and the museum's research library (Azcúe 2009).

The historical making of the nation: Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid

Since 1833, the newly-established Spanish liberal state strove to create a civic and political nationalism, for which the writing of history should provide the grounding and archaeology the material testimony. For this reason, the creation of a museum of 'national antiquities', which had been already proposed by the Royal Academy of History in 1830 (Almagro & Maier 1999), was fostered by the School of Diplomats after its creation in 1856. When finally, the National Archaeological Museum (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*: MAN) was created by Royal Decree in March 1867, its staff and first director, Pedro Felipe Monlau y Roca (1808-1871), came from this School (Marcos 1993). One year earlier, the National Historical Archive (*Archivo Histórico Nacional*) had been established for the preservation of the documental sources of the national history (Pasamar & Peiró 1996).

Characterised by a broad chronological discourse, the MAN covered from the origins of humanity to the Renaissance, and it even included technological items dating to the eighteenth century. In its endeavour to gather the material sources of the *historia patria*, the MAN collected artefacts from throughout the Spanish territory, but also from beyond its borders, such as Near Eastern and Classical antiquities, prehistoric collections from France and Scandinavia or overseas ethnographic materials (Marcos 1993, Barril 1993). In so doing, the MAN sought to place the history of Spain within a universal timeline of human development, from primitivism to civilisation. Nonetheless, medieval collections were predominantly of 'national' origin; they were chosen from the different regions of the country in order to stress the medieval origins of the Spanish nation in the *Reconquista*, defined as the process of Christian 're-conquest' of the territory from the Muslim 'occupiers'; as the foundational decree affirmed, 'the monumental history of that brilliant period of constant struggle, which began with Pelayo and ended with Isabella the Catholic, should occupy the main space in our museum' (Quoted in Marcos 1993: 26-27).

The governments of the *Sexenio Revolucionario* promoted the MAN; in 1869 it was decreed the nationalisation of all works of art, libraries and archives belonging to the Catholic Church, which were to be deposited in the state institutions. This decision was not implemented, but it justified the sending of commissioners to select pieces for the newly-created MAN, which opened its doors in a provisional venue in 1871. Nonetheless, those items were not enough to fill the empty rooms of a museum intended to compete with those in other European capitals; taking advantage of a diplomatic initiative, in 1871 a scientific mission was sent to the Eastern Mediterranean in order to purchase antiquities. However, the budget assigned was insufficient and, for instance, when the commissioners were offered a rich collection of Cypriot antiquities, they were obliged

to turn the offer down. I refer to the collection gathered by the USA consul of Italian origin Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1832-1904). His collection was eventually purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and Cesnola became his first director. Just as Spain did not manage in this period to affirm itself as a colonial power, so too did the MAN fail to create a significant collection of Middle Eastern antiquities.

The role of the MAN in the visualisation of national history was to be highlighted by its location in the Palace of National Libraries and Museums (*Palacio de Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*) in Madrid, along with the National Library and the National Historical Archive. This building, designed in the 1860s, was only completed in 1892, on the occasion of the *Exposición Hispano-Americana*. Juan de Dios de la Rada y Delgado (1827-1901), director of the museum from 1891 to 1901, was the chief curator of this exhibition and also directed the installation of the collections in its new premises in 1895. It was then that the Palace received its iconographic programme, based on allegorical representations (for instance the personification of Hispania crowning the façade) and historical heroes, artists and writers (Layuno 2004). The Palace is located in the Paseo de Recoletos, on the same urban axis as the Paseo del Prado, in an area representing the bourgeois expansion of the city (*Barrio de Salamanca*) and adjoining Columbus Square, where the monument dedicated to the Admiral stands.

In the same way as MAN had given a privileged position to medieval times in its early stages, during the twentieth century it promoted the study and display of Peninsular archaeology, and particularly Iberian culture (second Iron Age), which reflects the growing importance of prehistory and archaeology in the definition of the national identity in the first half of the century (Lanzarote 2011). When in 1941 the MAN received the Iberian sculptures and the Visigoth crowns of Guarrazar from Paris, they were given prominent positions in the display rooms of the museum. In turn, the ethnographic collections were destined for the newly created *Museo de América*, which was installed in the premises of the MAN until 1962. Finally, since 2006 this institution has been undergoing a profound renovation of its building, which may also affect its collections according to some press releases (the opening is scheduled for 2012).

The lands of the nation: Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid

The interaction between scientific practice and the creation of national master narratives can be explored in light of the National Museum of Natural Sciences (*Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales*: MNCN). The origins of this institution date back to the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Royal Botanical Garden (1755) and the Royal Cabinet of Natural History (1771) were established. Since the beginning of that century, the Spanish Crown had promoted natural history as an instrument to foster its prestige, as well as to bolster the economic exploitation of the colonies and their natural resources; plants, stuffed animals, drawings and reports were sent from the Americas to Madrid by administrators and scientific expeditions (Cañizares 2006, De Vos 2007). The Royal Cabinet expanded when King Charles III purchased the collection of natural history and curiosities created in Paris by an erudite scholar from Quayaquil (Equador), Pedro Franco Dávila (1711–1786), who became its first director (Villena et al. 2009).

The king promoted the reform and embellishment of Madrid, and particularly the area surrounding the Prado. A long promenade adorned with trees and fountains was created and it was completed with the construction of the Royal Observatory and the new building for the

Royal Cabinet and the Academy of Sciences. Following a design in neoclassical style by the architect Juan de Villanueva (1739–1811), construction work began in 1786, but was halted during the Napoleonic period. When the museum opened in 1819, the collection that it contained had little to do with natural sciences. Finally, in 1815 king Fernando VII founded the Royal Museum of Natural Sciences, which since 1838 has been under the scientific direction of the *Universidad Central de Madrid* (Barreiro 1992).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the museum shared the premises of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, until it was transferred to the basement of the *Palacio de Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales* in 1895. However, due to the fact that it was deprived of a space of its own and had inconvenient display conditions and laboratories, the museum was soon closed to the public. This lack of official support may relate to the marginal place of scientific research in Spanish official policies during most of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, a somehow negative appreciation of nature prevailed during most of the century; viewed from cities, it was described as hostile, it had to be curbed and domesticated, adapted to the needs of the new liberal state. For this reason the dry lands of the interior of the Peninsula and the mountain ranges that traverse it were considered obstacles against the nation's progress; indeed geography was defined by some intellectuals as one of the Spain's problems. Nevertheless, in the last third of the century some of the urban middle classes pioneered a new appreciation of nature through *excursionismo*, a phenomenon also related to the genesis of other national projects within the state, Catalan in particular (Casado de Otaola 2010)

After the turn of the century, the Museum of Natural Sciences regained a leading role in the scientific life of the country. Under Ignacio Bolívar (1850–1944), its director since 1901, the museum was relocated to the *Palacio de Industria y Bellas Artes*, which had been built for the National Exhibition of Industry in 1881 and had hosted the National Exhibitions of Fine Arts ever since. It is situated in the Paseo de la Castellana, which is part of the same urban axis consisting of Paseo del Prado and Paseo de Recoletos, where the museums previously studied (Prado and MAN) are also situated. The museum was provided with a larger budget and became the headquarters of the *Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios*, the institution that led the scientific regeneration of the country in the first decades of the twentieth century; finally, in 1913, the museum was renamed *nacional*. The renovation of the MNCN also affected its display rooms; a group of taxidermists created dioramas reproducing the autochthonous species of 'Spanish nature', turning the museum into the showcase for a natural space defined as 'national'. As a place of knowledge, the MNCN focused on research into geological history and fostered the study of prehistory, stressing the link between natural space and historical discourse (Lanzarote 2011).

As the MNCN was being developed in Madrid, nature itself was also transformed into a museum when the first 'national parks' (*parques nacionales*) were created in 1918. Their promoter, the marquis of Pidal (1870–1941), affirmed the need to preserve natural spaces for collective enjoyment and the regeneration of the younger generations. The USA national parks provided the template, but so did too an initiative undertaken in Catalonia to create a 'national park' in the mountain of Our Lady of Montserrat (Casado de Otaola 2010). For this reason, it was not coincidence that the first Spanish national park was created in the mountains that surround the sanctuary of Our Lady of Covadonga (Asturias); it was precisely in those mountains that the

Reconquista, one of the foundational myths of Spanish nationalism, had started in the distant ninth century, when Don Pelayo, the legendary founder of the Leonese monarchy had risen up with his men against the ‘Muslim domination’ of the Peninsula. Nature, history and religion mixed in a place sacralised through the declaration of a national park (Boyd 2002).

The empire of the language and the faith: Museo de América, Madrid

The role of imperial narratives in the creation of national museums warrants particular attention in the case of Spain, because of its role in the European overseas expansion. The origins of the *Museo de América*, created in 1941, are to be found in previous institutions and initiatives. In the eighteenth century, the scientific conquest of the natural realm was part of the political domination of the Americas by the Spanish Crown; the scientific and ethnographic collections then created and new ones gathered by scientific expeditions were displayed during the nineteenth century in both the *Museo de Ciencias Naturales* and the *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, as well as in the *Museo Antropológico* thereafter (Cabello 2001).

The renovated colonial endeavour led to the celebration of national exhibitions in the last third of the nineteenth century; for instance, the one devoted to the Philippines organised in Madrid in 1887 (*Exposición de las Islas Filipinas*). Events of this kind not only presented the economic potential of colonial enterprise but also celebrated the civilising role of the metropolis; for this reason some ‘primitive peoples’ were displayed there for the pleasure of European visitors (Sánchez Gómez 2003). One of the Exhibition initiatives, the Museum-Library of the Overseas (*Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*) was turned into a permanent institution. Attached to the ministry of Overseas Affairs (*Ministerio de Ultramar*), it gathered information on Spain’s historical role in the discovery and colonisation of extra-European territories and was intended to encourage contemporary colonialism.

The prestige of the overseas empire was exploited for national identity building when the fourth centenary of America’s ‘discovery’ was celebrated with the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* in Madrid in 1892. As a token of mutual recognition, several Latin-American nations sent artefacts to be exhibited in Madrid, and delegates were dispatched to the events that took place in the province of Huelva (Andalusia), from where Columbus had departed on 12 October 1492 (Bernabéu 1987). However, these events celebrating the colonial past and present of the Spanish nation were held during a period of instability provoked by the uprisings in Cuba and the Philippines, which concluded in 1898 with the Hispanic-American War and the liquidation of Spain’s overseas empire. Subsequently, the government decided to close the *Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*, thereby symbolically enacting the end of the colonial project (Carrero & Blanco 1999).

However, the memory of the Empire and links with the Spanish-speaking world were again stressed in the context of early twentieth century reaffirmation of national identity. Intellectuals and politicians promoted the idea of *Hispanidad*, which was based on an assertion of a common ‘civilisation’ on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1913, celebrations of the 12th October were launched in both Spain and *Hispanoamérica* and in 1918 it became Spain’s national day (Sepúlveda 2005). The 1929 *Exposición Ibero-Americana* in Seville sought to stress the alleged fraternity with the former colonies, in the city that had monopolised trade between Europe and the Spanish Americas in early modern times.

The exaltation of Spain's imperial past became another of the propaganda tools used during Franco's regime. Shaping the idea of *Hispanidad* for his own purposes, in 1941 the dictator created the *Museo de América* to commemorate the role of Spain in the colonisation of the New World. Firstly located in the MAN, in 1962 the museum was transferred to the university campus of Madrid (*Ciudad Universitaria*), at the northwest exit of the city. The *Ciudad Universitaria* had been totally destroyed during the siege of Madrid during the Civil War. When its reconstruction was completed, the dictator erected a gigantic arch of triumph (*Arco de la Victoria*) in 1956, in commemoration of his victory.

Situated next to the arch, the *Museo de América* was thus part of a propagandistic programme of a regime that defined itself as *nacional-católico*. Not surprisingly, the purpose-built museum designed by the architects Luis Moya Blanco (1904-1990) and Luis Martínez-Feduchi Ruiz (1901-1975) was inspired by sixteenth century Spanish monastic architecture, highlighting the role of Spain in the extension of Catholicism to the American territories. For this reason, it displayed both archaeological and anthropological collections (which came from the MAN and the *Museo de Antropología*) and a large number of pieces dating to the colonial period. The museum was renovated for the fifth centenary of Columbus' arrival in America in 1992, celebrated with a World Exhibition in Seville that served as a showcase for Spanish modernity and universal projection.

Since then, the museum's discourse has been structured following the classification of human societies provided by anthropology – *Bands, Tribes, Chiefdoms and States* – and devotes attention to both the history of the pre-Columbian peoples and the colonial times. In so doing, the museum stresses the creative mixing of peoples and cultures and the legacy of Spanish civilisation to the New World, while avoiding the discussion on the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise. It thus seemingly reflects the motto that dominated the 1992 celebrations: 'Meeting of Two Worlds' (*Encuentro de Dos Mundos*). For instance, at the end of the permanent collection, the visitor is invited to watch a video projection on languages in the Americas in which Spanish is presented by both Spanish and Latin American writers as the language of modernity and dynamic international culture (González de Oleaga & Monge 1997). Moreover, as a result of the migratory trends that have changed the composition of Spanish society in the last decades, the museum is reframing its mission and its pedagogic activities in order to address the Latin American community in Spain.

The nation projected: Museu d'Història de Catalunya, Barcelona

One of the most important features of Spanish democracy is the creation of the *estado autonómico*, a quasi-federalist system (or better *federalising*, given the progressive nature of the decentralisation process). The management of most museums has been transferred to the *comunidades autónomas*, which have also developed their own cultural agendas. In 1996 the *Generalitat* created the Museum of History of Catalonia (*Museu d'Història de Catalunya*: MHC). This institution does not just represent an attempt to establish a master narrative on the history of this territory (or as the official motto puts it *la memòria d'un país*, 'the memory of a country'), but it also exemplifies a new museological concept. The MHC does not own a collection of artefacts and most of the historical objects and documents are on loan from other institutions. It is innovative in that it combines traditional museum presentation, based on the display of objects, with the new technologies,

notably media and interactive devices, to pursue its teaching goals (Hernández Cardona 1996; Vinyes 2006).

The permanent rooms invite the visitor to take a journey from prehistory to the twenty-first century, in which Catalonia is defined as an essential reality. In the first room the fossil remains of *Homo erectus* from Tautavel (Languedoc-Rousillon, France) are presented as the ‘first Catalan’. The museum concentrates on two historical periods particularly cherished by Catalan nationalism: on the one hand the Middle Ages, and on the other the age of industrialisation; in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Catalan culture revival movement (*Reinaxença*) constructed the medieval period as the Golden Age of Catalan language and arts. Barcelona was then at the centre of a larger political entity, the Crown of Aragon, which included not only the peninsular territories (Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia) but also the Balearic Islands, Sardinia and Southern Italy. For this reason, the museum describes medieval Barcelona as the capital of a Mediterranean empire open to external influences, drawing on the stereotypes of open-mindedness and adventurousness usually associated with mercantile peoples. This idea is reinforced by the location of the museum in the former building of the customs office in Barcelona’s port.

In their turn, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are presented as a period of decadence, and Catalonia is described as the ‘periphery’ of the Spanish empire. After those ‘dark ages’, nineteenth-century industrialisation is portrayed as generator of a new economic revival, which allows the renaissance of arts and culture and national re-awakening. Finally, the twentieth century is largely displayed as a time of both the rise (Second Republic), fall (Francoism) and resurrection (Democracy) of the Catalan nation. In the MHC, Spain is usually referred to as the ‘Spanish state’ (*estado español*) an impersonal expression that denotes the artificiality of such a construct according to Catalan nationalism: whereas in the museum Catalonia is charged with sentimental rhetoric, the ‘Spanish state’ is a mere bureaucratic entity and a repressive state superstructure.

Cartography features very prominently in the museum, particularly in mapping exchanges between Catalonia and other territories, or when reminding the visitor what the Catalan irredentist project calls ‘Catalan Countries’ (*Països Catalans*): the reunion of all territories in which varieties of Catalan are spoken, including the Valencian region and the Balearic Islands, but also Andorra, Roussillon and Cerdagne in Southern France, a strip of land in the East of Aragon, and the city of Alghero in Sardinia. Moreover, the museum makes good use of audiovisual devices, such as models, dioramas and reconstructions of historical settings (a medieval war tent, a Republican school class as opposed to a Francoist one, etc.). Particularly striking is the reproduction of the balcony from which Francesc Macià (1859–1933) proclaimed the Catalan Republic in 1931: the visitor enters the balcony to find the Catalan flag, a picture of the crowds in the foreground and a life-size mannequin of Macià, while a recording repeats his 1931 declaration. The re-enactment concludes with the roaring of the people and the playing of the Catalan national anthem.

When the museum was built, it covered the period until the first democratic elections held in Catalonia in 1981, which brought to power the conservative nationalist party, *Convergència i Unió*, the same one that promoted the museum in the 1990s. In recent years, a new section has been added. Entitled ‘Portrait of Contemporary Catalonia’ (*Retrat de la Catalunya contemporània: 1980–*

2007), this section highlights Catalonia's leading economic and cultural role in democratic Spain. Large pictures show the 'new Catalans', including members of minorities, such as a Roma (stereotypically characterised with a guitar) or an immigrant from Eastern Europe (with a scarf on her blonde hair). Catalan modernity is represented by several artists and professionals (a film director, a prestigious cook) or the picture of a gay couple: Catalonia was one of the first *comunidades autónomas* to grant civil partnership to homosexual couples in 1998, several years before the passing of the Spanish law on same-sex marriage in 2005 (Visited in November 2010).

The battle for historical memory: Museo del Ejército Español, Toledo

In contrast to the Catalan initiative just described, or the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin, Spain has not created a museum devoted to national history. This is not surprising given that one of the tacit agreements upon which democracy was constructed after 1975 was that the tragic memories of the Civil War and Francoism would not be invoked or used politically. During the 1980s and early 1990s debate on Spain's conflict-driven twentieth-century history was confined to university faculties. Although some official initiatives made an effort to recover the memory of the Second Republic or the worker and leftist movements, the discussion of more sensitive and potentially dividing issues was avoided (Aguilar 2002).

Nevertheless, since the mid-1990s, public debate on 'historical memory' (*memoria histórica*) has moved to the forefront. At the origins of this movement is a grass-roots initiative in different parts of the country to unearth the mass graves and give proper burials to the victims of Francoist repression. This has gained the support of large sectors of the Socialist Party, at first in opposition (1996–2004) and since 2004 in government. In 2007, three years after their electoral victory, the Parliament passed the Historical Memory Act (*Ley de Memoria Histórica*), which requires the removal of those symbols of the division of the country and supports initiatives to open historical records and the mass graves of the repression. Meanwhile, in the last years of John Paul II, the Vatican reactivated its policy (frozen for several decades) to beatify victims of anticlerical repression on the Republican side during the Civil War (Aguilar 2008; Boyd 2008).

This renewed interest in coming to terms with the recent past has motivated, among many other initiatives, the restoration and opening to the public of the Civil War trenches on the Aragon Front, and the creation of the *Refugio – Museo de la Guerra Civil* in Cartagena (Murcia). These initiatives, undertaken by regional governments or municipalities, have not yet received support from the state authorities in the form of a national museum of history. Nevertheless, a recent project to renovate an old national museum, the Museum of the Spanish Army (*Museo del Ejército Español*) has become entangled in the debate on the 'historical memory'.

Created in 1803 as the *Museo de Artillería*, this national museum was installed in 1841 in the surviving wing of the palace of *El Buen Retiro*, where the *Salón de Reinos* is situated. Renamed *Museo Histórico del Ejército* in 1932, the collections of other sections of the army were then incorporated into it. The trilogy of the Spanish national military museums is completed with the Museum of the Navy (*Museo de la Armada*; nowadays *Museo Naval*), opened in Madrid in 1843, and the Air Force Museum (*Museo del Aire*), projected in 1948 and inaugurated in 1981 in the outskirts of Madrid. In the original display of the *Museo del Ejército*, national history was explained as a sequence of great men and their deeds, commemorated through venerable relics such as the sword of El Cid or the flags taken from the enemy in various battles. One room was devoted to

the War of Independence, presented as the rise of the nation against the French invader, while others displayed thematic collections of artefacts in evocative settings, such as the Arabic Room. The *Salón de Reinos* constituted the core of the display: under the coats of arms of the kingdoms painted on the vaulted ceiling, the room was decorated with portraits of generals (the original seventeenth century paintings had been transferred to the Prado), flags, armours and panoplies of weapons and guns (Castillo 2006; Rubio & García de la Campa 2006).

After 1939, the museum was refurbished as part of the dictatorship's propaganda programme. Inaugurated by General Franco in 1941, it became another piece in a much larger set of resources deployed for the memorialisation of the Civil War; a large equestrian portrait of the dictator greeted the visitor from the top of the staircase, and blood-stained uniforms of those fallen for God and Spain (*caídos por Dios y por España*) bore witnesses to the epic victory of the *Nacional* (that is Francoist) side. After the democratic transition the museum was left untouched and no symbols were purged. Therefore, in the first years of the twenty-first century, the Museum of the Army was still a mix of the Romantic decoration laid out the nineteenth century and the ideological discourse given to it by the dictatorship.

In 2003, the Ministry of Culture announced the transfer of the Museum of the Army from Madrid to Toledo's Alcazar, and the transformation of the *Salón de Reinos* into a dependency of the Prado. The decision to relocate the museum outside the capital was received with surprise, because it had been taken by the same conservative cabinet that had based its electoral campaign on the defence of the unity of the Spanish nation and the opposition to Basque and Catalan nationalism. Nevertheless, the decision can be contextualised if we consider other aspects: firstly, that one of the main cultural strategies of Aznar's cabinet was precisely the renovation of the Prado; and secondly, that in 2003, his cabinet initiated the process of professionalising the army, which entailed the suppression of the drafting system. From that year on, the army had to attract young men and women to the recruitment offices. In this context, the dusty and old-fashioned Museum did not serve the purpose of promoting a modern and dynamic image of the Armed Forces.

However, the newly chosen venue, the Alcazar of Toledo was no less controversial, because it was in fact another memorial to the dictatorship. The history of the Alcazar (a word of Arabic origins meaning 'fortress') goes back several centuries in time: a landmark of the city of Toledo, it was given its current shape when the Emperor Charles V transformed the medieval castle of the kings of Castile into a Renaissance palace. In the mid-nineteenth century, it became the property of the Army and housed the Academy of Infantry. After the military uprising that started the Civil War (18 July 1936) Colonel José Moscardó (1878–1956) barricaded himself with his garrison in the Alcazar and fought against the Republican forces that controlled the city. The siege lasted for seventy days until the troops sent by General Franco entered Toledo. The liberation of the Alcazar enabled Franco to affirm his prestige and leadership within the 'National' side.

After the end of the war, the ruins of the fortress were turned into a propagandistic memorial to Franco's victory: *El Alcázar* was the name of one of the main newspapers of the dictatorship; images of its ruined walls were included in every school text book and was also in the background of some of Franco's official portraits. It was not until the 1950s that the Alcazar was restored to its former shape, which did not mean that it lost its symbolism (Basilio 2004; Sánchez-Biosca 2008). Colonel Moscardó's office was reconstructed as it had appeared during the

siege; ragged curtains and shattered walls helped the visitor experience the anguish of the besieged under the enemy's bombs. Even more so, a recording (in audio) reminded the visitor of the heroic gesture of the colonel when he received a telephone call from the Republican militiamen holding his son hostage in Toledo, and demanding surrender of the Alcazar in exchange for his life: Moscardó is reported to have asked to talk to his son, whom he ordered to die dutifully as a patriot. This narrative, that historians have proved to be fabricated by the Francoist propaganda machine and its cinematographic industry, was re-enacted as the visitor entered the room, when the spectral voice of Colonel Moscardó resounded in its vaulted ceiling.

As had happened to the Museum of the Army in Madrid, the Alcazar was left untouched after the arrival of democracy, as if they too were protected by the policy of amnesty upon which Spanish democracy was founded. For these reasons, the choice of Toledo's Alcazar was contested; but this decision proved less controversial than the selection of the contents and the museographic treatment in its rooms of the Civil War and Francoism. The process was fraught by lack of agreement between the Army, responsible for the collections, and the social-democrat cabinet that resulted from the 2004 elections. In accordance with the provisions of the 2007 Historical Memory Act, the Ministry of Culture exerted its influence on the configuration of the permanent display, and the lack of agreement on key issues delayed the opening of the museum, scheduled for 2008, for more than two years. Finally, on 19 July 2010 (one day after the anniversary of the start of the Civil War), Crown Prince Felipe and the Minister of Defence inaugurated its renovated rooms.

The new museum is structured into two main sections, thematic and historical. The thematic rooms are devoted to particular subjects, such as the evolution of the national flag, the history of Spanish decorations and honorary orders or collections of tin soldiers. The historical rooms furnish an overview of Spain's military history in the context of its political and cultural evolution. Every section is divided into several subsections: each of them start with a historical briefing, to move further into the history of warfare and finish with the scientific and cultural contributions of the army and its men to society. Contrary to the old gloomy Madrid museum, the Alcazar offers a renovated atmosphere fully in line with current trends in museum display: whitewashed walls, glass showcases and large font texts constitute the museum's new image, and the objects are presented as scientific sources of history. Moreover, the museum is endowed with teaching resources, such as audiovisual reconstructions of historical battles (Salafranca 2010). The relocation has also provided an opportunity to undertake the scientific study of its collections, which has revealed some surprises; for example, a sixteenth-century fabric tent traditionally considered to have belonged to Emperor Charles V has proved to have been made by an Indian workshop for a Portuguese governor.

As regards the history of the twentieth century, the museum's discourse has not completely severed its links to the interpretations of history as seen from the Francoist side. For instance, the Second Republic is characterised as a period of confrontation and disorder, implicitly justifying the 1936 military uprising. Franco's bust figures prominently in the room that introduces the twentieth century section and a bronze cast of his mortuary mask is displayed in a showcase. As for Moscardó's office, after the museum's inauguration in July 2010, it was decided to keep its door closed. Reopened following protests by several historians, it is today open to visitors. Nevertheless, the room is now empty; its furniture has been removed and only the old telephone

hanging from the wall recalls the Colonel's dramatic conversation with his son, which can no longer be heard (Visited in November 2010).

The museum's discourse seeks to emphasise the new democratic order inaugurated by Franco's death. Next to the dictator's mortuary mask, three items represent the *Transición democrática*: first, a copy of the 1978 Constitution, second the cadet uniform of Crown Prince Felipe and third an audiovisual reproduction of the television message that king Juan Carlos I addressed to the nation on the night of 23 February 1981. The king, clad in military uniform as head of the army, condemned the military *coup d'état* against the democratic institutions initiated that morning by a sector of the armed forces. His role in persuading the military to lay down their arms has cemented the prestige of the monarch, since the failure of the 23-F *coup* is considered to be the final step in the transition to democratic order. Whereas in the old Alcazar the re-enacted voice of Moscardó resounded in the vaulted ceilings as a token of dictatorial propaganda, today it is king Juan Carlos' voice that reminds the visitor of the founding myth of the current Spanish state: the much-praised, peaceful and successful transition to democracy.

Conclusion: kingdom of nations?

After the relocation of the *Museo del Ejército* to Toledo, the *Salón de Reinos* was earmarked for the Prado. Different options were considered for this space; it was first proposed to restore its original iconographical programme, reinstalling the paintings of battles and the portraits of Philip IV and his family (Álvarez Lopera 2005). However, some experts have argued against the idea of separating Velasquez's paintings (the *Surrender of Breda* and the royal portraits) from the rest of the works by the Spanish master preserved in the Prado's central rooms. Nevertheless, in March 2010 the director of the Prado, Miguel Zugaza, announced a new project: to display three masterpieces there: Velasquez's *The Surrender of Breda* (an episode in the military repression of the Dutch revolt), Goya's *The Third of May 1808* (the execution by firing squad of several Spanish rebels at the beginning of the French occupation) and Picasso's *Guernica* (the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by Franco's Nazi allies during the Civil War).

This idea recalls nineteenth-century initiatives to display masterpieces from different times together, such as the previously mentioned *Salón de la Reina Isabel*. However, the historical dimension of those paintings transcends even their artistic merit as outstanding examples of the Spanish school of painting. As Zugaza put it, the idea was to turn the *Salón* into a space for reflection on the universal concepts of war and peace. Moreover, these three paintings depict three crucial episodes in the narrative of Spanish history: the time of the Hispanic Empire, the rise of the 'nation' in the origin of modernity and the Civil War. Therefore, this initiative would have transformed this room into a sort of condensed museum of national history, a privileged venue for the reflection on the evolution of the country through its war conflicts and its art masterpieces, displayed in a historic space created in the seventeenth century by the monarchy to stress its role holding together the kingdoms of the composited Crown.

However, this plan implied an exchange between public museums and particularly, requesting from the Museo Reina Sofía the most valuable item of its collection. This is not the first time that the transfer of the *Guernica* had been proposed; in the 1990s the Basque autonomous government asked for the painting to be put on display in the new Guggenheim museum in Bilbao. As had happened then, the Reina Sofía Museum's trustees refused to loan *Guernica* for

Zugaza's projected *Salón de Reinos* in March 2010, arguing that the state of preservation of the painting advised against the transfer, but also that it remains central to the museographic programme of that museum. The project was subsequently shelved; almost like a metaphor for the whole country, the future of the *Salón de Reinos* is awaiting a decision.

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