

THE MUSE and the @ieA

English-Speaking TRAVELLERS, ARTISTS
and WRITERS in MAJORCA (1900-1965)



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ARXIV MUNICIPAL de PALMA.

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THE MUSE AND THE SEA.

English-speaking Travellers, Artists

and Writers in Majorca 1900-1965

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Cover illustration: detail from Concepció Boncompte’s painting “Les muses a es Caragol”.



This exhibition presents a selection of travellers, literary figures, scientists and artists associated with Majorca during the first half of the twentieth century. Through them, the island gained renown as a place conducive to inspiration and creation, a place of active intellectual retreat. The people who comprise this portrait series were not marauding tourists; on the contrary, they enhanced the international reputation of the island where the muse and the sea had taken them in.



Travellers and the Island:

between the Word and the Deep Blue Sea

Although a few select Romantic and Victorian travellers had arrived in the nineteenth century, Mallorca was little more than an infrequently visited island on the outskirts of Europe prior to the emergence of tourism in the Balearic Islands. Nonetheless, in 1903, Palma’s Gran Hotel was opened, marking the start of what was to be the most productive industry of the twentieth century: tourism.

The island’s easy access and the enchantment of an eden lost in time attracted the attention of travellers, artists and writers. The new era’s visitors travelled with a deliberate desire to witness archaic images and ancestral ways of life threatened by relentless modernity and incipient tourism. Herein lay the writer-traveller’s dilemma: to make a name for themselves by writing about the island for the future tourist -- or leave it in sweet oblivion? The First World War halted the flow of visitors to Majorca. In the mind of the soldier, the stark and bloody breach of the European Front contrasted with the sunny memory of the Mediterranean island. The traveller’s perspective of the island changed from one of fantasy to compensation. In the aftermath of WWI, travellers distanced themselves from abstract thought and instead looked to the island for

an experience that was more physical, sensual and carnal. From the 1930s until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the distinction between Palma and the rest of the island became obvious. Urban and suburban visitors in the areas around the Bay of Palma enjoyed daily swims and nighttime encounters in internacional clubs. This is where the myth of Majorca as a venue for the *bon vivant* was born. In contrast, the visitor more inclined towards the artistic and the intellectual preferred the simple life, finding inspiration in the mountains or the coast, at a remove from the cosmopolitan hullabaloo of neighbourhoods like El Terreno. The myth of an ‘other-island’ for poets and artists gained strength.



Inspiration and Creation in Majorca

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Majorca, due to geographic and historical conditions, has attracted British and North American visitors based on three different perspectives. At the start of the century, Majorca was an exotic stop for journeys undertaken in the style of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour. Starting in the 1920s, Majorca was a cheap and peaceful place for thinking and writing -- still within the Greenwich meridian, as Robert Graves put it. In the mid-1950s, with the famous flight of American intellectuals to France, many passed through Majorca:

the island (along with Ibiza) became a lure for youth movements such as the hippies. From the extensive list of writers who passed through Majorca and wrote of their experience, some only came for short (but repeated) visits, e.g. Agatha Christie, Anthony Burgess, David Lodge, Kingslay Amis, Gertrude Stein. Others, such as Robert Graves, Robert Creeley, Ruthven Todd, Paul Roche, etc. chose to establish their residence in Majorca.

Apart from the aforementioned literary figures, there were also a number of researchers, scientists and humanists who shared in the Majorcan experience: Dorothea Bate, Margaret A. Murray, Ralph Adams Cram, Alan and Mary Hillgarth, Anthony Bonner, etc. From various perspectives, they portrayed an island whose image reached beyond its shores -- all contributing to the forging of the concept of “Majorca as Paradise” in the twentieth century.



A Paradise Open to the World

With its mountains and sea light, Majorca also attracted numerous painters and sculptors, concentrated in Pollença and the Serra de Tramontana. Various artistic schools emerged. Island life was one of constant coexistence with other expatriates, creating a shared experience. For example, William Cook encouraged Gertrude Stein to come to Majorca; the Gittes did the same with Melanie Pflaum; Niki de Saint-Phalle, James Metcalf, John Ulbricht, Angela von Neumann, Tomás Harris, etc. In many cases, their island sojourn launched their careers on the path to international recognition. For these artists, as for the writers, the island as muse is an undercurrent that resounds in their work.

Ross Abrams · Kingsley Amis · Donald K. Armstrong · Roy Baker · Dorothea Bate · Bessy D. Beckett · Jack Beeching · Anthony Bonner · Paul Boulanger · Mary Stuart Boyd · Dorothy Bradbury · Robert Bradbury · Jacob Bronowski · Anthony Burgess · Arthur Byne · Francis Caron · Frederick Chamberlin · Agatha Christie · William Edwards Cook · Ralph Adams Cram · Robert Creeley · Margaret D’Este · Nina Larrey Duryea · Havelock (Henry) Ellis · Lyn Evans · Ruth Fainlight · J. E. Crawford Flitch · Archie Gittes · Douglas Goldring · Robert Graves · Frederic Volker Grunfeld · Margaret Hall-Sweeney · Tomás Harris · Ada May Harrison · Jacquetta Hawkes · Alan Hillgarth · Mary Hillgarth · Jocelyn Hillgarth · Eugene Hollbrook · Ellis Jacobson · Anthony Kerrigan · Elaine Kerrigan · David Herbert Lawrence · David John Lodge · Alfred E. W. Mason · Harry Mathews · Thomas Stanley Matthews · James Metcalf (Jimmy) · Jesse Metcalf · Ritch Miller · Toby Molenaar · Verónica More · Margaret A. Murray · Angela von Neumann · Rose Standisch Nichols · Jenny Nicholson · Anaïs Nin · Edna O’Brian · Raphael Patai · Melanie Pflaum · Joshua Podro · Alastair Reid · Laura Riding · Paul Roche · Bertrand Russell · Niki de Saint Phalle · Henry C. Shelley · Margaret Kinloch Forbes Sheppard · Georges Sheridan · Jean i Franc Shor · Alan Sillitoe · Margaret Stark · Gertrude Stein · Ruthven Todd · John Ulbricht · William H. Waldren · Jacqueline Waldren · Evelyn Waugh · Percy Waxman · James Lindo Webb · Gordon West · Colin Wilson · Norman J. Yanikun · William Frederick Yeames · William Butler Yeats

