

HISTORY OF THE MUSEU DE MENORCA

MUSEU MUNICIPAL DE MAÓ

The predecessor of the current Museu de Menorca was the earlier Museu Municipal de Maó (Municipal Museum of Maó), which opened its doors on the 4th of November 1889, located at the Principal de Guàrdia building opposite the City Hall. It was originally inaugurated as the Museum of Archaeology and Natural History, and was an initiative of Joan Seguí Rodríguez, through donations received from several private collectors. In fact, the centre's first curator, Pere Monjo Monjo, donated its first pieces, several fragments from Roman graves found in the Plaça del Príncep Square of Maó. Other donors contributed to the creation of the museum's collection with fossils, whale bones, some archaeological materials and works of art.

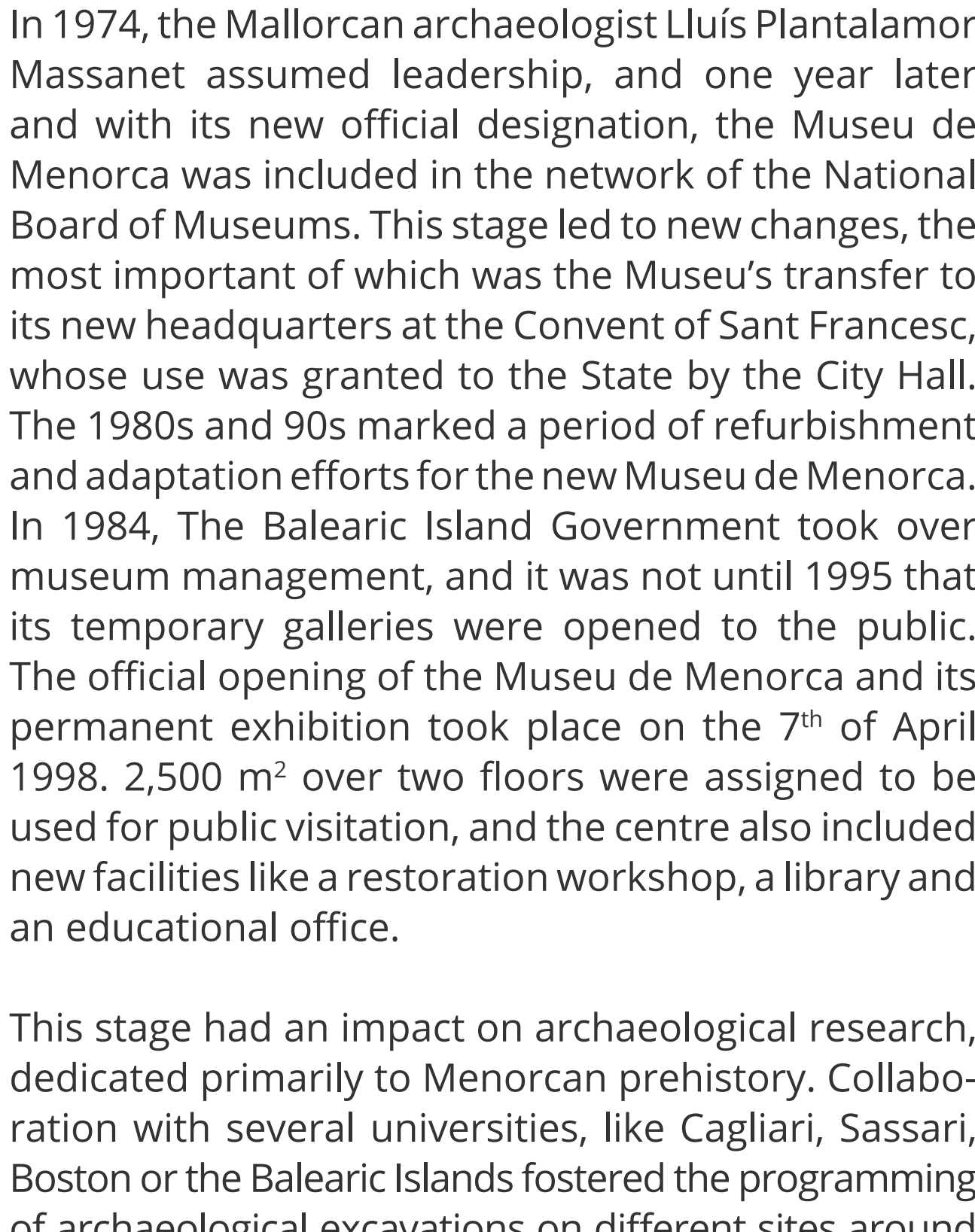
Joan Seguí Rodríguez died just one year later, and the City Hall offered management of the Museum's collection to the faculty of the Institut de Maó. In 1898, Francesc Hernández Sanz, a professor at the Institut, was named curator, and he proceeded to consolidate the collection. In 1906, the City Hall opted to deposit the Municipal Museum's collection at the Ateneu de Maó (Athenaeum of Maó), and between 1928 and 1931, Joan Flaquer served as the curator of the Museu de l'Ateneu, which at the time was made up of collections from the earlier Museu and private collections from this institution.

MUSEU PROVINCIAL DE BELLES ARTS

On the 23rd of November 1944, the Museu Provincial de Belles Arts (Provincial Fine Arts Museum) was founded. That same year, the City Hall of Maó granted use of the Can Mercadal building, adapting it for use as the new museum and public library. One year later, the director of the public library, Felix Durán, took over as director of the museum, and in 1951, Felix Merino Sánchez was placed at the helm. The Provincial Museum of Fine Arts was created in parallel, under the direction of Joan Flaquer, who had taken part in the creation of the future Museu as the Curator of Archaeological Excavations. Finally, on the 18th of November 1948, the Provincial Museum of Fine Arts was officially inaugurated.

At Can Mercadal, the collection saw notable growth, bringing together possessions contributed by the Ateneu de Maó, the Archaeological Excavations Commission, the Monuments Subcommittee and others originating from private collections. In 1946, one of the first deposits was received, contributed by the family of the archaeologist Antoni Vives Escudero, made up of a significant ensemble of archaeological, ethnological and artistic pieces.

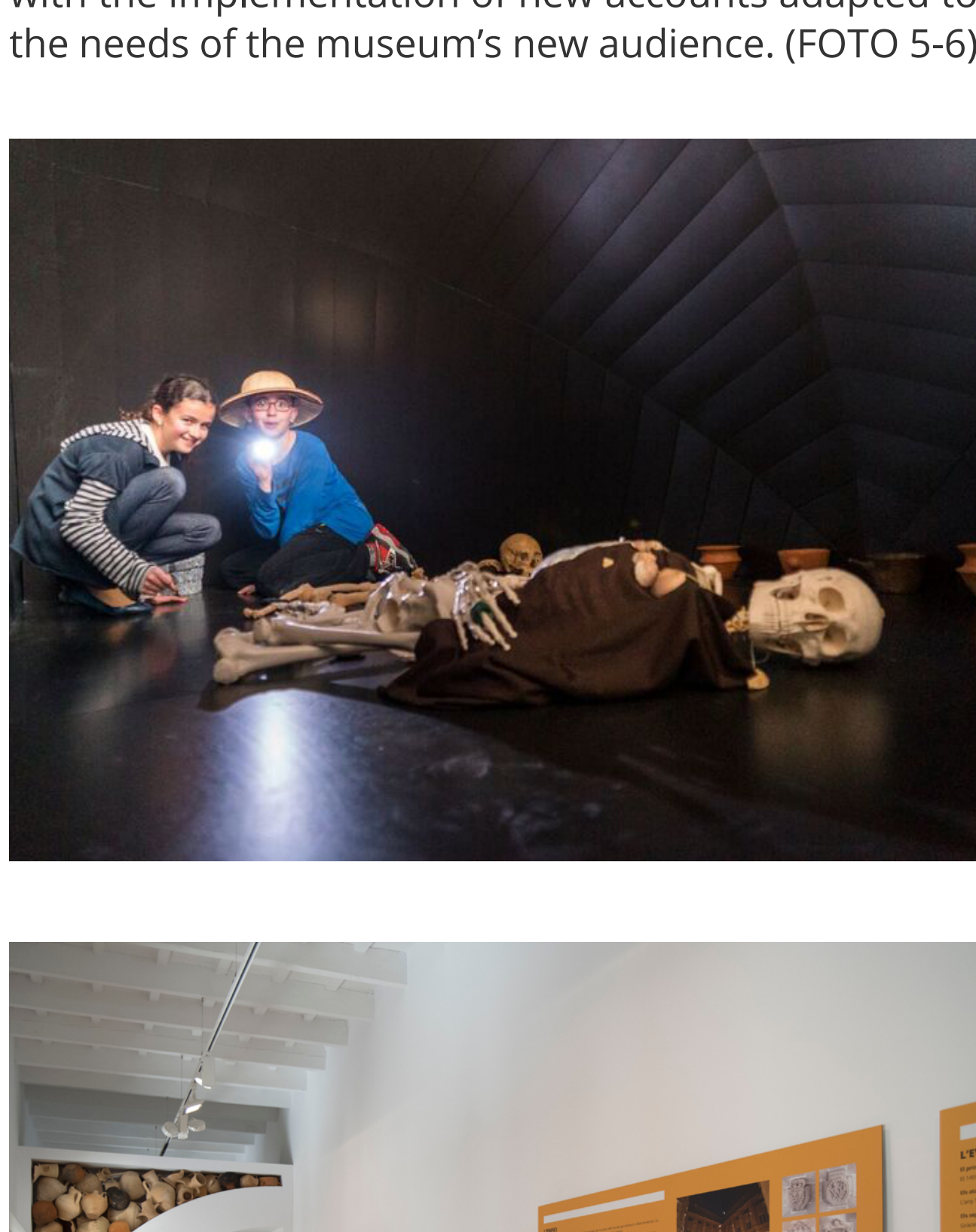
In 1953, a new period began under the direction of the archaeologist, historian and archivist Maria Lluïsa Serra Belabre, who held the position until her death in 1967. This period is distinguished for the noteworthy expansion of the archaeological collection by means of archaeological excavations carried out on emblematic monuments of Menorca: the Tudons and Rafal Rubí navetas, the Talatí de Dalt settlement, and the basilicas of Fornàs de Torelló and Illa del Rei. Maria Lluïsa Serra also grew the Museu's artistic collection with the acquisition of works of art and donations from contemporary Menorcan painters like Sansuguet and several artists from the Grup Menorca, for whom temporary exhibitions were organised.



MUSEU DE MENORCA

In 1974, the Mallorcan archaeologist Lluís Plantalamor Massanet assumed leadership, and one year later and with its new official designation, the Museu de Menorca was included in the network of the National Board of Museums. This stage led to new changes, the most important of which was the Museu's transfer to its new headquarters at the Convent of Sant Francesc, whose use was granted to the State by the City Hall. The 1980s and 90s marked a period of refurbishment and adaptation efforts for the new Museu de Menorca. In 1984, The Balearic Island Government took over museum management, and it was not until 1995 that its temporary galleries were opened to the public. The official opening of the Museu de Menorca and its permanent exhibition took place on the 7th of April 1998. 2,500 m² over two floors were assigned to be used for public visitation, and the centre also included new facilities like a restoration workshop, a library and an educational office.

This stage had an impact on archaeological research, dedicated primarily to Menorcan prehistory. Collaboration with several universities, like Cagliari, Sassari, Boston or the Balearic Islands fostered the programming of archaeological excavations on different sites around the island, such as Torre d'en Galmés, Cap de Forma, So Na Caçana, and the hypogea at Trebalúger and Toraixa. Preventive excavations were also carried out near the Sant Francesc Convent in the heart of Maó, resulting in the documentation of part of the Roman and medieval city and the historic Sa Raval district (Es Castell). These efforts help supplement the collections with new materials from various historical periods.



Yet another important milestone was the arrival from Cambridge of archaeological materials from the Talayotic settlements of Trepucó and Sa Torreta de Tramuntana, which had been excavated by the British archaeologist Margaret Murray in the 1930s.

Furthermore, the centre's artistic and ethnological collections were also expanded through the purchase and donation of additional pieces, in accordance with the following criteria: that the objects were of Menorcan origin or had decisive relevance for the completion of the museum's discursive course. In this regard, the 1990s and 2000s saw numerous donations and deposits of archaeological, ethnological, artistic and industrial materials, highlighting perhaps the arrival of the Vives Campomar, Serra Belabre and Humbert Ferrer collections, as well as a collection of 18th and 19th century cartography.

On the 1st of September 2011, the Island Council of Menorca took over management of the Museu de Menorca.

In 2015, the current director of the Museu was named, the museologist Carolina Desel González. This new management would update the course for the museum, defining the general population as the institution's priority.

The last 30 years have seen exponential growth in programmed and preventive excavations that have allowed for the arrival of new resources from different eras. The Museu de Menorca boasts multiple research projects that are currently moving forward with research at several sites across the island. Over these years, the collection has grown through additional donations like the Flaquer collection, which arrived in 2017.

Since then, a new era has begun, with the renovation of the museum's facilities, an updated permanent exhibition, inaugurated on the 18th of July 2018, a steady program of temporary exhibitions, and ultimately, with the implementation of new accounts adapted to the needs of the museum's new audience. (FOTO 5-6)

Bibliography

- Andreu Adame, Cristina (2015). "Origen i formació de les col·leccions del Museu de Menorca" en Miscel·lània d'estudis en homenatge a Lluís Plantalamor Massanet. Palma: Govern de les Illes Balears. Pp. 45-57.
- Desel, C. i Andreu, C. (2017): "Historia del Museu de Menorca". Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional, 35, Madrid. Pp. 693-702.
- Serra Belabre, M. L. (1963): *Breve guia del Museu Provincial de Bellas Artes de Mahon*. Panorama Balear, 83, Maó.
- Serra Belabre, M. L. (1967): *La Casa de la Cultura de Mahón*. Escuela Tipogràfica Provincial. Palma de Mallorca.