

Credits

Introduction

Álvaro Perdices
Yolanda Romero Gómez

Texts

Álvaro Perdices
Patricia Alonso del Torno [pp. 94-95]

Text Editing and Proofreading

Irene Fernández

Translations

Dean Wang

Design

gráfica futura

Printing and Image Reproduction

Artes Gráficas Palermo

Photography

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COVER IMAGE

Alberto Martorell - Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid

Mining, c. 1932

Cartoon for the stained-glass window in the Patio de Operaciones, corner panel
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, depositado en la Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

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ISBN: 978-84-09-78252-9

DL: M-23234-2025

Acknowledgements

The Banco de España wishes to thank all the individuals and institutions who contributed to the research and preparation of this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. The project has benefited from the invaluable support of the Ministerio de Cultura and the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, whose collaboration was crucial in the loan of the original sketches and drawings produced by the Maumejean Workshop for the creation of the Banco de España's stained-glass windows in 1934. These works are currently held on deposit at the Centro Nacional del Vidrio - Real Fábrica de Cristales de La Granja, to whom we extend our deepest gratitude.

We would also like to recognize the outstanding work of Natalia Villota and Rocío de Castro García, who were essential to the restoration and presentation of this valuable material, as well as Alfonso Muñoz and Pablo Muñoz, for the restoration of the stained-glass windows on display.

Special thanks are due to: Diego Alcaide, Sofía de Alfonso, Patricia Alonso, Miriam Alzuri, Manuel Barea, Rosario Calleja, Almudena Camps, José Castaño, Paula Colom, Marcos Corrales, Ana Crespo, Hugo Durán, Juan Escrigas, Félix de la Fuente, Sergio Fuentes Milà, Damián Gemenó, Lourdes Gómez, Gema Hernández, Rodrigo Iglesias-Sarria, María Inclán, Laia Lafuente, Celso Lago, Manolo Laguillo, David López, Gabriel López / GK, Violeta Márquez, Nuria Moreu, Julia Ogayar, Leticia Pérez, César Riego de Fuentes, Ángel Rodríguez, Paulino Rodríguez Barral, Javier Romeu, Elena Serrano, Andrew Shallcross, Bel Vecchio, Carmen Velasco and Miguel Ángel Vives, as well as to the researchers and authors of the texts.

Our gratitude is likewise extended to the collectors and institutions that have generously lent works for this exhibition: Adolfo Autric, Javier Astudillo, Pablo Muñoz, Alfonso Muñoz, Rosario Tamayo, the Ministerio de Cultura, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, the Hemeroteca Nacional, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Fundación Telefónica, the Arxiu Històric Fotogràfic de Catalunya, the Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra, the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Iberia, and the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid.

Finally, our most sincere thanks go to all the Banco de España departments and services involved in the preparation and installation of this exhibition.

Allegories of What Is to Come



Allegories of What Is to Come

Banco de España

BANCO DE ESPAÑA
Eurosistema

Exhibition Gallery
Banco de España
26/11/2025 - 28/03/2026

Allegories of What Is to Come

Allegories of What Is to Come explores the threshold between eras – a liminal space where past and future intertwine through architecture, art, and institutional memory. Through this exhibition, the Banco de España offers a considered perspective on one of the most significant chapters in its history: the extension of its Madrid headquarters in the 1930s, a moment of profound social, political, and aesthetic transformation that left an indelible mark on the collective imagination.

No mere assemblage of objects, nor a nostalgic celebration of heritage, this project is above all an opportunity for reflection – an invitation to question the role of institutions in shaping modernity and to reconsider the images that have established our identity. Through stained-glass windows, sketches, architectural plans, banknotes, photographs, furnishings, and previously unpublished documents, *Allegories of What Is to Come* weaves a complex, multifaceted account revealing both the modernizing impulse and the tensions threaded through that turbulent era.

The narrative journey revolves around two emblematic spaces within the building: the Patio de Operaciones (Main Banking Hall) and the Cámara del Oro (Gold Vault). Both were conceived by the architect José Yáñez Larrosa (Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966) as symbols of a new era in which architecture was expected to respond not only to functional requirements but also to representational needs. The first – open and monumental – serves as a public square where the people can access financial services; the second – hidden and fortified – houses the nation's gold reserves, ensuring economic stability in times of uncertainty. This duality – the visible and the secret, the accessible and the guarded – guides the exhibition path and allows visitors to uncover the many layers of meaning woven into the fabric of the building.

The 1930s were, in Spain and across Europe, years of profound contradiction. The hopes of democratic modernization ushered in by the Second Spanish Republic were entangled with social conflict, political polarization, and the rising threat of authoritarianism. Against this backdrop, the Banco de España undertook an ambitious architectural extension that sought to project an image of stability, progress, and confidence in the future. The selection of materials – steel, stone, glass, polished brass – and adoption of technical innovations reflected not just the pursuit of efficiency and permanence but also the urge to express the values of modernity in institutional form.

Art Deco – an international aesthetic blending geometry, order, and sophistication – was the visual language chosen for the extension. The stained-glass windows commissioned from the renowned Maumejean Hermanos workshop became the iconographic heart of the project, with allegorical figures of laborers, farmers, merchants, and mechanics embodying the ideal of a virtuous, productive, and vigorous population. The exaltation of labor as a secular creed, the heroic representation of the human body, and the epic stylization of scenes all reflect a desire to craft an institutional image affirming the bank's role as a guarantor of national progress.

Yet this exhibition is no self-congratulatory exercise. Photographs, films, and documents reveal the other side of the allegorical coin: the harsh working conditions, the precarity, the daily struggle. This contrast invites us to reconsider the function of institutional art as an instrument of legitimation, but also as a means of concealment. What do these images show, and what do they obscure? Which bodies are represented, and which remain out of view? What tensions of gender, class, or ideology stretch through these visual discourses?

It also prompts reflection on the role of architecture itself. As Tim Benton has observed, “Art Deco is a style that calls into question the fundamental role of architecture and design: What psychological role do architecture and design play in providing pleasure and stimulating the senses? Should they be purely functional? Should they aspire to the sublime in art or occupy an intermediate role – both artistic and functional?”¹

Yárnoz, who visited the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris – an event that helped Art Deco to spread internationally – drew upon this aesthetic and knew how to adapt it harmoniously to the functional requirements of the Banco de España. Over and above addressing questions of layout, his extension was conceived as an integrated whole, a unity achieved through the interweaving of various applied arts. Yárnoz oversaw every last detail of the extension – lamps, rugs, furnishings, metalwork, signage – not only selecting or designing the objects that would adorn the new building but also devising a comprehensive plan to meet the operational needs envisioned by the institution. Among the elements that most clearly expressed this integration was the use of stained glass – which imparted a distinctive character to the entire extension – blending with the established tradition of his predecessor, Eduardo de Adaro, while also achieving the transparency and openness that guided Yárnoz's own design. All the public areas included this dual decorative and utilitarian element: besides the grand Patio de Operaciones, both the new staircase – connecting the building's six floors – and the main entrance hall were fitted with stained-glass windows.

Also on view is the decorative plan for the building's extension, presented through previously unseen materials from the Maumejean Archive, held at the Real Sitio de La Granja. This exceptional collection of drawings, cartoons, sketches, maquettes, and photographic plates allows the meticulous reconstruction of the entire design process in remarkable detail. Thanks to a collaborative effort between the Banco de España, the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, and the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio, these materials – many of them unpublished – have been restored, reassessed, and are now presented to the public for the first time. Their recovery not only brings to light the project's technical and artistic complexity but also helps to illuminate its symbolic and institutional significance.

The thematic thread unspools across five sections, together forming a coherent visual and narrative composition. The first, *Landscape, Progress, and Society*, transports visitors to the threshold of the 1930s, evoking the historical and artistic environment from which the Banco de España's extension evolved. The second, *The Maumejean Hermanos Workshop*, assembles working materials from the renowned Maumejean Hermanos studio – drawings, sketches, and cartoons tracing the creative process behind the stained-glass windows. In the large central gallery, the third section, *Allegories of What Is to Come*, features the allegorical figures reproduced from the original cartoons, along with two restored stained-glass windows exhibited for the first time. The fourth, *The Cámara del Oro: Technology and Security*, digs into the Gold Vault through plans, documents, and a photographic frieze, unearthing its construction and the people who made it possible. Finally, the fifth, *An Administered Modernity*, presents functional and decorative designs in the Art Deco style adopted by the Banco de España as its institutional language in pursuing modernity. Each of these spaces fosters an encounter between viewer and work, between history and the present, between memory and what is to come.

Beyond its artistic merits, this exhibition offers a reflection on the role of images in shaping democratic memory. At a time when the past is more present than ever, *Allegories of What Is to Come* invites us to reconsider the visual accounts that have shaped our history – to question their omissions, their contradictions, their unfulfilled promises. Allegory, as an institutional language, here becomes a critical instrument – a means for examining the present while keeping one eye on the past.

Álvaro Perdices / Yolanda Romero

1. Tim Benton, "Art déco: estilo y significado," in *El gusto moderno art déco en París 1910-1935* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2015), p. 15 [translated from the Spanish edition].

Room A

Landscape, Progress, and Society

The exhibition opens with a selection of works from the collections of the Banco de España and other national institutions, focusing on the land of peninsular Spain and on those who inhabit and work it. The interplay between these thematic predecessors and the figures depicted in the Banco de España's stained-glass windows – displayed here in other rooms – invite reflection on the relationship between art, labor, and nation-building. Extremadura, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Castile, and Madrid are among the identifiable places through which this relationship is explored critically and pluralistically.

Our journey begins with two contrasting landscapes. In *Old Vilanova Road* (1890), the artist Ramón Casas bypasses the forest to focus on communication and the move toward what is to come, captured in a specific, almost documentary setting. Opposite is Daniel Vázquez Díaz's *Fuenterrabía Landscape* (1927), which introduces a Cubist scene far removed from naturalism, pointing the way toward avant-garde visions. Nearby, Joaquín Torres-García's mural sketches for the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya – unrealized projects – anticipate a form of cultural nationalism revolving around the laborer as the heart of social regeneration. In these works, agricultural and industrial tasks are composed so that laborers and owners share common ground.

The diverse settings in this section – countryside, sea, city, and factory – generate a kaleidoscopic view of the productive landscape. They feature figures – farmers, pavers, fishermen, working women – who are anonymous yet essential, whose presence elevates the image of manual labor. Alongside them lies materiality itself: earth, metal, tarmac. In this regard, art becomes not only representation but also a record of the material processes reshaping the environment.

Other visual artifacts – such as the documentary film *The Plowmen of Extremadura* (1937), produced by the Ministerio de Agricultura and the aerial photographs of Jean Moral – offer distinct ways of portraying the productive realms of Spain, from the countryside to the modern planned city. In one particularly memorable scene from *The Plowmen*, shot near the corner of the Banco de España in Madrid, a symbolic line is threaded between the center of financial power and the agrarian periphery.

This first section thus proposes a reading of the landscape as a locus of modernity, conflict, and transformation, where art serves both as witness to and agent of the social changes that shaped the visual imagination of the 1930s.

Ramón Casas i Carbó
(Barcelona, 1866-1932)

Landscape (Old Vilanova Road), 1890

Oil on canvas

109 x 147 cm

Colección Banco de España

The upper half of the canvas opens onto a clear horizon, lightly punctuated by a few clouds. Below stretches an arid, treeless terrain, a barren landscape where nature is no longer the subject. At the center stands a post that, beyond its structural function, rises as a visual focus and allegorical line of communication and of electricity. Casas renders the landscape with a material directness that departs from the idealized evocation typical of the genre in an approach suggesting a documentary, almost topographical, record indicating the way. While these lines and paths converge on a symbolic point leading the eye toward the horizon of the 20th century, their immediate destination was Sitges - then still a small fishing village that would become mythologized by a circle of artists. Though the work holds out the promise of progress, it also harbors the seed of a modern tourist destination.



Daniel Vázquez Díaz
(Nerva, Huelva, 1882 - Madrid, 1969)

Fuenterrabía Landscape, 1927

Oil on canvas

73 x 86 cm

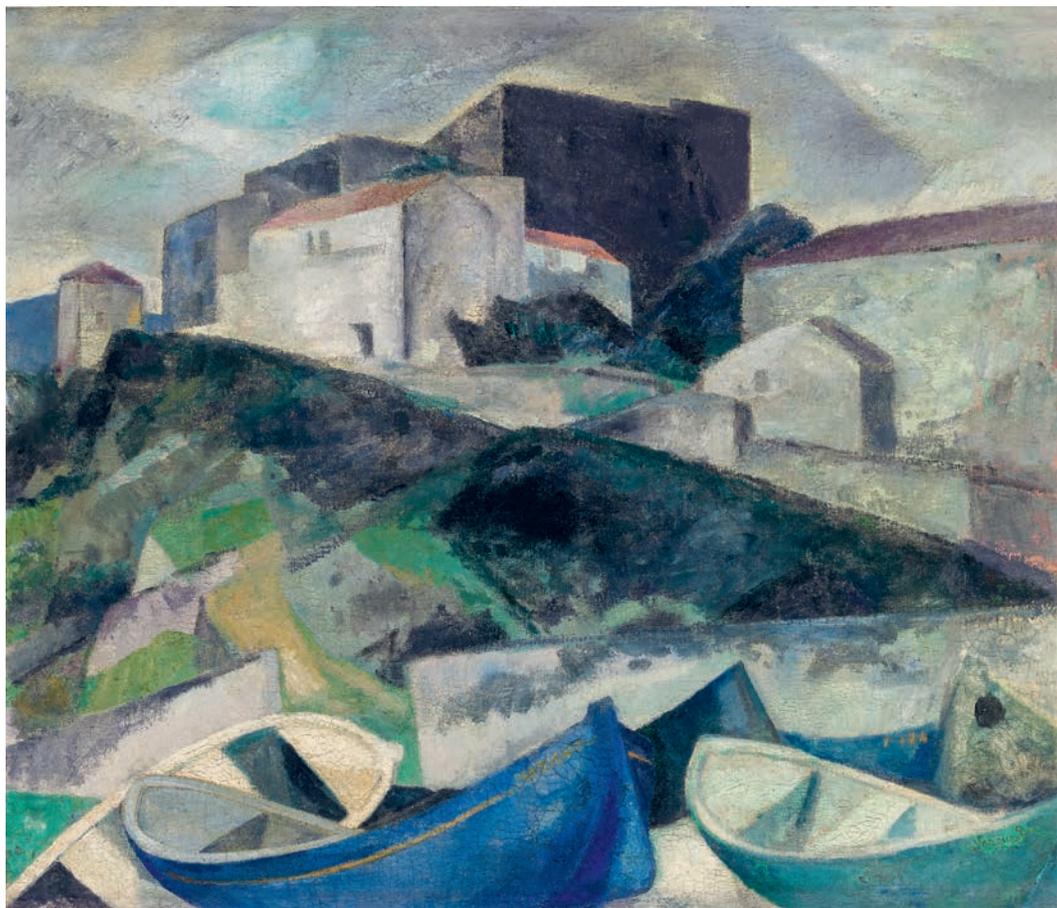
Colección Banco de España

In 1927, Daniel Vázquez Díaz embarked on his great mural cycle, one of the pivotal works of his career and of Spanish painting in the early 20th century, at the monastery of La Rábida in Huelva. A few years earlier, he had produced *The Factory in the Mist* (1920) and *The Sleeping Factory* (1925), works in which he embraced a language rooted more resolutely in Cubism.

In this slightly later work, however, such modernity is softened and becomes less edgy.

Although the forms could be described as Cubist, it is largely only in appearance. The painter lays out the view of this Basque port along the clear perspective lines of a post-Cubist vocabulary, without venturing into the conceptual or analytical explorations pursued by the avant-garde artists he had become acquainted with during his stay in Paris in 1918.

Here the forms of houses, boats, and waves in the landscape are arranged into a visual system more stylistic than analytical: they neither deconstruct reality nor refine it through synthesis. Vázquez Díaz situates himself in a middle ground between the Spanish landscape tradition and a formal modernity that, in interwar Spain, still met with resistance.



Joaquín Torres-García
(Montevideo, 1874-1949)

The Brickworks, 1916
Watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper/board
107.5 x 51.5 cm
Generalitat de Catalunya



Joaquín Torres-García
(Montevideo, 1874-1949)

Industrial Catalonia, 1917

Draft for the fifth fresco in the Saló de Sant Jordi, Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya
Watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper/board
120 x 79 cm
Generalitat de Catalunya

In 1912, Joaquim Torres-García was commissioned to decorate the Saló de Sant Jordi in the Palau de la Generalitat in Barcelona. The project carried a strong ideological charge: it was to symbolize the ideal of a universal Catalonia promoted by the Lliga Regionalista at the time. These two sketches, made in 1917, spring from that commission, though the frescoes were never executed owing to political changes in the Generalitat's presidency.

In these works, Torres-García begins to articulate a constructive order based on the separation of space into distinct scenes that, despite their varying motifs, share a unified compositional plane. The use of flat colors and heavy contour lines imparts clarity and, at the same time, a certain didactic character, aligning with the public art initiatives of Catalan *noucentisme*, which sought to harmonize classical tradition with modernity. Both sketches are arranged in two rectangular fields capped by lunette-like sections of classical and statuary inspiration. *The Brickworks* depicts various forms of agricultural and manual labor, while *Industrial Catalonia*, more schematically conceived, presents an industrial world in which workers and owners appear to be on the same level, balanced in scale and number on either side of a doorway. This principle of visual equality anticipates the social concerns that would later mark the artist's international career in the Americas and the Río de la Plata.

These works thus pursued an eminently public aim, through which the institution sought to convey its messages in a visually ordered form - the same approach the Banco de España would adopt years later in commissioning its stained-glass windows, which also addressed similar themes of labor, individuals, and nationhood.



Mateo Inurria
(Córdoba, 1867 - Madrid, 1924)

Fisherman, 1903

Patinated bronze

52 x 33 x 50 cm

Colección Banco de España

This monumental head by Mateo Inurria belongs to the allegorical sculptural group *La Marina*, created for the monument to Alfonso XII in Madrid's Retiro Park. It is a bronze casting of a plaster original. Its size reflects the expansive scale of this commemorative landmark.

Inurria was a sculptor deeply rooted in 19th-century traditions. His travels to Paris and Italy imparted greater formal fluency to his work, which nevertheless retained its grounding in the academy. This fidelity

to and compliance with convention – quite characteristic of Spanish sculpture of the period – explains the absence of pathos and of the “necessity” from which, as Rilke noted, true works of art arise.

Viewed in isolation, this head projects a commanding presence. The pronounced expressiveness of its features, together with the nearly stone-like hardness of the cap, lend the figure a subdued power, tempered by the commemorative motive of the larger monument. The work reflects the social purpose of public sculpture: to ennoble its subject and to elevate an anonymous fisherman to a paragon in the collective memory. In this gesture one also perceives the influence of the early-20th-century regenerationist movement, which sought to affirm the symbolic value of labor and of the maritime professions in shaping Spanish national identity.



Joaquín Sorolla
(Valencia, 1863 - Cercedilla, Madrid, 1923)

In the Tavern, Zarauz, 1910

Oil on canvas

100 x 80 cm

Colección Banco de España

Light, so essential to Joaquín Sorolla's work, shapes not only his Mediterranean scenes but also those of other coasts, such as the Cantabrian. Yet in this painting its absence is striking: the two figures, crammed into a tavern interior, remain submerged in shadow, barely outlined by the density of their corporeal forms.

The brushwork, boldly gestural and radically economical, emphasizes a sense of the unfinished. This is not carelessness, but rather a deliberate choice, turning pictorial writing

into an immediate, almost shorthand-like record, capable of conveying both formal decisions and a probing insight into social reality. The two men's gazes, direct and unyielding, transfix the viewer. There are no eyes, only hollow sockets, and it is precisely this absence that intensifies the confrontation: the observer feels observed, subjected to the rawness of their presence.

This pictorial statement recalls Velázquez's *Calabacillas*, where it is our gaze that submits to the painting's power, not the reverse. Here, representation is anchored in the specific: two flesh-and-blood fishermen, with names and occupations, embodying a regenerationist ideal. Sorolla offers not a simple genre sketch but a testament in which these men's features mirror the social and existential condition of a Spain that, in the early 20th century, sought to recognize its own face.



Luis Ramón Marín (Madrid, 1884-1944)

Aerial View of Madrid, 1918

Giclée print on Fujifilm baryta 300 gsm paper
30 x 40 cm

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España

Photographer unknown

First commercial Iberia flight, 1927

Giclée print on Fujifilm baryta 300 gsm paper
30 x 40 cm

Courtesy of Iberia Airlines

These two early documentary photographs from the early 20th century mark the arrival of the airplane in modern life - and with it, humanity's new ability to occupy the air and contemplate the world from above. *The City at Your Feet* and *Moving over the Earth* might serve as subtitles for these inaugural images, which by the 1930s found echoes in the decorative motifs of the Banco de España's stained-glass windows.

The first photograph, taken by Luis Marín in 1918, presents Madrid from a groundbreaking vantage point for the time. The airplane, still a fragile silhouette in the sky, allows the viewer to assume a position of visual ascendance: from the view of a city pedestrian to one of an observer whose gaze encompasses the entire city, not unlike that of a god. Yet this conquest of the air was not without ambivalence: the same machine that offered panoramic views would soon become a instrument of destruction, as in the Rif War in Morocco shortly after and later in the Spanish Civil War. The second photograph shows a few mechanics next to the airplane - almost inconspicuous in the background, before the inaugural Iberia flight from Barcelona to Madrid in 1927. The scene is presented without fanfare - with the men simply there, immersed in their tasks - captured by the photographer and perhaps unconcerned by or unaware of the moment's historic significance. Paradoxically, this nonchalance foreshadows the normalization of air travel, which today has become routine.



**Aurelio Arteta
(Bilbao, 1879 - Mexico City, 1940)**

Basque Fishermen, c. 1930-1935

Oil on canvas

110 x 83 cm

Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

Aurelio Arteta's *Basque Fishermen* was probably produced during his stay in Madrid in 1936, a moment when social struggles and new modernization projects were radically transforming Spanish life. Certain details - the rope, what appears to be the bow of a boat, the figures' physical features - evoke a maritime setting, yet the people could just as easily be builders or factory workers. The ambiguity is deliberate: what matters is not the specific trade, but the dignity of a worker's body as an artistic subject.

The painting depicts three figures of different ages in conversation: one older, one middle-aged, and one younger. Their clothing is similar, but it is the elder who is passing down generational knowledge with his raised hand. The formal stylization, geometrization of volumes reminiscent of Cubism, continuous shading from dark

to light, and pictorial modernity of the composition approach muralism. In this sense, Arteta seems more interested in exploring formal and stylistic aspects than in delivering an overtly militant message, placing his work in a delicate balance between aesthetic modernity and social commitment.



Benjamín Palencia
(Barrax, Albacete, 1894 - Madrid, 1980)

Geological Landscape / Stones Creating a Landscape, 1931

Oil on canvas

65 x 92 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Nocturne, 1927

Oil on canvas

46 x 33 cm

Colección Banco de España

These two landscapes by Benjamín Palencia spring from the experience of the so-called *Escuela de Vallecas*, a group of artists that also included Alberto Sánchez. In the area surrounding the Madrilenian town of Vallecas, they explored nearby hills – such as Almodóvar or Testigo – and proposed a new reading of the Castilian landscape. With their rallying cry, “¡Vivan los campos de España! (Long live the fields of Spain!)”, they affirmed that the desolation and austerity of this land could serve as a starting point for an avant-garde

artistic vision, rooted in direct engagement with the material world.

Nocturne and *Geological Landscape* stand out for the radical nature of their material and tactile experimentation. Deeply connected to the land, Palencia did not simply depict it: he brought its physicality and materiality into the very process of painting. In *Nocturne* he applied fragments of straw, building them up with oil paint almost sculpturally on the surface of the canvas. In *Geological Landscape* he explored textures evoking the mineral hardness of the subsoil. With paint that is spread, scratched, or combed, he worked the canvas as a farmer works the earth – opening furrows, raising ridges, molding the material.

Here lies one of the most radical gestures of his process: Palencia broke with the academic canon while also distancing himself from contemporary European avant-garde trends. His modernity stemmed not from mimicking the artistic capitals, but from a poetic and physical appropriation of the Castilian landscape, transformed into a symbol of rootedness and material experience.



Joaquim Sunyer Sitges
(Barcelona, 1874-1956)

Rural Family, 1935

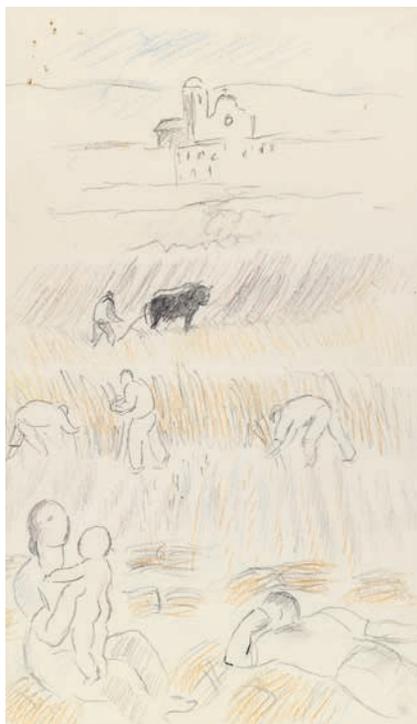
Pencil, ink, and wax on paper

22.2 x 14 cm

Colección Banco de España

A leading figure of Catalan *noucentisme*, Joaquim Sunyer was regarded as the father of the Catalan school of modern painting. Associated with artists such as Torres-García, he sought a distinct identity for Catalan art, firmly rooted in the land, in the idea of nationhood, and in the Mediterranean spirit – envisioned as a place of peace, clarity, and vital harmony between humankind and nature. His pastoral scenes present a serene Arcadia where figures and landscapes coexist without social tension or conflict. *Rural Family*, a

small preparatory drawing for a later project, reflects this aspiration. The composition is organized vertically, as though intended for a mural or monument: in the lower portion, a mother and child alongside a resting father symbolize a tender, untroubled family life tied to agriculture. In the upper part, scenes of harvest and fieldwork, still carried out by hand or with animals, evoke the cycle of the seasons. Rising above all is the silhouette of a church, probably modeled on that of San Sebastián in Sitges, the artist's birthplace. Its presence consecrates the whole and crowns the scene with a divine order that bestows meaning and harmony upon rural life, representing an idealized Catalonia. This drawing led to the sketch and the work *The Land* (1952), which was commissioned for the lobby of the Banco de España branch in Barcelona and paired with Daniel Vázquez Díaz's *The Sea* (1955).



Photographer unknown

Rural Family, c. 1934

Three black-and-white photographs in period frame

20 x 30 cm

Astudillo Collection

These three photographs by an unknown artist, taken between 1932 and 1936 in the village of El Atance, Guadalajara, were most likely the work of itinerant photographers who commonly traveled from village to village offering commissioned portraits. Beyond their documentary nature, they are among the first records in which a rural community saw itself represented through photography.

In the central image, the child gazing directly into the camera takes on an almost epiphanic quality, engaging the viewer from a moment

suspended in time. These are not images glorifying rural life for urban contemplation, nor are they visions of misery. They are and contain the marks of an everyday reality that reveal both the hardship and the dignity of agricultural life.

The contrasts speak for themselves: the baby, wrapped in a shawl, still has pale skin; the parents, by contrast, have copper-tinged faces, weathered and darkened by the sun. Such details reflect a world rooted in subsistence, manual labor, and the unchanging cycle of the land.

These photographs were taken during the years of the Second Republic, shortly before the Spanish Civil War, when rural issues and land reform were at the center of political debate in Spain. Their simplicity transcends the individual and places them at the very heart of the country's social history.



Antoni Arissa Asmarats
(Barcelona, 1900-1980)

Farmer Shouting, c. 1928-1930
Gelatin silver print on baryta paper
41.2 x 50.2 cm
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

This photograph by Antoni Arissa is striking for its almost life-size scale – an unusual format for the time – which amplifies the image's expressiveness. Arissa belonged to the first generation of Catalan photographers who, drifting away from pictorialism, adopted visual languages allied with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and photographic constructivism, exploring formal clarity, geometry, and compositional drama. Far from capturing a spontaneous moment,

Farmer Shouting is a staged image with a distinctly epic character. The framing both contains the gesture and allows it to spill over: the shout seems to break through the physical borders of the photograph and project beyond its material limits. The man is presented as classically robust and attractive, his arms arranged in a studied composition reminiscent of the visual vocabulary of the films of that period, when montage and close-ups turned the human face into a bearer of universal emotions. Produced during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, the work is bound to a moment when the figure of the rural laborer became emblematic. Here the worker is neither anonymous nor marginal: he is the focus and endowed with voice, body, and monumental presence in the construction of a new vision of modernity.



Marquis of Villa Alcázar
(Cádiz, 1885 - Madrid, 1967)

The Plowmen of Extremadura, 1936
Black-and-white film with sound, 12:39
Documentales Cinematográficos Agrarios

Social realism peaked with the film *The Plowmen of Extremadura* (1936), commissioned by the Instituto de Reforma Agraria and directed by the marquis of Villa Alcázar. Influenced by Soviet documentary style, through austere images and a paternalistic voice-over the film depicts the lives of the plowmen of Extremadura, who worked the fields with a pair of animals – generally mules – for low wages while not owning the land. Villa Alcázar resorts to the imagery of misery and scarcity. As in Buñuel's *Las Hurdes* (1933), the aim was to move an essentially urban audience, the ultimate consumers of such portrayals. At minute 1:57, the camera is positioned at the corner of the Banco de España – precisely the spot where the work may be viewed today as part of this exhibition. The narrative, however, omits the waves of land occupations, led by an increasingly politicized rural working class, that preceded its filming. Again, with a view toward its intended audience, the film underscores the contrasts between rural reality and how that reality was perceived in the city. It is devoid of critique to avoid having to cover political events, in favor of more ethnographic and folkloric imagery that was easier on the urban eye.

An indirectly related episode occurred on 25 March 1936, when some 80,000 plowmen peacefully occupied the large estates of Extremadura. Laden with symbolism, the protest involved joining arms to encircle the properties, calling attention to the shared social stakes in the land against *latifundismo*, the system of large landed estates. Thus, while the film portrays a harsh reality, it sidesteps the political concerns of a rural population in the throes of historic transformation. As Cristina Cámara has noted, it is also striking that a film financed by the Second Spanish Republic should emerge as a searing critique of its own inability to transform the rural world.



José Gutiérrez Solana (Madrid, 1886-1945)

The Asphalt Layers of the Puerta del Sol, 1930
Oil on canvas
140 x 115 cm
Colección Banco de España

The urban modernization of Madrid in the 1930s was driven by extensive public works: new avenues, services, and paving projects that transformed the capital into a modern city. Yet behind this image of progress stood a working population that, under precarious conditions, continuously fed the urban engine. In *The Asphalt Layers of the Puerta del Sol* (1930), Gutiérrez Solana turned his gaze toward these anonymous laborers. The nocturnal scene reveals figures whose faces blur into masks: men who, in the shadows,

readied the city so it could awaken anew each day.

Both in format and dynamism, there is a throughline to Goya's *The Forge* (Frick Collection), in the rapid, impastoed, expressionist brushwork with which Solana conveys the roughness and fumes of the asphalt. It also harks back to the density of *Two Old Men Eating* (Museo Nacional del Prado), where the painter's touch lays bare the harshness of the subject matter. Solana's debt to the Aragonese master is not just visual: like Goya, he embraced a social and documentary shift in painting, raising the visibility of the margins of urban life.

The work transcends genre and becomes a testimony to the tension between urban modernity and the harsh reality of the manual labor that supported it.





Jean Moral
(Marchiennes, France, 1906 - Montreux, Switzerland, 1999)

The Port of Barcelona, 1933
 Gelatin silver print
 26.5 x 22 cm
 Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Barcelona (Airplane Wheel in Mid-Flight), 1933
 Gelatin silver print
 28.6 x 20 cm
 Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

These two images were not taken from ground level: they are aerial views captured from an airplane window in mid-flight. In one, the aircraft's wheel dominates the foreground, an unmistakable aspect of the view of the Mediterranean. The mechanical object not only shapes the shot but also suggests humanity's new capacity to contemplate and command the world from above – a symbol of progress, speed, and modernity in the 1930s. The second photograph presents a carefully composed view of the Port of Barcelona: cables, docks, and ships are arranged in a geometric layout bordering on the abstract. Jean Moral, known for his work in advertising

photography, was influenced by the principles of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), with its attentive eye to mechanical forms, urban structures, and the exaltation of technology. As such, these images are a dual lens on the aesthetic fascination with the geometry of the modern world and on the belief in the transformative power of aviation, an emblem of that decade.

Aurelio Arteta
(Bilbao, 1879 - Mexico City, 1940)

The Burceña Bridge, c. 1925-1930
 Oil on canvas
 100 x 83.5 cm
 Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

The modern city, with its new materials and industrial architecture, became a new pictorial paradigm. Metal, factories, smoke rising from chimneys, and blocks of worker housing shaped a genre that celebrated contemporary engineering. The Burceña Bridge, designed by engineer Adolfo Barreta and built by the French company Le Creusot, entered service in 1879. With its metal latticework of rhomboids, it was the first iron bridge built in Bizkaia and replaced the ferry

that had until then connected Bilbao with its industrial areas. A symbol of progress, it also marked the beginning of environments that were often alienating for the working class.

Arteta's work highlights this duality. The conventional rectangular framing is replaced by a rhomboid of industrial iron that reorients the composition and reflects the imprint of civil engineering on the Basque

landscape of the early 20th century. In the background, worker housing, in marked post-Cubist forms, lines the industrial belt of Bilbao; in the foreground, an anonymous laborer leans into the void. The absence of any natural features – so characteristic of the Basque Country – on the fringes, is striking. In this realm of manufacturing, vegetation has ceased to matter – both to the inhabitants of these neighborhoods and to the city itself.



Horacio Ferrer
(Córdoba, 1894 - Madrid, 1978)

Women Working in the Factory, 1936-1939

Pen and India ink on paper

31.5 x 23.3 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Horacio Ferrer (1894–1978) was a painter and draftsman whose career was deeply affected by the political events of his time. A figurative artist associated with the *Retorno al orden* (Return to Order) movement, he maintained his distance from the avant-garde, though his work reflects the influence of the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and related Italian circles. As a member of the *Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas para la Defensa de la Cultura*, during the Spanish

Civil War he created emblematic works such as *Madrid 1937 (Black Airplanes)*, presented at the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the Paris International Exposition.

At the same time, Ferrer maintained an intense graphic output comprising dozens of drawings, prints, monotypes, and stucco works on martial themes, conceived for trench newspapers and publications intended for both combatants and the rearguard. *Women Working in the Factory* belongs to this corpus. Executed in pen and India ink, the scene is concentrated in the central area of the sheet, with blank margins left deliberately unworked. The image makes visible the essential role of women in the war effort, who took the place of absent male workers and underscored the collective aspect of industrial labor in times of conflict.





Juan Cabanas Erauskin
(Asteasu, Gipuzkoa, 1907-1979)

Altos de Vizcaya. Large Beams from 320 to 600mm. Wide-Flange I-Beams for Metal Framework Construction, c. 1934
 Lithograph on paper
 Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

In the 1930s, alongside the rise of the decorative arts, poster design experienced both creative evolution and widespread circulation. This development was fueled by the consolidation of the graphic arts in schools such as the Bauhaus and those associated with US government agencies, which opened departments devoted to producing screenprinted posters on subjects ranging from political activism to the spread of electricity and running water across the country. In Spain, industries such as steel and chemicals deployed these designs in the

form of posters and other items. A notable example is the 1929 *Nitrato de Chile* sack design, an Art Deco image of a horseman silhouetted in black against a yellow background. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the medium evolved even further, producing exceptional graphic works such as those created by Josep Renau. This screenprint by Juan Cabanas Erauskin, vivid in color and intended for overtly commercial purposes, celebrates the production of I-beams in epic terms, with pronounced foreshortening. These beams were fundamental to the architectural and structural growth of many cities and infrastructures built during this period. In this poster for Altos Hornos de Vizcaya, the I-beams advertised are the very elements used in the framework supporting and covering the grand stained-glass skylight of the Banco de España's Patio de Operaciones.

Room D

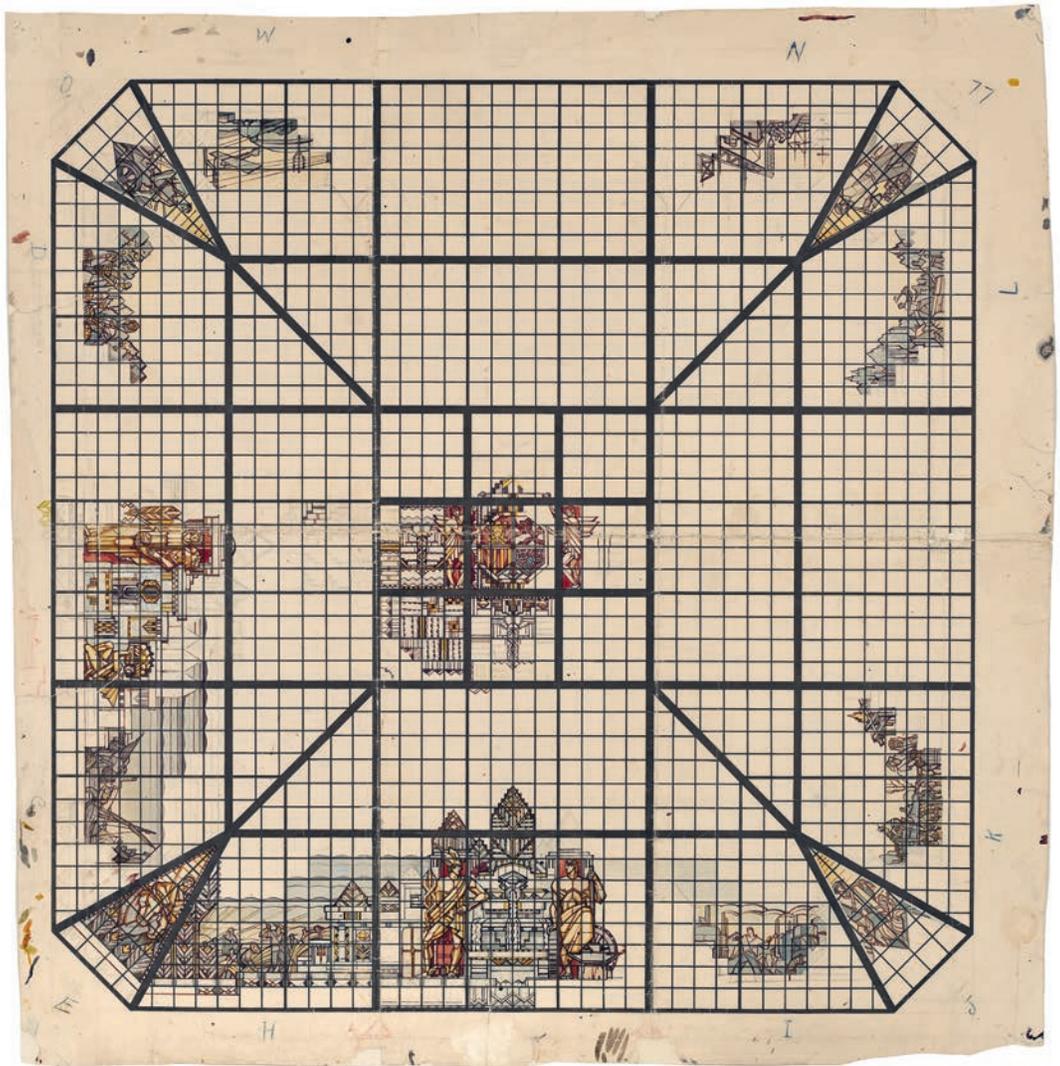
The Maumejean Hermanos Workshop

This room focuses on the design and production of the stained-glass windows as visual artifacts created specifically for the Banco de España. The drawings, sketches, and multiple drafts prepared by the Maumejean Hermanos workshop reveal the creative process behind one of the most significant decorative projects in Spanish institutional architecture of the 1930s. Visitors may observe how male and female figures were conceived and reworked, and how their attributes – tools, clothing, proportions – were debated in relation to their symbolic roles within the allegorical theme of labor.

Founded in Pau, France, in 1860 and established in Spain in 1897, Maumejean Hermanos maintained workshops in Madrid, Barcelona, and San Sebastián. Although much of its production was devoted to religious commissions, the workshop also executed projects for public institutions, adapting its visual approach to the artistic currents of the time and to the priorities of its clients. This section brings together a diverse corpus of watercolor sketches and preparatory drawings produced by a team of artists, among whom Alberto Martorell stands out. The scenes depicted – wheat harvesting, steelmaking, orange picking, dock work, and fishing – compose a repertoire of agricultural and industrial activity translated into allegorical figures, predominantly male, conceived as emblems of strength and productivity. The female figures, more statuesque in nature, frame and validate these scenes, reinforcing their symbolic role.

In parallel, the room includes designs from other contemporary projects of similar formal character, created for the nearby entrances on calle Marqués de Cubas and for the Escuela Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid. Among them, a small set of photographic plates used as preparatory material shows how photography was woven into the creative process as a complementary tool, enhancing the formal precision and visual authenticity of the artisanal process.

This section welcomes visitors into the workshop as a space for visual consideration, where allegory takes shape through drawing, trial and error, and technique, articulating a vision of collective labor as both the aesthetic and ideological fabric of institutional modernity.



**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Cali, Colombia, 1979)**
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Sketch for the skylight in the Banco de España
Patio de Operaciones, c. 1932
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on watercolor
paper
114 × 113 cm

Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Sketch for stained-glass windows in the Patio de Operaciones, 1932

Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
66.5 × 66.5 cm (sketch); 22.7 × 27.4 cm (per sheet)

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

The grand stained-glass skylight in the Patio de Operaciones was the most ambitious and technically complex project undertaken by the firm Maumejean Hermanos S.A. for the Banco de España. Three surviving drawings make it possible to follow the creative process of this singular work.

As it was conceived as a skylight, from the outset the master glaziers had to design a complex and precisely engineered supporting structure. This framework was assembled with sections and sloping panels formed from strips of different thicknesses, laid out into an exact number of divisions and subdivisions into which square modules of 45 cm per side – where the images are applied – were set. The aim was to create a plane whose internal tension would bind all the elements together, ensuring both the structural stability and visual harmony of the composition.

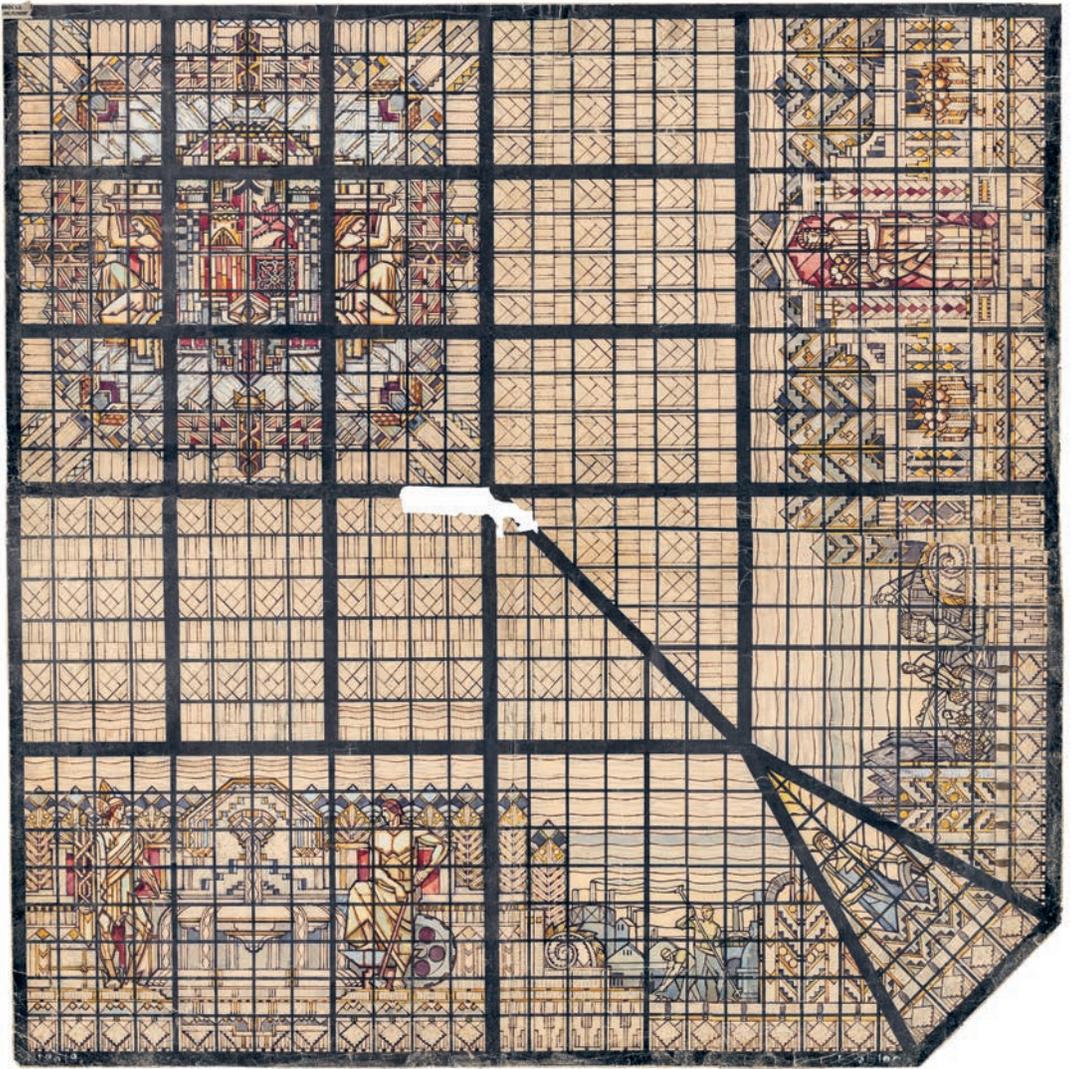
The first sketch partitions the space through a strict grid of guiding lines, establishing a visual hierarchy revolving around a central element: the coat of arms of the Second

Spanish Republic, supported by two figures facing forward. This is framed by a secondary area of abstract motifs that transitions to a third, a perimeter of narrative scenes. It is a working document, with no colors yet defined, which reveals that the scenes were conceived individually before being integrated into the whole. Its fragile condition is typical of workshop material.

The second sketch considers only one quarter of the skylight. Here transparent backgrounds are already hinted at, with different types of figured glass intended to temper the light. The Republican coat of arms reappears, this time supported by two female figures with their backs to the viewer, a clear allegorical allusion to the defense of the nation.

The third sketch represents the final version. It retains the central iconography and distributes the figurative scenes around the entire perimeter, adding subtle chromatic variations and geometric motifs. Its impeccable finish and excellent state of conservation indicate that this was the version presented to the works committee by the architect José Yárnoz.

The new decorative plan sought to update the Banco de España with imagery tied symbolically to the country's progress and modernization. The skylight, with its centered Republican coat of arms and various scenes of labor, thus became a visual manifesto of the new regime. Most likely at the request of José Yárnoz – who spoke up for the bank – the work survived the Franco years without being removed, preserving to this day its powerful symbolic force.



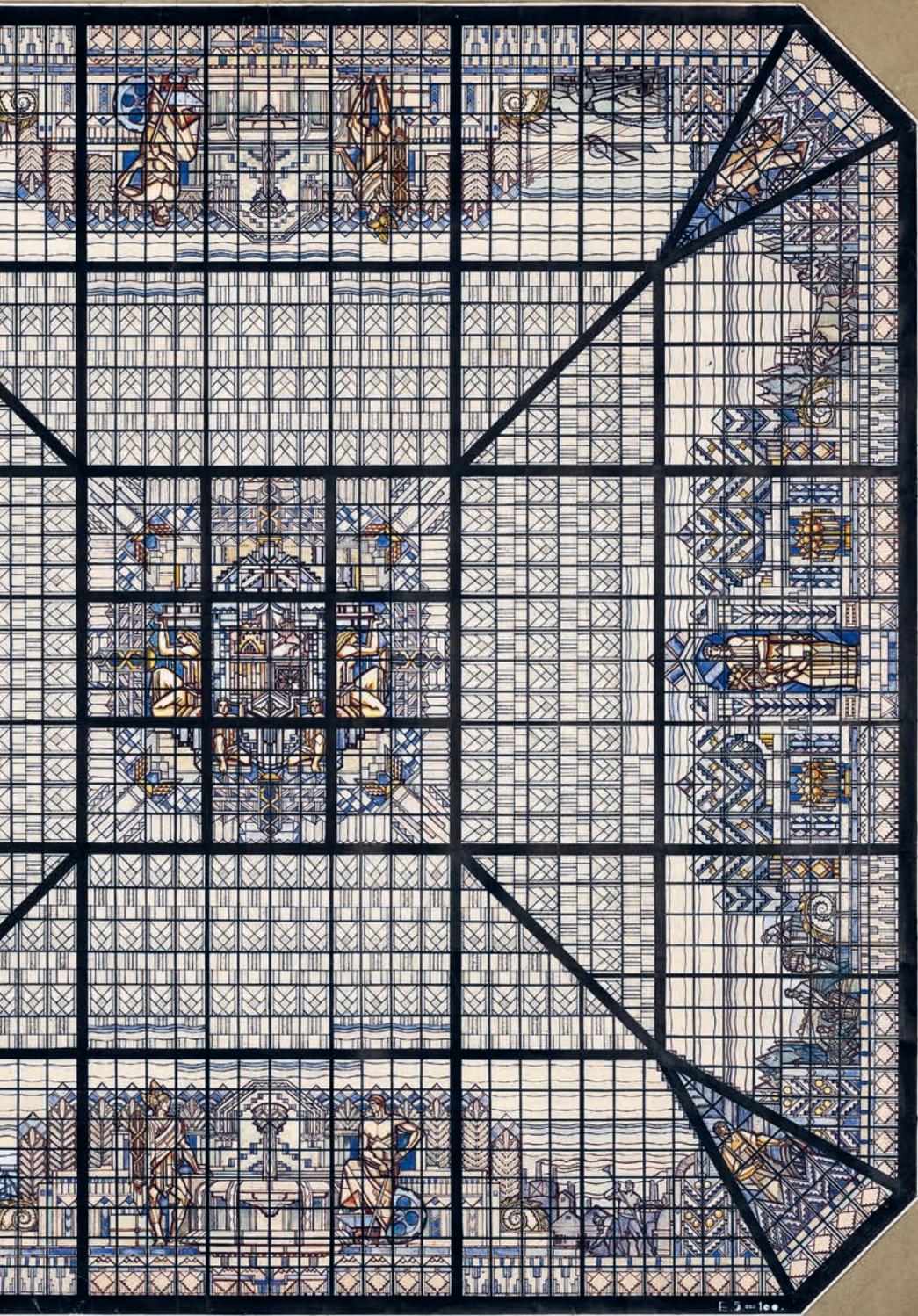
**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979) (attributed)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Border with figures and allegorical scenes
of Industry and Commerce; at the center,
the Coat of Arms of Spain
Sketch for the large stained-glass window
in the Patio de Operaciones of the Banco
de España, 1932

Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
104 x 104 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio





PROYECTO PARA LA GRAN CLARABOYA EJECUTADA PARA
EL EDIFICIO DEL BANCO DE ESPAÑA EN MADRID

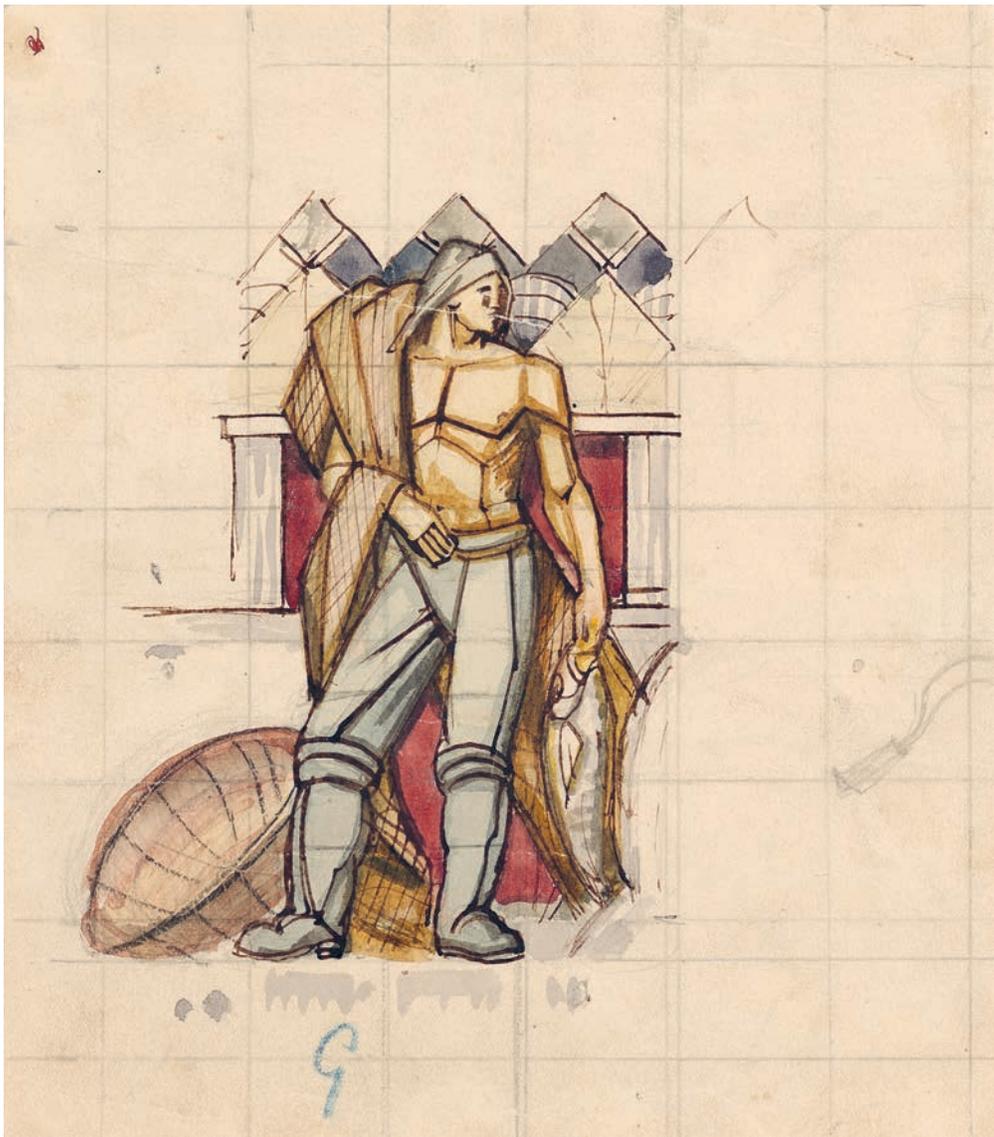
Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979) (attributed)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

Allegory of Fishing (fisherman), 1932
Sketch for a side panel of the stained-glass
windows in the Patio de Operaciones
Watercolor and pencil on paper
19.4 × 17.1 cm

Allegory of Agriculture (reaper), 1932
Sketch for a side panel of the stained-glass
windows in the Patio de Operaciones
Watercolor and pencil on paper
19.3 × 17 cm

In 1931, the government of the Second Spanish Republic drove a series of reforms to combat the labor discrimination faced by many female workers, ensuring equal rights through decrees and the new Labor Contracts Law. Media such as photography, documentary film, and illustration propagated these advances visually, offering images of an emerging social and political modernization. Yet the representation of women in the designs produced by the firm Maumejean



Hermanos for the Banco de España lies at a distance from this new reality. These two studies correspond to one of the sloping panels of the grand stained-glass skylight in the Patio de Operaciones and depict trades traditionally associated with men: agriculture and fishing.

In both scenes, the central figures are athletic-looking men with pronounced musculature, broad torsos, and sculpted chests. These nearly heroic figures project as models of strength, virility, and mastery over nature. In their final arrangement within the skylight, the fisherman and the farmer face one another, forming an almost symmetrical

composition that reinforces their status as a 'canon' of human representation.

The choice of this iconography conveys an unmistakably conservative visual message: men as the measure of all things and keepers of the nation's fundamental trades, relegating women to secondary iconographic positions. Thus, even at the height of the Republic, the work reveals a tension between the official progressive ideal and the persistence of traditional values in institutional decorative art.



Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979) (attributed)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Industry, c. 1933

Sketches for the windows of the main staircase in the Banco de España extension
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
25 × 5.2 cm / 24.9 × 7.6 cm / 25 × 5.1 cm

Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid

Allegory of Agriculture (women picking fruit), c. 1933

Sketch for the windows of the main staircase
Pencil on watercolor paper
24.9 × 17.9 cm

Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979) (attributed)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Agriculture (women picking fruit), c. 1933

Sketch for the windows of the main staircase
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
49.2 × 35.2 cm

Allegory of Agriculture (men picking oranges), c. 1933

Sketch for the windows of the main staircase
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
29.3 × 18 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

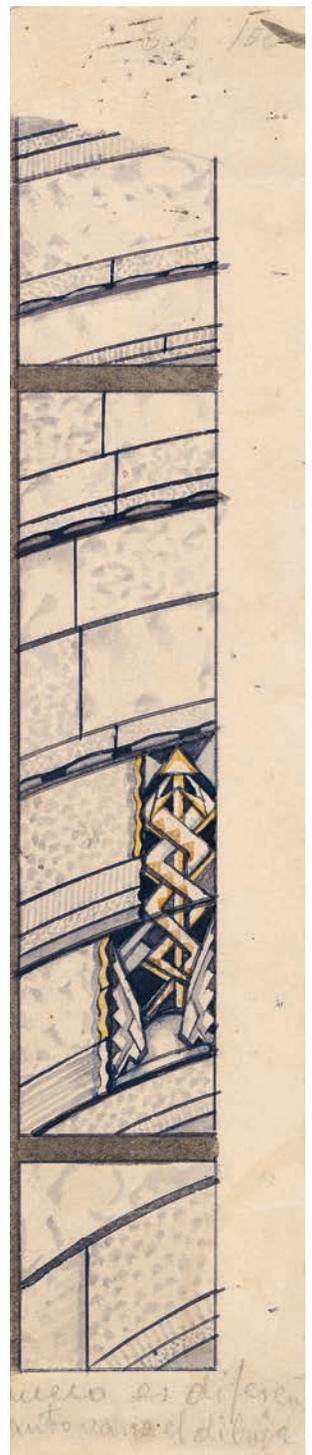
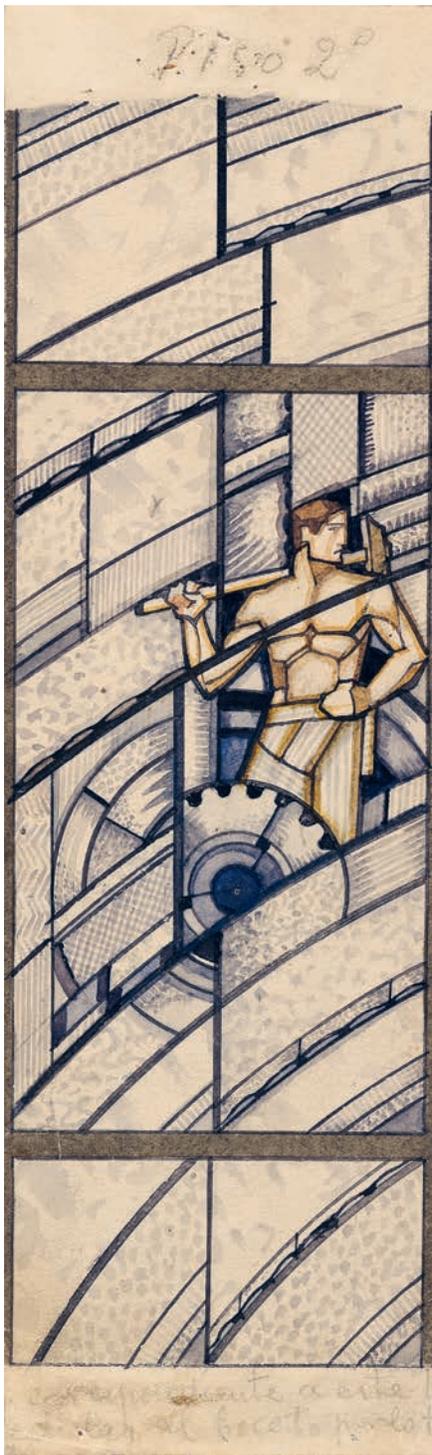
The production of a stained-glass window began with pencil drawings in which the artists or designers of Maumejean Hermanos sketched their initial ideas. Next came more developed drafts, rendered in watercolor, which even imitated the different industrial glasses through hatching, stippling, or transparent washes.

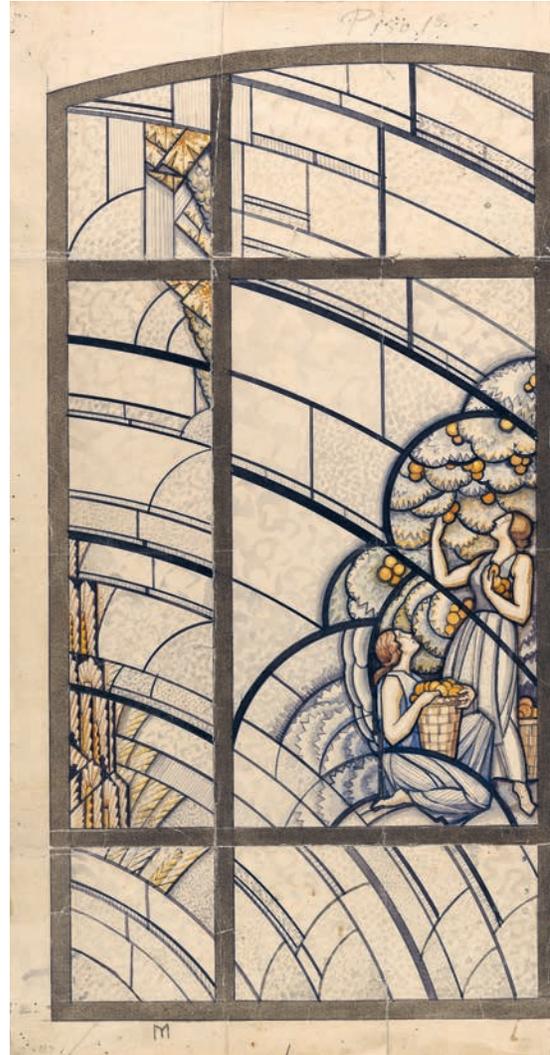
The designs preserved in the Maumejean archive allow this series to be attributed to Albert Martorell, whose training in Brussels brought him into contact with Viennese Secessionism. The first study for the *Allegory of Agriculture* presents stylized female figures arranged within discontinuous circles, notable for a formalism aligned with the international Art Deco style, where form is favored over content.

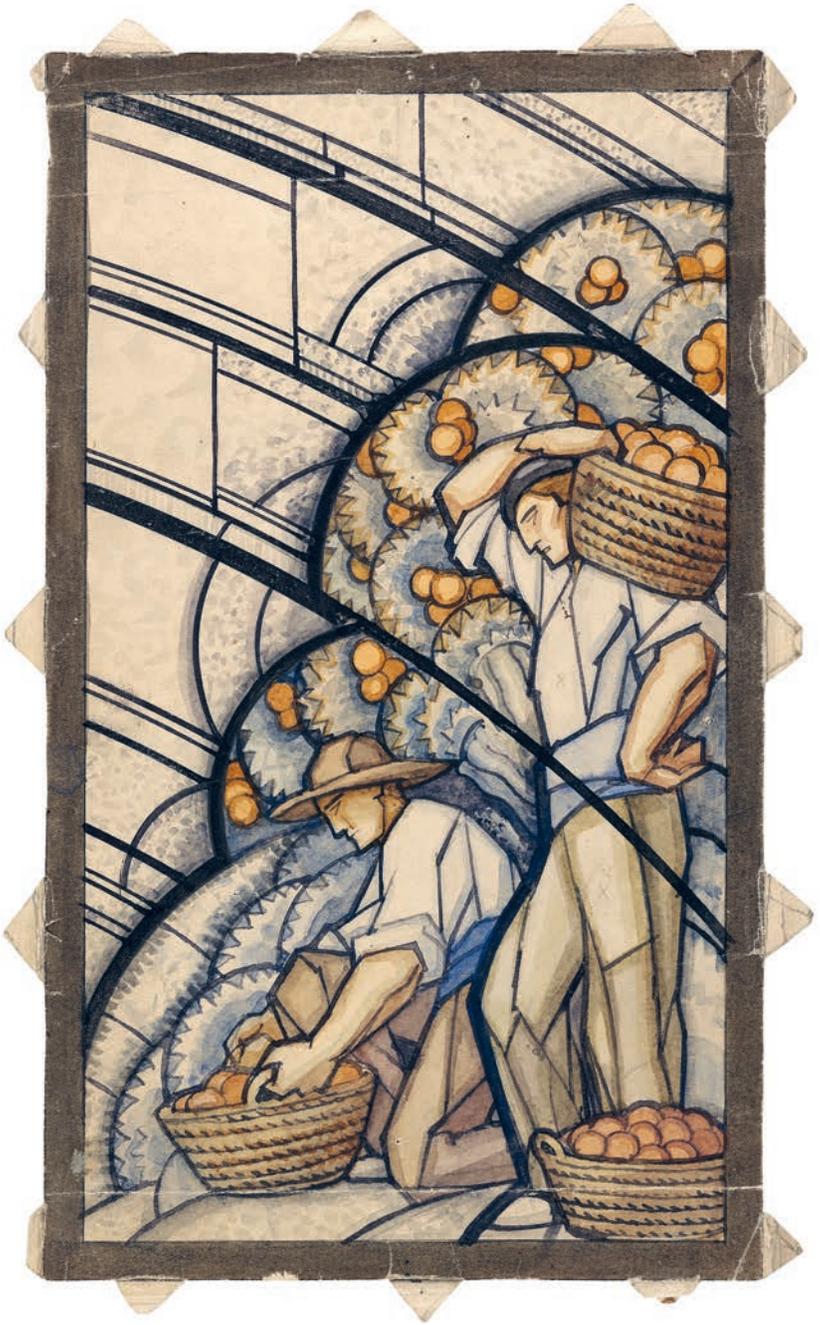
In later versions, the artist shifted toward a more regionalist focus: one scene features women picking oranges and another, male laborers – the option ultimately chosen by the Banco de España, probably for its closer affinity with the institution's values.

The draft for the *Allegory of Industry*, divided into three fragments for use in the workshop, shows a later and more refined execution. The lines are precise and the details clear, revealing that Martorell already had a definitive idea with hardly any corrections.

These final drafts reveal the ambition to transcend the merely decorative. They engage with the symbolic veneration of labor – both male and female – and with a cinematic aesthetic that reflected Spain's aspirations to modernity in the 1930s.







Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979) (attributed)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

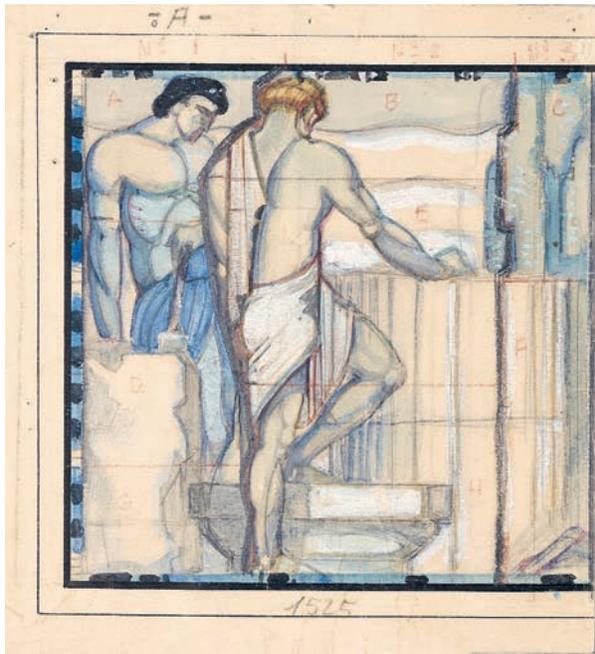
Allegory of Architecture (scenes), 1935
Sketch for a stained-glass window in the
Escuela Superior de Arquitectura, Universidad
Politécnica de Madrid
Watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper
19.2 × 51 cm

Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Architecture in Color, 1935
Sketch for a stained-glass window in the
Escuela Superior de Arquitectura, Universidad
Politécnica de Madrid
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on watercolor
paper
18.4 × 51.5 cm

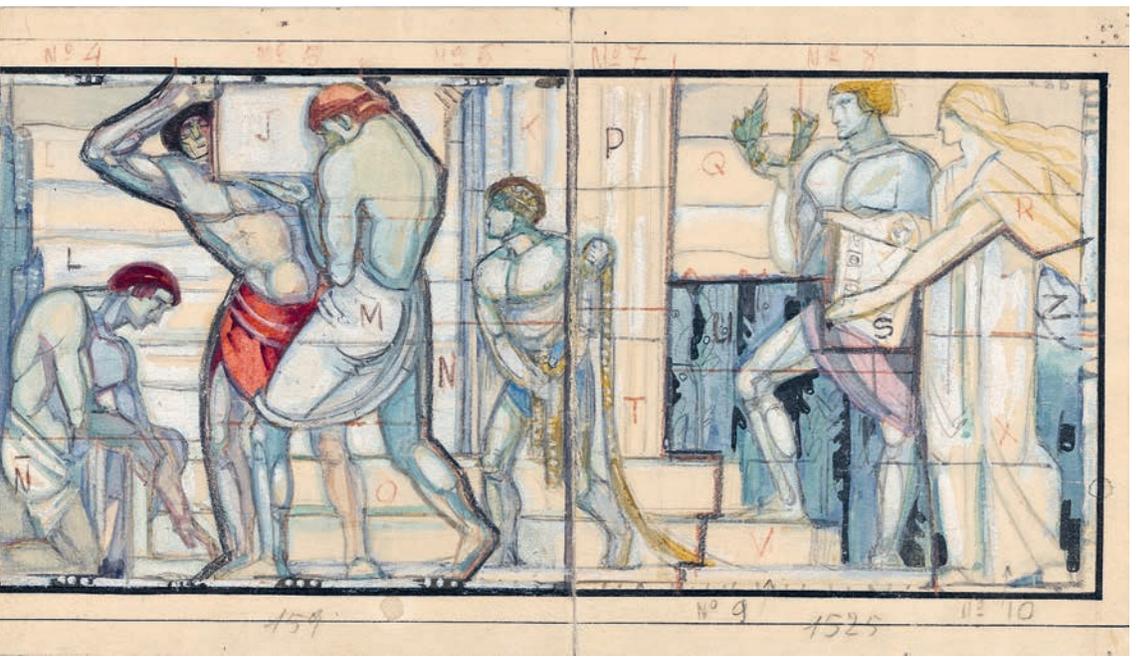
Allegory of Architecture, c. 1940
Cartoon for a stained-glass window
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
21.9 × 56 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio



The formal language developed in the stained-glass windows of the Banco de España continued into the early years of the Franco regime. The institutional iconography of that period continued to draw on the male body as a symbol of strength and on physical labor as a metaphor for national reconstruction after the devastation of the Spanish Civil War. These three preparatory sketches, with chromatic variations, pertain to the commission for the reconstruction of the Escuela Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, which had been severely damaged during the conflict. For this project, several stained-glass windows were designed and executed both for the main staircase and for the Salón de Actos, the space to which the studies presented here belong.

The drawings present three allegorical scenes. In the central one, two monumental male figures raise a solid stone block, dramatizing the collective strength of construction. To the right, male and female mythological characters represent Apollo, god of the arts, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom, underscoring the throughline between architecture, knowledge, and classical tradition. On the left, two men examine a plan resting on a column segment, evoking the idea of planning and calculation. Although attributed to Albert Martorell, these sketches already reflect a change in sensibility. Ornament is minimized, details are simplified, and bodies take on a stony density – a metaphor for the effort, discipline, and monumentality that characterized the official postwar aesthetic.



J. Viñas (attributed)

Photographic plates of models, c. 1933

Gelatin on glass

13 × 18 × 1.2 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

The interaction among different artistic media has been a constant throughout history. By the 1920s and 1930s, photography had already come into its own as a medium, employed for both documentary purposes and artistic expression.

These four glass plates form part of the extensive archive that the firm Maumejean Hermanos compiled to meet various workshop needs. A substantial portion of this archive consists of reproductions of the firm's own works, so it could be regarded as a true visual catalog of the company's output. The plates presented here belong to a

smaller group in which live models were used experimentally, captured in foreshortened poses to resolve more complex compositions. At times wooden slats or structures were employed to support the models in difficult positions. In other cases, the plates document landscapes with industrial elements or rephotograph images of iconographic interest, such as the electricity pylon that reappears in the stained-glass windows of the Banco de España.

These plates were projected onto kraft paper using an *agioscopio* or magic lantern. In this way, figures in motion or daring poses could be traced with greater precision, lending a visual veracity difficult to achieve through drawing alone. The use of photography as an auxiliary tool in the creative process reflects how, in the interwar period, stained-glass workshops integrated technical advances into artisanal tradition, thereby enhancing both the formal precision and expressive power of their compositions.







Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Cali, Colombia, 1979)

Eskimo Fantasia, 1929

Stained glass painted with grisaille and silver stain on figured and blown colored glass; leaded
153 × 107 × 5 cm

Jaguars, 1929

Stained glass painted with grisaille and silver stain on figured and blown colored glass; leaded
153 × 107 × 5 cm

Colección Vetraria

International fairs were select showcases where artists and decorative-arts firms presented their most innovative projects. The 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris was a watershed event, as was the 1937 *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne*, in which artistic projects intersected with divergent political positions. In Spain, the 1929 *Exposición internacional de Barcelona* marked the entry of rationalist

trends, exemplified in the celebrated modernist pavilion of Mies van der Rohe. In the same event, the firm Maumejean Hermanos presented three innovative stained-glass windows. Of these, the two preserved here stand out for their exoticism and use of industrially produced figured glass. They are a *rara avis* in Spanish decorative modernism: positing a new formal language aligned with international movements and expanding stained glass beyond its religious role into the secular and domestic realms.

In *Jaguars*, two black felines appear in a jungle setting of curves and dark colors, animated by vibrant flashes like precious stones. In *Eskimo Fantasia*, a child holds a seal against a background of ice in geometric forms, where the rectilinearity of the landscape contrasts with the curves of his attire - thus a transparent pane carries polar cold into the Mediterranean world. These works reflect the vogue for the exotic and the primitivist - so prevalent in European decorative arts during the interwar years - while also anticipating the materials and formal solutions that Maumejean would develop only a few years later for the stained-glass windows of the Banco de España.



Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Sketch for a stained-glass window with exotic landscape, lightbulb, and waves, 1930
Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
26.2 × 22.2 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

The work of the Maumejean Hermanos workshop was not limited to specific commissions but also included ongoing formal research and the creation of new designs. Out of this practice emerged a large group of sketches conceived as a general sample portfolio to be presented to various clients. These drawings had a distinctive feature: they were carefully mounted with a dark cardboard surround functioning as a passepartout, which lent each composition an almost self-contained quality. The selection gathered here reveals two distinct tendencies: on the one hand, geometric motifs; on the other, figurative projects.

The geometric designs exhibit a refined, rational vocabulary fully aligned with the aesthetics of the 1930s. They are compositions that, through lines, diagonals, and rhythmically repeated curves, form images endowed with remarkable narrative power despite their apparent detachment. They resonate with echoes of the European avant-gardes, particularly modern neoclassicism, Viennese Secession, and touchstone publications such as *The Studio*, which circulated the languages of modernism internationally.

In parallel, the figurative sketches open up more evocative scenes, populated by exotic animals suggesting distant places and, once transplanted into bourgeois interiors, transformed stained glass into actual “windows onto other worlds.” Among this group the striking sketch of a lightbulb stands out: a metaphor for electric modernity, its light spirals outward, illuminating a world encompassing both tropical landscapes and polar reaches.

Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Exotic Landscape, c. 1925

Sketch for a stained-glass window for the Banco de España building on calle Marqués de Cubas, 25

Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper
19.5 × 22.5 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

This group of sketches was produced for the commission for stained-glass windows in the buildings at calle Marqués de Cubas 23 and 25, and plaza de las Cortes 3, 4, and 5, designed by the architect Luis Díaz Toresana and completed in 1933. These preparatory drawings are very close to the finished pieces, making it possible to follow both the creative process of the Maumejean workshop and the way in which the formal and technical issues of the windows were addressed.

The works were intended for the stairwell windows, spaces receiving light from interior courtyards. For this reason, the glaziers employed nearly colorless figured glass, or glass with varying gradations of gray, which tempered the brightness without sacrificing overall clarity.

The subject matter falls fully within the Art Deco idiom. The motifs alternate between exotic scenes – with animals from the jungle and the poles – and evocations of far-away lands, such as the city of Venice. At the same time, some designs indulge in the veneration of modern technology, invoking power lines, trains, or airplanes transformed into fantastical birds.

In this regard, these sketches may be seen as an intermediate link between the stained-glass windows created for the 1929 *Exposición internacional de Barcelona* and those of the Banco de España in Madrid, with both sets sharing stylistic, compositional, and material solutions. They are a revealing example of Maumejean's ability to merge tradition and modernity in the Spanish decorative arts of the 1930s.



Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Agriculture, c. 1933

Industry, c. 1933

Sketches for the stained-glass window in the entrance hall of the Banco de España extension

Pencil and ink on paper

Pencil on paper

Watercolor and pencil on paper

22.2 × 33.7 cm

45.7 × 41.4 cm

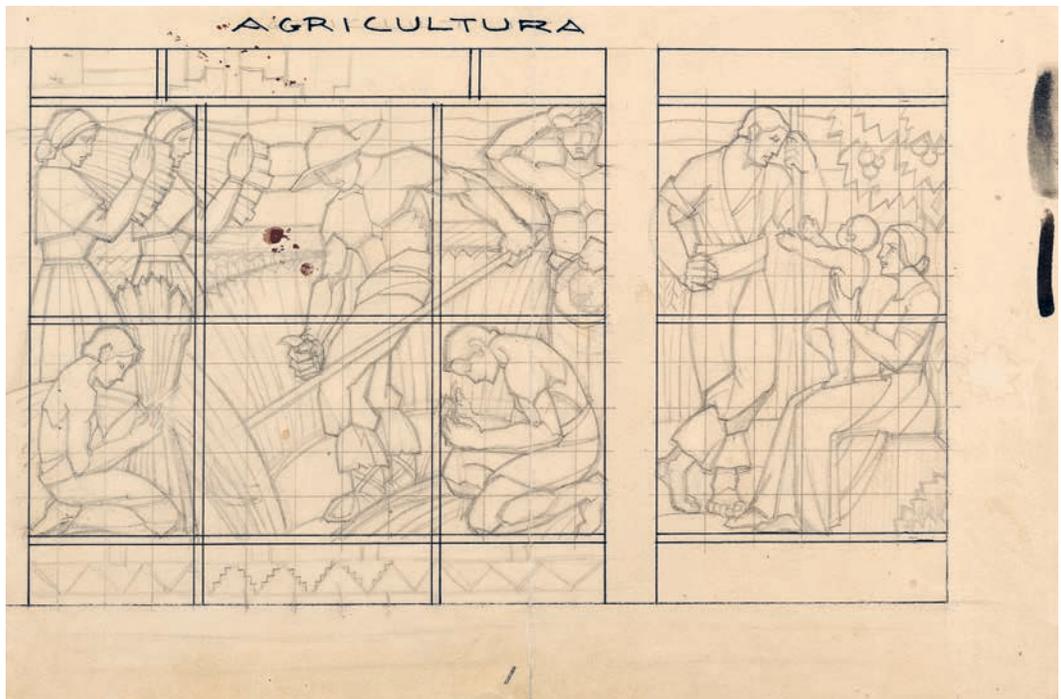
13.7 × 22.4 cm

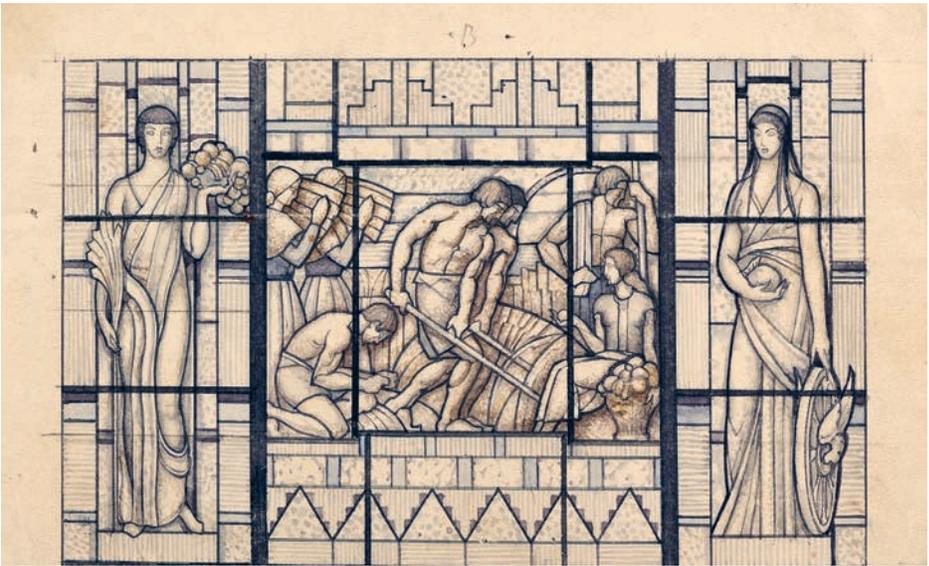
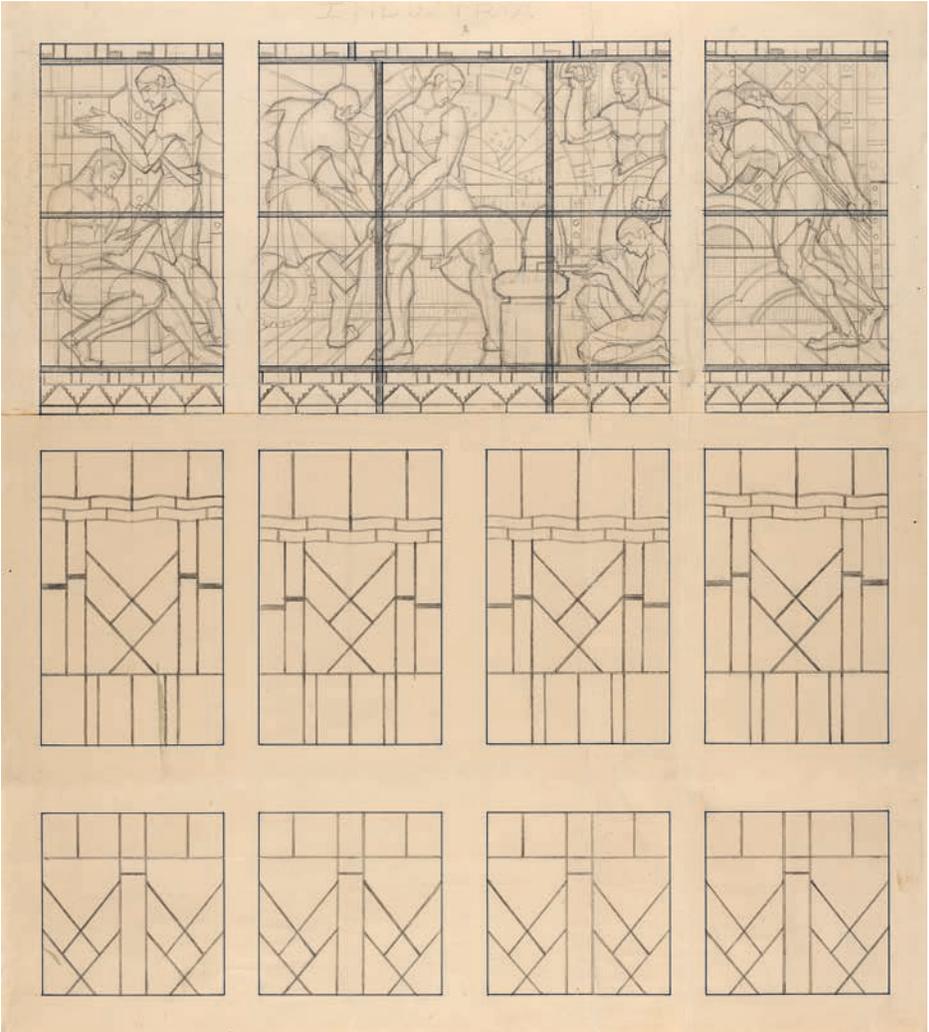
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit at the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

Producing a stained-glass window was a complex process, with distinct phases of drawing and research. This group of sketches makes it possible to follow that progression: from the initial conception to the arrangement and division of space through grids that enclosed the images – an essential step before transferring designs to the full-scale cartoons used in the workshop.

These are primarily graphite drawings for the two windows decorating the entrance hall of the Banco de España on calle de Alcalá, conceived as allegories of agriculture and industry. Both compositions are in the form of polyptychs, with nearly colorless glass, and are divided into central scenes flanked by lateral secondary scenes. At the sides, muses in statuesque poses elevate the main themes and reinforce their allegorical character. Notably, this group includes one of the most significant female representations in the entire project, although her role never attains the epic, monumental prominence reserved for the male figures.

These sketches also shed light on how the master glaziers, in defining the figures, were already incorporating the partition lines and structural modules needed to ensure the formal coherence and physical integrity of the whole. The specification of the thicknesses and sections of the lead came in the drawings not only guaranteed structural stability but also guided the visual reading of the finished window, where technique and aesthetics were harmoniously integrated.





Room B

Allegories of What Is to Come

The commission for the Banco de España's stained-glass windows was conceived for specific, commonly used spaces within the building, as part of the architectural extension designed by José Yárnoz during the 1930s. With the restoration of two of these windows – *The Allegory of Agriculture* and of *Industry* from the Calamarte staircase – and prior to their reinstallation in their original locations, the Banco de España has chosen to present them as part of this exhibition.

Room B, the exhibition's central space, features these two works alongside a substantial set of large-scale drawings – known as cartoons – displayed publicly for the first time. These full-scale cartoons correspond to the decorative panels of the stained-glass windows designed for the Patio de Operaciones, the entrance hall on calle Alcalá, and the main staircase. United in a single setting, these works constitute an experience of considerable visual impact, in which the images of laborers are transformed into epic figures, reimagined as civic emblems. This installation suggests an allegorical reading of labor as the driving force of progress, as envisioned during the Second Spanish Republic.

Within this milieu dominated by idealized bodies – mostly male – we also present a selection of banknotes issued by the Banco de España, whose iconography reinforces, through everyday circulation, the same symbolic message: the promise of a future in the making. Alongside them a series of photographs by Antoni Arissa from the 1930s is displayed, their compositions closely echoing the motifs found in the cartoons and stained-glass windows, broadening the visual imaginary of institutional modernity.

Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Industry

Allegory of Agriculture

c. 1934-1935

Enameled and figured glass and metal

415 x 306 cm / 440 x 306 cm

Colección Banco de España

The stained-glass windows *Allegory of Industry* and *Allegory of Agriculture* were conceived for the main staircase of the Banco de España extension designed by José Yárnoz in the 1930s. This staircase is one of the most distinctive spaces in the extension and leads to the first and second floors. The windows' recent restoration has allowed for their display in this exhibition, where they serve as the centerpiece.

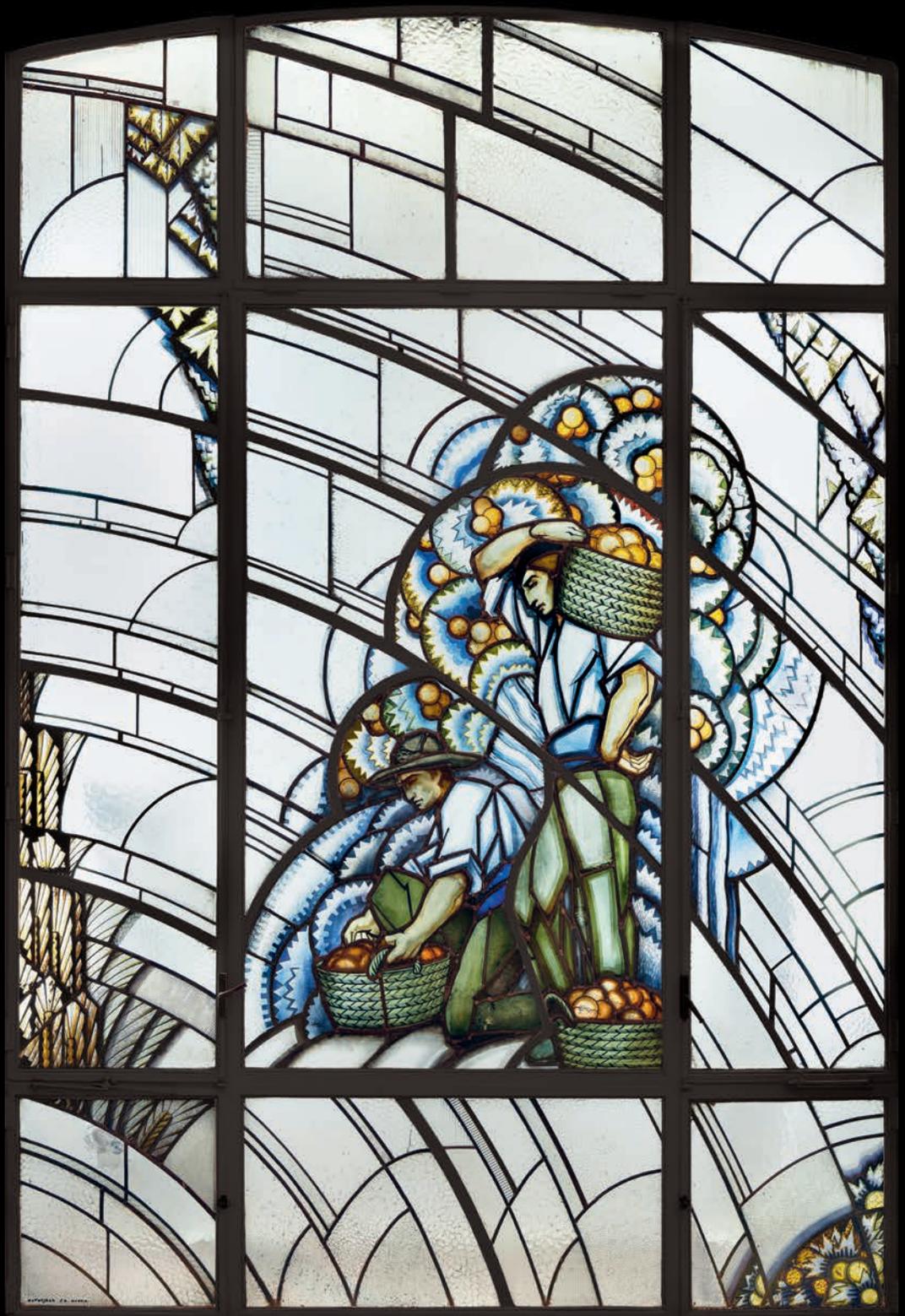
Both pieces are divided into three tiers and three vertical sections. The male figures in the central panels foster a particular notion of labor, while the geometric backgrounds of both windows along circular lines evoke Art Deco and the work of artists such as Sonia and Robert Delaunay. Though not installed side by side, they form a sequence as one ascends or descends the staircase, with their curved backgrounds drawing the viewer into a circular dynamic that suggests the motion of the assembly-line wheel as a metaphor for progress. The window dedicated to Industry features a

muscular man whose idealized body recalls both U.S. muralism and the visual vocabularies of Italian Fascism and Soviet Socialism. A large gear encircling one of his legs transforms into a spiral, radiating speed and movement in sync with avant-garde movements such as Vorticism, Futurism, and the Machine Aesthetic. It is a wheel that inescapably binds bodies to labor and to incessant productivity. The scene is completed by an ocean liner and Mercury's caduceus, symbols of commerce and the economy as the invisible drivers of modernity.

In the window devoted to agriculture, two men carry baskets of oranges in a clear allusion to physical labor. The curves in the background connect with those of the Industry window, reinforcing their pairing, while the crowns of oranges set a denser, more static rhythm. The features of the figures recall the Levantine farmer in works such as Sorolla's *El Naranjero*, heightening their Spanish character. The use of double enameled panes and silver stain intensifies the flesh tones and lends the figures greater corporeality.

The transparent backgrounds bathe both scenes in light, interrupted only by the curved lines and figured glass from different sources, which produce optical effects and temper the brightness. Taken together, they convey an ideal of labor and strength tied to manliness, while notably omitting women - a telling reflection of the mentality of the 1930s.





ROOM B LEFT

Cartoons were full-scale drawings on kraft paper, used to transfer images precisely onto the glass sheets for cutting and leading. Executed in ink, pencil, or charcoal, they were generally monochrome, though some included notes on coloring for the final piece. Their shading reproduced the textures of the figured glass planned for the project.

This set corresponds to the scenes and figures for the grand skylight of the new Patio de Operaciones of the Banco de España. Along the lower portion are three scenes of labor intended for the sloping panels: fishing, steelmaking, and wheat harvesting. In these, robust male bodies straining with effort appear alongside nets, coal, chimneys, or sheaves of wheat illuminated by sunlight.

On the upper part are isolated figures from the corner panels and one of the slopes,

representing specific trades: rancher, shepherd, steelworker, fisherman, and farmer. The last two are larger in scale and serve as atlantes who, in the final project, face and regard each other, enhancing the monumentality of the whole.

Stylistically, the cartoons are marked by formal economy: thick outlines model subdued facial expressions, offshoots of a sober and calculated modernity. These scenes are examples of social painting, with echoes of the Basque tradition and Soviet realism, where the message and the glorification of labor prevail over ornamentation, which is relegated to the translucent backgrounds of the stained glass. This international influence merges with the politics of the moment: the veneration of male labor as the engine of progress. The iconography projects a collective ideal in which the virile body becomes the emblem of construction, discipline, and productive power.

Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Scene of Agricultural Labor, c. 1932

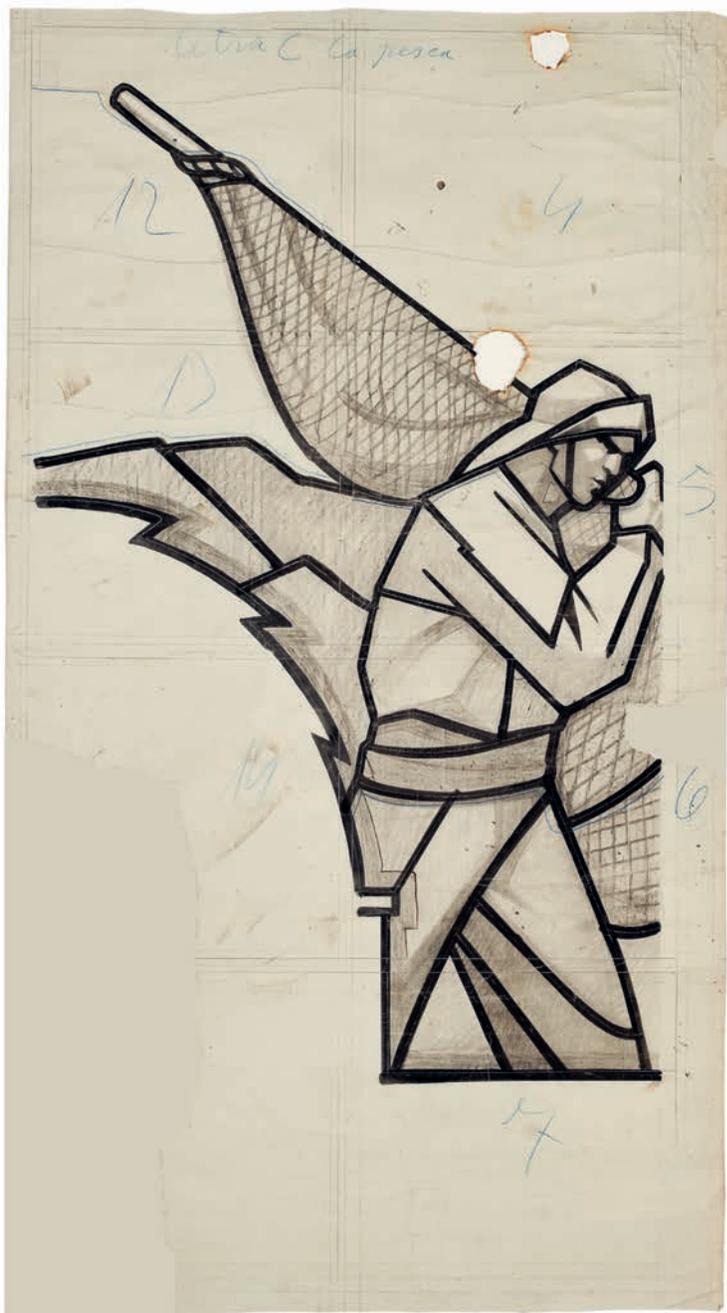
Cartoons for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones
Charcoal and ink on paper
196 x 55 cm / 192 x 106 cm / 195 x 110 cm

Scene of Metalwork, c. 1932

Cartoons for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
147 x 112 cm / 247 x 110 cm / 253 x 53 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio







**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Scene of Ship Mooring, c. 1932

Cartoons for the stained-glass windows in the Patio de Operaciones

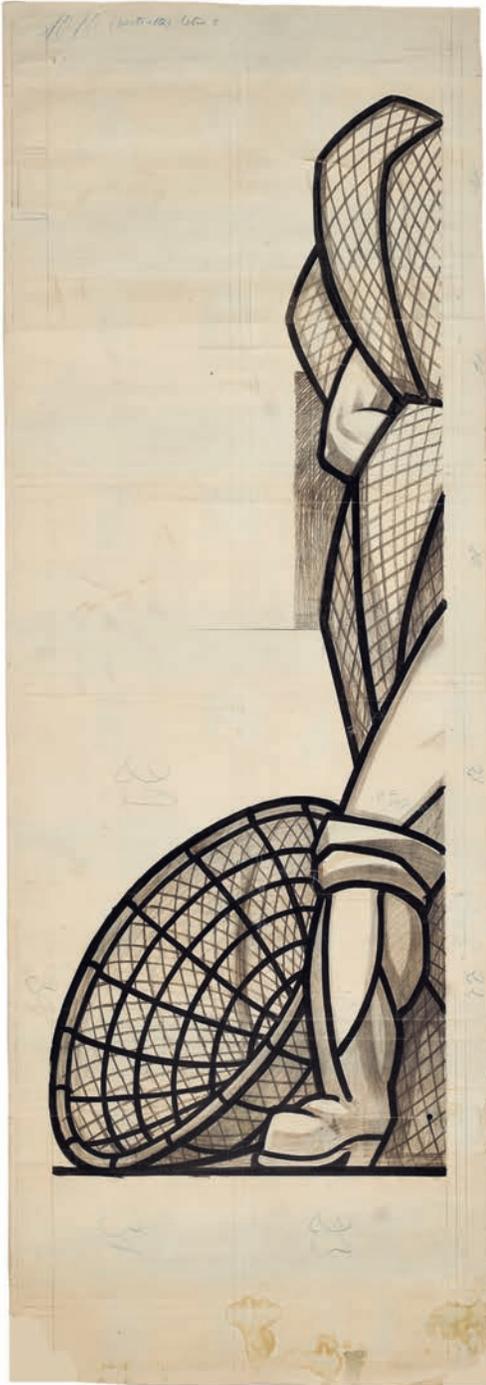
Side-panel scene

Charcoal and ink on kraft paper

195 x 108 cm / 196 x 110 cm / 143 x 54 cm

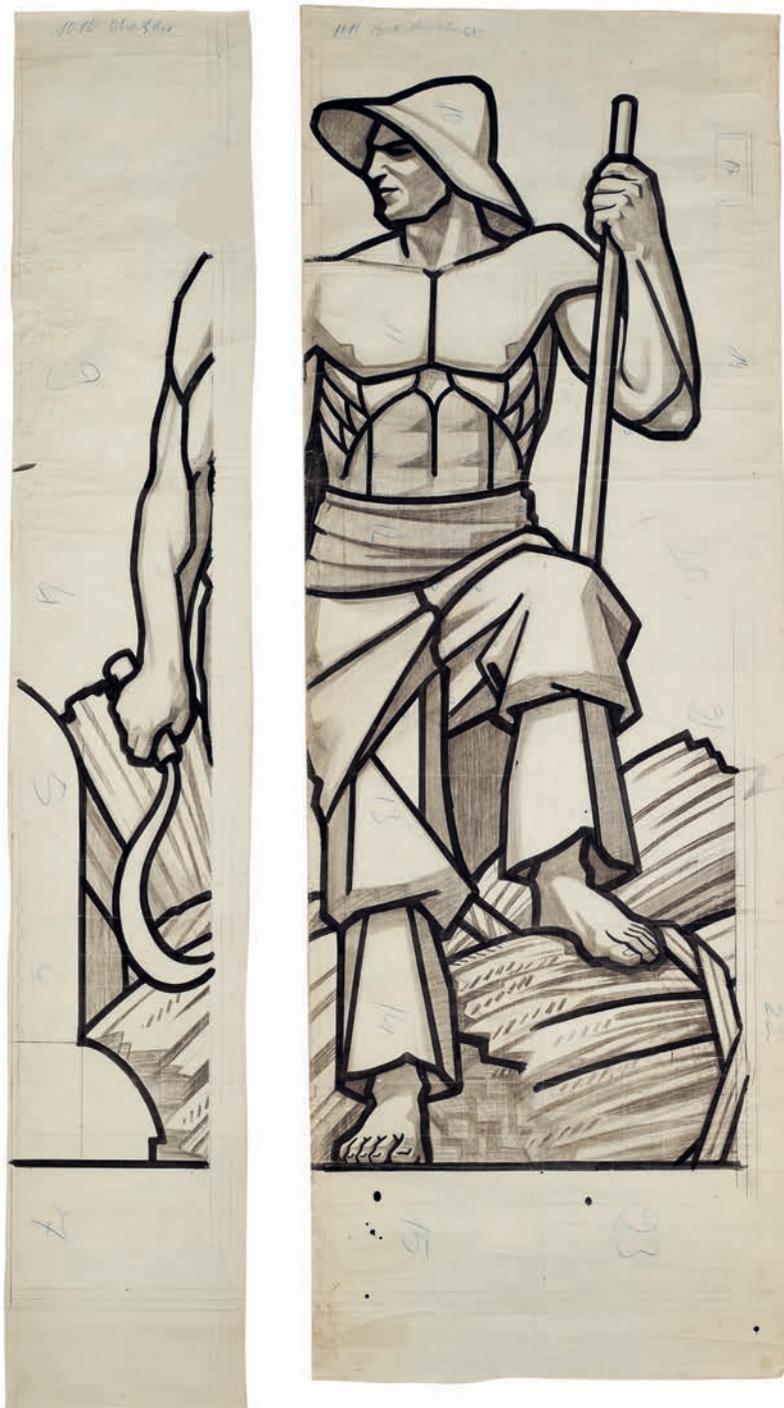
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit in the Fundación

Centro Nacional del Vidrio



**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Allegory of Fishing, c. 1932
Cartoons for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones, corner panel
Charcoal and ink on paper
310 x 109 cm / 302 x 110 cm
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio



Allegory of Agriculture, c. 1932

Cartoons for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones, corner panel

Charcoal and ink on kraft paper

315 x 55 cm / 305 x 108 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio



**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Shepherding, c. 1932
Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones, corner panel
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
179 x 122.5 cm
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio



Agricultural Transport, c. 1932

Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones, corner panel
Charcoal and watercolor on kraft paper

182 x 102 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

ROOM B RIGHT

In the 1930s, the representation of women in art mirrored the social and legislative advances of the Second Spanish Republic: the right to vote (1931), access to education, reduced illiteracy, workplace equality, and the right to divorce. Yet the iconography of the period did not always fully reflect these achievements. In the set of cartoons designed for the stained-glass windows of the entrance hall on calle de Alcalá, the number of female figures almost equals that of their male counterparts, though their depictions remain bound to traditional roles. Women appear as mothers, as fruit pickers engaged in lighter tasks, or as statuesque muse-like figures on the edges of the composition, validating and balancing the central subject.

Of particular significance is the figure of the Allegory of Commerce, recognizable by the great wheel she holds. Her iconography aligns with precedents such as Joaquim Torres-García's sketch *Industrial Catalonia* (Room A), where the social and economic narrative is institutionalized and safeguarded. Alongside these scenes for the Banco's entrance hall, the set also includes two additional cartoons: one for the *Allegory of Industry* in the Calamarte staircase, and another for the *Allegory of Abundance*, part of the grand skylight in the Patio de Operaciones. Straddling tradition and modernity, these cartoons reveal both the aspiration for greater representation of women in the project and the persistence of an iconography still rooted in classical, hierarchical models.

Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Industry (Vulcan), c. 1932
Cartoon for the stained-glass skylight in the
Patio de Operaciones, corner panel
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
397 x 113 cm
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio





**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Allegory of Commerce, c. 1933
Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
in the entrance hall of the Banco de España
extension
Pencil and charcoal on paper
178.5 x 74.7 cm

Allegory of Abundance, c. 1932
Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
in the Patio de Operaciones
Charcoal, ink, and gouache on kraft
paper
300 x 140 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio

10/10 (grande alla)

L. van der Meulen



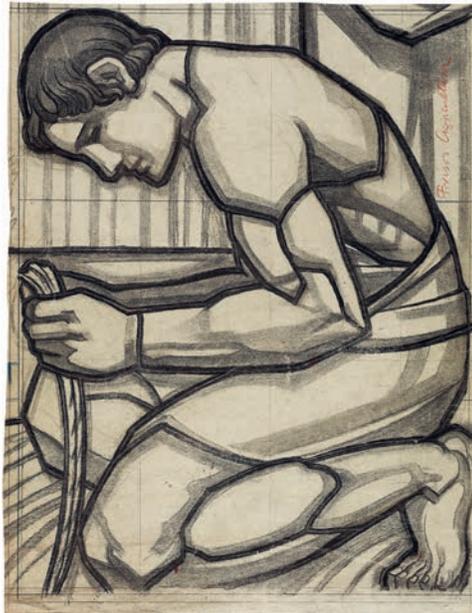
T





Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Allegory of Agriculture, c. 1933
Cartoons for the stained-glass windows
in the entrance hall of the Banco de España
extension
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper
138 x 54 cm / 137 x 74 cm / 53.5 x 69.5 cm
69 x 54 cm
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
on deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional
del Vidrio







**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Allegory of Industry, c. 1933

Cartoons for the stained-glass windows in the
entrance hall of the Banco de España extension.

Central scene of the frieze

Charcoal and ink on kraft paper

137 x 55 cm / 137 x 75 cm / 138 x 54.5 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on
deposit in the Fundación Centro Nacional del
Vidrio



**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**

Allegory of Agriculture (women picking fruit),
c. 1933

Cartoon for the stained-glass windows in the
entrance hall of the Banco de España extension
Charcoal on paper

136 x 94 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

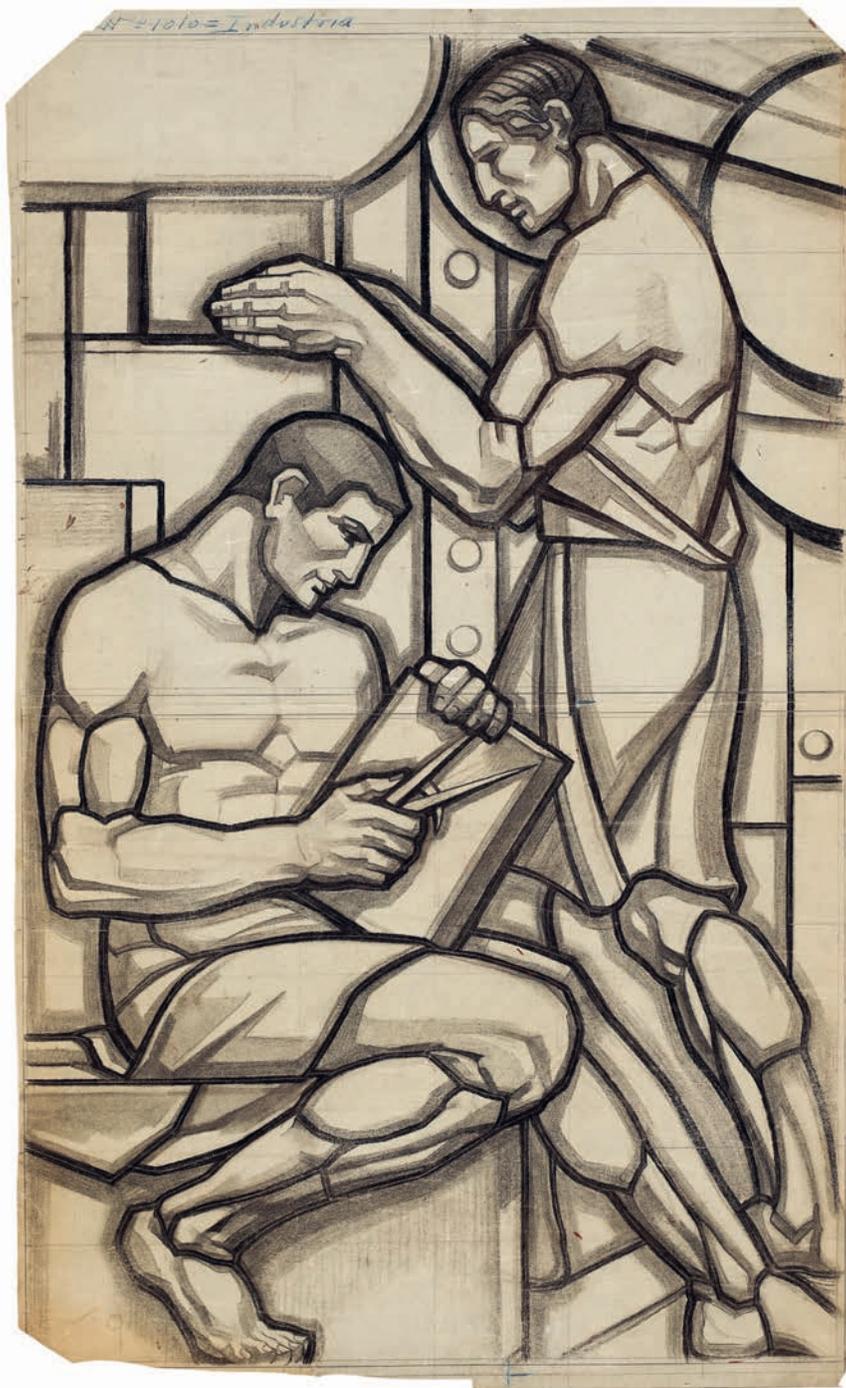


Allegory of Agriculture, c. 1933

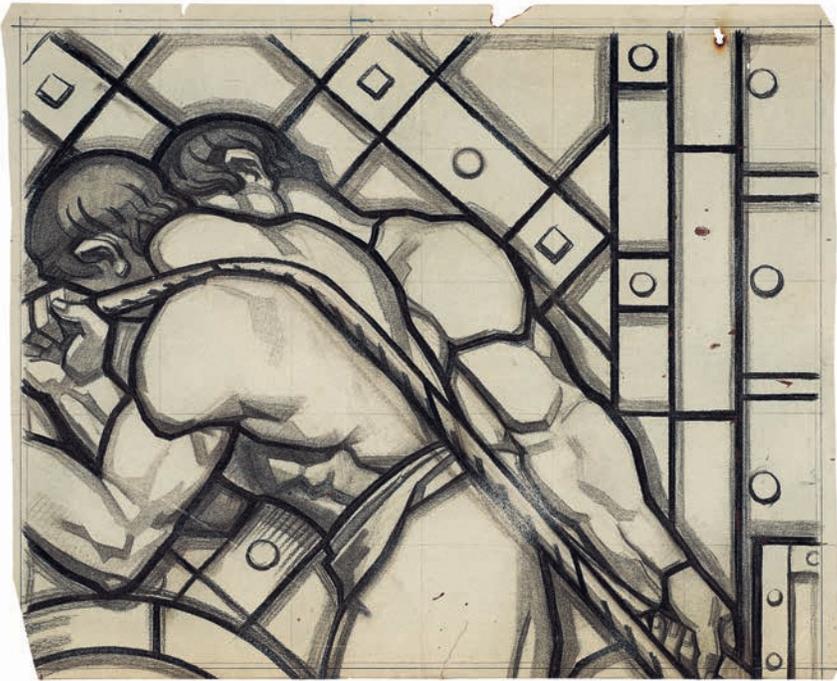
Cartoon for the stained-glass windows in the
entrance hall of the Banco de España extension
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper

137 x 94 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio



**Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols,
1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)**



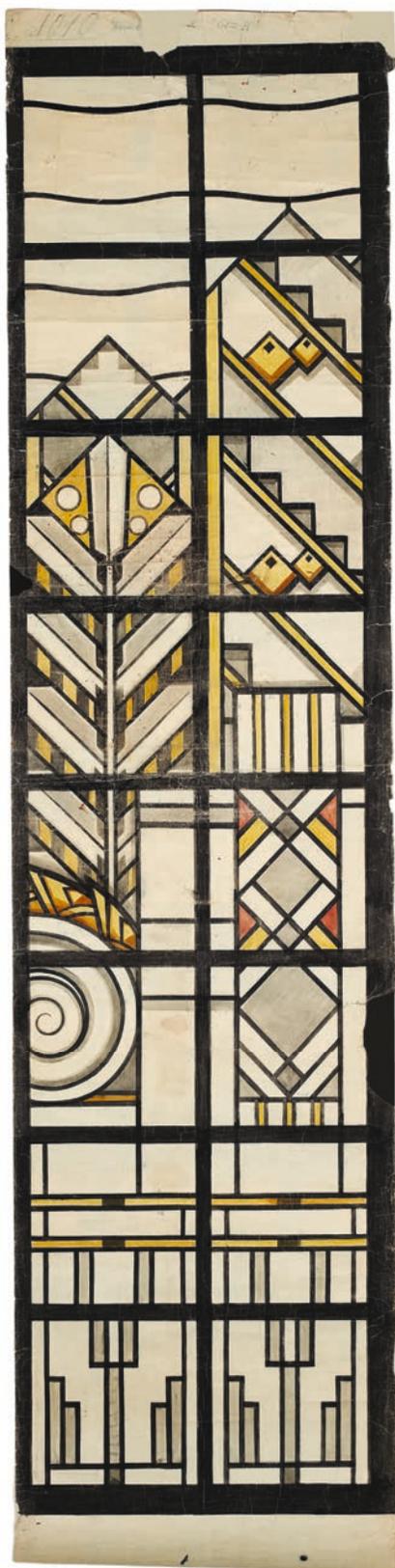
Allegory of Industry, c. 1933

Cartoons for the stained-glass windows in the entrance hall
of the Banco de España extension. Left scene of the frieze
Charcoal and ink on kraft paper

135 x 85 cm / 69 x 85 cm / 69 x 85 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio

For the backgrounds of the grand skylight in the Patio de Operaciones, a series of cartoons was designed in which geometric motifs with organic touches predominate. Some feature vegetal forms resembling ears of wheat, with leaves and seeds; others incorporate architectural elements infused with Art Deco inspirations, such as fountains. Their purpose was primarily ornamental, creating a visual counterpoint to the human figures, which were conceived as emblems set against the abstraction of the backgrounds. These backdrops served as stages where light figurative allusions were introduced, such as a loading crane in a port setting. Some cartoons are partially colored, though most of these backgrounds were executed through combinations of various figured glass panes in monochrome – a method that endowed the composition with nuance, varying light, and texture.



Alberto Martorell (Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 1890 - Calí, Colombia, 1979)
Maumejean Hermanos, Madrid (1923-1970)

Decorative Motifs, c. 1932
 Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
 in the Patio de Operaciones
 Charcoal, ink, and gouache on kraft paper
 415 x 102 cm

Dock Work, scenes for the side panels, c. 1932
 Cartoon for the stained-glass windows
 in the Patio de Operaciones
 Charcoal, ink, and gouache on kraft paper
 408 x 106 cm / 402 x 110 cm

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, on deposit
 in the Fundación Centro Nacional del Vidrio



Deogracias Magdalena Decoración-Muebles

Double bench designed by José Yárnoz
for the public hall, 1935
Carved and assembled Cuban mahogany wood
122 x 220 x 94 cm
Colección Banco de España

The Patio de Operaciones was conceived as the monumental interior space for the Banco de España. Its architect, José Yárnoz, oversaw every detail: he commissioned Maumejean to execute the grand skylight, designed the central monumental clock, and ordered wrought-iron work for grilles, screens, and doors clearly inspired by Art Deco. For this central space, Yárnoz also designed eight double benches in Cuban mahogany, manufactured in the luxury furniture workshop of Deogracias Magdalena in Madrid. Although the original drawings have been lost, the result clearly bears the imprint of modernism,

echoing other furnishings and publications in circulation at the time. In contemporary photographs by Antonio de Zárraga, the benches were first arranged in various groupings around the monumental clock. Following the same design, both single and double models of different widths were produced. The double bench shown here, with a shared backrest, is almost a piece of functional sculpture. Its continuous curved lines create a fluid, organic form, reinforced by the dark, monochrome solidity of mahogany. Despite its apparent weight, the bench is built with an internal frame and clad with curved veneers, achieving an ergonomic design that transforms the piece into a natural pedestal for the body - understood not as a secondary support but as an essential element defining the relationship between object, space, and user. This sculptural approach recalls one developed a few decades earlier by Constantin Brancusi.



Antoni Arissa Asmarats
(Barcelona, 1900-1980)

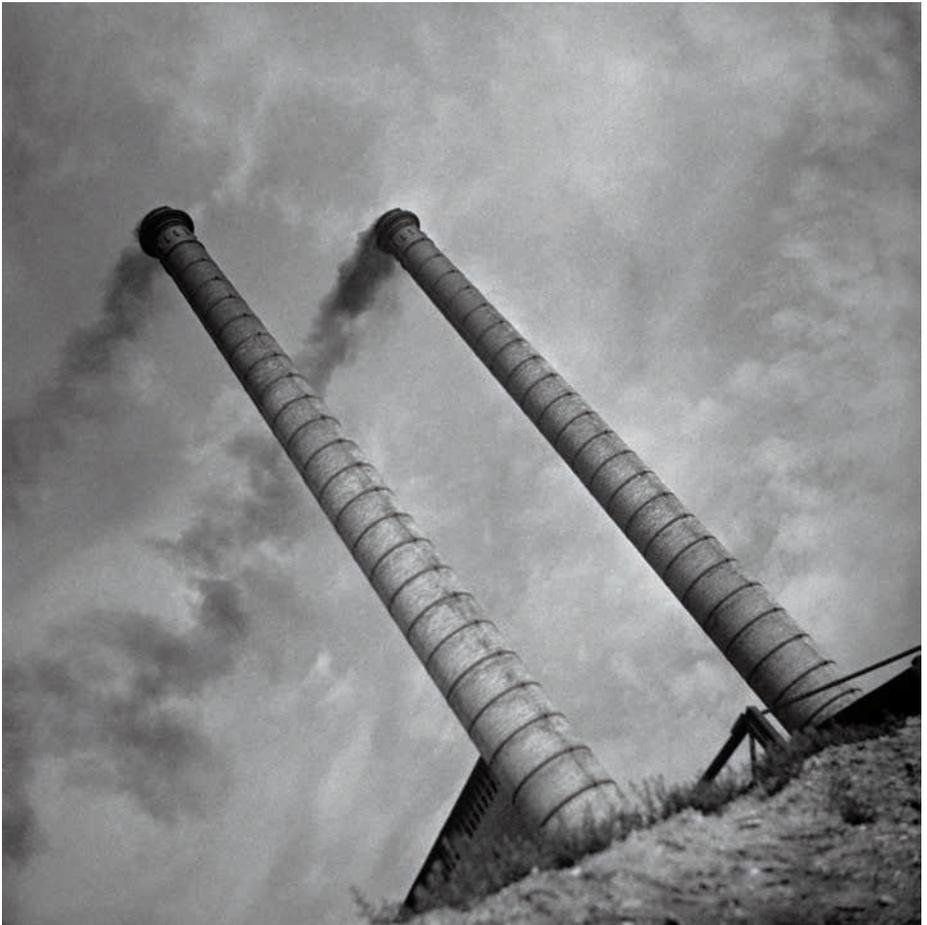
Untitled, c. 1934

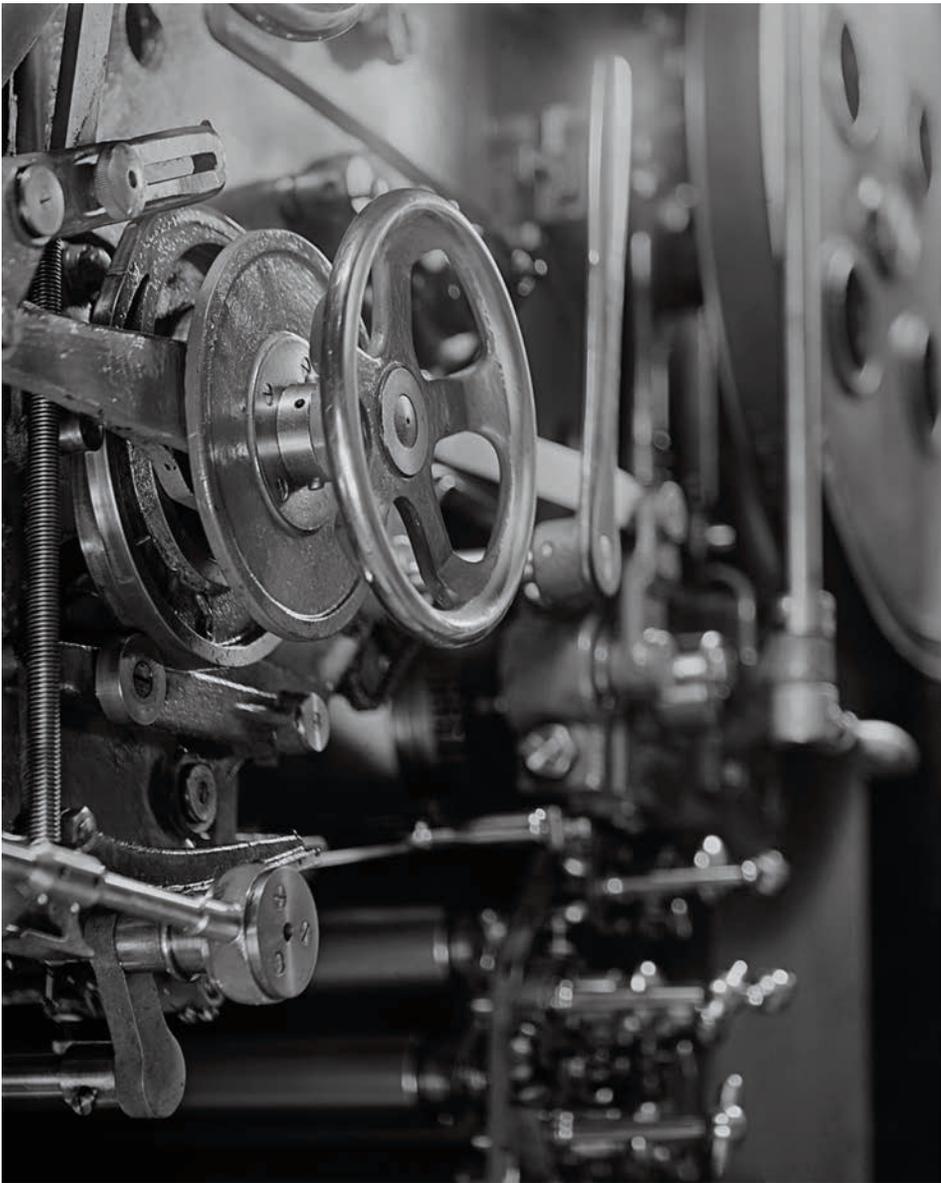
Modern giclée print on Fujifilm baryta paper
56 × 36 cm

Arxiu Històric Fotogràfic de Catalunya

In the 1930s, photography in Spain transitioned from pictorialism toward a more objective and conceptual language, akin to the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). Antoni Arissa's images are a clear example of this photographic avant-garde, which – consonant with other artistic media – embraced an ideology of progress, machinery, and modernity that aimed to depict reality in an objective, direct, and unadorned way. It is no surprise that some of these compositions resemble the drawings for the stained-glass windows in this gallery:

the veneration of machines, speed, and industrial production infused many cultural forms, from architecture to graphic design and even fashion. It is worth recalling that the Second Spanish Republic actively promoted the dissemination of this modern aesthetic through illustrated magazines and international exhibitions, seeking to project the image of a nation in transformation. One striking parallel is the similarity between Arissa's photograph of an electrical tower and the one appearing in Maumejean's photographic plate, or the identical angle of a locomotive breaking into both the skylight in the Patio de Operaciones and one of these photographs. Perhaps most striking, however, is the figure of the assembly-line worker, with his wheel in the foreground – a motif carried over into the heroic *Allegory of Industry* that dominates the stained-glass window in this very space.

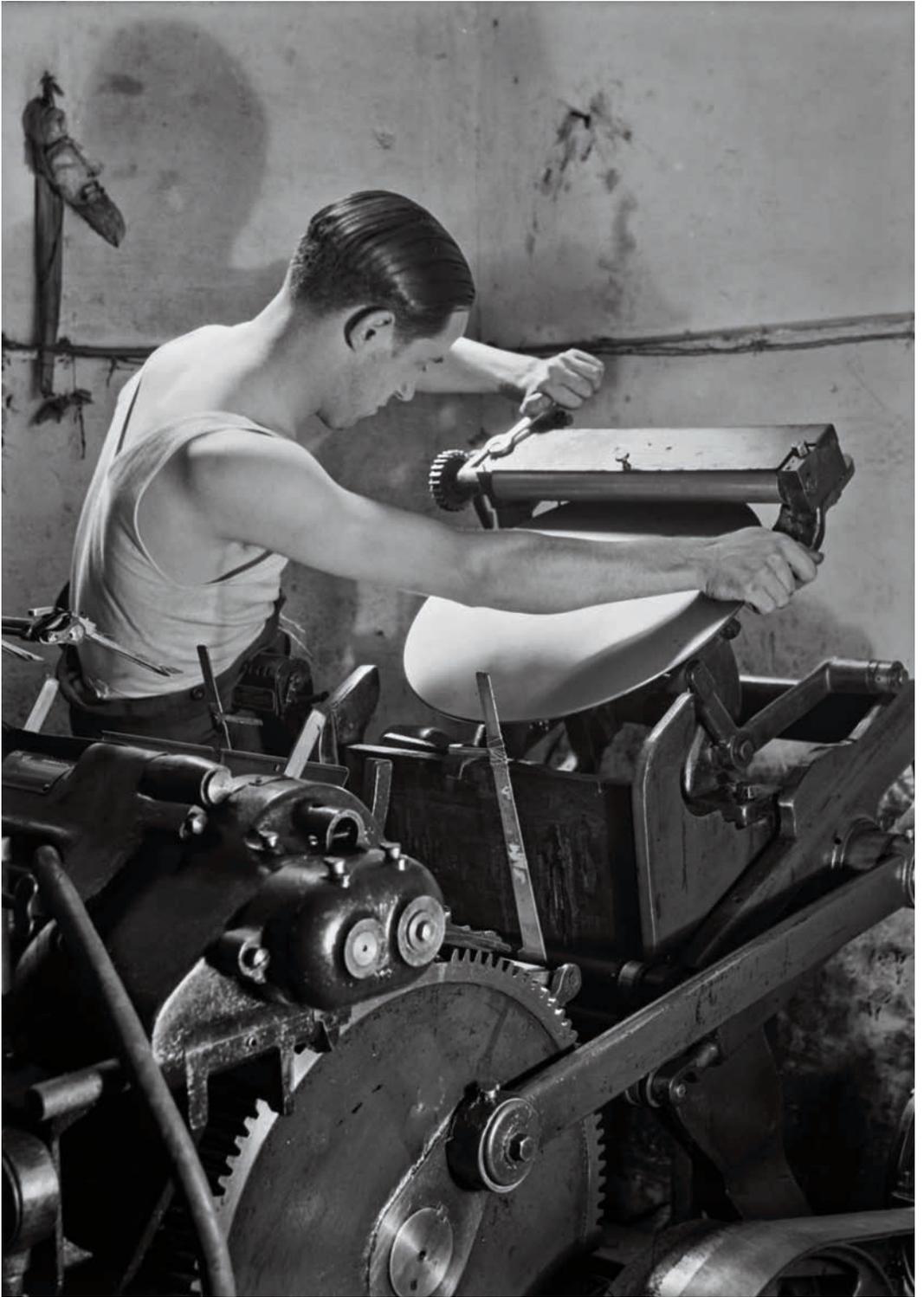




Antoni Arissa Asmarats
(Barcelona, 1900-1980)

Untitled, 1930-1934
Contemporary print in mineral pigments
on cotton paper
65 x 75 x 4 cm
Fundación Telefónica

Assembly-Line Worker, c. 1934
Modern giclée print on Fujifilm baryta paper
56 x 36 cm
Arxiu Històric fotogràfic de Catalunya



Banco de España provisional banknotes
 for 500, 100, 50, and 25 pesetas
 Bilbao issue, 1 January 1937
 Original rotogravure prints
 Printer: Huecograbado Arte y Editorial Vasca,
 S. A., Bilbao
 13.9 x 9.9 cm / 16.4 x 11 cm / 13 x 8.8 cm /
 12.2 x 8 cm



Consejo de Asturias y León banknotes
 for 1 peseta and for 50, 40, and 25 céntimos,
 c. 1937
 Original lithographic prints
 Printer: Control de Litografía, Gijón, at the
 Artes Gráficas press
 10.3 x 5.6 cm / 9.7 x 5.2 cm / 9.1 x 4.8 cm /
 8.5 x 4.5 cm



Generalitat de Catalunya banknotes
 for 10 and 2.50 pesetas
 Issued 25 September 1936
 Original lithographic prints
 Printer: Oliva de Vilanova, Barcelona
 16.7 x 7.4 cm / 16.3 x 6.9 cm

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España,
 Colección de Billetes

The graphic arts were probably one of the most dynamic means of expression and communication for disseminating images related to labor, the construction of progress, and ultimately national identity. Posters and magazines were key media for the circulation of economic, political, and social ideas. Laborers, factories, gears, and bold new typefaces also modernized the way images were read and understood – more directly and effectively.



In this context, the banknotes issued by the Banco de España during the Republican period stand as a superb example of graphic artistry. Like posters, they functioned as vehicles of visual propaganda, as their images and messages quite literally circulated from hand to hand, reaching thousands of people each day.

The designs presented here share the same formal and conceptual concerns as the stained-glass windows and their preparatory drawings. The stylization of the human figure, repeated as a true visual canon, demonstrates how clarity and symbolic impact were valued above ornament – transforming these banknotes into genuine instruments of mass communication.





Room C

The Cámara del Oro: Technology and Security

Room C delves into one of the most singular and least visible spaces in the building: the Cámara del Oro (Gold Vault), conceived between 1934 and 1936 as a high-security facility for safeguarding the nation's gold and silver reserves. At a depth of 35 meters, this subterranean chamber was designed as a work of precision architecture, in which every component – armored doors, protective barriers, waterproof materials, metal fittings – adhered to the principle of maximum security. More than a technical feat, the Cámara del Oro manifests an institutional vision of economic power as a sacred virtue: a space that transforms security into symbol and safekeeping into ritual. Its political significance intensified in September 1936, when the Republican government ordered the transfer of part of the reserves – around 510 metric tons – first to France and then from Cartagena to Moscow, to prevent their capture by insurgent forces. This affair, known as the *Oro de Moscú* (Moscow Gold), turned the vault into an emblem of an era shot through by the tension between modernity, conflict, and survival.

For the first time, this section presents plans, drawings, maquettes, and photographs documenting the construction process and technical specifications of the vault. Its plan comprised a range of spaces: a broad entrance vestibule, main and secondary chambers, and a patrol corridor used by the members of the security department, who were stationed there in weeklong shifts. Art Deco-inspired wall sconces illuminate images of some of the ten armored doors manufactured specifically for this vault by the York Safe & Lock Company.

A large photographic mural, composed of documentary images from the Banco de España archive, sheds light on the workers who built the vault, providing a view that is thoroughly human rather than allegorical. Their faces and bodies meet the viewer's gaze with a tangible presence, captured within a space permeated by the enduring struggle between the visible and the hidden that underlies power structures.

Artist unknown

Vault Door No. 8029 (detail of burnished sides), c. 1930

Watercolor and ink on card
90 × 71.5 cm

Vault Door No. 5229, c. 1930

Watercolor and ink on card
141.8 × 74 cm

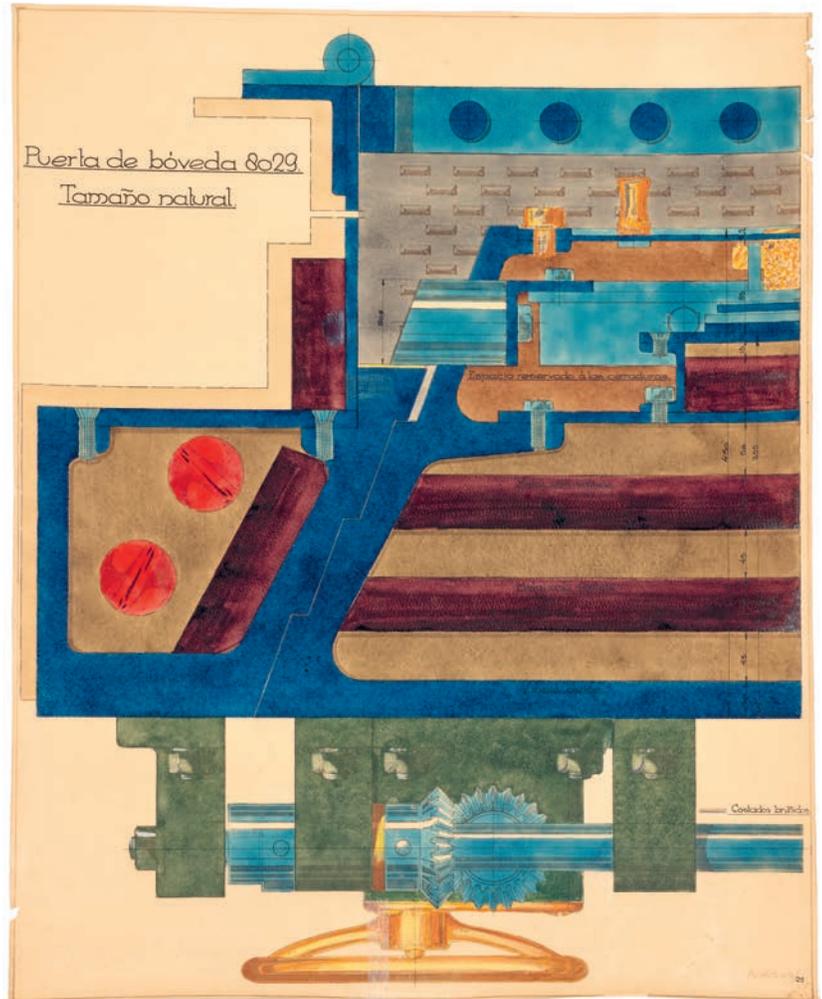
Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yárnoz Larrosa

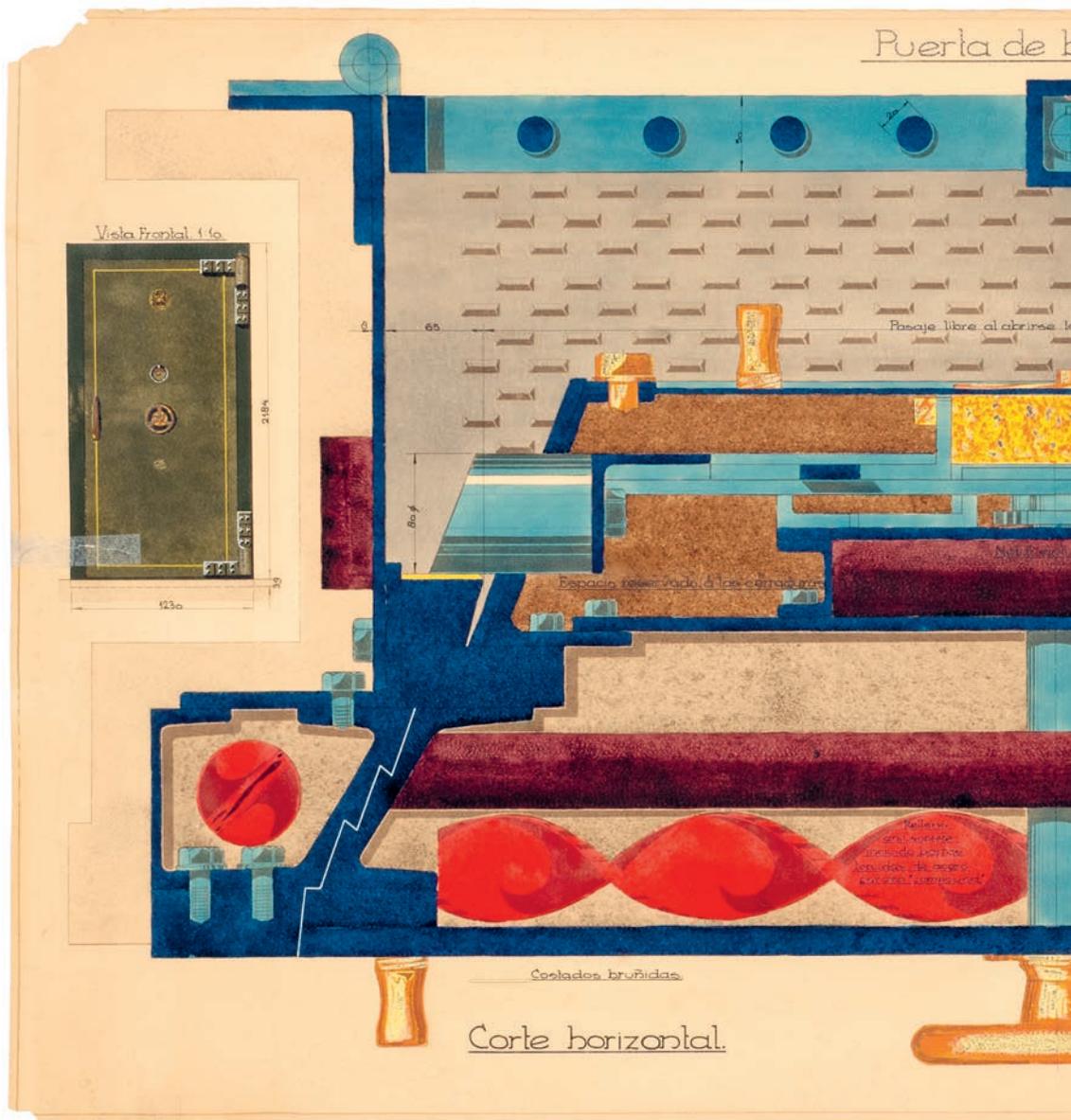
The subterranean vault, or Cámara del Oro, of the Banco de España was designed by architect José Yárnoz during the building's extension. Its construction addressed the bank's need for a larger strongroom for cash reserves and,

above all, for improved security amid political instability, robberies at other banks, and the social unrest of the interwar period.

The vault was built directly beneath the Patio de Operaciones, at a depth of 35 meters, and was fitted with an advanced system of polished steel armored doors manufactured by the American firm York Safe & Lock. The project's strategic importance explains the scarcity of surviving documentation on its specifications, at a time when bank security had become a central concern of international financial architecture.

These two technical drawings in watercolor depict an armored door (5229) and a vault door (8029), produced by the renowned Dutch firm Lips Dordrecht, which had specialized in security systems since the late 19th century. The company established itself as one of



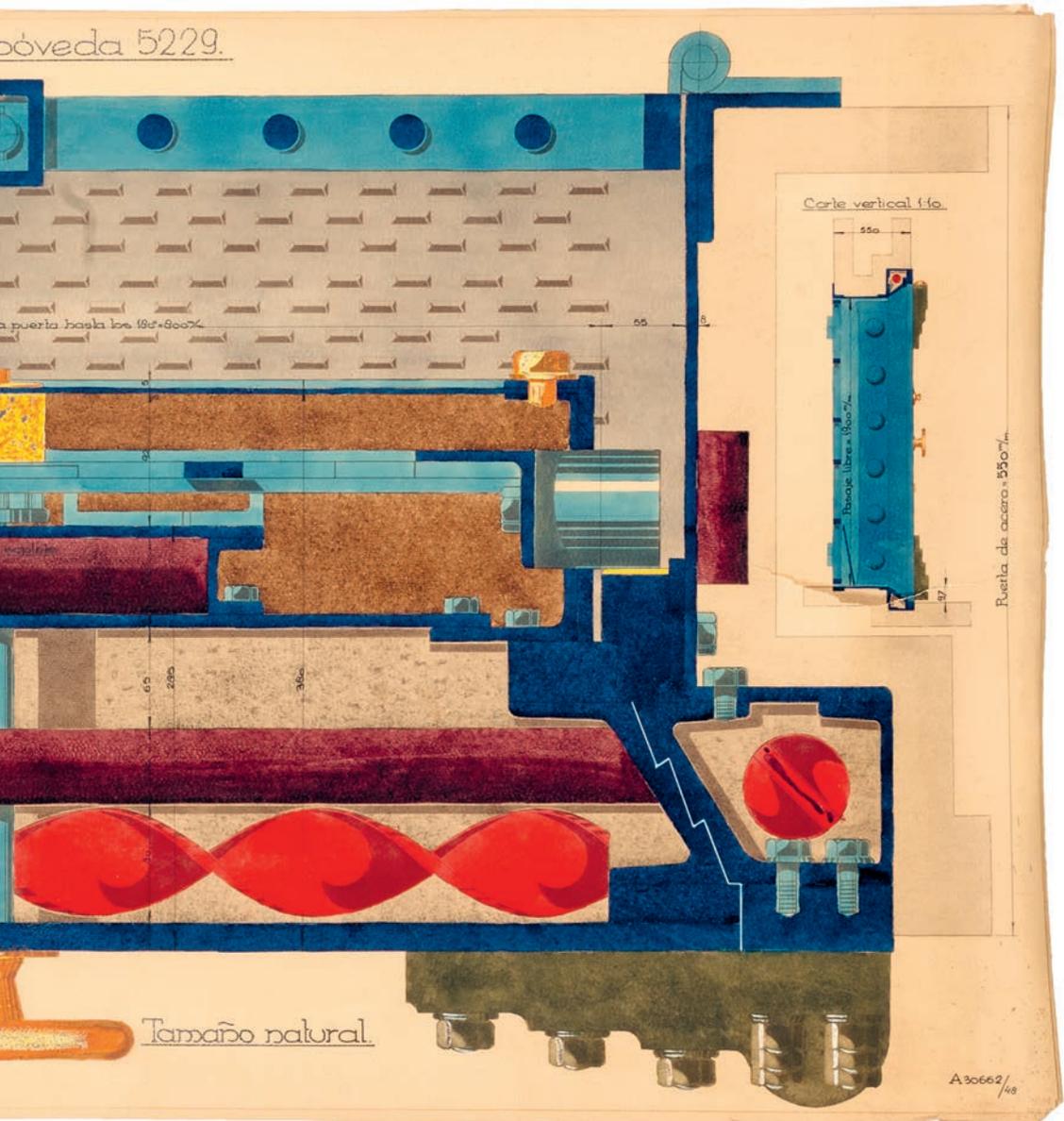


Europe's leading producers of safes and armored doors due to their technical reliability and a distinctive visual language fusing functionality with modernity.

What is remarkable about these documents is the precision with which they reveal internal mechanisms normally reserved for select clients, such as the spiral reinforcement bar. Though the drawings do not show the actual armored doors in the Banco de España's Cámara del Oro in Madrid, they were likely

drafted in Yárnoz's studio from Lips's technical sketches and later finished in watercolor. The minimalist palette highlights the mechanical vitality of these pieces, transforming them into images that transcend the merely technical to enter the aesthetic and cultural realm of modernity.

The 5229 model is an auxiliary door intended for medium-security environments, probably secondary bank branches. Its design combines mechanical precision with aesthetic flair,



its fluid lines closer to American Streamline style than to European Art Deco. It features a bronze wheel and central lock, a metal escutcheon, and the distinctive undulating plates characteristic of Lips, which increased resistance to forced entry and showcased the firm's technical innovation. The 8029 model, by contrast, is thicker and more sophisticated, with sealed hinges, a large gilt wheel, and visible cogwheels. It was

designed for main vaults and settings requiring the highest level of protection. Beyond their function, both drawings embody an aesthetic aligned with Precisionism and Streamline Moderne, movements that celebrated industrial modernity through geometric composition, axial symmetry, and constructive clarity - in harmony with the spirit of institutional Art Deco.

Unknown photographer

Cross Section of the Patrol Corridor, c. 1932

Patrol Corridor, After Concrete Cladding Completed, c. 1932

Shaft No. 1 from the Entrance to the Main Gallery, c. 1932

Main Gallery from the Side of Shaft No. 2, c. 1932

Open Peephole Between the Patrol Corridor and Shaft No. 1, c. 1932

Gelatin silver prints on baryta paper.
Period prints

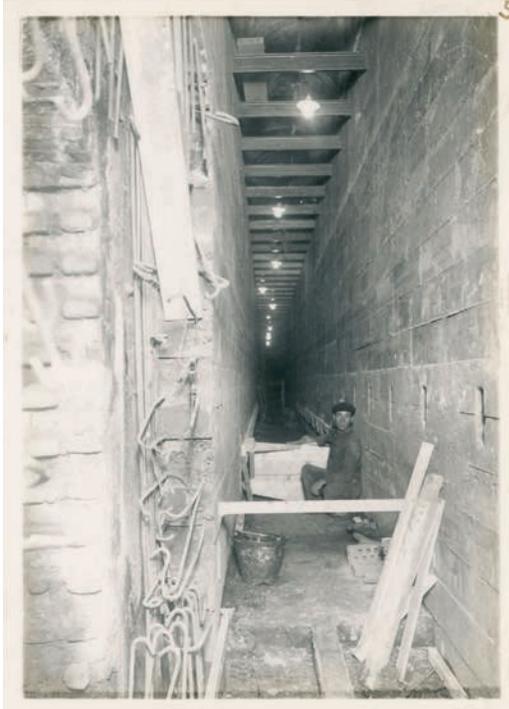
Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yárnoz Larrosa

The Banco de España's extension required the creation of a new space to safeguard the nation's gold reserves, as the existing vault was both too small and lacking the enhanced security standards that had become paramount in interwar Europe.

Designed by architect José Yárnoz, the project was situated beneath the Patio de Operaciones and came to be known as the Cámara del Oro. The photographs gathered here, by an anonymous photographer, were produced as construction records documenting the progress of the project. While they do not provide metric precision or dimensional detail, they offer a close look at the technical aspects of the project's early stages.

Devoid of exterior views or open perspectives, the images focus instead on the core elements of the security system: shafts, guard passages, peepholes, and access points. Through typed annotations, they reveal the complexity of the subterranean task, where excavating the earth meant creating a space at once impenetrable and hermetic.

El Paso de Ronda después de terminado el revestimiento de hormigón armado. 68





Antonio de Zárraga
(Madrid, 1885 – Mexico City, 1957)

Low-Angle View of the Interior Staircase Railings, 1936

Underground Vault: Main Corridor of Rental Vaults, 1936

Circular Armored Door to Shaft No. 1 of the Underground Vault, 1936

Gelatin silver prints on baryta paper.
Period prints

Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yáñez Larrosa

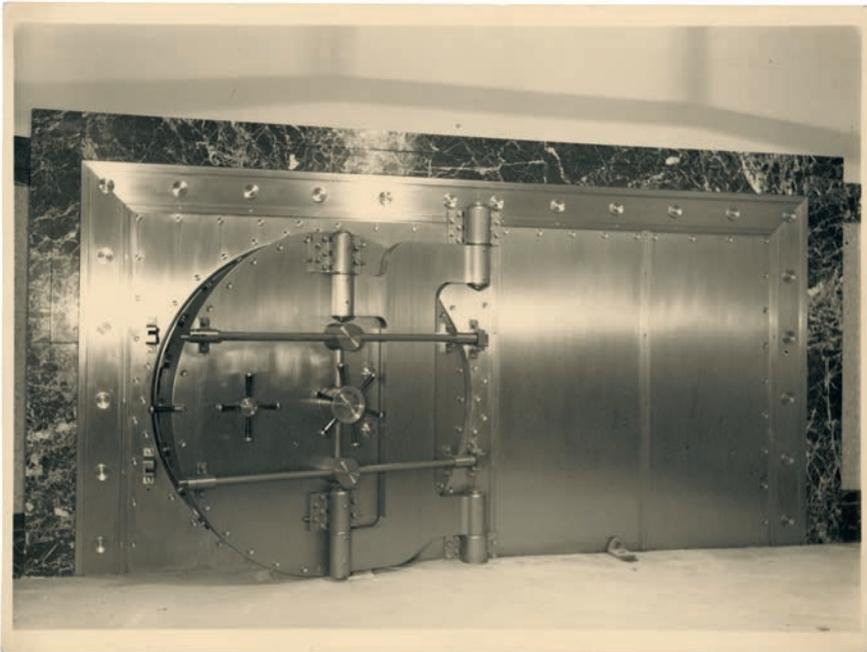
The Banco de España's Cámara del Oro was completed in March 1936, just months before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on 17 July. In that brief interval, the nation's gold reserves – some 700 metric tons – were moved inside, securing them under maximum protection. However, stability was fleeting: already in July,

at the direction of the Republican government, part of the reserves began to be sold, and by October around 510 tons had been transferred to Cartagena for shipment to the Soviet Union in exchange for war materiel, currency, and supplies.

These photographs by Antonio de Zárraga, commissioned to document the bank's extension for an internal publication, are the first visual record of the interior of this symbolic space. In an objective and precise photographic style, they reveal the corridors, metal structures, and imposing engineering of the facility.

Particularly striking are the images of the polished steel armored doors manufactured by the American firm York Safe & Lock – authentic security machinery designed to be impenetrable – alongside views of the shelving and vaults meant to store the gold ingots. Paradoxically, these photographs celebrate a space conceived for absolute inviolability at the very moment its treasures were being divested, transforming it into an icon of the fragile intersection of architecture, economics, and war.





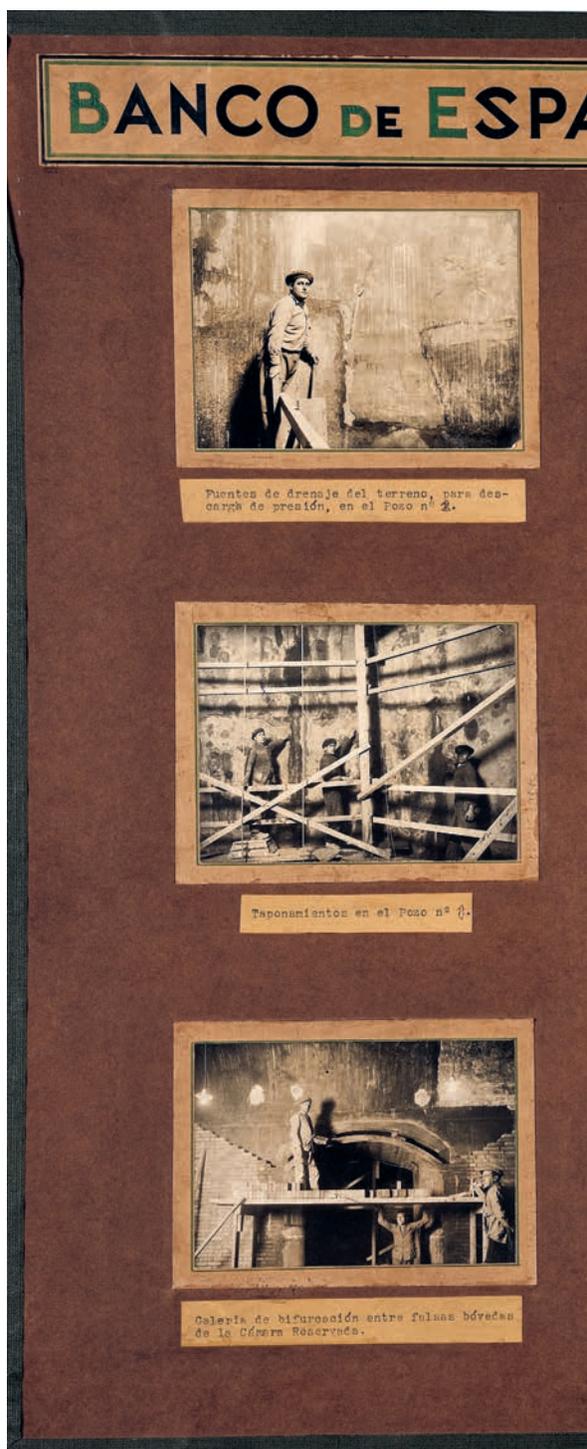
Unknown photographer

Panels with photographs of the construction of the building's underground vault, c. 1932
Gelatin silver prints
Archivo Histórico del Banco de España

The construction of the Banco de España's grand Cámara del Oro posed an exceptional technical challenge. Work on extending the building was already under way when the decision was made to excavate the subsoil to a depth of 35 meters, which required complex drilling operations under adverse conditions. Although specialized machinery and a pumping system were employed to remove sediments, the project was complicated by the constant presence of groundwater, which slowed progress and demanded additional technical solutions. The contractor, Erroz y San Martín, deployed a large workforce across three day and night shifts. Among them were drillers, laborers, mechanics, masons, and carpenters, whose combined efforts made it possible to carry out the excavation *in extremis*.

The photographic series presented here comes from a collection of small anonymous images mounted on cardboard, documenting both the progress of the project and the people who carried it out. The faces and bodies of the laborers, captured during their tasks, offer an unvarnished view of the strenuous human effort that made the construction of this facility possible. It is significant that, in a space designed to safeguard an abstract treasure such as gold, these photographs return the focus – as María Rosón observes – to the tangible presence of those who built it.

These images preserve the laborers' gestures, their faces. They are not allegories or idealized figures, but real persons looking back at us from the site itself. The resilience of their bodies became one of the true material foundations of the Cámara del Oro. These immediate photographs reveal a collective that, despite both photographic and individual anonymity, with their own hands built one of the most emblematic and secure facilities in contemporary Spain.



AÑACaja subterránea



Filtraciones en el Pozo nº 1.



Puente de drenaje del terreno en el Pozo número 1 para descargar la presión.



Taponamiento en el Pozo nº 1.
Segunda etapa del trabajo de impermeabilización.



Taponamiento en el Pozo nº 1.
Tercer etapa del trabajo de impermeabilización. Revoco final con antihidro.



Puerta de acceso a la Cámara desde el Pozo número 2.



Falsa bóveda y tabique aislante de la Cámara Reservada en construcción.

Banco de España Masons Staging a Sit-Down Strike in Solidarity with Their Fellow Shaft-Diggers

El Liberal (Madrid, 1879), 22 July 1934

Photograph by Díaz Casariego

The front page of *El Liberal* documents one of the most significant episodes in the construction of the Banco de España's Cámara del Oro: the workers' strike in the summer of 1934. The conflict arose from the harsh conditions endured by the laborers digging the deep shafts. Although those on the night shift received slightly higher wages, the reality was that all of them worked in an adverse environment, with scarcely any natural light, constant damp, water seepage, poor ventilation, extreme temperatures, and the constant risk of cave-ins.

Faced with this situation, the laborers demanded improvements, leading to a collective walkout that laid bare the precariousness of a project which, despite its grand technical and architectural scale, depended on human effort. The strike was settled by the *Jurados Mixtos* (arbitration boards), which ruled in favor of the laborers: they secured a wage increase, parity with the pay scale of the shaft-digging trade, and compensation for waterproof clothing and footwear.



**Industria Eléctrica Francisco Benito
Delgado S. A.**

Wall sconce from the Cámara del Oro, 1936
Bronze and cast and blown glass

The architect José Yárnoz conceived the entrance hall to the Cámara del Oro as a solemn space in which every element corresponded to a precise calculation of proportion, repetition, and harmony. To this end he employed polychrome marble in the floors and baseboards, heightening the grand character of a place designed to safeguard the nation's most valuable reserves. On each side of the vestibule, doors opened onto the vaults

and ancillary rooms, directing foot traffic with reserved monumentality. The lateral walls were fitted with bronze sconces in a classical style, whose descending arms supported white opal glass diffusers - by Josef Inwald A.G. of Prague - in the form of half-spheres that projected light toward the vaulting. Although later replaced by spherical models, their original design extended beyond mere illumination: the equidistant, symmetrical arrangement of the lamps transformed the hall into a space of silence and sanctity, reinforcing the sense of enclosure and solemnity that defines the architecture of the Cámara del Oro.



Underground Vault: Rental Vaults

Alongside the storage chambers of the Cámara del Oro, a space was set aside for the Vault's Department of Surveillance, whose members lived there in shifts to ensure the safekeeping of the national treasure. The quarters, designed to strictly functional criteria, included a kitchen, dining room, dormitories, and bathrooms, all fitted with metal furniture manufactured by the firm Asín Palacios S.A. Beds, wardrobes, tables, and chairs were produced without ornament. This metal chair with imitation-leather seat was designed without any adornment. It was most likely intended for the surveillance department. The economy of its matte grey painted finish and straight lines contrasts

with the symbolic and functional power of the armored steel doors and other precision-engineered locking devices protecting the vault.

The assigned quarters were also furnished with solid metal pieces, such as this desk without drawers but with a translucent glass top - offering a degree of privacy - intended for the drafting of reports and probably also for the registration and handling of objects and documents. These austere and durable furnishings bear witness to the material discipline that defined the daily environment of those who, through vigilance and administration, worked and lived within the Cámara del Oro.



José Yárnoz Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966)

Maquette of the Underground Vault in Cross Section, 1932

Wood, plaster, metal, and painted paper

1:20 scale

53.5 × 83 × 19.5 cm

Colección Banco de España

Architectural maquettes have long been indispensable tools, not only for visualizing the scale of a building but also as precise instruments of persuasion. They are handcrafted to convince the client and to convey the magnitude of the project. The maquette of the Cámara del Oro designed by José Yárnoz follows this logic exactly: it shows two of the five transverse galleries and

the surrounding patrol corridor, distilling the essence of a monumental construction into a compact format.

The maquette illustrates the construction process - from the excavation of the access shafts to the arrangement of galleries and auxiliary rooms - and reproduces in detail the materials employed: the thick reinforced-concrete walls enveloping the vault, iron reinforcements, and cast-cement bricks. It also reveals the sophisticated ventilation and drainage systems, with waterproof non-structural vaulting and air chambers designed to control seepage and circulate air. The maquette concentrates both the technical and constructive aspects of the project, and demonstrates its persuasive power as an object of architectural representation.



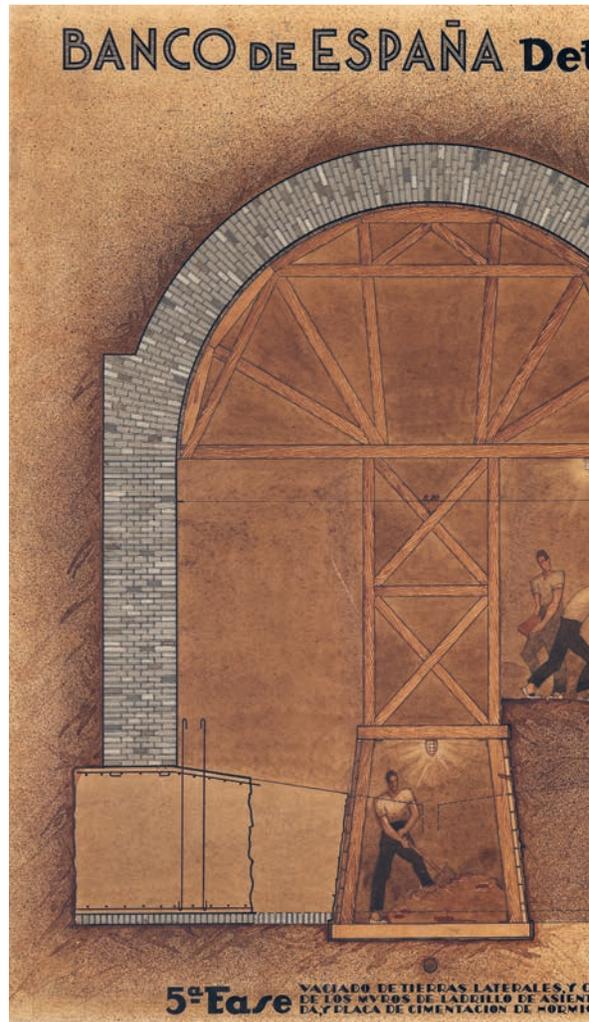
José Yáñez Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966)

*Construction of the Banco de España
Underground Vault (details)*

- 1st phase: Interior pilot gallery
- 2nd phase: Upper and lower pilot galleries
- 3rd phase: Construction of the brick vault
- 4th phase: Brick vault and central excavation
- 5th phase: Excavation of the lateral earthworks around the brick loadbearing walls of the vault, and concrete foundation slab
- 6th and 7th phases: Interior cladding of the vault and side walls with reinforced concrete, and construction of the inner corridor in cement brick

Original drawings in India ink and watercolor on paper mounted on canvas
1:20 scale
510 × 870 cm
Colección Banco de España

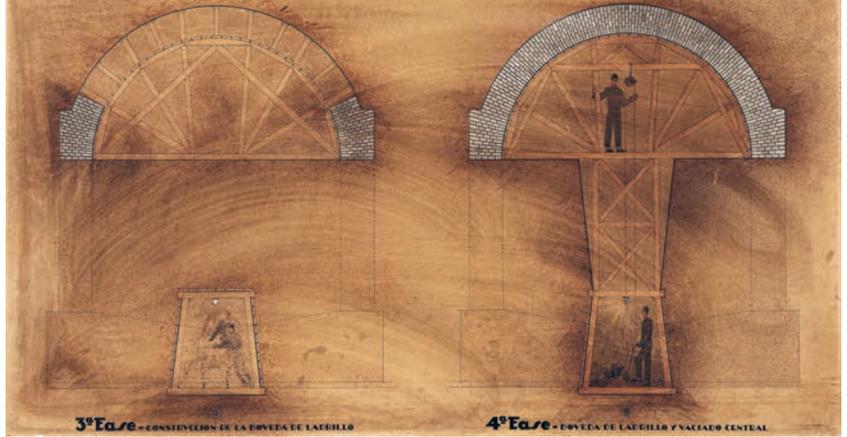
The studio of José Yáñez produced three meticulous and expressive drawings in India ink that illustrate, in seven phases, the construction process of the subterranean vault. Each sheet contains two views which, arranged sequentially, follow the narrative logic of a comic strip, transforming the feat of engineering into a graphic story. The graphic approach combines different techniques: clean, precise lines underscoring the technical control of the project and gestural ink washes conveying the earth's density and resistance to excavation. Two of the drawings feature robust laborers, rendered with a dynamism that emphasizes the physical strength required to carry out the work. The final phase - a section of a completed gallery - includes someone who appears to be an authority figure, seemingly certifying the proper completion of the task. These drawings, halfway between the technical and the literary, stand in contrast to the photographic mural, where we see the laborers immersed in the harsh reality of the excavation.



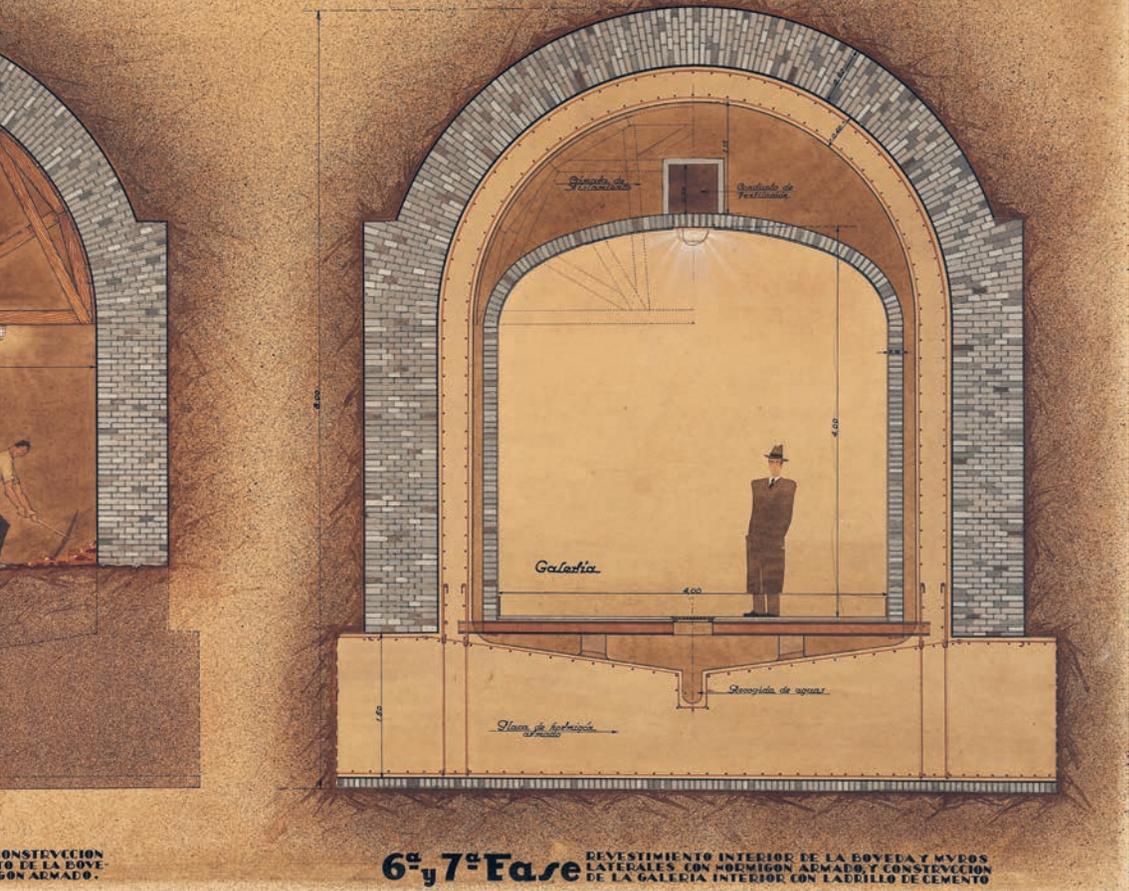
la Caja Subterránea



BANCO DE ESPAÑA Detalle de construcción de la Caja Subterránea

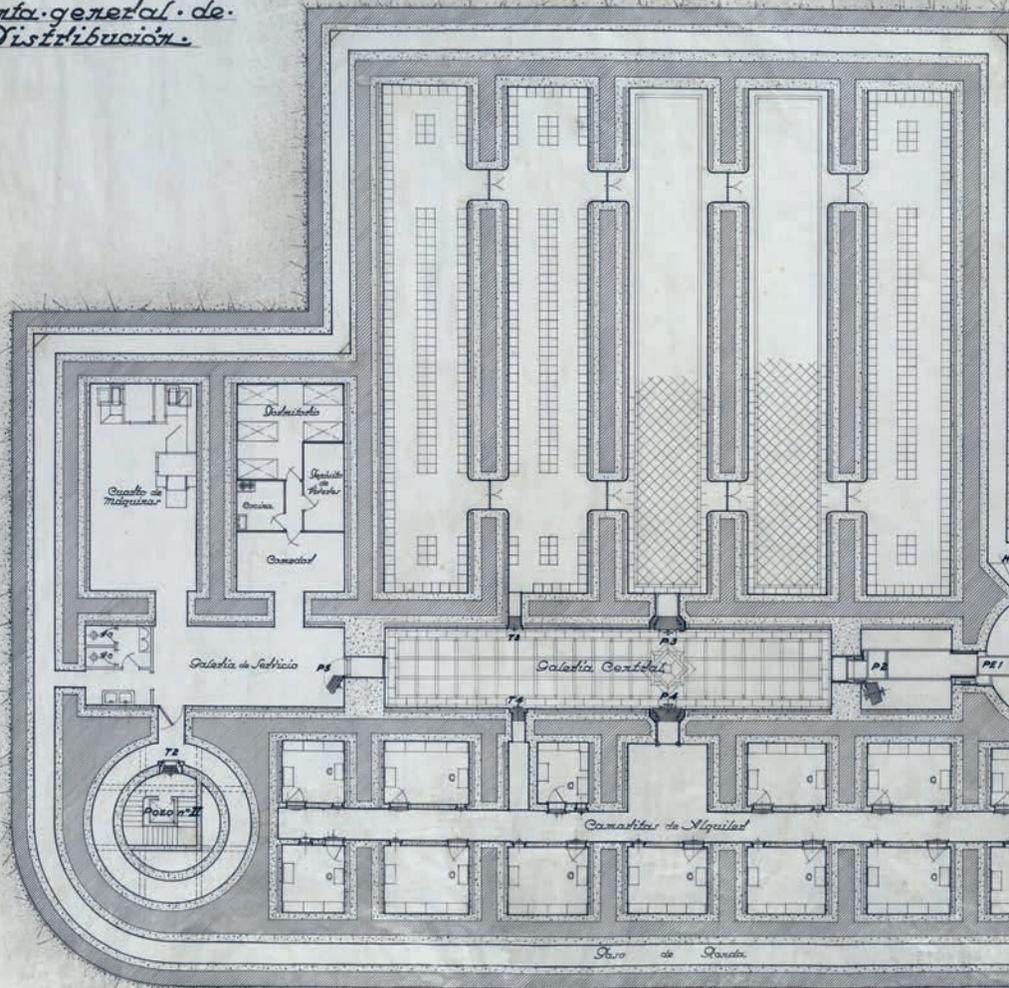


Detalle de construcción de la Caja Subterránea



BANCO DE ESPAÑA *Caja Subterránea*

*Planta general de
Distribución*



José Yáñez Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 – Madrid, 1966)

*General Floor Plan of the Banco de España's
Underground Vault, 1932*

Black ink drawing on cloth

1:100 scale

60.3 × 70 cm

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España
(AHBE), Colección de Planos
de Arquitectura

The Cámara del Oro was built with a dual purpose: to expand the space available and to improve the security measures of the old cash vault it would replace. Both aims were fully achieved with this remarkable construction by the architect José Yáñez Larrosa. The floor plan shows the layout and openness of the storage areas, designed to hold the bank's reserves, which had increased fivefold during the 1910s. In total, the holdings amounted to approximately 700 tons of gold.



The vault comprises an area of 1,500 square meters, with a central distribution corridor leading to the five transversal galleries used to store the precious metal. Another corridor running parallel to the central one was originally reserved for private rental vaults, and at the far end are the secondary areas: the service gallery, machine room, and quarters for the guards, who worked long shifts of in-person surveillance. Inaugurated in 1936, the Cámara del Oro was described

by the architect himself as an invulnerable and ultra-secure strongroom, thanks to its exceptional protective measures. Like several institutions abroad that, after the devastating consequences of the First World War and the crash of 1929, chose to build their vaults deep underground, this one lies at a depth of 35 meters. Its primary inspiration was the vault of the Banque de France's central branch in Paris, built below the level of the River Seine a few years earlier.

Apart from its underground location, the legendary flooding system of the entrance shaft makes it practically inaccessible, with features unique in Spain. The plan also shows the surrounding patrol corridor that isolates the vault and enables visual monitoring by the security staff. The reinforced concrete walls, which provide both structural support and protection, are extraordinarily thick and account for 1000 square meters of the vault's surface area. The heavy steel armored doors, manufactured in the United States, weigh several tons and safeguard the entrances to each section. They remain fully in use today, imparting an unmistakable character to the space.

Drafted in minute detail, the plan also includes the decorative composition of the central corridor floor, eventually executed in colored marbles with a distinctly classical air. The delicately balanced synthesis of architecture, engineering, and technology has produced a historic vault of undeniable appeal.

References:

- AHBE, *Órganos de Gobierno* [Governing Bodies], *Actas de las Comisiones Especiales* [Minutes of the Special Commissions], 1932
- AHBE, *Órganos de Gobierno* [Governing Bodies], *Actas del Consejo General* [Minutes of the General Council], 1932

[Patricia Alonso del Torno]

Room E

An Administered Modernity

The final section of the exhibition centers on the material and functional design of the Banco de España during its 1930s extension, designed by architect José Yárnoz Larrosa. Beyond showcasing its technical achievement, this section examines architecture as an institutional language in which every element – structure, materials, furniture, signage – contributes to a unified vision of the building as a symbol of modernity, efficiency, and authority.

The project included the new Patio de Operaciones (Main Banking Hall), public service areas, monumental staircases, technical facilities, and fixed furnishings. These spaces interweave architecture, function, and representation: the building not only serves as a center of activity but also transmits confidence, order, and permanence. The use of steel, structural glass, polished brass, and domestic stones such as granite reinforces the sense of a moderate, rational visual order – defined by a reserved yet symbolic modernity.

At the center of the Patio de Operaciones, a monumental four-faced clock fulfills both functional and decorative purposes: acting as the focal point, distributing light and air, and evoking international models such as the tower of Mallet-Stevens's *Pavillon du tourisme* and Lalique's luminous fountain at the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris, which Yárnoz visited. Its design, drawing on Streamline Moderne, recalls industrial timepieces and aeronautical engineering. Around it, curved desks resembling ship prows or airplane noses compose a kind of public plaza that seamlessly weaves ergonomics, modern aesthetics, and spatial harmony.

This form of Art Deco – worlds away from the ornamental luxury of bourgeois interiors – here translates into an institutional language uniting functionality and monumentality. It appears in wrought ironwork, lamps, grilles, railings, and stained glass, unfolding as a coherent aesthetic that unifies the building from its foundations to its finest details. Plans, sketches, and photographs from the archives of José Yárnoz and of the Banco de España document this visual logic: an architecture conceived to endure, to represent, and to project an image of stability in times of transformation.

Estudio José Yárnoz

Detail of rugs for the office of the First Deputy Governor
Cyanotype
1:20 scale

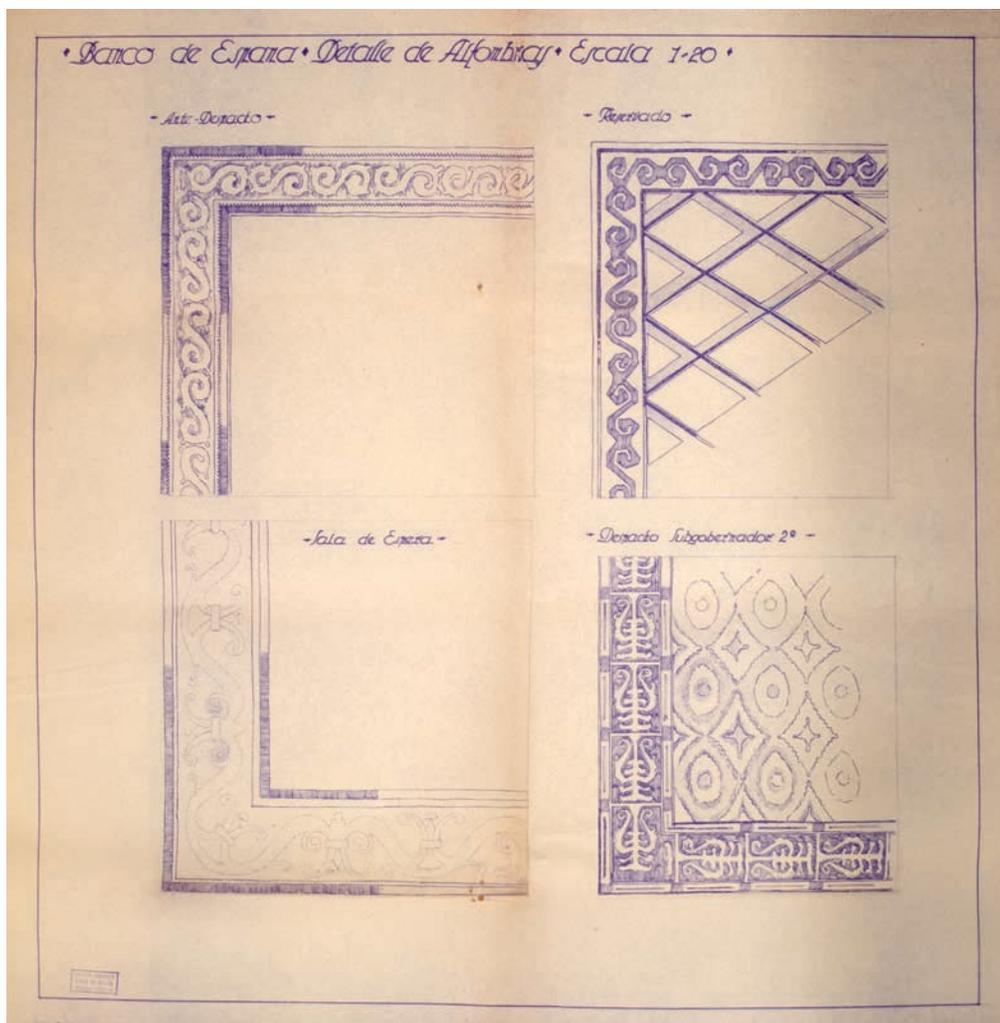
Archivo Histórico del Banco de España, Administración y Obras. Patrimonio y Colecciones, C. 5

The extension of the Banco de España was entrusted to José Yárnoz in 1927, with building works finished in 1934. The official opening did not occur until 1936, after the decoration of the various offices and construction of the Cámara del Oro had been completed. He set the executive offices, waiting rooms, and corridors on the main floor, creating a veritable contemporary palace in which the institutional

hierarchy was expressed through architectural and decorative forms. Yárnoz also assumed responsibility for the design, commissioning, and supervision of the furnishings and ornamental objects, delegating their execution to specialist firms through competitions.

The designs here, produced as cyanotypes, guided the manufacture of the rugs. La Fábrica Nacional de Tapices and luxury houses such as Loscertales produced rugs intended for the state rooms, where a deliberately conservative design language was preferred to modern trends or European Art Deco.

These textiles, together with furniture of fine woods and meticulously finished accessories, created a palatial setting that evoked stability, tradition, and continuity, adorning economic power in the same symbolic flourishes as those associated with the political power of the State.



Henri Clouzot
(Niort, France, 1865 - Paris, 1941)

La ferronnerie moderne [Modern Ironwork],
1925

Printed plates on paper

42 x 29.7 cm

Colección Adolfo Autric

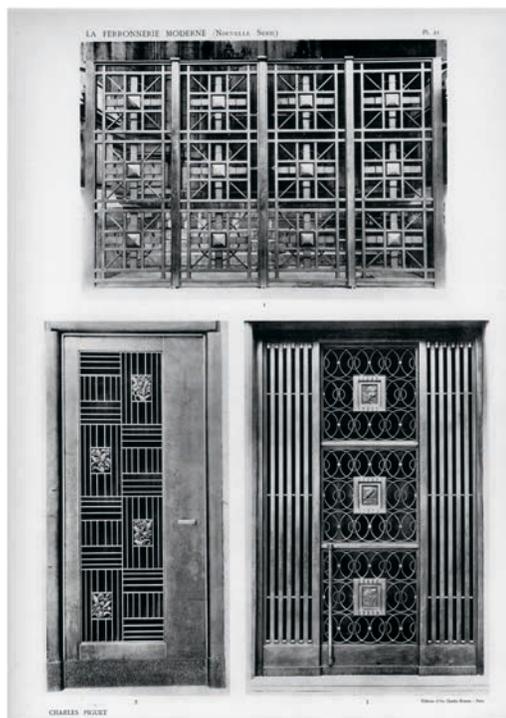
This set of plates comes from the sample portfolios published in 1925 by Henri Clouzot through Éditions d'Art Charles Moreau. It collects examples of decorative and industrial metalwork – doors, railings, balustrades, screens, and grilles – designed by leading figures, most of them French.

In the early 20th century, Paris established itself as the capital of art and design, boosted by the world's fairs and by the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*. This latter event conferred artistic status on utilitarian objects and gave its name to a modern movement, later termed Art Deco in the 1960s – a heterogeneous style mixing geometry and exoticism, craft and industry.

Prominent among its exponents were Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann, renowned designer of luxury furniture; and Edgar Brandt, innovator in curvilinear wrought iron; together with Piguet, Dunaiame, Subes, and Szabo.

The spread of Art Deco proved decisive in the artistic development of José Yárnoz, as seen in the railings, screens, and grilles he designed for the Banco de España, which adhered closely to French models. His visit to the Paris exhibition of 1925 was pivotal: he later gave an account of it in an article published in issue 78 of the journal *Arquitectura*.

The influence of those designs extended to various Banco de España branches, including those in Pamplona, Vitoria, and especially Barcelona and Madrid. In the latter, artistic ironwork assumed a prominent role, most strikingly in the Patio de Operaciones – where both structural and ornamental design choices evince direct affinities with the decorative repertoire presented in Paris – confirming Yárnoz's modern and cosmopolitan sensibility within the realm of Spanish bank architecture.



Robert Mallet-Stevens (Paris, 1886-1945)

Vitraux modernes [Modern Stained-Glass Windows] Portfolio, 1937

Plate 9: Jean-Jacques Gruber

Plate 16: Paule and Max Ingrand

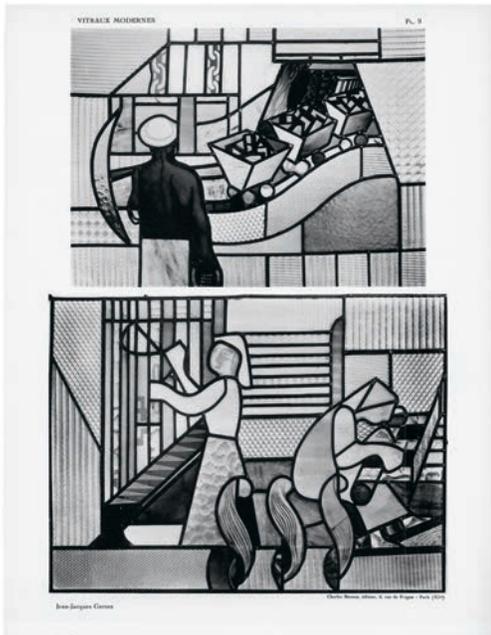
Paper

32 x 25 cm

Colección Adolfo Autric

From the 1920s, stained glass shifted away decisively from religious and mythological subjects toward the secular. The rise of rationalist architecture and schools such as the Bauhaus encouraged its integration into civic, institutional, and residential buildings, where large windows and industrial materials redefined its design language. Artists such as Delaunay, Barillet, and Le Chevalier explored geometry and light; projects like the Café de l'Aubette (1926) or Barillet's collaboration with Mallet-Stevens established modern stained glass as an essential component of architecture. These plates reflect that transformation: white figured glass conveys a cold,

industrial modernity while incorporating groundbreaking iconography – trains, airplanes, test tubes, gramophones – that celebrated science, technology, and leisure. In Spain, Maumejean Hermanos produced much of the stained glass of the period, with notable examples in Madrid doorways and in the Pakea building in San Sebastián. The role of architect José Yáñez in this sphere was decisive. In the 1930s he introduced translucent, modernist-inspired stained glass into several Banco de España branches, notably in Barcelona and especially in the Madrid headquarters, making this group one of the most significant collections of Art Deco stained glass in Europe.



José Yáñez Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966)

*Cross Section of the Hall, Connecting Vestibule,
and Main Staircase*

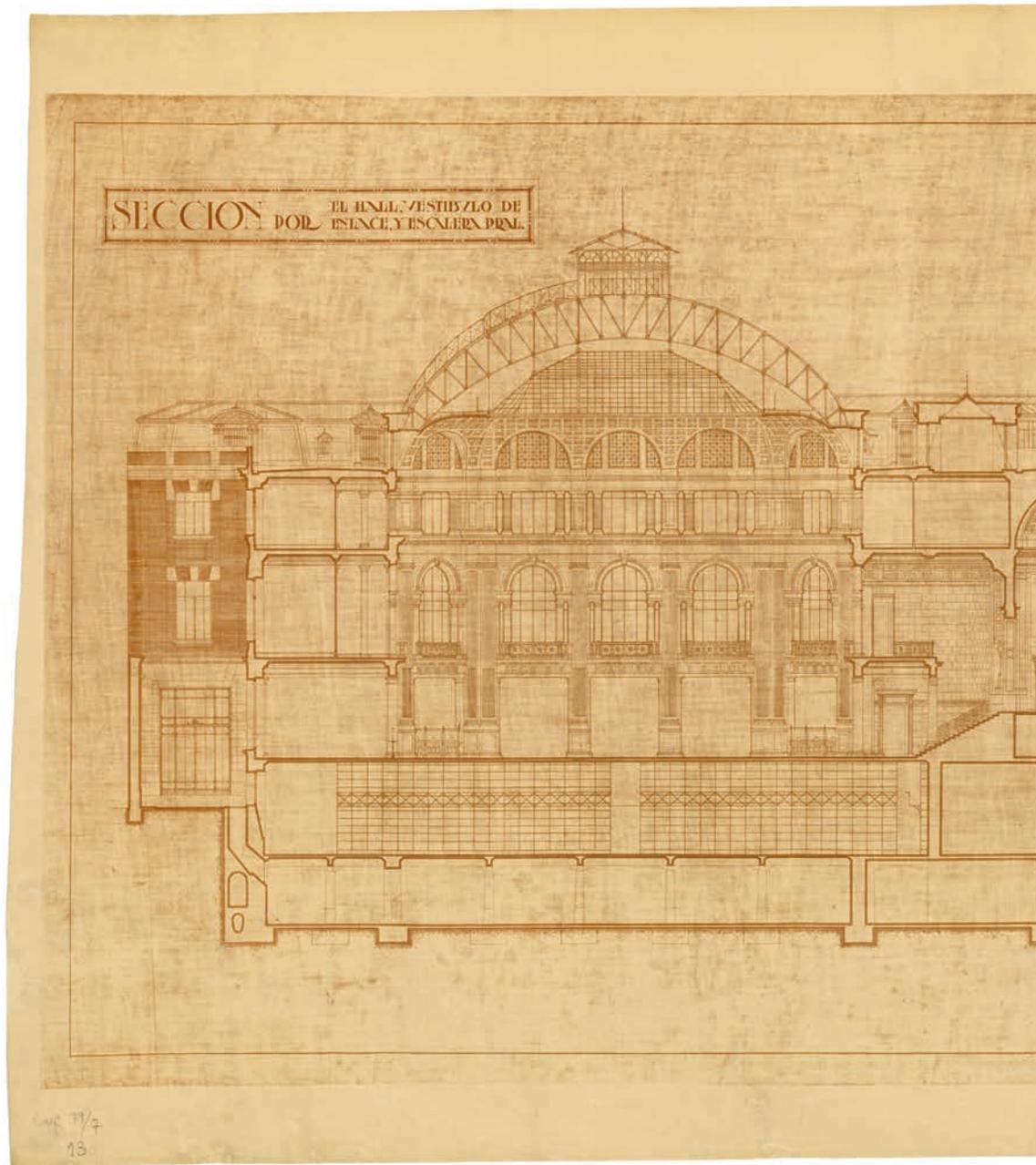
1:100 scale

Diazotype

135.2 x 74.7 cm

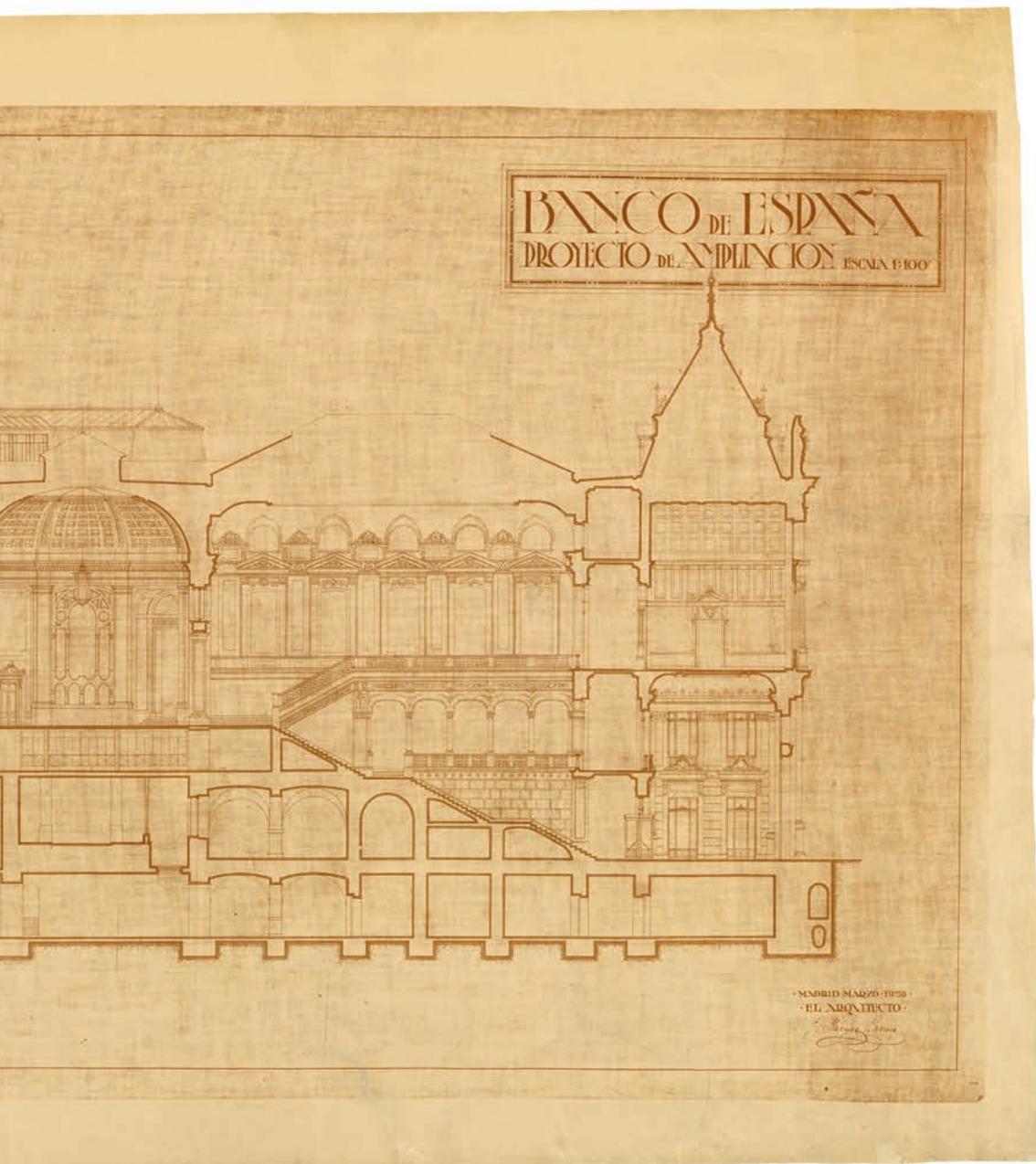
Archivo Histórico del Banco de España

This sectional plan comes from the extension project for the Banco de España undertaken by José Yáñez Larrosa in 1928. The institution's evolution had led to its outgrowing Eduardo Adaro's original 1891 building, requiring an intervention that could meet new technical and administrative needs without compromising the image of institutional stability.



Three principles guided Yáñez's project: maintaining stylistic continuity on the exterior façades to reaffirm the historicist design language as a symbol of permanence; producing interiors that were modern and functional, suited to the growing complexity of banking management; and linking the 19th-century building seamlessly with the new extension.

The cross section shows how the architect accomplished this transition through staircases, passages, and vestibules that alternate in rhythm and scale. From the paseo del Prado, one enters via the monumental "Royal" or "Imperial" staircase, leading to the Rotonda de Echegaray – conceived as a connecting vestibule – before culminating in the Patio de Operaciones, the true heart of the extension.



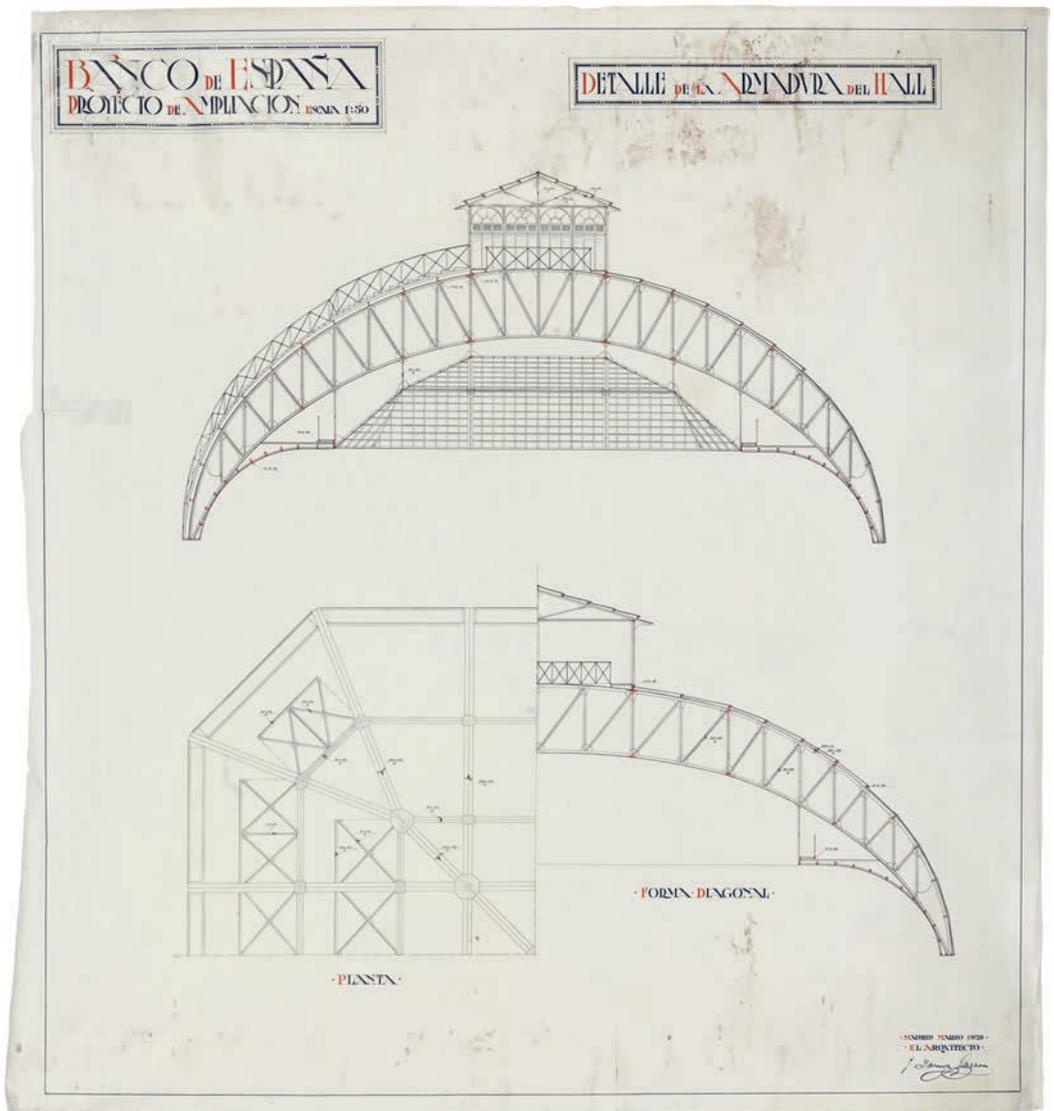
José Yáñez Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966)

Plan of the roof structure in the Patio de Operaciones, 1930
Ink on waxed paper
91 x 98 cm
Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yáñez

This sectional detail shows the skylight rising to a height of 27 meters, covering a square plan of 900 m². Its monumental

character is enhanced by Art Deco elements: an upper stained-glass window by Maumejean Hermanos, a monumental clock, and elaborate wrought-iron work – grilles, balconies, and screens – providing lush ornamentation.

Although it appears to be covered only by the stained glass, the hall is in fact sheltered by a concealed metal framework. Built by Altos Hornos de Vizcaya and engineered by Alfonso Peña Bouf, it combines zinc panels below with glazed sections above, ensuring the transmission of natural light.



Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, Paris 1925

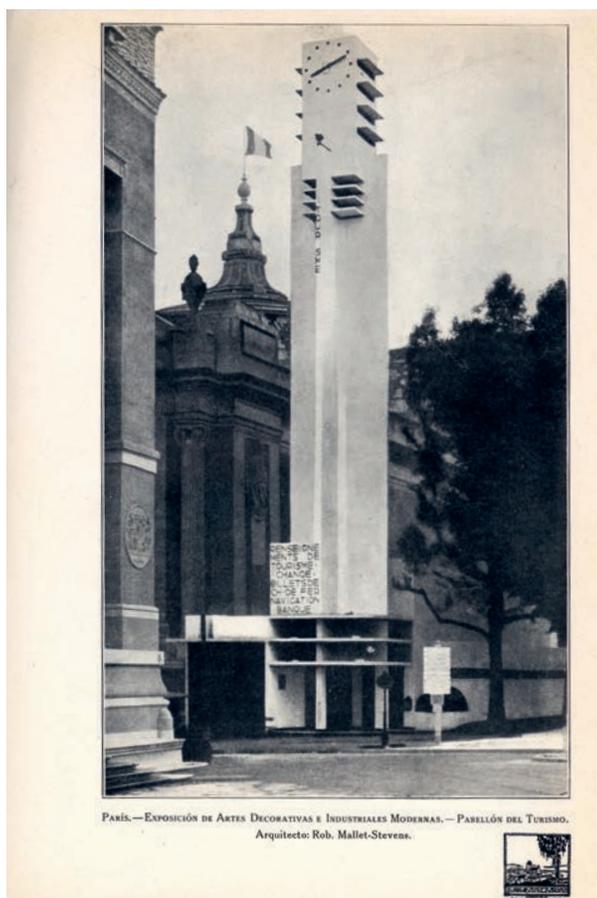
Postcard of *La Fontaine*, by R. Lalique, night view

Pavillon du tourisme, architect Robert Mallet-Stevens

In October 1925, *Arquitectura* devoted three articles to the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris, authored by José Yárnoz, Rafael Bergamín, and Fernando García Mercadal. Bergamín, in his article “*Impresiones de un turista* [Impressions of a Tourist],” was receptive to the most innovative aspects, highlighting Robert Mallet-Stevens’s Tourism Pavilion, whose luminous architecture he regarded as one of the highlights of the exhibition. Yárnoz, by contrast, questioned

the definition of modernity and lamented the loss of classical styles. He also objected to the location and urban planning of the exhibition in central Paris, arguing instead for an outlying site where the fair buildings might have formed a new neighborhood in the city. While he did praise Patout’s design for the entrance gate and the pavilion of a “collector” with furniture by Ruhlmann, he considered many other pavilions excessively fanciful. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the true value of the applied arts: glass, ceramics, ironwork, furniture, and decoration. Mercadal, for his part, adopted a more technical view, focusing on the floor plans and the circulation of visitors.

Despite his reservations, the impact on Yárnoz proved decisive: the monumental clock in the Banco de España’s Patio de Operaciones echoes the grandeur and theatrical lighting he had seen in Paris.



PARÍS.—EXPOSICIÓN DE ARTES DECORATIVAS E INDUSTRIALES MODERNAS.—PABELLÓN DEL TURISMO.
Arquitecto: Rob. Mallet-Stevens.

Antonio de Zárraga
(Madrid, 1885 - Mexico City, 1957)

El Banco de España [book], 1936

Public Hall Lit by Its Central Ornamental Motif, 1936

Grand Polychrome Stained-Glass Skylight Covering the Public Hall, with about 460 m² of Artisanal Glass, 1936

Framework of the Central Hall Dome, with the Grand Artisanal Stained-Glass Panels Below, 1936

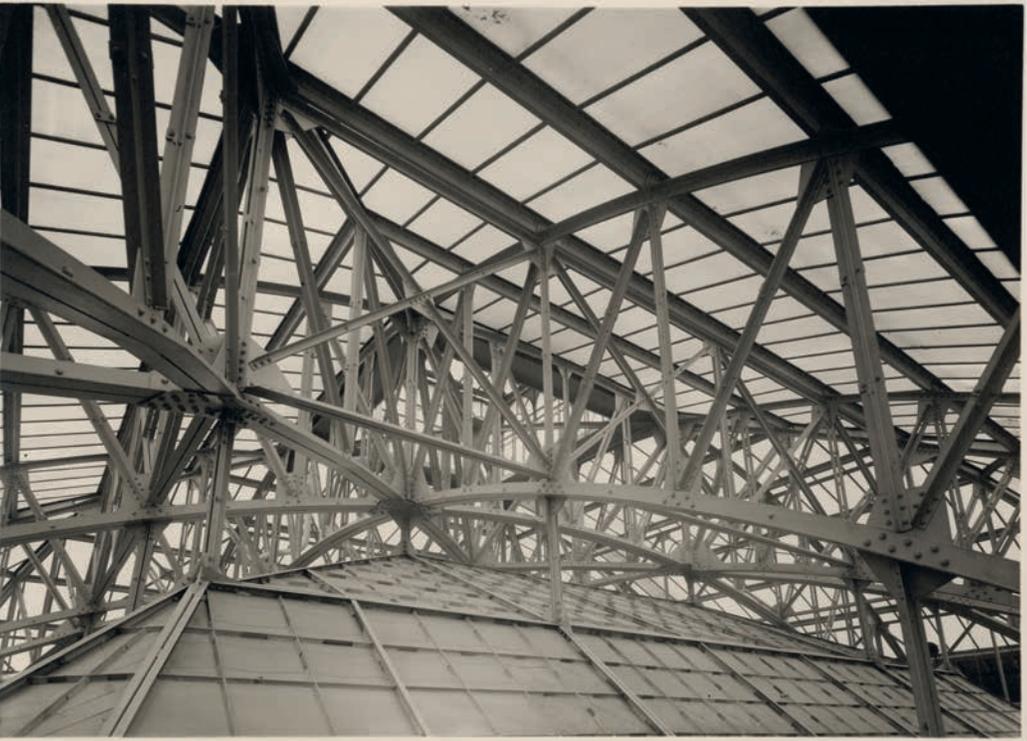
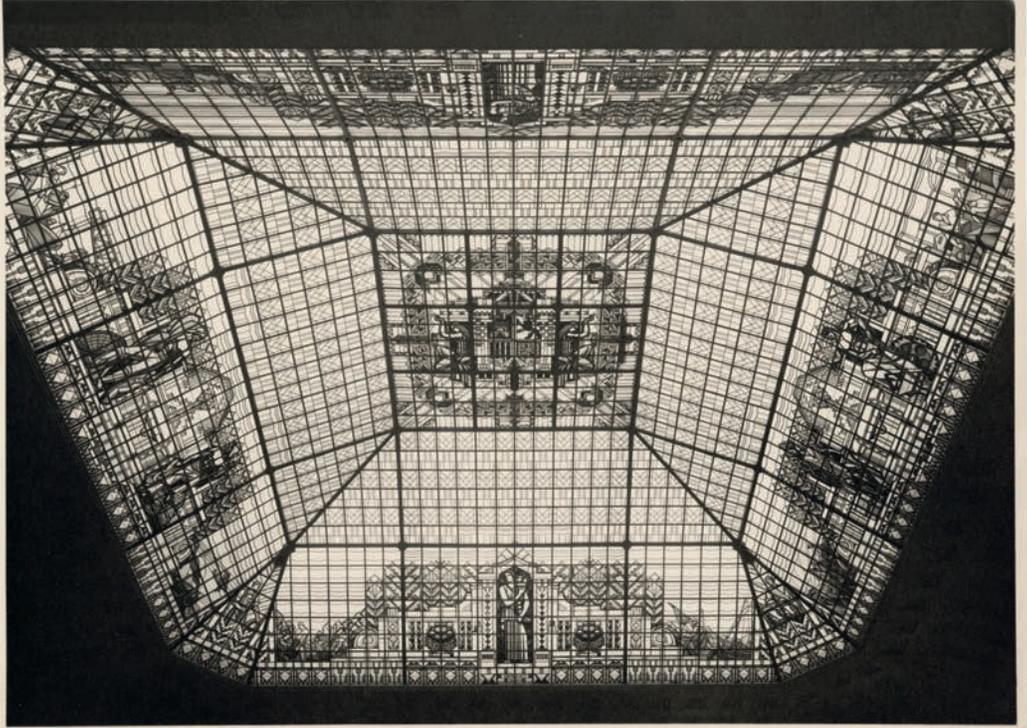
Gelatin silver print on baryta paper.
Vintage prints
17.2 × 23.3 cm

Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yárnoz

In February 1936, the Asociación General de Empleados del Banco published *El Banco de España: Información gráfica*, a volume

documenting the institution and especially the recently completed extension of its Madrid headquarters. Standing out among its pages is the extensive photo-essay by Antonio de Zárraga – an employee in the bank's banknote division and an amateur photographer – whose little-known work reveals a striking affinity with the visual language of photographic objectivity. Far from a merely descriptive view, his images probe the rationality of the architecture, emphasizing the light, perspectives, forms, and symmetries that structure the building. Zárraga focuses on the most modern elements – the stained-glass windows, the Patio de Operaciones, the machinery, and technical equipment – treating them with an almost clinical precision that highlights textures, materials, and volumes. Although he was not an avant-garde photographer, his conceptual and direct approach imparts a pristine objectivity that exalts both the monumentality and materiality of the architecture, aligning him with the modern sensibility typical of European photography in the 1930s.





José Yárnoz Larrosa
(Pamplona, 1884 - Madrid, 1966)

*Banco de España: Design for a Monumental
Clock in the New Building*

Watercolor and ink on card

79 × 72 cm

Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra,
Fondo José Yárnoz

The Patio de Operaciones is the most emblematic space of the Banco de España's extension: a space of grand presentation, scale, and light where the institution's modern ideals are made manifest and, concurrently, where public-facing transactions are carried out. Mindful of these needs, José Yárnoz produced this exceptional design: a monumental clock from which a beam of light emerges, coursing through the skylight and projecting outward. This dramatic play of light, conceived almost as an architectural revelation, could be read as a metaphor for the power of the institution, radiating clarity and strength beyond its walls.

The project is one of the architect's boldest designs, which resonates with echoes of the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris. There, Yárnoz had admired Robert Mallet-Stevens's architecture and René Lalique's celebrated luminous fountain - references that likely inspired this modern and symbolic vision for the heart of the bank. As María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco notes, the verticality and scale of this interior clock tower parallel the rise of the skyscraper, especially in New York City, which was ascending to mythological status as a modern metropolis.





ESPAÑA · PROYECTO DE RELOJ MONYMENTAL EN EL NUEVO EDIFICIO ·

Boselli

Wall Clock, c. 1930

Metal, glass. Cast, enameled

6 x 41 Ø cm

Colección Banco de España

The Boselli company, founded in Milan by Enrico Boselli, was a renowned clockmaker specializing in pieces for the Italian navy. In the 1930s and 1940s, it collaborated with designers such as Gio Ponti, who created round and square wall models intended for factories and workplaces.

The clock displayed here, produced by Boselli during those years, exemplifies the period's formal priorities: a clean design in which functionality and visual clarity prevailed over ornament. Its typography, crisp and sans serif, is close to industrial variants of Futura or DIN 1451, which were designed for immediate legibility in work environments.

It is not known which area of the Banco de España this clock originally occupied, though it was likely a communal space. It contrasts sharply with the clocks reserved for executive offices, which hewed more closely to tradition: German movements with striking mechanisms, pendulums, and wooden cases that conveyed prestige and solemnity.



Industria Eléctrica Francisco Benito Delgado S. A.

Staircase wall sconce, 1935

Bronze, nickel, and glass. Cast, gilt, and blown

Colección Banco de España

The original Banco de España building, designed by Eduardo Adaro in the late 19th century, featured the imposing “Royal” or “Imperial” staircase, carved from Carrara marble and laden with the ornament typical of historicist eclecticism.

For the 1930s extension, José Yáñez designed a new staircase giving onto the first and second floors, conceived in a more streamlined yet elegant spirit. In contrast to the ornamental splendor of its predecessor, this one embodied functional modernity while incorporating an austere, almost Roman classicism conveying vigor without ostentation. Among its elements are the balustrade and wall sconces, shaped like torches, which illuminate the ascent with restrained monumentality.

The exemplar displayed here was manufactured by Casa Torras in bronze.

Square in form, both at the base and along the shafts, it features vertical fluting and a lobed opening that houses the diffuser. The present model is fitted with a flat white glass shade, although other versions exist with shades in the form of a half-sphere.



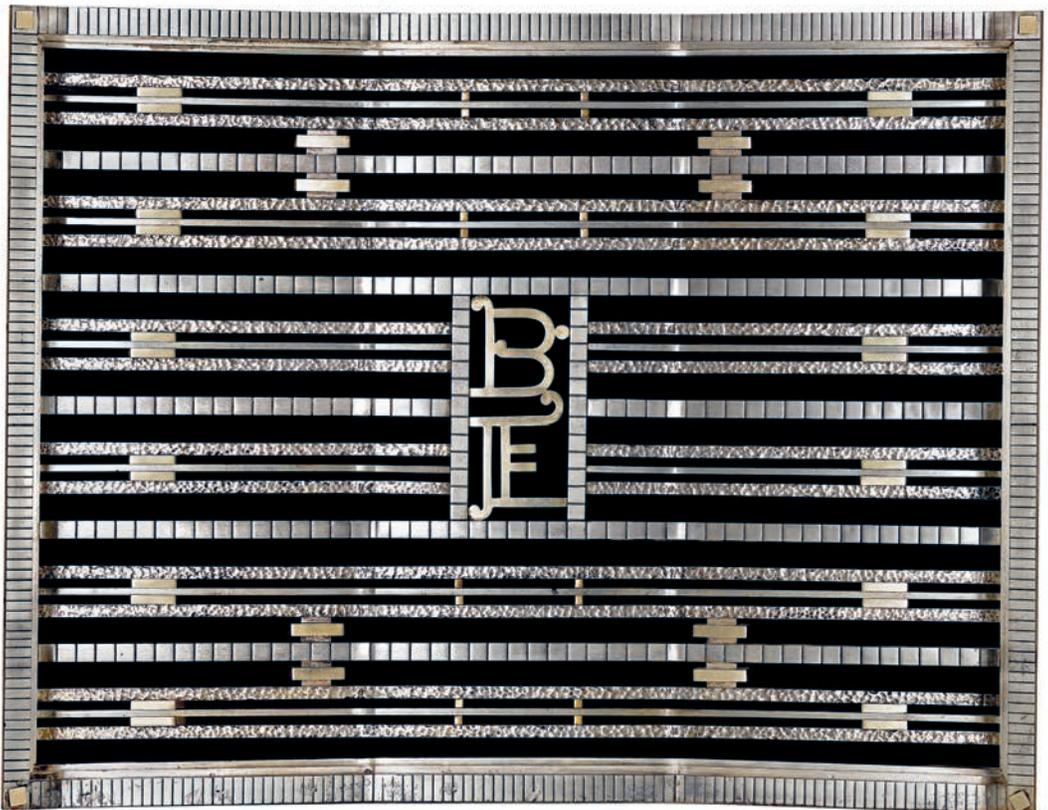
Cerrajería Artística Francisco Torras
[Francisco Torras Artistic Ironwork]

Radiator grille, 1935
Steel structure
Banco de España

In the project to extend the Banco de España, José Yárnoz took charge of designing various decorative elements – handrails, balustrades, teller windows, balconies, and radiator covers – many of which are still in use in the Patio de Operaciones and other areas. He drew on models previously adopted in the Barcelona branch, which closely allied with the designs of Raymond Subes, Charles Piguet, and Jean Prouvé that were circulated in Henri Clouzot's French publication, *La ferronnerie*

moderne. Production was entrusted to the firm Casa Torras, specialists in artistic ironwork.

All of the ironwork shares a formal unity, executed in wrought iron with elegant gilt accents. On this radiator cover, the initials “BE” (Banco de España) appear as a central emblem, integrated into a series of horizontal bars whose spacing varies rhythmically. The strict horizontality is interrupted by gilded metal blocks separating the bars, each marked by slight vertical incisions and an organic hammered surface. As Raúl Martínez Arranz highlights, this arrangement – analogous to contemporary automotive design – sets a visual rhythm and a subtle play of textures that also recalls, to a certain extent, musical notation on a staff.



Herraiz Muebles y Bronces de Arte
[Herraiz Art Furniture and Bronzes]

Revolving Bookcase, c. 1930
Mahogany wood
Colección Banco de España

During the Banco de España extension, José Yárnoz also oversaw the design of furnishings for the new offices. For the executive suites, pieces were commissioned in fine woods, classical in style and deliberately conservative, while for technical staff and employees more economical materials were used, including metal. The firm Rolaco-Mac, which held the exclusive license for Mies van der Rohe's furniture, even submitted bids, though it never

secured a contract. How this piece entered the Bank's collection remains uncertain. Its rarity in Spain makes it exceptional. It was probably produced by the Madrid firm Herraiz after models by Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann. Yet, as Mariàngels Fondevila has suggested, it might also have been made in Barcelona in the workshops of Francisco Giménez, which advertised Ruhlmann's designs in the magazine *d'Ací i d'Allà*. It may have originated as a private commission, reproduced from plans or photographs. Intended for a private office, it combines an internal oak structure with ebony veneer, rests on a circular rotating base, and houses a top-mounted light that radiates an intimate, refined air.



C. G. E. E.

Original Advertising Poster for Metal Lamps -
X-Ray, Reflectolux, and Albalita, c. 1935
58.5 x 50 cm

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España,
Secretaría, C. 3256

In the poster and screenprint, used for both political propaganda and commercial advertising, the graphic arts broke fertile ground for innovation. At the outset of the Civil War, numerous Spanish artists turned to this medium as a tool for visual communication, addressing issues such as agrarian reform or the active role of women – among them, Manuela Ballester. The graphic

language suggested an economy of means: broad areas of flat color, limited palettes, and dense inks that lent forcefulness to the message. Novel, expressive typefaces facilitated immediate legibility. Information was typically arranged in geometric planes, as in this poster for the Madrid shop of Benito Delgado, a supplier of lamps and wall sconces for the Banco de España extension. The piece on display preserves red pencil annotations, likely made by José Yárnoz, who was responsible for selecting the models – evidence of his direct involvement in defining the visual language of various decorative elements in the project.

X-RAY

REFLECTOLUX

ALBALITA

C.G.E.E. LAMPARA "METAL"
Seccion de Luminotecnia
Puerta del Sol, 1
Aptado, 150
MADRID

Ronda Universidad, 33
BARCELONA

Rioja, 5
SEVILLA

UN MODELO REPRESENTATIVO DE LAS LAMPARAS "METAL" DE ALBALITA, CON SU DIFUSOR DE ALUMINIO Y SU CABLE DE ALUMINIO, QUE PERMITE SU USO EN AMBIENTES DE ALTA TEMPERATURA, COMO EN LOS LABORATORIOS DE INVESTIGACION.

ALBALITA X-RAY 1
ALBALITA X-RAY 2
ALBALITA X-RAY 3
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ALBALITA X-RAY 100



Alfonso de Olivares
(Hernani, Gipuzkoa, 1898-1936)

Paris, 1927
Oil on canvas
130 × 97 cm
Colección Banco de España

With his modern, open approach, Alfonso de Olivares is an artist who is impossible to classify. From his arrival in Paris in 1923, he immersed himself in the most innovative currents, diverging from naturalism. A free spirit unbound by dogma, he engaged with

avant-garde movements as well as the large circle of Spanish artists in the French capital, to whom he dedicated a celebrated article in *La Gaceta literaria* in 1927. His interest in architecture and decoration attuned him to the new Art Deco preference for rational elegance, light, and metal. The painting *Paris*, dated 1927, reflects this fascination: against a black background, red and white lines outline a nocturnal architecture illuminated by a fountain, mirroring the luminous urban spectacles that defined Parisian modernity after the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*.

Banco de España

Exhibition

Governor
José Luis Escrivá

Organized by
Banco de España

Deputy Governor
M.ª de la Soledad Núñez

Commissioned by
Álvaro Perdices
Yolanda Romero

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Javier Priego

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Alfonso Muñoz
Mónica Ruiz Trilleros
Juan Antonio Sáez Dégano
Cleanerlamp
María García Mora
Alfonso Castrillo

Exhibition Design
Marcos Corrales

Installation
TTI y TDARTE

Allegories of What Is to Come

Room A
Landscape, Progress, and Society
Room D
The Maumejean Hermanos Workshop

Room B
Allegories of What Is to Come

Room C
The Cámara del Oro: Technology and Security
Room E
An Administered Modernity



Exhibition Gallery
Banco de España
26/11/2025 - 28/03/2026