
Photographic Archive Banco de España

From Albumen to Pixel



Exhibition Gallery
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to Pixel

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Introduction

Photographs, whether artifacts or digital files, make up the world's visual culture and historic heritage in a sort of infinite and measureless photo library of Babel. Their common denominator is the perpetuation of memory, and when we view them, we are submerged in their content and implicated in what they represent. The collections of photographs preserved at institutions are exceptional documentary corpora that form part of their cultural patrimony. Their recovery, analysis and diffusion has been and is possible thanks to archives, which take charge of their custody, conservation and dissemination with the object of reconstructing history through analysis and interpretation. Of all this, the Archive of Banco de España is a paradigm.

Beyond its original function, a photograph uses the detail (Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment) to offer universal meanings. As a witness of events, it is fundamental for historical study, with similar values to written texts, and its consideration as a complementary element has been overcome by conferring its own identity upon it. That is why it acquires special interest for scholars, who attribute or assign the archive the role of a safeguard of memory. Its use and application to research make it a reference document and therefore a nuclear source.

The Photographic Archive of Banco de España has existed since 2019. It arose as the result of important work carried out in the bank's Historic Archive, which ascribed value for the first time to a previously dispersed and little known set of documents. Its creation is the work of the Historic Archive of Banco de España and has been fostered, supported, encouraged and

assisted by the General Secretariat, the General Vice-Secretariat and the Division of Archives and Documentary Management, in which the Archive is integrated.

The Archive is a testimony to the graphic image of the bank throughout 150 years of photography at the institution. Its study draws us closer to details of our own internal history, allowing us to put a face on figures of the past, find out about ways of working that have disappeared, and identify numerous photographers who have brought time to a halt at Banco de España with their cameras. Its creation has evidently enhanced the value of the documentary heritage and has broadened our knowledge of the institution and those who have interacted with it.

Made up of more than 25,000 photographs accumulated over a century and a half, the collection has a documentary character. At the time, these photographs formed part of the reports generated by the administrative management of the institution (construction of buildings, search for locations, possible branch offices, streets, neighbourhoods and buildings under construction, identification of personnel, investitures, organisation of events, receptions and meetings) and were consequently scattered around several sections, series and files of the Archive. For reasons of conservation, they are now grouped into a collection, but they maintain their inseparable link to the documents among which they were born.

The photographs transferred to the bank's Archive had not received any treatment until the year 2013, when a project began that was prolonged until 2018. The work consisted mainly of locating the photographs, identifying and

describing them, and installing them in conditions suitable for conservation, all tasks which might seem simple but required large doses of effort, technique and methodological application, as well as intelligence and a passion for the documents. Finally, in 2020, they were digitised in accordance with international directives and standards that enable the long-term preservation of digital objects and interoperability with other systems. The result is the formation of a collection of 25,000 originals on various supports that are all fully identified, installed, digitised and available for diffusion and utilisation.

The exhibition's title reflects yesterday and today, symbolised by two terms that are fundamental to the history of photography: albumen and pixel. The first is linked to the democratisation of the image from its origin, and the second to the revolution of the end of the 20th century: that is, two ways of presenting the image in the past and in the present.¹

The exhibition comprises nearly three hundred pictures and follows a chronological sequence from the mid-19th century to the present day. Photographs summarising the life and development of the bank, and by extension of the country, are arranged in five sections: *Yellow time* (19th century), *The photograph as document* (1900-1925), *From the Silver Age to the transition* (1925-1975), *Spain is different* (1975-2023) and *Towards artificial intelligence* (21st century).

They present three clearly differentiated aspects in accordance with the photographic models

of each period: the portrait as an identifying element, the spaces of the institution, and its activity. All three permit social readings and re-readings on the basis of their contents, specifically urbanism, architecture, public works, people and customs.

The show is also another way of looking and seeing, going from the contemplation of the particular to the universal while also adding a historical survey of technique by showing originals obtained by different procedures and on different supports: positives and negatives on glass, paper and plastic, albumen prints, cyanotypes, gelatin prints, slides and digital files.

This exhibition arises out of Banco de España's commitment to society whereby it strives to share the rich historic heritage it guards and place it at the disposal of the public for the use and enjoyment of all. Moreover, with the diffusion of its photographic collection, the Archive of Banco de España is complying with several of the objectives established in the National Plan for the Conservation of the Photographic Heritage presented in 2015 by the Ministry of Culture, and fundamentally with two of them: the promotion of initiatives that will facilitate access to the photographic heritage and foster its use by researchers and private individuals, and the development and promotion of strategies of social sensitisation for the knowledge and appreciation of the photographic heritage and of photography as historical document and cultural asset.

1 Albumen is an emulsion formed of egg white mixed with potassium chloride and sodium iodide. When exposed to the light, it leaves an image of great transparency and detail. The process was invented in 1847-1848 by Abel Niépce de Saint-Victor for obtaining negatives, and was improved by Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard, who obtained positive contact prints on 27 May 1850. It was used until the end of the 19th century. The term pixel, derived from 'picture element', is defined as the minimum unit forming a digital image. It is visualised as a dot or a square, and constitutes a unit for measuring resolution. It is considered to have been invented by Russell Kirsch in 1957.



Room 1

Yellow time

“The fragment of reality represents the perpetuation of memory.”

Boris Kossoy

In *El rayo que no cesa* [The Unending Lightning], Miguel Hernández described 19th-century albumen prints as “yellow time”: “One day yellow time will lay itself upon my photograph.” The Historic Archive of Banco de España preserves a magnificent collection of albumen portraits and landscapes from which a selection of originals has been made for the exhibition: “Gallery of the representatives of the nation” (1869) by Leopoldo Rovira; views of the buildings used as the first branch offices (León, Málaga) or offered as territorial head offices but not accepted (Alicante, Barcelona, Linares); portraits of employees in their official uniforms in the gallery of Eusebio Juliá (1880); and the exceptional reportage on the inauguration of the Banco de España building (1891) from the studio of Juana Roig, the successor to Jean Laurent. These pictures were used by *La Ilustración Española y Americana* to illustrate its report on the event, and they confirm the documentary value of photography.

The section is completed by the article dedicated by the magazine *Blanco y Negro* to Banco de España’s banknote manufacturing workshop (1898), illustrated with five pictures by Christian Franzen, a pioneer of photojournalism, and including a reference to the institution’s photography and photogravure laboratory. In other twist, the stereoscopic cameras popularised in the last quarter of the century allowed the world to be

viewed in three dimensions. Some models are also preserved in the Archive, and positive prints are displayed here on glass and paper supports. This group closes with four monumental European bank buildings contemporary with the head office on Cibeles and located in Brussels, Amsterdam, Budapest and Milan.

Gallery of the representatives of the nation

Photography as political propaganda has its paradigm in the revolution of 1868, with the government presided over by General Francisco Serrano y Domínguez posing in front of Jean Laurent’s camera, an image of which thousands of copies were made to spread familiarity with the harbingers of the ‘Glorious Revolution’. From then on, gallerists formed iconographies of the members of parliament, one of the most widespread being the Constituent Assembly of 1869 photographed by Leopoldo Rovira, whose studio was at number 37, Rambla del Centro, Barcelona. He entitled it “Gallery of the representatives of the nation”, and it was made up of albumen portraits cut out into ovals and mounted on cards by the engraver Martín Pujadas (36 × 29 cm). The pictures were sold both loose and bound in albums. On each plate, over the portrait, a motif was included that represents the uprising of the Cádiz squadron on 29 September 1868, the start of the revolution, and the coat-of-arms of the city represented by the parliamentarian. Added at the foot were the name, profession, position, constituency and birthplace of the sitter, together with his original signature and flourish.



Portrait of Francisco Serrano Domínguez. 1869.
 Photograph: Leopoldo Rovira. Albumen paper.

All the portraits were framed inside the abbreviated coat-of-arms of Spain, formed by castles quartered with lions and flanked by the pillars of Hercules and the two hemispheres with the legend *Plus ultra*. Beneath are the collars of the Order of the Golden Fleece and of Charles III, hanging from which are the insignias of the four Spanish military orders: Calatrava and Alcántara on the outside edges (two crosses flory), and Santiago and Montesa (by the sides of Charles III). Leopoldo Rovira's initiative had precedents in similar models derived from the flourishing industry of portraits, though not only of politicians but of personalities related to culture in general, imitating the popular "Gallery of contemporaries" by Disdéri, the inventor of the *carte de visite*. Examples are the works of Alonso Martínez, Martínez de Hebert, Laurent and Juliá, who printed a specific text on the back of

his cards: "Publisher of the 'Gallery of celebrated Spaniards'". The Frenchman Charles Monney, a tireless traveller in Romantic Spain, made and sold a mosaic with 72 portraits of the deputies of the Constituent Assembly of 1869 in direct competition with Rovira's images.

The "Gallery of the representatives of the nation" found response and continuity in official experiments with similar formal characteristics but more ambitious pretensions. One example was the Committee for National Iconography, created by Royal Decree on 13 August 1876 to compile and inventory portraits of illustrious Spaniards. Its development was delayed until 15 March 1907, when regulations were approved for the gathering of iconography of Spaniards who had distinguished themselves in national affairs. Taking source material from the collections of the studios of the great portraitists, Franzen

and Kaulak among them, the book “Portraits of Spanish personalities” was published in 1914. After the dissolution of the committee, as stipulated in its statutes, the collections entered the National Library in 1970.

Leopoldo Rovira Deloupy was one of the most prestigious portraitists. Such fame is justified by his magnificent 19th-century gallery, of which 15 of the 108 originals preserved in the Historic Archive of Banco de España are on display here. Born in Montpellier, he settled in Barcelona in about 1863, and a year later appears registered in the city’s annual commercial directories with an offer of visiting cards printed on the reverse with his basic details: “L. Rovira. Photographer. Rambla del Centro, 37.” In 1868, he appears in the “Annual general directory of trade, industry and professions”. The researcher Jep Martí has also identified him as active in Lorca (1861-1864), Valencia, Madrid and Mataró. Intellectuals, politicians and artists posed in his studio, among them Antonio Gaudí, whom he portrayed in 1879. He advertised himself with a wealth of detail: “Photographic establishment mounted according to the most recent developments. All types of portrait are made, from microscopic to life-size, as well as all kinds of reproduction.” Rovira trained outstanding professionals in his studio, among them José Rodrigo Navarro-Casete (Lorca, 1837-1916). He died in 1895.

The portraits of Juliá

A group of Banco de España employees posed in the studio of Eusebio Juliá, one of the most prestigious portraitists of the second half of the 19th century. In a corner of the gallery at number 27, Calle del Príncipe, the photographer mounted the scenery to immortalise four pairs of officials: a clerk and a collector, two watchmen, two porters, and a messenger and a clerk. These eight figures stand in front of the camera lens, leaning on the papier mâché set (fireplace, column, chair and table) so as to endure the time of the exposure without moving. In the dressing room, they put on their uniforms, groomed themselves and adopted a bearing of responsible duty. The session was brief but intense. All except one look at the camera, dignified and attentive to the operator’s instructions.



Porters and warden and check of Banco de España in regulation uniform. c. 1874. Photograph: Eusebio Juliá. Cabinet cards. Albumen paper.

They wear a coat, a jacket, a white shirt with a bow tie and a cap with a metal badge. Some have the habitual moustache of the time and others a thick beard. The older of the porters vaunts his seniority by showing the chain of his pocket watch, and conceals his nerves by hiding his hand in his pocket and adopting a condescending air.

It seems unlikely that the pictures would have been taken to build up a identification register of the employees. The fact that only the professional statuses are given on the photographs, not the names of the sitters, and that one of them appears posing with his back turned suggest that they were used to document the clothing of the professional categories that were obliged by internal regulations to wear a uniform. The photographs, which were taken in Madrid between 1874 and 1884, were probably sent from there to the recently created branch offices as a visual indication of the uniforms worn by the lowest-ranking officials. Since 1874, the bank had begun to set up its network of branches with the opening of several territorial offices, and a communiqué of this type seems logical. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that these four photographs taken in Juliá's photographic studio in Madrid were found among the documentation in the Cádiz branch. Aside from the memory, the content and the artifact, these photographs on 'cabinet' cards (16 × 11 cm) refer us to the norms of the time, idiosyncrasy and culture in the broadest sense of the term. Before pasting the definitive albumen prints onto the cards, different tones were tested to adjust them to the preferences of the sitters. 'Cabinet' cards, also called 'album' and 'American' cards, were introduced to Spain from France in 1867 by Jean Laurent, as indicated in a note in *La Correspondencia de España* dated 29 June that year: "Latest photographic novelty: American cards. First copy 10 reales, the rest at 5 reales. The photography studio of J. Laurent, no. 39, Carrera de San Jerónimo, is the first in Spain to have introduced portraits of this new type, which have won such acclaim from the public that those on ordinary cards are now completely disregarded. The new American cards, which offer the singular advantage of providing both large and small portraits at the same time, are made at the aforementioned studio at the price paid until now for ordinary cards. Large discounts on ordinary

cards motivated by the introduction of the new American cards. First copy 10 reales, the rest at 5 reales. American cards: first copy in two positions, 24 reales; the rest of the cards at 4 reales".

On the back of the photographs, elaborately printed in violet or purple ink and with a profusion of medals alluding to awards won, it is stated that the photographer was a member of the jury at the Madrid Exhibition of 1973, and was the winner of a prize in Vienna that same year, so offering proof of his professionalism.

Eusebio Juliá (Madrid, 1830-1895) was the son of a musician in the corps of halberdiers. He studied music and painting in Paris, and in 1855 he opened his first photographic studio in Madrid (no. 1, Calle de la Visitación). He was an official portraitist of Queen Isabella II and a chronicler of the transition between the reigns of Amadeo I and Alfonso XII, monarchs who maintained his privileges in the Royal Household. His wife, Sebastiana Vaca, was also a photographer, and together they enlarged the business with two galleries, one at number 22, Calle del Príncipe, where they took portraits of intellectuals, artists and politicians, and the other in Paris (no. 50, Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis). In the mid-1860s, he announced on the back of his *cartes de visite* that he had published the "Gallery of celebrated Spaniards", comprising portraits of intellectuals, politicians and artists. He won a Gold Medal at the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris with a portrait of a child, and from that year on he published almanacs made up with portraits and texts of literati. In that of the year 1872, he included 33 personalities, including Ramón de Campoamor, Manuel Fernández y González, Eugenio Hartzenbusch and Mesonero Romanos. In 1873, he travelled to Venice to take pictures of the city, and at the end of the century he contributed to several periodicals, among them *La Ilustración Española y Americana* and the specialised bullfighting journal *Soly Sombra*.

We can gain some idea of his commercial and training activity from the advertisement inserted in the magazine *Caminos de Hierro* in 1872: "Special factory of photographic apparatuses and deposit of plates from the great factory of Saint Gobain et Ciry, constantly improved with all that is invented for photography in Europe [...]. It is the only one in Europe dedicated to portraits of children and instant productions [...]. It takes

charge of the construction and provision of galleries and offers lessons to amateurs. On sale are portraits of most of the political men of all parties, of the principal literati, and of a large number of dramatic artists and luminaries in all the branches of human knowledge. Profusion of stereoscopic views and others of great merit and size.”

He won prizes at several Universal Expositions and a distinction from the Madrid Economic Society. He received the Medal of a Knight of the Orders of Charles III and Isabella the Catholic, and was the representative in Spain of the London firm Ross (manufacturer of lenses), the Viennese firm V. Monckoven (inventor of an apparatus for enlargements), and other accredited factories in Berlin, Paris, Dresden and Munich. Shortly before his death in 1895, he transferred his gallery to the photographer Fernando Debas. Ramón Gómez de la Serna dedicated a moving text to him in *La sagrada cripta del Pombo* (The Sacred Crypt of El Pombo), where he recalls his almanacs: “Every year, Juliá produced some books [almanacs] with thirty direct photographs and a

great many poems and articles... These books are some of the most moving things one can find in second-hand bookshops. When I come across some new copy, I weep over it as over an album that has finally been rescued».

The reportage of Laurent

The Archive of Banco de España preserves an extraordinary set of photographs of the building on Plaza de Cibeles taken at the end of the 19th century by the Laurent firm. The oldest was taken in about 1886 and shows a steam crane in the foreground lifting materials during the building's construction. Five years later, on the occasion of the building's inauguration in 1891, a reportage was made consisting of nine images of the exterior and some parts of the interior, although the preserved positive prints were made by Juana Roig, Laurent's successor, between 1915 and 1921, the years when she took charge of the photographic studio.

Madrid. Banco de España. Main staircase. 1891. Photograph: Laurent y Cía. Later copy by Juana Roig. Gelatin silver.



Preserved at the Madrid Stock Exchange is an exterior shot of the building signed on 3 March 1891 by the governor, Cayetano Sánchez Bustillo, in memory of the inauguration. This provides fuel for the hypothesis that a set of albumen prints might have been made as gifts for cultural and political institutions and personalities. On the other hand, it confirms the commercial vision of Laurent and his successors, evident from the start with the paradigmatic series of *cartes de visite* that began with the group portrait of the revolutionary government of 1868 under the presidency of General Serrano, or with the mosaics of bullfighters, artists and politicians.

The aim of the reportage was to document the most significant aspects of the building (exterior, entrances, main staircase, trading floors and safe deposit boxes), and the photographs served as models for the engravings published in March and April 1891 in *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. They were recently found unexpectedly in the collection of the Archive of Banco de España, where they had remained hidden

from everyone and are therefore exceptionally well preserved. This is the most authentic and almost the only record of the building as it was originally imagined and built, as the plans of Eduardo Adaro, the main architect of the project, have not been preserved, and neither have most of the drawings of the numerous decorative details that adorn the building. Nine originals by the Laurent firm are displayed in the exhibition along with an albumen print by Joseph Lacoste, another of Laurent's successors.

THE GHOSTS OF LAURENT The introduction of the human figure was a habitual practice in 19th-century photography as it was a way of providing a spatial reference. Laurent and his successors deliberately incorporated such figures, turning many of them into ghosts, especially those who moved during the shot. On the albumen print at the Madrid Stock Exchange, mounted on card with the *ad hoc* printed text "Banco de España; J. Laurent y Cía. Fotog. Madrid", there are several people to be seen in the street next to

Madrid. Banco de España. Cash till court. 1891. Photograph: Laurent y Cía. Later copy by Juana Roig. Gelatin silver.



the mule-drawn trams, an image with a seductive content and exceptional documentary value owing to its representation of a *fin-de-siècle* Spain still oblivious to the coming misfortunes of 1898. It shows someone reading a newspaper, probably a redundant worker in search of a job, as well as the coachman settling his fee and the strollers criticising the politicians in the nearby parliament building. Figures also appear in the picture of the cash till court: these are guards and cleaners at a moment of their everyday work. This incorporation of people to the scene helps to transmit a striking sensation of a moment frozen in time.

Jean Laurent y Minier (Garchizy, 1816-Madrid, 1886) worked in Spain from 1843 onwards as a marbler, an activity for which he was awarded a Bronze and a Silver Medal at the Industrial Exhibitions of 1845 and 1850 respectively. In October 1856, he opened a photographic gallery on the fourth floor of number 39, Carrera de San Jerónimo, next to the Congress of Deputies, and after 1868, he set up two agencies, one in Barcelona and the other in Paris, which he moved successively from number 27 to number 90, Rue de Richelieu, and later, in 1881, to number 7, Rue Drouot. He had relations with the court and was appointed photographer to H.M. the Queen in 1860. He portrayed politicians, intellectuals and artists of his time, and travelled printing large-format negatives of monuments and works of art. Furthermore, he hired a team of professionals for whom he provided portable darkrooms, cameras and lenses. He created an archive for marketing copies, and from 1861 published general and thematic catalogues. In 1862, several publications, including *Clamor Público* and *La Iberia*, considered him one of the most influential tradesmen in the capital. By then he had produced the album "The Royal Museum of Madrid. Volume One. Spanish School", with albumen prints of paintings. He associated with José Martínez Sánchez, and the two of them patented leptographic paper (1866), which allowed positive prints of greater quality to be obtained. In 1872, his catalogue listed more than 3,000 negatives on a variety of themes: architecture, public works, painting, sculpture, monuments and popular subjects.

In 1874, he enlarged the firm and associated with his stepdaughter, Catalina Melina Dosch, and the bookseller Manuel Sánchez Rubio to

form J. Laurent y Cía. Rubio left the business three years later. In 1879, Laurent published the catalogue *Nouveau guide du touriste en Espagne et Portugal. Itinéraire artistique*, with an introduction by his son-in-law Alfonso Roswag. In 1881, he transferred his part of the business to Catalina Melina, and he then devoted himself until his death to enlarging the archive with new pictures (railways, bullfighting, architecture, etc.). In 1884, he, his daughter and his son-in-law commissioned the architect Ricard Velázquez Bosco to build a mansion at number 16, Calle de Granada, which became his dwelling, studio and workshop, and where he died in 1886.

After his death, the firm appeared successively as Sucesores de J. Laurent, L'ancienne Maison Laurent, C.^a M.^a Dosch Succr. and J. Laurent y Cie. Photographes éditeurs. Between 1893 and 1900, Roswag ceded the business to Juan María Gamoneda García del Valle, although it was managed by his brother Eudoro Gamoneda. Afterwards, it had several proprietors: Joseph Lacoste, Juana Roig, N. Portugal and Joaquín Ruiz Vernacci. All of them enlarged the collection, which was acquired in 1975 by the Ministry of Culture (40,000 negatives, of which approximately 12,000 are attributed to Laurent). Ana Gutiérrez located his tomb in the cemetery of La Almudena in Madrid.

From 1900, Joseph Lacoste y Borde (Tour-nous-Devant, France, 1872-?) took over the studio of Laurent's heirs at number 7, Calle del Pacífico, transferring it in 1901 to number 2, Plaza de las Cortes, entered by number 18, Calle del Turco. During this first period, he signed photographs as "Antigua Casa Laurent. J. Lacoste Sucesor". He was a member of the Royal Photographic Society, and the Count of Romanones appointed him as official photographer to the Museo del Prado. In July 1902, he associated with the photographer Ángel Redondo de Zúñiga, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *La Fotografía* and general secretary of the Royal Photographic Society of Madrid, with whom he formed the company Laurent. J. Lacoste y Compañía, transferring the business to number 53, Carrera de San Jerónimo, and the collotype and printing workshop to number 28, Calle de Cervantes. They broke up their association in 1904 and Lacoste continued with the firm. He contributed

to numerous periodicals and documented the principal events in the capital, including the parade for the wedding of Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenia of Battenberg in 1906. His name and the reference Laurent y Lacoste appeared indistinctly at the foot of the photographs, indicating that he respected the work of his predecessor. In 1912, he published a new edition of the *Catalogue de la Collection photographie Laurent* with pieces from the Museo del Prado, and in 1913 he inaugurated the Salón Lacoste for painting exhibitions. After 1914, he was succeeded in the business by the aforementioned Juana Roig, N. Portugal and Joaquín Ruiz Vernacci.

The first branch offices of Banco de España

The oldest photographs preserved in the Archive of the branch offices of Banco de España date from 1880. The first territorial headquarters were opened in Valencia and Alicante in 1858 under the law of 28 January 1856, which permitted the creation of issuing and discounting banks in cities where there had not previously been a branch of Banco de San Fernando (1829-1856). This law also granted the institution its definitive name of Banco de España. The other branches, up to a total of 70, were established on the basis of the Decree of 19 March 1874, signed by the finance minister José Echegaray y Eizaguirre, which granted Banco de España the monopoly on issuing banknotes, after which there was an intensive search all over Spain for premises that could be used as the essential headquarters for the distribution of notes.

In 1874, branch offices were opened in Barcelona, Bilbao, Cádiz, La Coruña, Málaga, Oviedo, Palma, Pamplona, San Sebastián, Valladolid, Victoria and Zaragoza. Together with those of Valencia and Alicante, this brought the number up to fourteen. New openings followed in the succeeding years, especially between 1884 and 1887, with the result that by the end of the century there were 58 open branches, in 1932 there were 68, and the last two – Ferrol and Ceuta – opened in 1945 and 1957 respectively. In the meantime, the bank's representations outside Spain began in 1902 with the opening of agencies in London and Paris, followed by Berlin in 1903. Tangier

opened in 1909, and Larache and Tetouan in 1920. After the Decree of 1874, several of the old issuing banks merged with Banco de España, bringing the buildings they owned with them in the operation. This is the case, among others, of Banco de San Sebastián, Banco de Sevilla, Banco Balear and Banco de Málaga, whose real estate was reused by Banco de España to instal its first offices. For example, the Banco de Málaga building on Alameda Hermosa, of which an albumen print of 1896 is shown, was Banco de España's office in the city for over sixty years, until it was moved in 1936 to another building in Avenida de Cervantes designed by the architect José Yáñez Larrosa in 1933. Regretfully, in February 1937, shortly after the move and at the height of the Civil War, the old building was bombed and left in a state of such ruin that it had to be demolished.

In the first few years, the premises were rented in most cases until new purpose-built banks started to be constructed. This was the case of León, where the bank rented the Conde Luna Palace in Plazuela del Conde, in the political centre of the mediaeval city. On display is a photograph of it dating from the end of the 19th century, where a villagers' market is seen in front of it. The building, constructed in the 14th century by order of Pedro Suárez de Quiñones, was the property of María Álvarez Carballo y Bueno, who rented it to Banco de España from 1890 to 1903.

During the work of buying or renting buildings to house the branch offices, images were compiled that are of great interest owing to both their content and their authorship, as they offer us unique testimonies to the cities of the time and their architecture. In this way, one photograph that has come down to us shows Plaza del Duque de Medinaceli in Barcelona. It was taken by Laurent in about 1880 and sent to the vice-governor of Banco de España by the manager of the Barcelona branch with a proposal to move the office to one of the buildings in the plaza. Another picture shows a building in Linares, in Calle de la Virgen del Linarejo, which was offered for rent in 1895, and an albumen print of 1880 shows the house of the Marquis of Escalambre on the Esplanade in Alicante.

The construction of new buildings began very soon, especially in towns where there were



Above: Barcelona. Plaza del Duque de Medinaceli. Building offered for branch office. c. 1880. Albumen paper. Below: León. Banco de España. Plaza del Conde de Luna. c. 1890. Later copy.

no constructions suitable for the bank's needs. This was the case of Valladolid (1877), San Sebastián (1883) and Segovia (1893), all lost examples of that early phase of Banco de España's architecture, as many of these buildings were demolished in the 20th century to construct others on the same sites which would be more modern and adequate for the new necessities that had arisen with time. Among them, special mention should go to the building in Valladolid, commissioned from the architect Pedro Martínez

Sangrós in 1877 and built at number 28, Calle Duque de la Victoria. This building has the honour of being the first to have been constructed in the history of Banco de España on commission from the institution, even before the headquarters in Madrid. Of this building, demolished in 1954 to make way for the construction of a new edifice on the same site designed by the architect Romualdo de Madariaga, some magnificent photographs are preserved, taken by Enrique Gilardi Silva in 1929.



Banco de España. Stereoscopic positive prints on paper and glass. c. 1900. Albumen paper and gelatin silver (glass).

Stereoscopic cards

Spanish and foreign photographers and publishers printed and distributed stereoscopic cards with the image of Banco de España as part of their offer for collectors, teachers and enthusiasts. Because of its architecture and its privileged location on Plaza de Cibeles, it was one of the buildings most frequently photographed by both professionals and amateurs after its inauguration in 1891. Shown in the exhibition are five original stereographs, three cards and two positives on a glass support, and a detail from a positive albumen print on paper, all with images of the exterior. La Casa Editorial Alberto Martín, a publishing house in Barcelona characterised by its

large production and the high quality of its work, published a *Geographical atlas of Spain and Portugal* with a set of stereoscopic cards that included an external view of the building with an explanatory text on the back: “This palace was inaugurated on 3 March 1891. The first stone had been laid by H.M. King Alfonso XII in 1884. It occupies the corner of Calle de Alcalá and Paseo del Prado. It cost fifteen million pesetas. It is entirely of dressed stone, iron and glass. The main staircase, with marbles, artistic stained glass windows and rich paintings, is grandiose and noteworthy, and so too are the others in the building”.

From the mid-19th century, stereoscopic cards were a source of entertainment and a collector’s item. The extraordinary invention allowed a three-

dimensional view of images obtained by a special camera with two lenses separated by a distance similar to that between the eyes, about 65 mm. When the resulting images were viewed with a special apparatus, they produced an illusion of a three-dimensional effect.

Three of the large American firms dedicated to the production of stereoscopic cards included views of Banco de España in their collection: Underwood and Underwood, American Stereoscopic Company and Keystone View Company. Originals of all of them, dated between 1902 and 1908, are preserved in the Library of Congress in Washington.

The history of photographic stereoscopy goes back to 1849, when David Brewster obtained several views with a binocular camera. In 1851, some daguerreotypes taken with stereoscopic cameras by Jules Duboscq were shown at the Great Exhibition in London, and J.B. Dancer perfected the method in 1856 to achieve pictures of better quality. The positive prints on paper obtained from the glass negatives were mounted on cards and commercialised at economical prices, so encouraging collecting. In 1859, Charles Leander Weed distributed the first views of San Francisco, Sacramento and Yosemite in the United States, and in 1864, Jules Michaud published series of Mexican landscapes and monuments. Millions of copies were sold in England in 1858, and production was continued at the same level until well into the 20th century by firms like London Stereoscopic Company (Great Britain), Richard Frères, Ferrier, Levy o Braun (France), and George Washington Wilson, American Stereoscopic Company, Lawrence & Houseworth or Houseworth & Company, Underwood and Underwood, Keystone, Kilburn Brothers and Continental Stereoscopic Company (United States).

After an experimental period, stereoscopy went through a long period of splendour that culminated at the turn of the century with the publication of boxed sets, with curved models to enhance vision in relief. The viewers, called stereoscopes like the cameras, had been designed by F.A. Elliott in 1837 and were perfected by Charles Wheatstone, who patented them in 1838 for application to drawings. In photography, those used were the models of David

Brewster (1844) and Holmes (1850). Antonio Rave presented the apparatus in 1862 in the illustrated scientific and literary magazine *La Abeja*: “Etymologically defined, according to a name derived from Greek, as an instrument that shows all objects in relief. The first part of the word means solid body, salient body or real object; the second part means ‘vision’. The name of stereoscope thus means ‘vision in relief’”.

One of the most curiously shaped viewers was Jules Richard’s Taxiphote, manufactured from 1891 onwards, which automatically passed up to 25 glass plates for successive viewing. Afterwards, the Cazes model (1895) and the Verascope Richard (1913) were patented for the use of professionals and travellers.

In Spain, there was an interest in the stereoscopic photograph from the start, and it grew in the mid-19th century, when it was advertised in the press as an almost magical contraption. *Diario Oficial de Avisos, El Isleño* and *El Mallorquín* (the last two from Palma) inserted notes in 1859: “Stereoscopes and views of the principal cities and monuments of France, Italy, Switzerland, the Holy Land, Spain and these Balearic Islands, from the incredibly low price of 12 *cuartos* at 4 pesetas each.” Alcalá Galiano, in an article entitled “Varieties. Light and Photography” that was published in *La Época* on 21 December 1860, wrote: “With a stereoscope, one travels without moving from one’s chair. From Peking, one jumps to Washington without feeling it; from the Nile one passes to Nigeria without tiring from such a long journey. And this miracle is performed with two pieces of glass and photography. Our head is also a stereoscope full of fantastic visions that delight us, but take away a glass, and farewell to an illusion; another appears, it flees at once, and a hope opens... A stereoscope is imagination materialised and memory made flesh and blood”.

Practically all the researchers and intellectuals of the first third of the 20th century used cameras of this type to obtain positive prints with which to document their work. In cultural gatherings and photographic societies, soirées were organised with projections and specific competitions. They ceased to be used after the Second World War, and were retrieved in the 1980s with models like the Nimslo, with four lenses for three-dimensional images.



Room 2

The photograph as document

“While the photograph exists,
they will live on.”

Julio Llamazares

In the first third of the 20th century, Banco de España became an emblem for recovery after the disaster of 1898. The buildings offered for its branch offices were photographed (Granada, Cartagena, Tortosa and Alcoy, among others), and the location and architecture of the new buildings became mirrors of their cities, as in Oviedo, Valencia, Badajoz, Bilbao and Vitoria. The emblem was the head office on Paseo del Prado in Madrid, opposite the Linares and Buenavista Palaces, with views towards Atocha, Retiro Park and the Gate of Alcalá, and with the Cibeles Fountain as the witness of its birth. The chamfered corner looking northwards was designed like the prow of a ship, a spearhead in the new aesthetic of the city, and was reproduced in millions of collotypes and printed postcards, of which a significant sample is shown here.

The set of portraits on display features employees of the bank and comprises two groups with the function of identifying the individuals concerned as part of their personal files. The first were taken by the official photographer José Irigoyen in about 1906, and the second are studio shots by different photographers. All converge on a common denominator: the dignification of the sitter. In the case of Irigoyen, the technique is the same for all the portraits, while in the second group, owing to their diverse authorship, we find flat or diffuse backgrounds, gloss or satin

finishes, carbon emulsions and other details appreciable on the secondary supports. Especially interesting are the Bertillon style portraits (full face and profile) from the Paris branch, inspired by the identification photographs used by the French police and penitentiaries. Finally, the bank's institutional activity is represented by the group portrait of the 1911 Board of Governors, taken by Alonso.

José Irigoyen: portraits and electrotypes

Banco de España's first staff photographer was José Irigoyen Zabaleta (Hernani, 1865-Madrid, 1911), linked to the institution from 12 December 1903 to 16 July 1907. During that period, he took charge of the reproduction of negatives and electrotypes in the Banknote Manufacturing section, where he produced an interesting corpus of portraits of employees. A significant selection of these is shown here.

Irigoyen had previously worked as a photojournalist for the magazine *Blanco y Negro* and in *ABC* since its foundation in 1903. A specialist in bullfighting photography, he regularly attended the gatherings at the Gran Café de Madrid and was the co-founder of the weekly magazine *Pan y Toros* (1896), in which he was responsible for the graphic information. He also contributed to *Nuevo Mundo* (1895), *Sol y Sombra* (1896), *La Fiesta Nacional* (1908), *Respetable Público* (1908-1910) and *El Torero* (1911). On 5 April 1911, the first issue appeared of *Arte Taurino*, a publication for which he took his last photographs in the bullring of Madrid. One of them, a picture of



Employees of Banco de España in Madrid. Carmen Esteban Santa María, toilet cleaner, and Bartolomé Maura Montaner, engraver of the Banknote Manufacturing Department. 1905-1907. Photographs: José Irigoyen Zabaleta. Gelatin silver.

Employees of Banco de España in Madrid. Juan Sotillo de la Fuente, night watchman, and Engracia Herranz Esteban, toilet cleaner. 1905-1907. Photographs: José Irigoyen Zabaleta. Gelatin silver.

Vicente Pastor at the Press Association bullfight, appeared on the cover of the magazine.

Recognised by his contemporaries as a pioneer of graphic reporting, he died suddenly on 3 April 1911 and was buried at the cemetery of La Almudena. *ABC*, *Blanco y Negro*, *El Imparcial*, *El Liberal* and all the bullfighting journals published his obituary. Don Pío, the critic of *Arte Taurino*, wrote: “During the night he was developing his plates and making trial prints of his last works until his strength failed him.”

In consonance with the technical advances and tendencies in the field of personal identification that had been produced in other institutions since the end of the 19th century, Banco de España agreed in November 1905 to introduce photographs of its employees to their personal files, accompanied by their manuscript signatures. According to research in the Archive, Irigoyen, the staff photographer, must have taken more than three hundred portraits of employees to fulfil this objective. Identical in presentation (semi-profile medium shots in imperfect ovals on 13 × 18 cm sepia-toned paper) and bereft of any artifice, these images, given their aesthetic characteristics and bureaucratic function, can be considered worthy predecessors of the modern passport photograph. Today, now that they are freed from their original function of identity surveillance, we see them as beautiful socio-cultural documents. They immortalise professions that have now disappeared from the institution and society as a whole, such as night watchmen, wardens, banknote engravers and lift operators, and they show us living faces with a striking sensation of material presence. The secret is in the gaze, the shining and alert eyes, like those of the engraver Bartolomé Maura. Some of them had notable personal histories, like Juan Sotillo de la Fuente, whose thick beard and checked kerchief symbolise the popular character type in Alfonsine Spain, and whose photo caption states that he is unable to sign because he is one-armed. Juan Sotillo worked as a labourer on the construction of the Cibeles building, where he lost his left arm in an unfortunate accident in 1889. Because of this, the institution took him on as a night watchman when the works were completed. In the meantime, Carmen Esteban, who looks like so many women of the popular classes of bygone days,

with signs of fatigue and premature aging on her face, greying hair gathered in a bun and a knitted shawl on her shoulders, represents a milestone in the history of the bank's staff, for she was one of the first two women to be employed by Banco de España in 1901. She was to work as a cleaner.

As for electrotype, also called galvanoplasty, it was a technique for the production of printing plates by electro-chemical means. It was characterised by fine detail. At the start of the century, large firms had electrotype departments (like Irigoyen at Banco de España) or sub-contracted the work to studios. Specifically, it was a “chemical engraving procedure for obtaining typographic and chalcographic moulds, pressing the photographic image onto the metal plate prepared with a potassium dichromate or some other analogous substance, and then etching it by means of a galvanic bath or electrical current.”² Although it took its name from the scientist Luigi Galvani, its creation is attributed to Moritz Hermann Jacobi in 1838. Walter George McMillan defined the electrotype as: “An exact facsimile of any object that has an irregular surface, since it is an etching on a steel or copper plate, or a piece of wood, that is subsequently used for the impression, or a medal, medallion, statue, bust, even a natural object, for artistic purposes.”

Portraits as sonnets

“If the sonnet is the most supreme and arduous thing in poetry, it might be said that the sonnet of photography is the portrait.”

Cánovas (Kaulak)³

The studio portrait, together with photojournalism, is the paradigm of photography. According to Kaulak (Antonio Cánovas del Castillo Vallejo), the art of the portrait needed “preparation,

2 Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada (1924). “Fotogalvanoplastia”. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1924, vol. 24, p. 669.

3 Antonio Cánovas (Kaulak) (1912). *La fotografía moderna. Manual compendiado de los conocimientos indispensables al fotógrafo*. Madrid: Imprenta de J. Fernández Arias, p. 163.

culture and prolonged practice.” Photography studios had a special magic. Impregnated with the gestures and gazes of the models, they were transformed into special places where some of the best moments in life emerged, using a simple rectangle to concentrate the details of the destiny that Gómez de la Serna (1948) described as “new hopes of immortal optimism.”

The portraits of the employees of Banco de España respond to the stereotype of the time. Their documentary function as part of administrative files does not stand on its own but permits various other readings ranging from their authorship to the contents of the image. They were generated in a space specially created for the purpose, captured at an instant of the person's life, interpreted by the photographer, and quite apart from all these questions, they were chosen and accepted by the models themselves. Taken together, they represented the society and by extension the culture of an epoch, while at the same time they manifest the psychology of each sitter. Dresses, suits, hats, hairstyles and accessories form a specific aesthetic embedded in time and so susceptible to study from the point of view of design, sociology, communication or even politics.

The profession of the portraitist evolved towards the mass production of the 1930s as a result of technological progress. Specialisation moved into the background owing to the proliferation of hand-held cameras, which meant immediate access to easily manipulated tools for the use of which no previous knowledge was necessary. This is why studio portraits signed by prestigious professionals make the archives into safeguards of memory and photographic art, and their content validates the transversality of photography.

The stamps and logos on the portraits preserved at Banco de España present us with the best-known artists of their time, now regarded as classics: Photo Art (Alicante), Sociedad Artístico Fotográfica (Cáceres), Cepillo (Cádiz), Tutor (Calahorra), Muro (Logroño), Calvet, Hauser y Menet, Roca, Yo, Yruela (Madrid), Ortega (Murcia), Gombau (Salamanca), Luis Sánchez (Valencia), Mena (Zamora) and Gutiérrez (Tenerife).

The act of having oneself portrayed in a gallery generally responded – and responds – to either the commemoration of an event or the desire to leave a record of one's existence. In either case, it is always a question of the construction of memory, a transcendent moment in life. The portraitist analysed the model's behaviour and physiognomy in order to obtain the best image, which did not always match the one people had of themselves. Kaulak established three criteria for making a portrait: positioning, lighting and expression. Positioning was the combination of the posture (frontal or profile) and the physiognomy. Lighting was used to achieve effects (relief, depth, shadow), and expression included the gesture, the gaze and the smile, which was not always necessary: “But not everybody ought to smile. With people of a certain character, smiling kills them off. Just imagine a cardinal smiling... But there are many people who should not be begged to smile, either because they are better off serious, or because they will laugh too much... Children, in general, should be encouraged. Youth is barely conceivable without the accompaniment of joy. I generally advise young girls to think of him... and they go dreamy and poetic. To boys of 20 to 25, I talk of them (in the feminine and, better, in the plural), and their eyes light up and they grow very animated...”⁴

As for the tools for achieving this, he pointed out the basic ones: a good quality lens, properly sensitised plates, the correct exposure time, and soft and transparent negatives. Other aspects that Kaulak devoted attention to were the sudden and the photogenic. The first referred to the photographer's capacity of reaction (improvisation) to the model's behaviour with the goal of obtaining or capturing the best image of that person, while on the photogenic, he wrote the following: “Not all people lend themselves in the same way to photographic reproduction... There is also, without hardly anyone noticing it, a special gift for having oneself portrayed that the layman feels, recognises and expresses when he says: *so-and-so* always comes out *well*... A multitude of complex circumstances determine this inequality in the *aptitude for being portrayed*, which does not depend, as some might think, on any plastic quality, on the external appearance, and far less on a fine presence or beauty. We thus see men and women

4 *Ibid.*



Employees of Banco de España. Cecilio Alcaraz Muñoz, messenger at the Valencia branch, c. 1906; and Eleuterio Torrejón Rodríguez, messenger at the Murcia branch. c. 1926. Photograph: Carlos Ortega. Gelatin silver.

Employees of Banco de España. Cirilo Ruiz Panadero, messenger at the Tarragona branch, c. 1920; and Eduardo Joaquín Álvarez Fernández, temporary auxiliary worker in Madrid, c. 1928. Gelatin silver.

who are physically worthless but come out improved and favoured by photography, while genuine types of arrogant beauty lose attractiveness when they are photographed”.

One who made a philosophy of this subject was the academic Alberto Schommer, a psychologist before becoming a preacher in the art of Daguerre: “A portrait is a compulsion of forces, of tensions constructed over a long period of knowledge, dialogue and acceptance.”⁵

Geographies of Banco de España

The academic and art historian Pedro Navascués confessed the attraction he felt for the preserved or photographed sites and buildings of the former branch offices of Banco de España owing to their ability to transmit what we were and what we made with effort and tenacity. From that admiration arose the urge to go on a tour of the geographies of the bank and its history: “They attract me personally. That is why I look with veneration at the Palma branch, which since 1874 has occupied the very same spot where the bank planted itself. I enjoy recovering the lost memory of certain branches, like the first one that Játiva had, located in the Municipal Schools building... Very important for me are the branches in Barcelona, Seville and Zaragoza, with sturdy 20th-century buildings. I amuse myself with the branches in smaller towns, like Logroño or its competitor in Haro. I peep into the history of the branch of Bilbao, in Calle del Banco de España, and its duel with Banco de Bilbao. Finally, I am very specially attracted by those which, as a precedent to the current work, were compiled over the last century in handsome publications on the history of Banco de España: the one which appeared in 1924 or that of 1926, which also reproduces the agencies in Paris, London,

Larache and Tetouan, as well as the delegation in Tangier. A valuable urban, architectural and documentary legacy...”⁶

The life and transformations of the territorial branches are reflected in Banco de España’s collection of photographs, allowing us to discover countless details of the buildings and their evolution over time. As a graphic document, regarded as such since the formation of the Archive, the photograph has persisted in time.

At the start of the 20th century, Banco de España had reached a figure of nearly sixty branches that had mostly been set up in rented or acquired buildings built for other purposes and reused after adaptation by the bank’s architects, mainly Eduardo Adaro and José María Aguilar. Many of these premises turned out to be in poor condition, with insufficient space, light and comfort, and the bank intensified its policy of constructing buildings designed purposely for better internal organisation and customer attention. Little by little, the number of new constructions increased and that of the reused buildings diminished.

The Valencia branch in Calle Barcas, by the architect José de Astiz, was photographed by the Valencian José Grollo in 1918, the year of its inauguration. The reportage includes unique photographs of both the exterior and the interior which show us the building with its original appearance, since it was heavily transformed in a major refurbishment carried out in 1963 by Juan de Zavala, who added a storey and correspondingly raised the tower at the corner of the two façades. Together with Benito González del Valle, José de Astiz had joined Banco de España in 1898 as reinforcement for the bank’s team of architects at a time of considerable building activity, since the only house architect at that point was Eduardo Adaro, who had consolidated his reputation with the construction of the Madrid building (1891) and was also the creator of the branches in Burgos (1898), Pontevedra (1900), Huesca (1902) and Logroño (1905). De Astiz remained at the bank until 1924 and designed a large number of branches, like those of La Coruña, Badajoz, Lugo, Jerez de la Frontera, Pamplona, Santander and Oviedo. A picture of the last of these, behind the Provincial Council building, can also be seen in the exhibition.

5 Alberto Schommer (1998). *Elogio a la fotografía*. Speech on induction to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. Madrid: RAE, p. 12.

6 Pedro Navascués Palacio (2023). “El Banco de España y la ciudad”, in *Archivo Fotográfico Banco de España, 1874-2023*. Madrid: Banco de España, p. 39.



Above: Bilbao. Banco de España. Gran Vía de D. Diego López de Haro. 1923. Gelatin silver. Below: Valencia. Banco de España. Calle Barcas. 1918. Photograph: J. Grollo. Gelatin silver.

Another magnificent example is the Bilbao branch in Gran Vía de don Diego López de Haro, photographed in 1923, the year of its inauguration, in an extensive and impressive reportage by an unknown photographer. It was a gift of the building's architect, Julián Apraiz, to the Board of Governors. The set offers a complete panorama of the building with its original appearance, including the exterior, the trading floor, the tills, the lift, the protective frame of the stained glass window, the safe and the Archive. Julián Apraiz, the co-designer of the new cathedral of Vitoria, his home town, received the commission to construct a new building for Bilbao in 1917 after winning a competition convened by the bank.

The three-storey building, on one of the blocks of the Ensanche, with its main entrance on Gran Vía, has a model distribution in its interior. Around the obligatory centrally lit trading floor are the cashiers' and auditors' offices, the safe deposit boxes, the telephone and telegraph office, offices for the agents and collectors, and the office of the branch manager and his secretariat, all on the ground floor. On the upper floor was the manager's living quarters, whose main hall was lit through the gaps between the caryatids on the façade, a gesture of complicity with those in Madrid. Having the manager's living quarters in the branch itself formed part of the basic programme of these branch offices which, like railway stations, post offices and telephone exchanges, required the continuous presence of the director in the building itself.⁷

Also on view in the exhibition are some of the bank's other branch offices in Cartagena (Calle Puertas de Murcia), Alcoy (Calle Santa Elena) and Badajoz (Plaza de la Soledad), all of which

reused previously constructed buildings that were shortly afterwards discarded in favour of others built by the bank's architects.

Banco de España in the press and in books. Photogravures and collotypes

The precedents of photogravure lie in the research carried out by Alphonse Louis Poitevin in 1862. The first direct photograph with semitones (direct photogravure) was published in the *New York Daily Graphic* on 4 March 1880, although it was Georg Meisenbach who patented a new procedure on 9 May 1882 that he called autotype, which left a perfect joint impression of text and image. *La Ilustración* of Barcelona was the first Spanish newspaper to reproduce photogravures on 4 December 1881, and *La Ilustración Española y Americana* applied them for the first time on 2 September 1883. Collotype consisted of making a plate from a negative with which proofs of high precision and fidelity were achieved.

Banco de España was a key referent for the press and books published at the turn of the century. Illustrated magazines, encyclopaedias and monographs reserved space for one of the country's great institutions, showing its splendour in their images. In the last decade of the 19th century, the most reputed weekly publications (*La Ilustración Española y Americana*, *Blanco y Negro* and *Nuevo Mundo*) reported on different aspects of the bank with a profusion of illustrations, and in the first decade of the 20th century, the *Enciclopedia Universal Espasa* brought out an extensive illustrated article with photographs of several European banks and the new head offices in Madrid. The palatial building on Plaza de Cibeles also started to become a symbol of the capital thanks to photogravures and collotypes.

LA ILUSTRACIÓN ESPAÑOLA Y AMERICANA On 4 July 1884, the draughtsman and photographer Juan Comba attended the laying of the first stone by King Alfonso XIII of the new Banco de España building in Madrid. The illustrator recreated the scene in full detail, showing the authorities, the clergy and the public on seating set up for the occasion. Eleven days later,

⁷ Pedro Navascués Palacio (2015). "La arquitectura del Banco de España", in Serrano García, E. (ed.), *Planos históricos de los edificios del Banco de España. Madrid y sucursales*. Madrid: Banco de España, p. 34.



"How banknotes are made". *Blanco y Negro*. 20 August 1898. Photographs: Christian Franzen.

on 15 July, the magazine set aside half a page for the drawing and information on the ceremony. Seven years afterwards, on the occasion of the inauguration of the building located opposite the Buenavista Palace and on the way to the Gate of Alcalá in the west and the Museo del Prado to the south, three series of photographs were published that had been taken directly from photographs by Laurent's famous studio. The first was a double-page spread with a full view of the exterior (8 March 1891), the second featured three spectacular images of the main staircase (double page), the treasury court and the general assembly hall, both forming one page (8 April 1891), and the third consisted of a view of the magnificent cash till court and a curious composition made up of various details of the building (30 April 1891).

The third interesting reportage appeared on 22 November 1896 with a mosaic of six line engravings by the aforementioned Juan Comba under the generic title: "Madrid. The national

subscription at Banco de España". The vignettes bore the captions: 'One of the doors of the Bank at nine in the morning on the 16th', 'Registration desk', 'Window for agents', 'Public subscription', 'For millions and for a single bond', and 'The last poster'. The legend of the latter read: "Sale of treasury bonds on customs revenue. Subscribed until 10 o'clock. In Madrid: 291,561,500 pesetas. In the provinces: 216,802,500. Total: 508,364,000." In the next issue (30 November 1896), the magazine published full-page reproductions of portraits of the bank's senior management: José García Barzanallana (governor), after a photograph from the Artistic Photography Society; Manuel Ciudad (first vice-governor); Benito Fariña (second vice-governor); Juan Morales y Serrano (general secretary); and Fernando Casariego (cashier), all after photographs by Manuel Huerta.

BLANCO Y NEGRO AND NUEVO MUNDO The inauguration of Banco de España in 1891 coincided with the presentation of the magazine



"The subscription to the public loan at Banco de España". *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. 22 November 1896. Drawings: Juan Comba.

Blanco y Negro, Torcuato Luca de Tena's great project, which revolutionised the press by copying the German model of the reduced format (20 × 27.5 cm). Until then, the illustrated publications had presented images by means of line engraving, meaning drawings carried out by artists. This magazine pioneered the spread of photography in modern periodicals, especially after the incorporation on 21 October 1893 of a 'Current affairs' section that prioritised graphic information.

Although there are various textual references, the most interesting reportage was the one by the journalist Gabriel R. España which appeared on 13 August 1898 under the title: "How banknotes are made". It was illustrated with

five photographs by Christian Franzen taken in various parts of the workshops: chalcographic printing, drying of printed sheets, background impression, gumming and varnishing, and numbering and stacking. The author describes the process of printing the notes, but voluntarily desists from explaining the preparation of the gravures and the reproduction of negatives since these are, in his own words, "fairly well-known procedures". This deprives us of knowing who was responsible for the photography. Special mention is made of the creative function in the process of Bartolomé Maura y Montaner, recently appointed chief engraver to the bank after five years as an artistic engraver at the National Mint:

The paper, prepared *ad hoc*, is made under the immediate inspection and close surveillance of the Bank, in such fixed quantities that from the moment it is concluded, a special account is opened, as though the blank sheets were already notes ready for cancellation. . . Like the national mint, Banco de España has as its engraver the illustrious artist Don Bartolomé Muara. With his habitual kindness, he showed us a magnificent piece of work from a banknote factory in New York, saying: "When it comes to making this, and to doing us harm, the Americans are a long way ahead."

Nuevo Mundo, founded in 1894 by José del Pe-rojo with a similar format and contents to *Blanco y Negro*, dedicated a full page on 23 December 1909 to the meeting of the Board of Governors of Banco de España, chaired by Fernando Merino Villarino, Count of Sagasta, and illustrated with two photographs by Alonso, one of them taken during the meeting and the other (selected for this exhibition) with the board members posing in a room in the bank. Appearing here, besides the governor, are Ángel González de la Peña (first vice-governor), Pío García Escudero (second vice-governor), Joaquín López Doriga and Manuel Marañón y Gómez de Acebo (directors).

BOOKS, ENCYCLOPAEDIAS AND COLLOTYPES The large illustrated books of the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th also devoted text and images to Banco de España. An example is "The great cities. Rome, Madrid, Lisbon, Athens, Tokyo" by Pedro Umbert, an edition of 1909 illustrated with views of monuments, paintings, landscapes, panoramas, character types and popular scenes, for which the author chose two buildings as modern symbols of each country. In the case of Spain, these were the Congress of Deputies and Banco de España. The paradigm of reference works is the great *España* encyclopaedia, which at the start of the century illustrated the entry 'Bank' with several images of the exterior and interior of the building, and described its growth in the following terms: "The bank has established branches in all the provincial capitals, as well as in other major

cities on the Iberian Peninsula and in Tangier, with operations commencing at the latter on 2 January 1909." The photographs were completed in the 1925 volume dedicated to 'Spain', where they included a portrait of a porter in regulation uniform and the interior of the Barcelona branch.

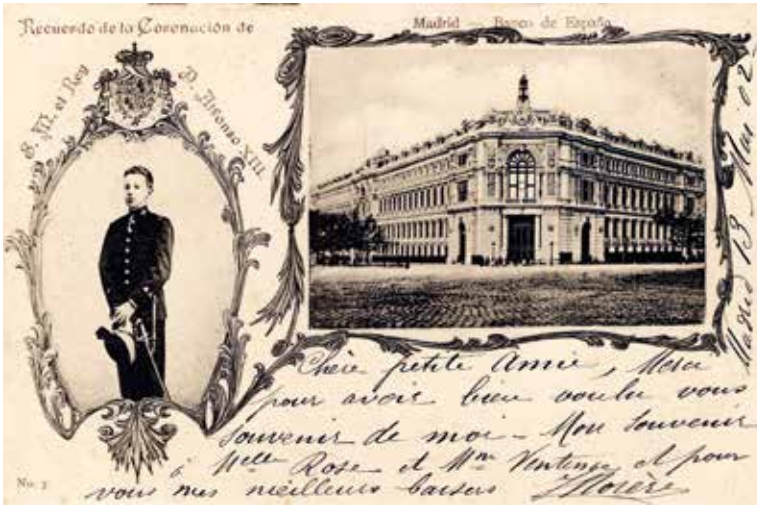
By the second decade of the century, the image of Banco de España already formed part of the country's brand image, and appeared in the huge quantities of postcards and prints of the city of Madrid that were marketed by publishing houses for travellers, visitors and tourists. One of the most beautiful prints, *Calle de Alcalá*, was made by Otto Wunderlich, a German photographer who settled in Spain in 1913. It belongs to the set of collotypes with which the Voluntad publisher made a series of portfolios in 1917 entitled "Landscapes and monuments of Spain". Because of its composition and elegance, it is included in the exhibition.

Postcards

The Archive of Banco de España holds a significant collection of postcards that show urban views, architecture, people, furnishings, decoration and other artistic contents. The bank's buildings were a recurrent subject on postcards from the end of the 19th century, and the head office on Plaza de Cibeles significantly appeared in the first Spanish picture postcard, produced by Hauser y Menet in November 1892 with the title *Recuerdo de Madrid* (Souvenir of Madrid), with four views of the capital: Carrera de San Jerónimo, Puerta del Sol, the bullring and Calle de Alcalá. The last of these shows the Banco de España building and is therefore one of the oldest photographs of the edifice.

The series shown in the exhibition presents everyday life in the city centre, its intense traffic, its diversity of vehicles (carriages, horse-drawn cabs, trams, omnibuses), buildings, monuments, public works, streets, squares, gardens, fountains and popular character types: that is, fragments of history captured by the camera and recorded with silver emulsions or printers' inks.

Postcards were first regulated by the Austrian postal service in 1869 and gradually introduced



Above: Postcard of the coronation of Alfonso XIII. 1902. Publisher: Unión Postal Universal. Collotype. Below: First picture postcard in Spain. 1892. Publisher: Hauser y Menet.

to the rest of Europe as a means of communication. The first models had no pictures, and it was not until the end of the 1880s, thanks to the photogravure, that illustrations started to be introduced. Their characteristic format (10 × 15 cm) and diverse contents led to mass production and collecting. In 1899, the first Great Exhibition of Illustrated Postcards of All Countries and Nations was held in Nice. During the so-called 'golden age' from 1901 to 1905, there was an annual production of 122 million postcards in just four European countries. In January 1906, the

back of the card was divided to concentrate the text on one side while the front was reserved for the illustration.

The collotype, characterised by the clarity and quality of its image, was invented by Poitevin and perfected by J. Joubert and Joseph Albert. In Spain, it was applied by the Heliographic Society. In his book *Fotografía*, Antonio León defines it thus: "The procedure that consists of using a layer of more or less solubilised gelatin capable of retaining greasy ink and producing printed images which do not have the mottling



Above: Postcard of Calle de Alcalá. 1908. Publisher: Blass y Cía. Collotype. Below: Postcard of Plaza de Cibeles and Calle de Alcalá. 1905. Collotype.

that a metal plate gives them, but perfect uniformity and very beautiful semitones.” In *El mundo visto a los ochenta años* (The world seen at eighty), Ramón y Cajal predicted that politicians, artists and bullfighters would be known to posterity thanks to the photogravure and the collotype, and wrote in praise of postcards: “When the monotonous dripping of the winter rain corners us in the solitary home from which our children have fled, those collections ease our numbness, evoking the pleasant days of youth and maturity.” Ramón Gómez de la Serna also

loved postcards, in which he saw the passage of time and the immortality of existence:

When we see those postcards of the city, we feel an envious desire to be one of those passers-by perpetuated in them, crossing the great squares or strolling along the pavement. We would have given anything to be one of those citizens chosen by lot who give the city so much life, who represent it better than anybody, who will be its eternal pedestrians...



Room 3

From the Silver Age to the transition

“Life passes, but the image remains.”

Santiago Ramón y Cajal

The third room of the exhibition covers an extensive period from the mid-1920s to the end of the dictatorship, with the dramatic parenthesis of the Civil War and its consequences. From this period, Banco de España preserves an extraordinary set of photographs that reflect its history when its buildings were emblems and visual referents of their cities and identifying hallmarks for the outside world. In this section, the chronological sequence is continued in two parts, 1925-1950 and 1950-1975. It opens with the portrait of Alfonso XIII by Christian Franzen that hung in the halls and offices of Banco de España until the proclamation of the Republic.

Shown in the first part are views of the buildings and settings of the Banco de España offices in Guadalajara, Vigo, Vitoria, Palma, Almería and Barcelona. On the last of these, Puig Farran made a magnificent reportage in 1932 compiled in a historic album. Added to these images are portraits of employees from their personal files, taken by some of the best photographers of the time. Also from the Republican phase are the mosaic by an unknown artist on the construction of the gold chamber, and the photograph by Portillo of the Shareholders' Assembly, both dating from 1934. The set is completed by postcards that take Plaza de Cibeles as an epicentre for illustrating the development of events in the country. Particularly interesting owing to its content and framing is the picture of the proclamation of the

Republic by Alfonso, displayed here next to the camera with which it was taken.

The Civil War is represented by the album on the destruction and reconstruction of the branch office in Teruel, and by the pictures of that same building by the Marquis of Santa María el Villar, together with a curious inverted photograph of the bank's headquarters in Cibeles that was published in the magazine *Trincheras*.

From the post-war period comes another group of portraits of employees displaying human and social characteristics, signed by Amer, Torres Molina and Savignac, while the 1950s are represented by pictures of branch offices like those of Burgos and Larache, together with the bank's social project for the construction of 'family homes' in the Madrid district of Vista Alegre (1958). Another of the special albums, with shots that are surprisingly modern, is the one made by Carlos Pérez de Rozas on the branch opened in Barcelona in 1956, while an emblematic image from that period is Ragel's view of the bank's photographic darkroom.

In the mid-1960s, Juan Carlos de Borbón, then the crown prince of Spain, visited the gold chamber, and in 1966, the 13th International Monetary Conference of the American Bankers Association was held in Madrid. This marks a dividing line in the images that points towards the opening of the country to the exterior, also represented by the colourful postcards of the second half of the 1960s, which were aimed at tourism. Another interesting group is made up of aerial photographs, with colour views on display of Toledo, Ávila, Palma de Mallorca, San Sebastián, Santiago de Compostela and Santander.

The section closes with the photographs of the extension to the Banco de España building on the corner of Calle de los Madrazo with Marqués de Cubas (1969-1976), where the Gong Cinema, frequented by the writer Azorín, stood until 1965.

Alfonso XIII. Institutional portrait

The use of the institutional portrait as a representative symbol has its origin in classical pictorial iconography, gradually replaced by photography in the second half of the 19th century. This meant a significant change in the veracity of the image given the intrinsic qualities of photography. Hanging portraits of the monarch in schools and public institutions, Banco de España among them, was a variant on the symbolic ritual of the representation of power and its emblematic character, and also helped to disseminate the monarch's image.

Banco de España agreed that all its offices should display a portrait of Alfonso XIII taken at the gallery of the Danish diplomat Christian Franzen in about 1915. The monarch wears the full dress uniform for field events of the Army General Staff with the rank of Captain General. Around his neck is the Golden Fleece, and on his breast are the insignia of the Grand Crosses of Charles III and Isabella the Catholic, the Grand Cross for Military Merit (with its corresponding sash), and that of Grand Master of the four military orders. He also wears the medals of Santiago, Calatrava, Alcántara and Montesa.

The chosen portrait formed part of a series made during one of the royal couple's frequent visits to Franzen's studio, and postcards were also printed from the negatives. The composition is similar to the oil painting by Nicolás Aquino (Museo del Prado, 1912), although there he does not wear the Grand Cross of Isabella the Catholic, and to those of Tomás Martín (Real Academia de la Historia, 1915) and Luis Menéndez Pidal (Senado, 1909-1911).

Christian Franzen y Nissen (Fjølde, Denmark, 1864-Madrid, 1923) was the favourite photographer of Queen Victoria Eugenia. In the 1880s, after a period of apprenticeship at the studio of Christian Neuhaus in Copenhagen, he opened his own studio in that city, the

Atelier Français. He moved to Madrid in 1893 and worked as an operator at the Artistic Photography Society, becoming its director in 1895. From that year on, with a studio open under his name at number 11, Calle del Príncipe, he produced the pictures for three sections of the magazine *Blanco y Negro*: 'Physiognomic Studies', 'Madrid by Night' and 'Intimate Photographs'. For the first of these, he portrayed fashionable personalities, while for the second he illustrated texts by Eugenio Rodríguez (Monte-Cristo), who published the book *Los salones de Madrid* (The salons of Madrid). For the third section, he illustrated writings by the journalist Gabriel R. de España with portraits and popular scenes. He also contributed to numerous other magazines, including *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, *El Teatro* and *La Esfera*.

On 7 July 1899, he was appointed official purveyor to the Royal Household by Queen María Cristina, which authorised him to print the royal coat-of-arms on his cards. It was then that he coined his slogan: "Photographer of kings and king of photographers". As a portraitist, he won great prestige among the *haute bourgeoisie*, presenting his positive prints on platinum cards with Poulene paper. He hired the painter José Gartner de la Peña for retouching and lighting, and offered an extremely wide range of work: reproductions, enlargements, oil paintings, watercolours, platinotype, enamels, photographs on wood and metal, portraits and artistic groups, pictures of children, exterior shots and nocturnal interiors with magnesium.

In about 1900, he associated with the printer José Blass to form the publishing house Blass y Cía. They published some excellent works and brought out the weekly magazine *Alma Española*, for which Franzen produced photographs. One of the most interesting books was *El Monasterio de Guadalupe*, published in 1906, on which he collaborated with reproductions of paintings by Zurbarán and pictures of rooms in the monastery. The colophon read: "At the expense of Christian Franzen, photographer to H.M., generous enthusiast of the Spanish arts." He won an award at the International Exhibition in Brussels in 1907, was designated acting consul of Denmark on 26 October 1908, and occupied the post officially from 1910 onwards. On 4 August 1912 he was



Alfonso XIII. Portrait in the uniform of the Army General Staff.
c. 1915. Photograph: Christian Franzen. Photogravure.



Vigo. Banco de España. Vestibule. Rúa do Areal. 1929.
Photograph: Enrique Sarabia González; and Almería.
Banco de España. Exterior. Plaza Circular. c. 1929.
Photograph: Antonio Mateos Hernández. Gelatin silver.

named a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog. He died in 1923, and his obituary in *ABC* (18 September) stated: "He combined a technical command of his art with a taste perfectly cultivated in his visits to museums, and his knowledge of their masterpieces quickly brought him to prominence. Everyone of any social significance in Madrid passed through his studio." Much of his work is preserved in the Documentation Centre of Radiotelevisión Española.

Landscapes, architectures, spaces

Through its exterior and interior landscapes, architectures and spaces, Banco de España continued to integrate itself in cities as an emblematic nucleus and a visual referent, acquiring a social dimension that surpassed its banking function by becoming an identification marker for places and moments in history. The bank always looked for a wide and central street or square that would facilitate the transport of cash, and it was frequent for an empty plot or built site to be chosen that would allow the bank's activities to be incorporated into the city's most lively and representative area.

On display as models of this type of branch office are those of Palma de Mallorca (G. Rul·lan), Vitoria (A. Salinas), Sevilla (Dubois), Vigo (E. Sarabia) and Almería (A. Mateos Hernández). Included in the last case is a diazotype plan of the architectural project in coloured inks on fabric reinforced paper by Enrique López Rull (1902).⁸ Unfortunately, the original building in Plaza Circular in Almería, with a chamfered corner inspired by the one on Plaza de Cibeles in Madrid and an inner courtyard that looked more

like a tenement building than a bank's trading floor, was demolished in 1953 to make way for a new construction designed by the architect Romualdo de Madariaga.

The pictures of Palma de Mallorca by Gaspar Rul·lan, one of the great Majorcan photographers of the 20th century, include some of the earliest known photographs of this singular building. Out of the three photographs that make up the reportage, dating from about 1930, people appear in only one, that of the vestibule, where the photographer has mounted a theatrical scene by placing them conscientiously at different positions and planes. The building on Calle Sant Bartomeu had been designed in 1871 by Miguel Rigo y Clar as the new head office of Banco Balear in an eclectic style tending towards classicism, similar in appearance to the family mansions of the period. In 1874, Banco Balear merged with Banco de España, and the new building was therefore directly inaugurated as the Banco de España branch. Extraordinarily, this makes Palma the only branch office to have preserved its original building.

The pictures of the Vitoria branch show us the building that provided a model for the branch offices of Banco de España for more than thirty years. The architect José Yárnoz Larrosa designed a fully detached building with a rectangular plan and its main front on one of the shorter sides, with five window bays and three storeys. The interior, functional and diaphanous but also solemn and monumental, contains offices enriched with stained glass windows and coloured marbles. Like nearly all the branches, the one in Vitoria has its own singular history. The architect José Yárnoz won the commission in a competition convened in 1916 and proposed a design that turned out to be so much to the liking of the institution's senior management that it was subsequently adopted as a representative model, and was followed by the bank's other architects, stylistic particularities apart, until the 1950s. The building seems to be inspired by Vitoria's neoclassical theatre (1817), no longer extant, by Silvestre Pérez y Chávarri, which had been damaged by fire in 1914, and whose site was acquired by Banco de España for the construction of the new branch office in the city. In this way, a neoclassical building like Silvestre Pérez's theatre

⁸ Diazotype or whiteprint: a technique used for the reproduction of documents by means of a chemical process that uses diazo compounds. It is also known as the blue-line process, as it results in blue lines on a white background. It is a contact printing process that accurately reproduces the size of the original, but cannot reproduce continuous tones or colours. The diazotype process (whiteprinting) replaced the cyanotype (blueprint) process for reproducing architectural and engineering drawings because the technique was simpler and involved fewer toxic chemicals. Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whiteprint>.



Employees of Banco de España. Miguel Francisco Burgos, apprentice bookkeeper at the Seville branch, c. 1932-1934; and José Mario Berriatúa Arriete, temporary auxiliary worker at the head office in Madrid, c. 1939. Gelatin silver.

Employees of Banco de España. Teresa Yuste Valdés, temporary auxiliary worker at the head office in Madrid, c. 1939. Photograph: Amer Masfarret; and Francisca Revilla Rodríguez, female temporary auxiliary worker at the Lugo branch, c. 1943. Gelatin silver.

in Vitoria ended up as the official model for the branch offices of Banco de España.

The Seville branch in Plaza de San Francisco is illustrated by some beautiful pictures of the bank's most public areas (exteriors, courtyard, cashiers' and auditors' offices) taken in 1929 by the Sevillian photographer Dubois, who practised the portrait, the montage and the reportage. His work has rightly succeeded in drawing attention to the magnificent building designed by Antonio Illanes in 1917 and finished in 1928. Banco de España had first established itself in Seville in 1874, after the monopoly on the issue of banknotes was decreed, and had merged with Banco de Sevilla, acquiring its head office on Calle Estrella and using it until transferring to the current building on Plaza de San Francisco.

The 1929 photographs of the Vigo branch were taken by Enrique Sarabia González, originally from Orense, who had opened a studio in Vigo with his brother Constantino. They show the mansion it occupied on Rúa do Areal, designed by Manuel de Uceda in 1863 as a personal residence for Fernando Carreras. Banco de España, which arrived in the city in 1885, rented and later bought the building, where it carried out its activities until 1942, the year when it moved to an office on Calle Policarpio Sanz designed by Romualdo de Madariaga.

The view of the entrance and garden of the former courtyard of the building in Guadalajara, located at number 1, Plaza de Santa María, is distinguished by its ethnographic content. Taken by the local photographer Reyes, it has the words "Entrance to the branch" written in the upper margin. Seen in the background is the Mudejar tower of the co-cathedral of Santa María, and in the foreground are two peasants with pack mules. This was Banco de España's first branch office in the city, and it remained there until 1934, when it moved to Plaza de Don Diego García.

Also on display is a set of photographs of sites chosen or intended for branch offices, such as the convent of Santa Fe in Toledo and the former Almadín building in Játiva, both of great historical value. In Toledo, there was an attempt in 1935 to construct a new branch in the grounds of the convent of Santa Fe in Paseo del Miradero, for which various preliminary plans were drawn

up by the bank's architects. This is illustrated by an original composition in which photographs of the convent are superimposed with drawings by Yárnoz Larrosa on translucent paper, showing the effect that a new future building might have had on the city. Fortunately, the project never went ahead and the bank rid itself of the property in 1944, choosing instead to construct a new building in Calle Nueva.

The photographs of the first Játiva branch, which date from 1927, belong to a moment when it was being considered whether to acquire the building of El Peso Real, later to house the National Schools, for the establishment of the bank's first branch in the town. Curiously, the proposed modifications are drawn freehand in ink on the photograph of the façade.

Interesting too are the pictures of Rambla de Méndez Núñez in Alicante, taken from opposite angles. They show the appearance of this important thoroughfare in 1936, now unrecognisable, and the former convent of Las Madres Capuchinas, on whose site the new branch was built (1943-1947). This Alicante branch was once "the most outstanding building on the boulevard and is today the smallest, though of greater nobility and serenity than all those around it together."⁹ This was to be Banco de España's third office in Alicante, the city where, along with Valencia, it had opened its first branches in 1858. The series is completed by views of the head office on Cibeles on several tourist postcards, together with others of Cádiz and Salamanca.

The vulnerable eternity of portraits

Fernando Villalón, 8th Count of Miraflores de los Ángeles and a poet of the 1927 Generation, created the 'Photographs in Verse' for his book *Andalucía la Baja* (1926). He divided the poems into landscapes, still lifes and figures in order to describe spaces and their characters, a structure which leads us to the personal files of the Banco de España employees, which reflect the poet's idea by fitting people into their setting.

9 Pedro Navascués Palacio (2023). "El Banco de España y la ciudad", *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Seen nearly a century later, the pre-war portraits recover the essence of the moment and permit the social review demanded by historians. They thus become perpetual, perennial and eternal documents, but the apparent eternity of the photograph was described as vulnerable by García Lorca:

To seek my childhood, my God!
I ate rotten oranges, old papers, empty
[dovecotes,
and I found my little body eaten by rats,
at the bottom of the pool and with the hair
[of madmen.
My sailor suit was not sodden with the oil
[of whales,
but it had the vulnerable eternity of
[photographs.

Eduardo Zamacois, a 'Silver Age' novelist who was contemporary with both poets, questioned the values of the portrait with an imprecise argument: "Portray us? To what end when the portrait they made of us yesterday will no longer respond today to what we are?" The answer to his questions is obvious, since every portrait always responds to what we once were at a given moment: that is, to the past, because the photograph ceases to be the present as soon as it is taken.

The portraits from the personal files of Banco de España at that period of cultural ebullience are a kaleidoscope from the finest photography studios. In the years before the Civil War, their presentation was gradually simplified by stripping them of their earlier adornments and fantasies (painted backcloths, drapes, classical furniture), and new techniques now became habitual (intense lighting, dense shadows, soft focus, warm toning, strong contrasts), all with the purpose of enhancing the figures and the photographic objects themselves.

The proliferation of studios in the centre and outskirts of cities led to a loss of quality, but this did not affect the prestigious classics and professionals like Calvet and Portillo, who took many photographs of the Banco de España staff for their employees' cards using a modern and avant-garde approach. This was especially true of Portillo's elegance, sobriety and precision, which made for faces of great veracity. Taken overall,

these photographs permit a reading of their poses and at the same time tell us something about the gazes of their authors.

The group shots form another canon in the set, some of them as paradigmatic as Cristóbal Portillo's reportage of March 1934 on the Shareholders' General Assembly. These are images of exceptional value as they are nearly the only ones of an event of this type which show us the assembly hall with its original appearance, a year before it was modified in a refurbishment that completely did away with the iconographic programme executed in plaster by Francisco Molinelli in 1891.

The picture which best represents the "vulnerable eternity of the photograph" in this exhibition is the one taken by the master photojournalist Alfonso Sánchez Portela (Alfonso) in Plaza de Cibeles at 11.20 in the morning on 14 April 1931 with his Goerz camera, the very same one which is on display and with which he portrayed the writers of the 1898 Generation (Machado, Baroja, Azorín, Unamuno, Valle-Inclán and others) and the 1927 Generation (Lorca, Aleixandre, Altolaguirre, Cernuda, Salinas, Guillén and others), as well as the avant-garde Ramón Gómez de la Serna, a great friend of his on whom the graphic reporter wrote: "How he taught me to look and see!"

Although it was spring, it was a cold and cloudy day with a touch of mist. Amidst the bustle, men and women, young and old, show joy as they throng to the celebration. An allegory of destiny in Plaza de Cibeles. The goddess Cybele on her chariot drawn by lions emerges amidst the crowd like an islet while the ship holds its course among the waves of people. The photograph shows thousands of people around Banco de España, many of them looking straight at the camera lens, perhaps recognising the famous reporter perched on a lamp-post in the plaza and seeking a moment of glory for themselves. The wide-angle lens captures a view of more than ninety degrees from the tower of the Circle of Fine Arts to the boulevard of Paseo del Prado, encompassing the whole of the bank's building on the infinite horizon line. It is an interplay of planes based on depth of field, with not the slightest detail out of focus. There is probably no picture in the history of Spanish photography with so many people and so much expressive force in the faces, and it is certainly also an exceptional document of the history of Banco de España.



Barcelona. Banco de España. Photograph album of the building on Vía Layetana. 1932. Photographs: Andreu Puig Farran. Gelatin silver.

Puig Farran and the Barcelona album

In 1932, the branch office of Banco de España was inaugurated in Vía Layetana in Barcelona. The work of the architects José Yáñez Larrosa and Luis Menéndez-Pidal, it was a monumental

classical-style building with an interior décor inspired by the Viennese Secession. One of the finest buildings ever constructed by Banco de España, it is occupied today by another bank. The name of José Yáñez is linked to Banco de España from 1917 onwards as the author of many of the projects

for provincial branches, and especially of the extension to the head offices at Plaza de Cibeles in Madrid in 1934, a work whose unmistakable architectural style relates it directly to the contemporary building in Vía Layetana. This was the bank's third branch office in Barcelona and the first whose construction had been commissioned by the bank itself. The first, in 1874, was a building at number 2, Calle Ancha, rented from Manuel Girona. From there it transferred to the Marc de Reus Palace at number 27, Rambla de Santa Mónica, also rented, which was adapted by Elías Rogent for its use as a bank. There it remained until 1932.

With the title *Banco de España. Sucursal de Barcelona* printed in gold lettering, a beautiful album was created with photographs by Andreu Puig Farran. On landscape-format folio pages bound in imitation reptile skin cardboard covers with the names of the architects printed in gold, grey card was used as a backing for forty 18 × 24 cm black and white images with sepia toning and a thin white margin. These photographs reveal the artistic quality of the photographer by contrast with his limited reputation as a graphic reporter, Puig Farran's paradigmatic speciality as an industrial photographer.

The set is impeccably executed, sober like the building, refined and elegant with very effectively framed shots, especially those of geometrical and circular spaces (workspaces, courtyards and staircases). Every part of the building is covered, from the imposing columned façades to the vestibules, trading floor, canteens and basements. Puig Farran chose the sepia tone in imitation of albumen as an acknowledgement to classicism. Among the interiors, special mention should go to the overall views of the rooms, and especially the stained glass of the vault, perfectly reproduced to the millimetre, while one of the finest exterior shots is that of the sculpture group crowning the façade, an imposing work by the academician Vicente Navarro Romero with two allegories and the letters of Banco de España carved into the stone beneath the official coat-of-arms of the period, without columns and with a mural crown.

Joan Andreu Puig Farran (Belianes, 1904-Barcelona, 1982) trained as a portraitist at the gallery owned by his uncle Sagarra in Lleida. His collaboration with the press started in the mid-1920s, contributing to the newspaper *El País* from 1924

to 1929 and working from 1928 onwards for *Metropolitano* in Barcelona. In 1929, he formed an association with Carlos Pérez de Rozas Masdeu to carry out reportages on the Barcelona International Exhibition, and they documented the remodelling of Montjuich for that event. During this period, they had a studio in the Palacio de las Noticias (no. 6, Rambla dels Estudis) under two names, *Fotografía Exposición*. Pérez de Rozas & Puig and *Art-Express*. During the Republic, Puig Farran's name was habitually to be seen at the foot of photographs in numerous daily newspapers, including *La Humanitat*, *La Vanguardia*, *L'Opinió*, *El Matí*, *Esplai*, *La Veu del Vespre* and *Última Hora*.

In 1934, he founded the agency Garfinform for the exchange of graphic material with foreign agencies. During the Civil War, he reported on the battle fronts in Lleida and Aragon, including the fall of Huesca in the first days of August 1936, published in *L'Instant*, and afterwards he covered the Republican landing in Majorca (22 and 23 August 1936). He was a member of the Professional Journalists' Association of the UGT trade union, and in January 1938 was made a board member of the Association's graphic reporting section. In that period, he also took photographs of everyday life in Barcelona and contributed to the newspapers *Clarín* in Buenos Aires, *Excelsior* in Mexico and *L'Humanité* in Paris. At the end of the war, he left Spain via the French border and was interned in several concentration camps. A year later, he joined the programme for the return of expatriates and went back to Spain for trial. He was imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro, judged and condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted and he was finally freed. After 1945, he devoted himself to industrial photography and advertising, and in 1952 he associated with Antoni Campañà, 'Brandanas', to found a postcard firm called *Postales en color CYP* (Campañà y Puig). Besides producing millions of colour postcards, they also illustrated several tourist guides to Spanish cities, including the "Guide to Ávila" with texts by Camilo José Cela (1960).

The gold chamber

The gold chamber of Banco de España is perhaps the most emblematic room in the bank



Madrid. Banco de España. Construction of the gold chamber. c. 1932-1935. Gelatin silver.

and, paradoxically, the least known. This is the high-security vault used to keep the institution's gold reserves, and is located at the considerable depth of 35 metres beneath the surface of Calle de Alcalá. Its technical complexity and the expense incurred in its construction were the object of intense deliberations by the governing bodies of Banco de España and a variety of prior studies carried out by architects and engineers. Once the technical and economic viability of the work had been determined, the construction project was finally approved in August 1932.

The idea of an underground vault was taken from other public and private banking establishments in Europe and the United States. Vaults at great depths were proof against possible air attacks and safe from the advances in professional crime since the crash of 1929, mainly in the United States. In the case of Banco de España, there was also a symbolic significance in providing the building with a chamber whose security measures were unique in Spain, as it heightened the pre-eminence of the institution within the national banking system.

The work on the vault formed part of the first extension to the head offices of Banco de España in 1927, the work of the architect José Yáñez Larrosa, who enlarged the building and added new areas. The great feature of the extension on the exterior was the continuation of the line of the façade and main entrance on Calle de Alcalá, and on the interior the fabulous trading floor covered with a magnificent art deco stained glass ceiling, which remains in public use today.

The Archive of Banco de España preserves 27 photographs that reflect different phases of the work on the gold chamber. They are grouped into sets of nine pictures and pasted onto three large cards, one of which is on display. The photographs, each of which is captioned with a technical explanation, may have been taken by the architect or by some member of his team, and they give an idea of the dimensions and complexity of the work. The pictures show some of the key aspects of the construction, such as the excavations, pits and shoring (as mentioned, it was necessary to dig down 35 metres below ground level), the reinforced concrete (the concrete walls alone occupy 1000 m²), the waterproofing solutions and products for the impermeabilisation of the vault (necessary owing to the great influence of water channels under Calle de Alcalá), and the security measures, among which was the construction of a surveillance gallery. The workers, who are shown in ten of the pictures, look straight at the camera, reminding us how tough it must have been to carry out such difficult work with means that fell far short of today's.

From the start, the chamber had numerous security features. The reinforced steel doors, weighing several tons each, were brought from the United States for installation in the bank. Impressive owing to their size, their spotless finish and the exact precision of their locking systems, the doors were made by the firm Coffres-Fort York, which had also constructed the doors for the Federal Reserve of the United States.

One of the means of protection that was included in the original designs for construction, and which has been the object of numerous legends, is the floodable pit. The antechamber is entered by crossing a sliding bridge over the pit, similar to a ship's gangway. In case of attack, the bridge can be withdrawn and the door to the antechamber

hermetically sealed from the inside in order to flood the pit above the frame of the door, using the water from a cistern located inside the chamber. This would make it impossible for attackers to enter. With the passage of time and technological advances in security, the vault currently has a large number of up-to-date measures of protection besides those already mentioned.

The first inspections for its construction were carried out in the summer of 1932. The work was performed by more than 260 labourers working in three shifts from morning to night, and its final cost was 9,387,639 pesetas. It was successfully completed in March 1936, still functions perfectly, and guards Banco de España's gold reserves in its interior.

Time of silence: war and post-war

The ravages of the Civil War left their mark on landscapes and their people. During the conflict, when most of the studios were closed or confiscated, portraits were made only for the purposes of identification. For this reason, copies were frequently cut out for reuse in the post-war period owing to the scarcity of economic and material resources. Where buildings were concerned, those in combat zones were damaged or destroyed. A paradigmatic case is the Banco de España branch in Teruel, one of the cities most affected by the conflict, on whose reconstruction a report was put together by the building's architect, Juan de Zavala Lafora.

Located in a prominent position along the north side of Plaza de Emilio Castelar or Plaza de San Juan, it had been designed by Zavala in 1933 as a new branch to replace the previous one at number 34, Calle de San Juan, and was finished in 1936. Regionalist in style, it appears to have been inspired by the Lonja (Merchants' Exchange) in Zaragoza, from which it took the gallery of mulioned arches on the upper floor. The building was bombed during the Battle of Teruel at the end of 1937 and practically destroyed, despite which it is one of the few edifices on Plaza de San Juan to have been preserved after the conflict.

The report was produced in the form of an album illustrated with an interesting set of images that show all the damage and the subsequent



Teruel. Banco de España. Building destroyed during the Civil War. c. December 1937-February 1938. Photograph: Marquis of Santa María del Villar. Gelatin silver.

reconstructions. Entitled “General summary of the work carried out on the reconstruction of the branch building of Banco de España in Teruel”, its introductory text refers to photographic documentation as a fundamental element in restoration work:

The branch building of Banco de España in Teruel, whose photographs are contained in the preceding graphic report, suffered great destruction and partial collapse during the past war owing to the effects of a large number of projectiles of all types that fell on it, and above all to the explosion of a mine that was positioned on the rear corner of the building, the part where the Archive is located.

The rebuilding took place between 1942 and 1944, and Zavala compiled numerous photographs of the previous period, of the intervention

and of the result. Measuring 23×16 cm, the album contains 43 photographs in all, and is quarter bound with red leather on the spine and corner pieces and marbled paper on the boards, with the coat-of-arms of Spain gummed to the cover. The photographs have various measurements with three variants, 4×6 , 6×10 and 10×15 cm, and are all pasted on black card and outlined with blue and white lines drawn in India ink.

Where the photographs themselves are concerned, they clearly show their straightforward documentary purpose, and so their authorship can be attributed to the architect or a member of his technical team. As regards their contents, the set gives a chronological account of the process of intervention on the building and its surrounding area, starting with exterior and interior views of the state in which it was left at the end of the war, and continuing with the development of the works in the course of two years of execution.

Pictures are added of the new furnishings and, as a symbol, the omnipresent clock hung to mark the time on the trading floor.

In Madrid, Banco de España was the backdrop for images of the Cibeles Fountain. In many of them, the monument appears beneath the sandbags that protected it from bombing. In a peculiar image that was published inverted on 18 July 1938 in the magazine *Trincheras*, the organ of the Unified Socialist Youths, the building appears on the other side of the plaza in a curious publishing error that makes for a historical anecdote.

Also in Teruel was Diego Quiroga y Losada, Marquis of Santa María del Villar, an important photographer linked first to pictorialism and naturalism and a clear exponent of documentary, ethnographic and touristic photography, with a very high production for the National Tourist Board since its creation in 1928. During the war, he collaborated voluntarily with the General Division of Devastated Regions, and he was hired by that organisation in 1939 to photograph the

ongoing reconstruction work. Of the Banco de España branch in Teruel and its surroundings, the Archive preserves several positive prints on Agfa Brovira gloss paper (17 × 17 cm). He also took pictures of the ruins of the houses in Calle de San Juan with some of the everyday objects seen among the rubble.

During the so-called time of silence, Banco de España was photographed by numerous graphic reporters, both Spanish and foreign. Preserved in the collections of the public institutions (Marín, Contreras, Santos Yubero or Alfonso) are hundreds of photographs where the building forms part of the landscape as a mute witness to history.

In the post-war period, Banco de España continued to choose urban areas with the goal of locating sites for its new buildings. A careful study was made of cities and their districts to determine the ones with the greatest financial activity and wide uncongested streets, which led to the photographing of public thoroughfares and urban real estate to assist in the choice. Among

Burgos. Views of Calle Vitoria and Calle General Sanjurjo (currently Avenida del Arlanzón) with indications for the location of Banco de España. 1947. Photographs: Federico Vélez. Gelatin silver.



others, this method was used for the reportages on Burgos, Alicante and Las Palmas, with interesting shots of traditional architecture to document the local styles in which the new buildings were to be integrated. Of Burgos, for example, views are preserved of various proposed properties located at numbers 34 to 39, Calle Vitoria.

In this connection, it is important to mention the originals of Tangier, Larache and Tetouan, cities that were also photographed in search of suitable sites for Banco de España. The Tangier branch opened in 1909, shortly before the creation of the Spanish Protectorate, while Larache and Tetouan opened in 1920. The bank initially opted to rent premises, and it was not until the mid-1940s that it was proposed to construct new buildings. The Tangier and Larache branches were designed and built by Juan de Zavala Lafora, who, as mentioned above, had been very closely linked to Banco de España since the late 1920s, and they were inaugurated in 1948 and 1950 respectively. Their style incorporated

characteristic elements permitting natural integration in the local architecture.

The Tetouan branch, inaugurated in 1950, is the work of José Yárnoz Larrosa, one of the key architects in the history of Banco de España and the designer of some of its most important buildings, like the one in Vía Layetana in Barcelona and the first extension to the head offices in Madrid, both built in the early 1930s. His relationship with Banco de España began in 1917, when he won the competition to build the Vitoria branch, and ended in the mid-1960s, by which time he had designed nearly thirty buildings for the bank.

Proper names

During the 'time of silence', which includes the war and the post-war period until well into the 1960s, photographs were taken for Banco de España by many distinguished professionals whose

General Assembly of Shareholders of Banco de España.
1934. Photograph: Cristóbal Portillo Robles. Gelatin silver.





Photographic darkroom of Banco de España in Madrid.
c. 1940. Photograph: Ragel. Gelatin silver.

names or pseudonyms appear on their logos, stamps or secondary supports. Especially fundamental were Cristóbal Portillo, a habitual collaborator in official events, and Ragel (father and son), both staff members of the bank.

Besides these, there is a long list of artists whose names appear on the originals preserved in the Archive, and while we have referred to some of them in other chapters, this is the place for specific recognition of the work of Amer, Aumente, Calvet, Campúa and Savignac (Madrid), Pérez de Rozas and Puig Farran (Barcelona), Vega and Mayoral (Ávila), Ferrer and Torres Molina (Granada), Lamela (Lugo), Planas and Sastre (Palma de Mallorca), Flores (Toledo), Jalón Ángel (Zaragoza), Diodoro (Larache), Blanco (Tangier) and García Cortés (Tetouan).

Francisco Amer Masfarret was one of the great society portraitists of Madrid in the 1930s, and he associated in the post-war period with Francisco Ventosa (Amer-Ventosa). Orestes Calvet and Campúa (José Demaría Vázquez) portrayed many figures of society, the arts and politics. Manuel Torres Molina was a classic of the history of photography in Granada, and Jalón Ángel (Ángel García de Jalón Hueto), besides

being an excellent portraitist, helped actively to spread Spanish photography outside the country through the international salons organised by the Royal Photographic Society of Zaragoza from 1925 onwards.

Cristóbal Portillo Robles (Cehegín, Murcia, 1897-Madrid, 1957) studied photography in Granada and Paris before returning to Spain at the end of the First World War. After travels through Europe, he opened a studio in Madrid in 1931, when he also started to work for public and private firms and cultural institutions like the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan (Madrid), a museum of sumptuary arts. He reached the highest level as a portraitist and also contributed to the press (*ABC*, *Mundo Hispánico* and *Hoja del Lunes*). His collected work, preserved in the Regional Archive of the Comunidad de Madrid, comprises nearly a million images in different formats and supports.

His collaboration with Banco de España began during the Republic with the reportage on the Shareholders' Assembly held on 11 March 1934. The meeting was held in the grand Shareholders' Assembly Hall with the coat-of-arms of Republican Spain on the tapestry in the background, and appearing in the photographs are the governor,

Alfredo de Zavala y Lafora, the first vice-governor, Pedro Pan Gómez, the second vice-governor, José Suárez-Figueroa y Serrano, and the board members José González Pintado y Hermoso, Francisco Aritio Gómez, José Varela de Limia y Menéndez, Viscount of San Alberto, and Lorenzo Martínez Fresneda y Jouvé, among others.

Another interesting picture by Portillo shown in the exhibition is that of the meeting of the Board of the General Employees' Association of Banco de España, held on 1 February 1936. Of the twelve people who appear, seven are seated, among them Antonio Rodríguez y Morales de Setién (vice-chairman of the Board of the General Employees' Association), and five are standing, among whom it is possible to identify Sergio Hervás Asensio (board member), Doroteo García de Fernando (treasurer) and Eduardo Valledor Idígoras (board member). A copy of this photograph, also on display, was manually altered in a superb cutting and pasting job to include the portrait of the trustee Agapito Aparicio Hernández in the row of standing figures. Also by Portillo are several of the portraits attached to the employees' personal files of the 1930s, before the war, with a characteristic blue stamp on the back that gives the address of the gallery: "Portillo. Fotógrafo. Plaza del Ángel, 17-1.º. Teléfono 16240. Madrid".

Diego González Ragel (1893-1951) settled in the Spanish capital in 1915 after working for several months in Argentina as a reporter. He applied to join Banco de España in 1939 as a photographer assigned to banknote manufacturing. His application was admitted at the Board meeting of 21 October but rejected by the Governing Council in its meeting of 24 October, when it was agreed that any photographic work he carried out should be paid "by tariff". In a written notification preserved in his personal file (30 November 1940), he reapplied for admission with a dual argument: his custody during the war of photographs and negatives of interest to Banco de España and the Official Currency Centre (kept at his home in Madrid and handed over to the Finance Ministry in 1939), and the professional photographic work that he had been performing for the institution since the end of the war. He finally joined the staff on 2 January 1941 and carried out his work for a decade, until

his death in November 1951. He was succeeded in the post by his son, Diego González Mellado (1924-2008), who had joined the bank on 10 May 1946 as an assistant photographer and remained active until his retirement in 1984.

On the official photographs for Banco de España, there are references to his contractual relationship with the institution: "Laboratorio fotográfico del Banco de España", "Ragel. Fotógrafo oficial. Banco de España", "Ragel. D. Ramón de la Cruz, 69", "González Ragel. Fotógrafo. Duque de Almodóvar, 15", "Ragel. Fotógrafo oficial. Banco de España. D. Ramón de la Cruz, 69", and "Banco de España. Gabinete fotográfico. Madrid".

Among González Ragel's work as a staff photographer for the bank, one of the most curious images is that of the visit to the gold chamber in 1944 of Demetrio Carceller, the Minister of Industry and Commerce. In the picture, the directors of the Spanish Foreign Currency Institute and Banco de España vaunt the country's capacity for economic reconstruction by showing the gold ingots on the shelves. This was just five years after the end of the Civil War, when nearly all of Banco de España's large gold reserves had disappeared.

Social activity. The dwellings of Vista Alegre

Banco de España has been responsible for numerous social and charitable activities. One of them, of which an exceptional document is preserved in the form of a photograph album, was the gift of a million pesetas in December 1958 to the patriarch of the West Indies and bishop of Madrid-Alcalá, Leopoldo Eijo Garay, to subsidise dwellings for humble families through the Virgen de la Almudena Trust. The housing was to be built in the grounds of Vista Alegre ('Joyful View'), whose name came from a crown estate described by Pascual Madoz in his *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y sus posesiones de Ultramar* (Geographical-statistical-historical dictionary of Spain and its overseas possessions) of the mid-19th century: "The first property found before reaching the village (Carabanchel), on the left before the road to Madrid."

The National Institute of Housing, dependent on the ministry of the same name, had been



Photograph album on Banco de España's donation for the construction of dwellings for underprivileged families in Vista Alegre (Madrid). 1958. Gelatin silver.

created in 1939 with the aim of fostering the construction of protected dwellings, but at the end of the 1950s, part of the population of Madrid, who had lost their homes after the Civil War, were eking out an existence in caves and slums in the outlying districts of Vallecas, Orcasitas, Fuenarral, Vicálvaro, Hortaleza, Lucero, Cármenes, Caño Roto, La China, Barajas and many others.

Twenty years after the war, in 1958, the construction of 60,000 dwellings in Madrid was approved under a Law of Social Urgency. The state made the necessary budgets available and also received extraordinary contributions managed by various institutions, among them the Trust mentioned above. By then, about a hundred families were living in miserable conditions in the caves of the hills of Vista Alegre, dug out of hillsides next to the areas of La Huerta de Castañeda and El Blandón. Aware of this situation, Banco de España agreed to grant a donation to the Virgen de la Almudena Trust for the Christmas festivities of 1958 “so that it may serve to ease the payment of new dwellings for the humblest families, who will very soon

occupy them in the Colonia Virgen de los Remedios of Vista Alegre.”

The project formed part of a general programme of ministry dwellings built at kilometre 3.5 of Paseo de Extremadura, which in all numbered 670 “modern, spacious and cheerful” houses in the Colonia (housing estate) of the patriarch Eijo Garay, to which another 722 were to be added afterwards: “The Trust has not forgotten for a moment the humble condition of these families and their previous life in caves or slums, and has built them some attractive, modern and sunny dwellings in Vista Alegre.”

The album of photographs of Vista Alegre, in folio format and bound in leather, is entitled: “Donation of one million pesetas from His Excellency the Governor of Banco de España to His Excellency the Bishop and Patriarch for the subsidising of dwellings for humble families, XII-1958”. It is made up of 33 sheets of black card structured in five sections with a title page handwritten in white ink, typed explanatory texts and sixteen photographs which can be considered crucial for historical studies.

Of the sixteen photographs, the first is a printed plate with three pictures of the caves on Paseo de los Olivos and the moment when their inhabitants leave them with their goods and chattels. A second group of three photographs shows the huts and provisional shelters to which they were temporarily transferred. The third set, made up of seven photographs, is devoted to the demolition of these huts and shelters and the transfer of the inhabitants to the Colonia Virgen de los Remedios. The fourth and final group is made up of five pictures of the new dwellings, where they arrived on 30 March 1959. The album ends with the list of the names of the 78 transferred families, with the full name of the father of the family, his age, marital status, spouse and number of children. The dwellings were formally handed over in March 1959, with exemption from the fees for signing the contract thanks to the bank's donation. The life of those people underwent a human transformation as well as a social one, as they regained their dignity in going from the damp walls and earth floors of the caves and slums to their new homes, clean, spacious, welcoming and described as follows in the official document: “A beautiful balcony, windows in



Photograph album on Banco de España's donation for the construction of dwellings for underprivileged families in Vista Alegre (Madrid). 1958. Gelatin silver.

every room, three bedrooms, dining room, kitchen and bathroom. The kitchen has an oven, all the rooms have wooden doors, and the electrical installation has the necessary voltage for the use of irons, electric stoves and radios.”

Banco de España's contribution allowed those 78 families to escape from misery. The people and places that appear in the photos, immobile as ghosts, recall the films of Italian Neorealism: stories of a recent past that persists thanks to images. The photographs of the Vista Alegre album help to banish oblivion and show us past tableaux that give the lie to the notion that things were always better in the good old days.

The reportage of Pérez de Rozas

In 1955, the architect Juan de Zavala Lafora finished the building he had designed as a branch office for Banco de España in Barcelona, an imposing edifice decorated with paintings by Joaquim Sunyer, Daniel Vázquez Díaz and José María Sert, those of the last two having been brought from the palace of Prince Mdivani in

Venice. For the façade, by popular request, the sculptor Ángel Ferrant was commissioned for a statue of the Guardian Angel of the city, which had protected the fate of Barcelona on that very spot until the demolition of the city walls. This branch office, Banco de España's fourth in Barcelona, was something of a novelty from the architectural and commercial point of view, as a much taller building was constructed than had previously been the norm in Barcelona. This was because besides housing the bank's offices on three storeys above ground and the three basement floors, the six remaining floors were used for the offices of private firms.

The first stone had been laid on 2 May 1948 in a ceremony attended by representatives of Barcelona's most important institutions and photographed by the graphic reporter Manuel Mateo Serrano. Seven years later, on 14 October 1955, the building was inaugurated with more than three hundred distinguished guests, among them the head of state, Francisco Franco, and his wife Carmen Polo, the finance minister Francisco Gómez del Llano, the trade minister Manuel Arburúa de la Miyar, the civil and



Barcelona. Banco de España. Inauguration of the building on Plaza de Cataluña. October 1955. Photographs: Carlos Pérez de Rozas. Gelatin silver.

military authorities of the city, Catalan bankers and entrepreneurs, and the entire Board of Governors of Banco de España.

The event started at exactly one o'clock in the afternoon, when Juan de Zavala led the guests on an official visit. Afterwards there were refreshments, and the vice-governor of the bank received the local press in the manager's office to give them a note drafted by the architect with the technical specifications of the building, together with a number of photographs of it.

One of the best photographers of the time, Carlos Pérez de Rozas y Sáenz de Tejada, made a magnificent reportage of superb quality that Zavala compiled in an album with a folio format, bound in blue cloth with gold printing and marbled boards. It comprises a typed report entitled "Account of the trip to Barcelona on the occasion of the inauguration of the building of the new branch of Banco de España", and added at the end is a specific section of "Photographs and appendices".

The pictures selected were fourteen 18 × 24 cm photographs on gloss paper with a thin white margin. Fifty per cent of them show the ceremonial events, and the other half views of the building. In the first group are the arrival of the guests, the institutional visit and the moments of the official signing of the inauguration by Franco and his wife (5) and the blessing of the new building by the bishop (2), while the second includes both exteriors (4) and interiors (3). The shots of the personalities are not solely documentary but offer information on the complicity between the guests through their gestures, while the interior photographs precisely render the geometric details.

With these images, Pérez de Rozas demonstrates his dual facet as an artist and journalist by documenting the event while capturing the essence of the building with elegance, style and creativity. Two of the exterior shots can be categorised within the trend for so-called street photography, and are thus comparable with the work of the great American artists of the 1950s. In the first of these, he incorporates the detail of a luxury automobile framed against the building in the foreground, so adding an air of modernity that contrasts with the other vehicles in the scene, while the asphalt is wet with rain that produces

a multitude of gleams among the dark areas. The second photograph is a nocturnal view of a lateral façade of the bank with the illuminated sculpture of the Guardian Angel in a niche, the work that Alejandro Ferrant had presented to the city as a gift. The two photographs are among the finest architectural images of the Spanish post-war period owing both to the expert use of light and to the beauty of the composition.

The album is completed with an appendix containing several press cuttings with reports on the inauguration published in various newspapers (*La Vanguardia*, *Diario de Barcelona*, *El Correo Catalán*, *Solidaridad Nacional*, *La Prensa* and *Noticiero Universal*). The articles are illustrated with photographs by Pérez de Rozas himself and by Josep Brangulí, who was also present at the inauguration.

Carlos Pérez de Rozas y Sáenz de Tejada (Barcelona, 1920-1990) is a classic figure in the history of Spanish photography, as was his father, Carlos Pérez de Rozas Masdeu (Barcelona, 1893-1954), a prestigious photographer whose work appeared in all the Catalan press from 1912 onwards. Pérez de Rozas first contributed as an apprentice to *Día Gráfico*, and he worked during the Civil War with that same newspaper and with *La Noche*. At the end of the war, he started to cover all kinds of news for *Solidaridad Nacional*, and in 1956, together with Ramón Dimas, he dedicated himself for a short time to making documentary films for television. In 1979 he joined the editorial staff of *La Vanguardia*, where he remained until his retirement in 1984.

Conference of the American Bankers Association

The 13th International Monetary Conference, organised by the American Bankers Association, was held in Spain from 23 to 27 May 1966. It brought together the governors of the world's most important issuing banks, the top management of various private banks, representatives of international monetary and economic organisations, and other important personalities from international political and economic circles. The conference dealt with economic issues of considerable weight, such as the economic situation



13th Monetary Conference of the American Bankers Association, held in Spain. May 1966. Photographs: Ferrer and Manuel Aumente. Gelatin silver.

in the main industrialised countries, the international balance of payments, monetary policy, the international monetary mechanism and commercial blocs.

The conference was an annual event that alternated on each occasion between the United States and a European country. In 1966, it was held for the first time in Spain, something made possible by the institutional, political and economic aperture of the country that had begun in the 1950s. Major milestones in this process include the return of foreign ambassadors to Spain in 1951 after their withdrawal in 1946, and Spain's admission to the UNO in 1955. In the economic sphere, Spain became a member in 1958

of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the World Bank, and put an end to its period of autarky by opening its economy up to the exterior through the Stabilisation Plan of 1959. Joan Sardà, the former head of the Studies Service of Banco de España and the main architect of the Stabilisation Plan, took part in the International Monetary Conference as advisor to the governor, a post he had occupied since 1965. Strangely, he hardly appears in the many preserved photographs of this event, although there are documentary records of his attendance.

Over the five days of the conference, intense working sessions and plenary meetings were com-

bined with cultural events and entertainments for those attending. The opening ceremony and the first sessions were held at Banco de España in Madrid, where they were chaired by George Champion, the president of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York and the chairman of the conference; Archie Kimbrough Davis, the president of the American Bankers Association; Angier Biddle Duke, the United States ambassador to Spain; and Mariano Navarro Rubio, the governor of Banco de España. On 24 May, Francisco Franco, the head of state, held an audience for the conference delegates at the Palace of El Pardo.

Afterwards, on 26 and 27 May, the working sessions were held at the Palace of Charles V in Granada. The closing ceremony took place in the gardens of the Generalife with a speech by Henry Hammill Fowler, the secretary of the Treasury of the United States, who emphasised the need for a spirit of cooperation so that the international finance system would promote the development of all nations. Besides those named above, the conference was attended by over 130 personalities from the world of finance and banking, including Juan José Espinosa San Martín, the Spanish Minister of Finance; Pierre-Paul Schweitzer, the director-general of the IMF; Harold Francis Linder, the chairman of the Export-Import Bank of the United States; and George Rowland Stanley Baring, governor of the Bank of England.

Given the great importance of the conference and the personalities attending it, it was widely reported in the media, with a large number of articles in the written press on the different events, as well as coverage by the NO-DO newsreels. Especially striking are the photographs of the leisure events, which locate us historically in Spain's process of opening up to the exterior, not only economically but also politically and socially, from the 1950s onwards. This was when Spain's diplomatic activity was renewed and the cultural export of Spanish folklore and typicality was boosted through the international tourist campaigns orchestrated by the new Ministry of Information and Tourism with such famous slogans as *Visit Spain* and *Spain is different*. The Archive of Banco de España preserves some extensive photographic reportages on the conference, with more than two hundred photographs in all taken

by such well-known photographers of the time as Manuel Aumente, who was to be the president of the National Federation of Photographers in the 1970s, and Manuel Torres Molina, a classic graphic reporter and director of Spain's first school of photography (Granada, 1916).

Los Madrazo and the Gong Cinema

At the end of the 1960s, Banco de España decided to enlarge its premises by occupying the corner of Calle de los Madrazo with Marqués de Cubas, which then contained several 19th-century buildings with dwellings, offices and services, and was transformed by the architects Juan de Zavala Lafora and Javier Yáñez Orcóyen between 1969 and 1976. At number 3, Marqués de Cubas, was the Cafetería Palais; at numbers 5 and 7, the offices and workshops of the newspapers *El Liberal* (1879-1939) and *Heraldo de Madrid* (1890-1939); also at number 5, on the ground floor, was the bookshop of the publishing house Afrodisio Aguado; and at number 11 were the automatic heating business of F. Gurrea Nozaleda and the Cine Gong, the cinema which gave its name to the bar at number 25, Los Madrazo.

From 1918 to 1959, the bank had gradually acquired the real estate in the block bound by Calle de los Madrazo (nos. 27 and 29) and Marqués de Cubas (nos. 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11) in readiness for future needs and favourable circumstances. Owing to the bank's very nature, its building projects had always been accompanied by a desire for isolation and insularity, but new requirements of space had become apparent since the end of the Civil War owing especially to the increase in the circulation of cash and the custody of valuables, the installation in 1939 of the Spanish Institute of Foreign Currency, and the growth of the staff in 1962 with the creation of the Private Banking service (now the Directorate-General of Supervision) and the Central Risk Office, both direct consequences of the nationalisation of Banco de España.

The bank's second extension, it took the building as far as Los Madrazo and Marqués de Cubas in a peripheral construction surrounding a new courtyard with a detached building for auxiliary services, and serving also to communicate

the new building with the pre-existing one along a number of connecting walkways. Banco de España thus came to occupy the entire block except for the corner of Alcalá and Marqués de Cubas, which had belonged first to Banca Calamarte and then to Banco Pastor.

The works lasted from 1969 to 1976, and their progress was recorded in several photographic reportages numbering more than 700 photographs in all, of which seven have been selected for the exhibition. They provide detailed information on the way the work evolved, as well as including unique photographs of the pre-existing buildings like the Gong Cinema and the offices of the newspaper *El Liberal*, of which, surprisingly, hardly any images are preserved.

THE GONG CINEMA The Agencia EFE holds one of the few images of the exterior of the Cine Gong. It had a narrow front, similar in width to the entrance to the building above it, and an enormous neon sign (white letters on a red

background) that stretched up two floors. The press agency's picture shows a gigantic mural painted with the face of Greer Garson, who starred with Ronald Colman in the drama *Random Harvest*, directed by the great Mervyn LeRoy and released in 1942. Before becoming a cinema, it was a dance hall, a variety theatre and a cabaret. On the plot where it stood, there had been a furniture warehouse whose owner had rented it out for the shooting of *Un solo corazón*, a film starring María Guerrero and Fernando Díaz de Mendoza. The dramatist Eduardo Marquina thus recalled its connection with the cinema in 1914 and 1915, when there had been a scarcity of sets and locations for filming. Marquina had written the screenplay and captions of the movie for Segre Films, and his son was the director.¹⁰

In 1935, the cabaret closed down and the premises were remodelled as a cinema by the architect Teodoro de Anasagasti. It opened on 19 October that year with the film *Madre alegría* by the production and distribution company Diana, directed by José Buchs and starring Ana Leyva and Gaspar Campos. A review of the preview screening was published in the magazine *Tarari!* on 3 October. It had eight hundred seats distributed between the stalls and the circle, and showed newly released films in continuous sessions from four in the afternoon until midnight. Bernabé de Aragón, the critic of the magazine *Mundo Gráfico*, commented on its opening in the 23 October issue: "It is a cinema that does honour to Madrid, the city of cinematographic palaces, and may be classed among those of the top category." A review of 27 October in the weekly magazine *Crónica* praises Anasagasti's modern design and the work of the engineer Rogelio Sol before going on to say: "The union of art and technology have made a reality of a very beautiful project, where together with the graceful lines, splendid colouring and comfort of the locale, special mention must be made of the novel and successful lighting, which today forms a branch of engineering: lighting technique."

Programme leaflet of the Gong Cinema. 1940.



¹⁰ Pascual Cebollada and Mary G. Santa Eulalia (2000). *Madrid y el cine. Panorama filmógrafo de cien años de historia*. Madrid: Consejería de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid.



Gong Cinema. Demolished in 1970 for the extension of Banco de España. Calle de Marqués de Cubas, 11. c. 1965. Photograph: Agencia EFE.

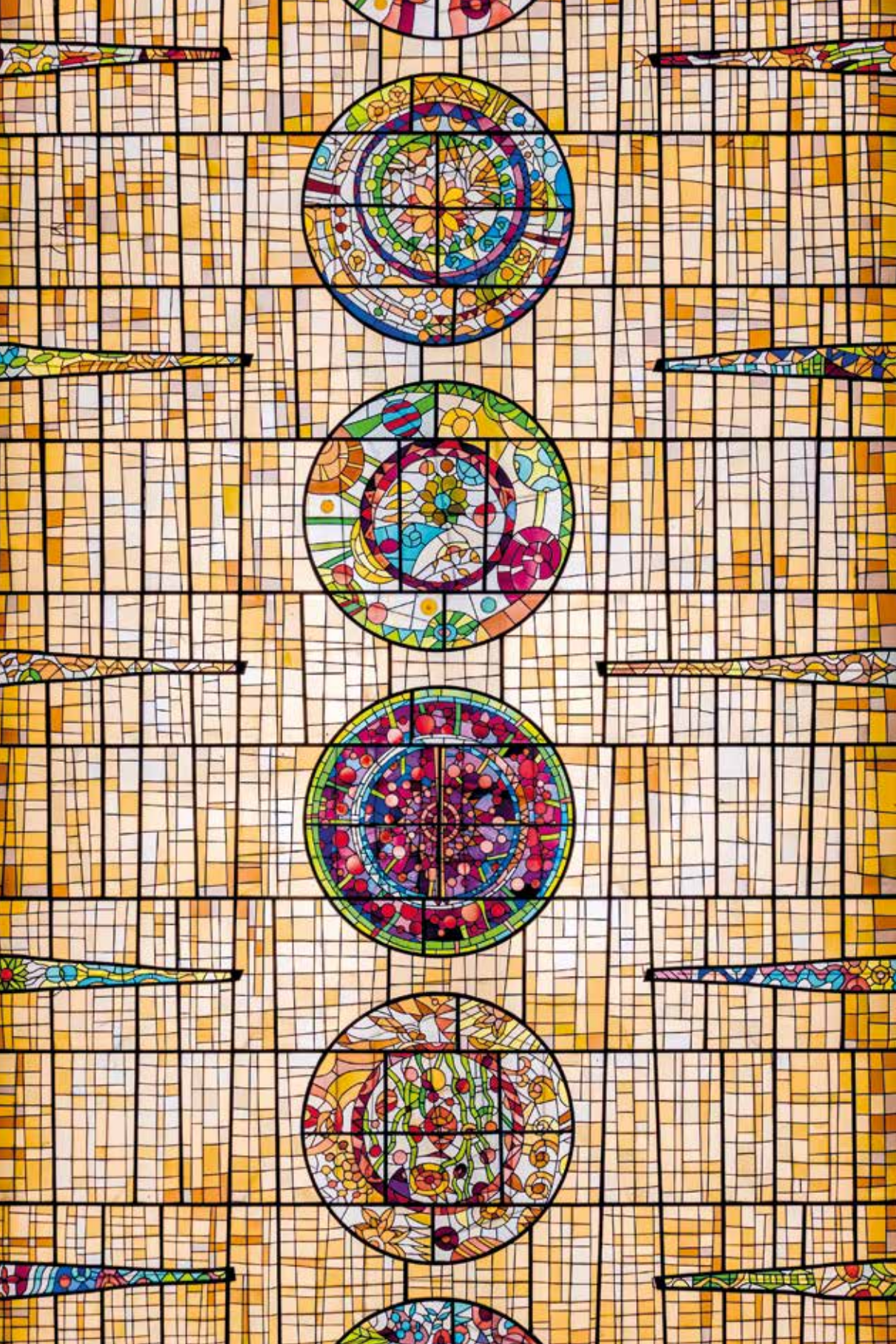
The Gong was one of the favourite cinemas of the illustrious writer Azorín, who frequently went there after 1950, during the last years of his life, from his nearby home at number 21, Calle Zorrilla. There he spent the hours of his old age enjoying the latest American movies and penning critical notes for the press, having written that he found the same aesthetic enjoyment in a book as in a film.¹¹ Mervyn LeRoy must have been one of his favourite directors, as Azorín was photographed in front of the box office of the Cine Carretas

looking at the poster of *Homecoming*, starring Clark Gable and Lana Turner (*ABC Archive*). The professor and literary critic Andrés Amorós had the following recollection of him: “When I was a lad, I remember seeing Azorín, who used to join the queue in front of the Gong Cinema, very near his house [...]. I watched curiously as he approached the box office, bought his ticket and went in. At the age of nearly eighty, a senile passion for the cinema had awakened in him.”¹²

The cinema was also a long way ahead of its time. In the 1950s, it had a children’s nursery attended by carers, and cinema clubs were organised from June 1951 onwards in collaboration with the Circle of Cinematographic Writers. In 1964, its programme included double features in their original languages, with discounts for language students. It closed in the autumn of 1965.

11 Fernando Lázaro Carreter (1996). “El cinematógrafo. Azorín”, in *ABC literario*, 5 January.

12 Andrés Amorós (2023). “Azorín, clásico vivo”, *ABC*, 8 June.



Room 4

Spain is different

“Photography is an act of love.”

Alberto Schommer

During the intense period from the transition to democracy until the end of the 20th century, Banco de España organised countless activities that are summarised in a hundred or so pictures shown in an audiovisual format. From the point of view of photography, the period is fascinating for the radical change from black and white to colour, for the use of slides, and for the ‘democratisation’ of the image by placing small and easily managed cameras in the hands of amateur photographers. Besides this, there were a number of documentary and creative works centred on the Cibeles building, with two paradigmatic books that are on display in the exhibition: *Banco de España. Una visita a la planta noble del edificio de Madrid* (Banco de España. A visit to the main floor) (1970) and *El viaje* (The Journey) by Alberto Schommer (1994).

Also exhibited are the projects presented for the competition convened in 1978 for designs to close off the building in the area of Calle de Alcalá. It was entered by the architects Fernando Moreno Barberá, Eleuterio Población Knappe, Luis Cubillo de Arteaga, José Antonio Corrales and Ramón Vázquez Molezún, Josep Maria Martorell, Oriol Bohigas and David Mackay, Javier Yáñez Orcoyen, and Rafael Moneo, who finally executed the work in 2006.

Another very interesting set of documents relates to ceremonial occasions like official visits and the investitures of directors and governors,

where those portrayed, apart from the officials concerned, include political and economic personalities. Also important is the group on the King of Spain Prizes for Economy, biennial awards instituted in 1986 by the José Celma Prieto Foundation which recognise the scientific careers of Spanish and Latin American personalities. This group of documents is rounded off with pictures of the visits of the King and Queen to Banco de España during special events like the celebration of the bank’s bicentenary in 1982, or the royal visit of October 2021 to attend a meeting of the Board of Governors and inaugurate the exhibition *2,328 reales de vellón. Goya and the Origins of the Banco de España Collection*.

The world in colour

The last quarter of the 20th century began with the transition to democracy and ended with the world submerged in digital technology. A month after the first democratic elections in 1977, Spain presented its official application for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), the precursor of today’s European Union, although its admission did not take place until nearly a decade later, in 1986. Photography underwent a massive transformation, cameras were robotised, images were counted in pixels, metal rolls of film became collectors’ pieces, paper originals, negatives and slides started to be digitised, and the machinery of darkrooms was replaced by computers, servers and printers. All this had an effect on publishing and, evidently, the press, with a shift from black and white photogravures to



Official visit to Banco de España of Karl Klasen, governor of Deutsche Bundesbank. 26 October 1970. Chromogenic print.

colour photomechanics without any loss in their documentary and informative function: “The images reproduced in the press preserve information on a specific affair in the life of the past.”¹³

From the 1970s onwards, the Archive of Banco de España compiled hundreds of images on these changes on various supports, gathering a corpus on the process of economic, political and socio-cultural transformation. The particularity was that professional photographs were collected alongside others by amateurs which, quality apart, captured special or unique

moments of interest. This was aided, like the later case of mobile telephony, by the application of new technologies to cheap and easily handled cameras with which millions of snapshots were taken each day, like the Spanish Werlisa Color, the German Voigtländer or the extremely popular Kodak Instamatic, which returned to the 19th-century slogan of this most paradigmatic of photographic companies: “You press the button, we do the rest.”

At the same time, the old grey postcards started to be printed in bright colours, reaching their splendour with the spread of domestic and foreign tourism. The bank’s headquarters on Cibeles was once again one of the emblems chosen as a brand reference for Spain, a touchpoint for

¹³ Boris Kossoy (2014). *Lo efímero y lo perpetuo en la imagen fotográfica*. Madrid: Cátedra, p. 61.

the glories of the capital and at the same time a reflection of the everyday life around it, including traffic, cars, passers-by, street furniture and the routine of the city as a whole.

Moreover, the activities and patrimony of Banco de España were registered in analytical and descriptive monographs. Among these was the work on display which represents a preamble or antecedent to the massive incorporation of colour to book culture, a vintage piece produced in the 1970s with the title: *Banco de España. Una visita a la planta noble del edificio de Madrid*. This leads readers through the building's rooms in the manner of a guided tour of a museum to see its furnishings, paintings, sculptures, tapestries and sumptuary and decorative artworks, such as stained glass windows, clocks, vases, desks, screens, lamps, candelabra and inkwells. The book includes pictures of a building whose main rooms had recently been refurbished by the bank's architects, who modernised it and

adapted it to the new functions of the institution after its nationalisation and enriched it with new furnishings and décor.

The book was designed with fold-out plates in the form of triptychs, silhouetted illustrations, borderless printing, thin margins and a rustic typeface, and some of the paper is even textured to resemble that used for wallpapering. All this makes the book a prototypical artifact resulting from the characteristic photomechanics of the period, printed in dull and saturated colours with a predominance of magenta over blue or yellow.

Shown as a counterpoint is the book *El viaje*, one of the many creations of Alberto Schommer, member of the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando and winner of the National Prize for Photography. In the book, published in 1994, the artist chose black and white to show details of the city of Madrid and involve the viewer in the identification of the settings. One of these was a previously unseen perspective of the Cibeles

The prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, during the investiture of José Ramón Álvarez Rendueles and Mariano Rubio as governor and vice-governor of Banco de España. 31 July 1980. Photograph: Europa Press ©. Gelatin silver.



building, here shown reflected in the rear view mirror of a vehicle. For this alternative gaze, Banco de España was once again the chosen motif.

Future projects

On 25 September 1978, Banco de España convened a competition inviting ideas for a new building to replace the existing one on the corner of Calle de Alcalá and number 1, Marqués de Cubas. The building that had stood there since 1924 was commissioned by Banca García-Calamate from the architect José de Lorite Kramer in 1919, and its ground floor and basement contained Banco de España offices, while the rest of the building was used for rented luxury dwellings. Banco de España had acquired the building in 1950, but it was not until 1974 that it was completely emptied of occupants. It was the last plot that would finally fulfil the old aspiration of taking over the entire block, making a completely enclosed and detached building in accordance with its nature.

Banco de España had been built between 1883 and 1891 on the former sites of the Palace of Alcañices, the Royal Congregation of San Fermín de los Navarros, the palace of the dowager Marchioness of Larios and a fragment of the terrain of the Civil Engineering School, which was reached from Calle Marqués de Cubas. Because the plots were located along Paseo del Prado between Calle de Alcalá and Calle de los Madrazo, it was there that the architect Eduardo Adaro located the main front. The shorter façade on Calle de Alcalá, which led onto the monumental chamfered corner facing Cibeles, thus remained secondary. Since it was not a completely detached building but was designed as if it were one, the architect connected the streets of Los Madrazo and Alcalá with an alleyway that isolated it from the adjoining buildings. In 1928, José Yáñez Larrosa was commissioned to extend the building on the site previously occupied by the Houses of Santamarca (or of El Chantre), the property of the Duchess of Nájera, at numbers 48, 50 and 52, Calle de Alcalá. The new building, which was finished in 1934, scrupulously respected the model of Adaro's façade, relegating all the

architectural novelties of the 1920s to the interior. Yáñez situated the entrance pavilion in the centre of the composition, introducing certain novelties with respect to the pavilion on Paseo del Prado, and absorbing a change of gradient at ground level that is barely perceptible. For reasons of security and isolation, he repeated the perimeter alleyway. Between 1969 and 1976, the building was enlarged for the second time. The project was entrusted to Juan de Zavala Lafora, who died at the start of 1970, and Javier Yáñez Orcoyen, the son of the designer of the earlier extension, who continued it on his own. The result was a peripheral building on the streets of Los Madrazo (nos. 25 and 27) and Marqués de Cubas (nos. 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11) leaving a large inner courtyard where a detached building was connected by walkways to the new edifice and the extension of the 1930s.

To close off the block and completely isolate the building, it remained to annex the corner of Marqués de Cubas (no. 1) with Calle de Alcalá, with an area of just 400 m². Banco de España now faced the challenge of providing a worthy finishing touch to a building that was an emblem of Madrid and had been photographed on countless occasions as an image of the city. It was not principally a question of extending its area but above all of achieving the integrity characteristic of a public edifice. Banco de España was aware of the architectural importance of the site within the urbanistic context of the area, and it was therefore decided to seek the collaboration of the most prestigious architects of the moment. At first, all that was requested of them was a study of the volume suited to the surroundings and a design for the façades, linking the original bank with its front on Calle de Alcalá with the new extension facing Marqués de Cubas. Invitations to participate were tendered to such respected architecture studios as those of Oriol Bohigas Guardiola, Luis Cubillo de Arteaga, Fernando Moreno Barberá, Rafael Moneo, Eleuterio Población, Ramón Vázquez Molezún and Javier Yáñez Orcoyen, several of whom constructed other buildings for Banco de España before or after this project. Luis Cubillo had carried out several major refurbishments on different parts of the interior of the traditional building; Ramón Vázquez Molezún and José Antonio Corrales are



Above and center: Madrid. Banco de España. Competition of preliminary proposals for the closure of the building on the streets of Alcalá and Marqués de Cubas. Projects by Corrales and Molezún and Moneo. 1979. Photographs: Altair Photo. Chromogenic prints. Below: Madrid. Banco de España. Extension of the building on the streets of Alcalá and Marqués de Cubas. 2006. Digital image.

the designers of the current Badajoz branch, inaugurated in 1985, and of the auxiliary building at number 522, Calle de Alcalá, built between 1983 and 1992; Rafael Moneo is the architect responsible for the former Jaén branch, inaugurated in 1988; Eleuterio Población produced the project for the last Huesca branch in 1985; and Javier Yáñez Orcoyen, together with Juan de Zavala, designed the second extension to the Madrid building, built between 1969 and 1976.

Aware of the difficulties involved in the project and its responsibility towards the city of Madrid in constructing a building that would continue the existing one, the bank sought the collaboration of institutions that would guarantee full support for any decision taken. It therefore requested Madrid City Council, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando and the Official College of Architects to appoint one architect each to represent them on an advisory committee that would issue a verdict on the proposals presented. These were handed in on 15 January 1979 and the competition was judged on 15 October. The winner was Rafael Moneo, who had understood the language of the bank and resolved the occupation of the site in the best possible way, completing the earlier layout with the new volume.

Four of the solutions offered – Cubillo, Moreno Barberá, Yáñez and Moneo – laid a stress on continuity, being differentiated substantially by their compositional approach to the façades and, above all, their capacity of analysis of the building as a whole. Martorell, Bohigas and Mackay opted for two proposals with alternative solutions: one for a zone of gardens occupying the entire site, and the other for a pavilion lower than the adjoining building. Corrales and Molezún proposed a tall construction with curtain wall façades and also, as a second idea, the inclusion of a volume to shut it off up

to the existing cornice. Finally, Eleuterio Población responded to the demands of the competition with the model of a hermetic solution completely opposed to the image of the Alcalá façade.¹⁴

The bank was ready to start construction immediately, but Madrid City Council, which was then working to prevent the systematic demolition of the city's architectural heritage, delayed approval of the demolition licence. Finally, the Calamarte building was excluded from the general catalogue of protected buildings and its demolition could be carried out in 2002.

Nearly 25 years had gone by from the inception of the project to its execution, and Rafael Moneo, a highly reputed international architect, tried to update the proposal he had presented in 1979 by introducing some changes, few but significant, which considerably improved the original project. These fundamentally involved the bays in the chamfer, the reorientation of the three façades and an agreement on the sculptural programme. The design was based on the use of a chamfer as an articulating element facing the major urban thoroughfare of Gran Vía and symmetrical with the monumental and emblematic chamfered corner on Cibeles, and on the use of caryatids as a means of transition and continuity between the buildings, in line with their function on the original façades. The same purpose was fulfilled by having the cornices at the same height and introducing a protective grille to the building on Calle Marqués de Cubas similar to those running along the Prado and Alcalá fronts. The extension was finished in 2006. Its construction allowed the whole block to be occupied and closed off with a splendid work of contemporary architecture that complements the earlier building, almost forming a single element with it.

A hundred tableaus

In the audiovisual produced for the fourth room in the exhibition, there is a compilation of a hundred black and white and colour images of the main events at Banco de España between the years 1975 and 2022. The only picture to fall outside this period, as it is dated 16 November

14 José María Viñuela (2006). "Arquitectura del Banco de España: la plenitud de un modelo", in *El edificio del Banco de España*. Madrid: Banco de España.



Inauguration of the Numismatics Exhibition of Banco de México at the Banco de España headquarters in Madrid. 1978. Photograph: Europa Press. Gelatin silver.

1973, shows the General Assembly held in Valencia. This photograph was taken by Luis Vidal Vidal, a member of one of the leading families of Valencian photographers.

The economic affairs related to the bank have been studied by María Ángeles Pons, and photographic records of many of them are preserved in the Historic Archive. From the photographic point of view, the individual pictures and reportages preserved today form an interesting corpus that permits a socio-cultural and economic reading and analysis of the last part of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st.

The selection shown in the exhibition gives some idea of the numerous activities photographed and the large number of personalities portrayed. In chronological order, the events represented between 1975 and 2002 are: the signing of the granting of loans to the Spanish state (1976), the meeting of the Board of Governors (1977), an exhibition of numismatics (1977),

the bicentenary of Banco de España (1982), the executive council at the Palace of La Moncloa (1982), the presentation of banknotes (1983), the tribute to Juan Sardá (1987), the meetings of governors of Central Banks of Latin America and Spain (1988, 1992), the inauguration of the Girona branch (1990), the royal audience for the Board of Governors of Banco de España (1994) and the meetings of the Governing Council of the European Central bank (1999, 2000).

The most recent photographs, also taken for documentary purposes, employ a digital format to reflect more of the bank's activities in every area. All of them recall the life, the activity and the people belonging or related to the institution. A larger number of images is compiled from the years 2000 to 2023: the Euro 2002 information campaign for the Eurosystem (2001); the inauguration of the exhibition *The road to the euro* (2001); the meeting of the governors of Central Banks of the American continent and Spain (2003); Jaime



Above: Meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank. 1999. Chromogenic copy. Center: Gonzalo Gil, former vice-governor of Banco de España, at the inauguration of the exhibition *Ten Years of the Euro in Spain*. 2009. Digital image. Below: Visit of King Felipe VI to the European Central Bank. 19 October 2022. Photograph: Juanjo Martín, Agencia EFE.

Caruana Lacorte and Rafael Moneo Vallés with the plans of the project for the corner of Alcalá with Marqués de Cubas (2004); the meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank (2006); the inauguration of the new Banco de España building and the exhibition *150 years of History* (2006); Miguel Fernández Ordóñez at the Governors' Seminar of the Eurosystem and the Mediterranean countries (2007); the inauguration of the exhibition *Ten years of the euro in Spain* (2009); the European Central Bank meeting in Barcelona (2012); the signing of the Plan for Financial Education (2013); the presentation of the Europe series 20-euro note (2015); the incorporation of the Sociedad Imprenta de Billetes, S.A. (Imbisa) (2015); the visit of Danièle Nouy, president of the Supervisory Board of the European Central Bank (2017); the 3rd Financial Education Day (2017); the Generation euro competition (2018, 2019); the meeting of the Board of Governors in Seville (2018); Financial Education Day (2019); ONCE Coupon Financial Education Day (2019); Margarita Delgado at the Tolling of the Bell for Gender Equality at the Madrid Stock Exchange (2020); the renovation of the collaboration agreement to foster financial education (2020); International Women's Day (2020); the inauguration of the exhibition *2,328 reales de vellón. Goya and the origins of the Banco de España Collection* (2021); the day of the expiry of the deadline for changing pesetas into euros (2021); the visit of Felipe VI to the European Central Bank (2022); the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Fundación FAD Juventud (2022); Open Administration Week (2022); and the Board of Governors (2023).

Also included is a selection of investitures of governors: José Manuel Álvarez Rendueles (1980), Mariano Rubio (1984), Luis Ángel Rojo (1992), Jaime Caruana (2000), Miguel Ángel Fernández Ordóñez (2006), Luis María Linde (2014) and Pablo Hernández de Cos (2018). A further selection shows the award of the King of Spain Prizes for Economy to Luis Ángel Rojo (1986), Julio Segura Sánchez (1990), Gabriel Tortella (1994), Enrique Fuentes Quintana (1998), Juan Velarde Fuertes (2002), Gonzalo Anes Álvarez de Castrillón (2006), Pedro Schwartz Girón (2010), Carmen Reinhart (2018) and Agustín Carstens (2023).

The visits and events with royal participation may be summarised as the bicentenary of Banco de España (1982), the exhibition of Hispanic coins (1989), the visits of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofía to see the portraits painted by Carmen Laffón (1989), the visits of Prince Felipe de Borbón (1989, 2006 and 2010), the audience granted by King Juan Carlos to the Board of Governors of Banco de España (1994), the Prince of Asturias with the Executive Committee (2001) and the Board of Governors (2012), the King and Queen at the inauguration of the last extension to the building (2006), King Felipe VI at the inauguration of the exhibition *2,328 reales de vellón. Goya and the origins of the Banco de España Collection* (2021), and the meeting of Queen Letizia with the Board of Trustees of the Fundación FAD Juventud (2022).

The photographs were taken by specialised agencies, mainly EFE, by professionals hired to document the events, and sometimes even by amateurs who were present. Of the hundred images in the audiovisual, thirty have credits while the authorship of the rest is unknown: Agencia EFE (2), Banco de España (1), Europa Press (1), Juanjo Martín (3), Ana Muller (2), Juan Carlos Quindós (1), Daniel Santamaría (17), Luis Vidal (1) and Vita & Olga (2).

The two pictures by Ana Muller show the governor Jaime Caruana Lacorte and the architect Rafael Moneo Vallés examining the plans on the table of the Executive Committee Chamber for the project to close off the block of the Banco de España head offices on the corner formed by Calle de Alcalá and Marqués de Cubas.

Daniel Santamaría is the photographer with the largest number of selected photographs. His relationship with Banco de España covers the period 2013 to 2023, with the reportage on the 2013 meeting of the Board of Governors attended by Prince Felipe de Borbón, the constitution of Imbisa in 2015, the visit of Danièle Nouy in 2017, the celebration of the 3rd Financial Education Day in 2017, the ONCE Coupon dedicated to Financial Education Day in 2019, International Women's Day in 2020, the award of the King of Spain Prize for Economy to Agustín Carstens (2023), and several shots of the exterior and interior of the Cibeles building.



SECRETARIA

2 3
5 6
8 9

INTERVENCIÓN
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HOJAS
PONES DE DEPÓSITO

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4321

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Desk and chair

4 5 6 7 8

Room 5

Towards artificial intelligence

“The world seems to exist to be photographed.”

Antonio Muñoz Molina

These are stories from history viewed through photographic documents.

The Archive as safeguard of memory

The photographs shown in the last room recognise the value of the Archive as a safeguard of memory, in this case the memory of the institution, as well as illustrating the development of the digital universe and the evolution towards artificial intelligence, capable of producing incredible hyperrealist images.

Exhibited as a reference is a set of images from the old archives of different branch offices, together with two digital photographs taken at the Historic Archive of Banco de España expressly for this exhibition: the reading room and the document deposit.

To bring the circle to a close, and in acknowledgement of classic techniques, two photogravures have been produced with today's technology on the basis of digital originals on a paper support, so symbolising the past and present of photography and its applications. As a finishing touch, continuing with one of the exhibition's themes related to professional activities and portraits, an emblematic image has been selected to symbolise the role of women in 21st-century Spain.

A timeline explains the course of events in the nearly two centuries that have passed since photography was first presented in Paris in 1839.

From Albumen to Pixel fulfils the ultimate purpose of the Archive of Banco de España: diffusion through visibility. The values of photography are seen both through the container (the source of information) and the contained (the heritage), which are fused in the generic term of 'document' (a message on a support). As heritage, photography forms part of the documentary and artistic collections of institutions, and as a source it is fundamental for historical research. “Every photograph is a residue of the past, a source both for the historian of photography and for other historians, scientists and scholars.”¹⁵

Printed and digital publications confirm the character and function of the photograph as historical document. Since the official presentation of photography nearly two centuries ago, it has had a long journey, going from books illustrated with pasted albumen prints to the photogravures of the press and subsequently to photomechanical techniques, before issuing in a vertiginous passage through the digital universe of the late 20th century, well illustrated by the detail of the stained glass window from the Tenerife branch shown in a large-format photograph by Galder Gortazar (2022), which forms part of a large set of digital photos taken by various photographers at different branches all over Spain.

The photographic production gathered by the professionals of the Archive throughout its

15 Boris Kossoy (2014). *Lo efímero y lo perpetuo en la imagen fotográfica*, op. cit., p. 50.



Huesca. Banco de España. Archive of the branch. Calle Coso Alto. 1945. Photograph: Martín Lluésma Vallestín. Gelatin silver.

history has been ordered, classified and made available for consultation and diffusion in accordance with established protocols. The Archive of Banco de España is therefore a paradigm and a model, and its procedures have followed the general directives of the institution, defined by María A. Pons as follows: “Its role has been to promote the smooth running and stability of the financial system and to advise on the reforms and measures necessary to confront problems, and it will remain crucial, as it has been throughout its history.”¹⁶

The professionals involved, both men and women, and the activities and the settings where they take place are and will continue to be fragmented into instants to perpetuate their memory. Hence the symbolism of the picture taken by Daniel Santamaría on 8 March 2020, where women pose in the Library of Banco de España in Madrid (the former cash till court) alongside the vice-governor Margarita Delgado Tejero. Its interest and relevance takes us

back to the period after the Civil War, when a large number of women joined the staff to occupy a variety of posts. We know their faces thanks to the portraits in their personal files, although no group photograph from that period has survived.

It is in this way that the photographer becomes an author and a witness. The image will reflect the bank’s internal history, and the Archive of Banco de España will continue to be the safeguard of memory. There is a constant influx of photographs with various origins: institutional events and activities, reproduction of documents or acquisition of special originals. Various photographs of interest have even been added to the Archive during the process of preparing this exhibition.

The digital universe

With society’s eyes now on artificial intelligence, the possibilities of generating images in what Joan Fontcuberta has called the post-photographic era have brought exceptional vigour to visual culture. The artist alerts us to a key aspect of the massive and constant production of photographs: the risk that the circulation of images will prevail over

¹⁶ María Ángeles Pons Brías (2023). “El Banco de España y la economía”, in *Archivo Fotográfico Banco de España, 1874-2023*. Madrid: Banco de España, p. 384.



Banco de España. Calle de los Madrazo. Finial of the façade. 2018. Photograph: Luis Asín. Digital image.

their content.¹⁷ In this context, archives acquire a fundamental role and their intervention becomes essential for inverting these terms.

The Archive of Banco de España has undergone a constant evolution that is reflected in the exceptional collection it preserves, manages and disseminates. Its adaptation to change has been and remains one of the challenges to be faced, and to this purpose it has applied, applies and will continue to apply the most suitable technology and resources so that its documentary corpus, of which photography forms part with nearly 25,000 items, will not only continue to grow but acquire greater value through its treatment and diffusion, especially in the entrepreneurial and academic fields. It will thus contribute to the socio-cultural and economic study of the country with a view to two converging factors, responsibility and commitment. The responsibility is that of guaranteeing the preservation of the heritage, and the commitment that of fulfilling the functions invested in it by the institution.

The digital universe and its meaning are explained by the steps taken by the Archive itself to digitise its photographic documents. After the archival work carried out between 2013 and 2018, which included the processes of tracing, locating, identification, classification, description, installation and conservation of photographs, the collection was then digitised by Informática Abana, a firm specialising in the digitalisation of the documentary heritage. The characteristics and technical directives of the digitalisation plan responded to standard and homologated international practices that ensure the long-term preservation and diffusion of the digital objects as well as interoperability with other systems. Given the fragility of the original materials, the digitisation was carried out manually with overhead scanners that fulfil quality standard ISO 19264 for the digitalisation of documentary heritage. The process resulted in preservation files and derived files optimised for diffusion. The digital objects generated are accompanied by their corresponding descriptive, technical and preservation metadata in accordance with the internationally recognised METS (Metadata Encoding Transmission Standard) and PREMIS (Preservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies). In all, 20,500 originals on physical supports (mainly paper and

¹⁷ Joan Fontcuberta (2020). *La furia de las imágenes. Notas sobre la posfotografía*. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, p. 39.



Madrid. Banco de España. Historic Archive deposit and researchers' reading room. 2024. Photographs: Ana Amado. Digital image.



Madrid. Banco de España. International Women's Day. Women employees of Banco de España with the vice-governor, Margarita Delgado. 8 March 2019. Photograph: Daniel Santamaría. Digital image.

plastic) were digitised, resulting in 32,000 master files that are stored on the Banco de España servers and managed with a specific computing tool for that purpose. The collection will be made available to the general public through the Institutional Repository of Banco de España.

On display in the exhibition are four works that exemplify the application of the digital process: two originals on different supports and two contemporary photogravures obtained from these originals. The pictures are of the trading floor of the Seville branch, photographed by Dubois in 1929, of which a paper copy is preserved, and the finial of the façade of the Banco de España building in Calle de los Madrazo in Madrid, a digital photo created by Luis Asín (2018). On the basis of both, Juan Lara made the two photogravures at his studio, OgamiPress.

A set of digital copies has also been generated from photographs on paper of the first half of the 20th century, allowing us to discover the nucleus and essence of the archives. Among the set, special prominence has been given to the picture of the Vigo branch, photographed by Enrique

Sarabia González on 6 September 1929. Banco de España opened a branch office in Vigo in 1885, when it rented a mansion at number 66, Rúa do Areal, that had been designed by Manuel de Uceda in 1863 as a personal residence for Fernando Carreras. The bank acquired ownership of it in 1889 and carried out various modifications of the interior over the years. In 1943, the branch was moved to a new building at number 15, Calle Policarpo Sanz, whose design was commissioned from the architect Romualdo de Madariaga. The branch was closed in 1982.

Finally, as a colophon, two new digital photographs have been created of the Archive of Banco de España: the reading room and the document deposit. The photographer, Ana Amado, has generated images that trace the dividing line between before and after the exhibition. In *From Albumen to Pixel* – that is, from yesterday to today – pictures are shown made with different technical and technological procedures, but the essence will always be the content, not forgetting that “everything is photographable, but not everything has been photographed.”



Photographers in the exhibition

A documentary analysis of the photographic collection of Banco de España yields a count of more than six hundred professional photographers all over Spain. To these, we must add a second unquantifiable but also numerous group owing to uncredited originals. The variety of the work is enormous, although it is mainly concentrated on the three themes seen in the

exhibition: portraits, spaces and activities. Governors, directors and employees have all been portrayed through these photographers' lenses, and spaces, buildings, settings and major events have been recorded. Most of these professionals were and are highly prestigious, and about one hundred of them are featured in the exhibition as representatives of the entire group.

Room 1

- Calderoni *et al.* (Budapest)
- Champagne, A. C. (Amsterdam)
- G. H. (Brussels)
- Juliá, Eusebio (Madrid)
- Laurent, Jean (Madrid)

Room 2

- Alonso (Madrid)
- Calvet Salvatella, Orestes (Madrid)
- Cepillo Lorite, Francisco (Cádiz)
- Collada Vega, Celestino (Oviedo)
- Gombau, Venancio (Salamanca)
- Grollo, J. (Valencia)
- Hauser y Menet (Madrid)
- Irigoyen Zabaleta, José (Madrid)
- Llaudará, J. (Lleida)
- Mena (Zamora)
- Muro, Alberto (Logroño)
- Olivenza Salazar, Miguel (Badajoz)
- Ortega, Carlos (Murcia)
- Photo Art (Alicante)
- Rodríguez, J. (Valencia)
- Sociedad Artístico Fotográfica (Cáceres)
- Tutor, R. (Calahorra)
- Yruela Marín, Enrique (Madrid)

Room 3

- Alfonso (Sánchez Portela) (Madrid)
- Altair Photo (Madrid)
- Amer Masfarret, Francisco (Madrid)
- Antonio Antón, José de (Segovia)
- Aumente Menéndez, Manuel (Madrid)
- Blanco (Tangier)
- Calvet Salvatella, Orestes (Madrid)
- Campúa, José (Madrid)
- Cortés, Francisco García (Tetouan)
- Ferrer (Granada)
- Flores (Toledo)
- Foto Mediamarca (Larache)
- Foto Moderna (Tetouan)
- Foto Nueva (Burgos)
- Fotografía Aérea y Terrestre (Madrid)
- Jalón Ángel (Zaragoza)
- Lamela (Lugo)
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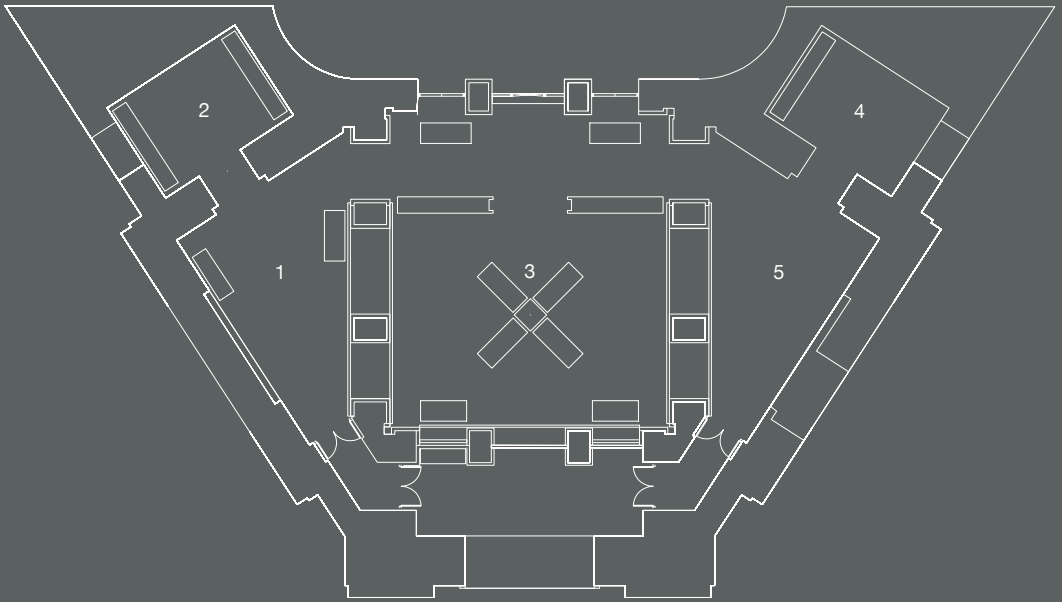
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