

THROUGH A GENDER LENS

Feminist route around les Corts



**Ajuntament de
Barcelona**

①

Pedralbes Monastery

Built in: 1327

Architectural style: a three-storey Gothic building with a cloister. The upper floor is Renaissance

Address: Baixada del Monestir, 9



© Quim Roser

 Admission charged



The ground and first floors of the cloister are accessible to people with reduced mobility. Wheelchairs are available for those that need them



Accessible signage and raised lettering



Accessible signage and lettering in Braille



Tactile 3D models of the monastery and the Queen's tomb



Accessible services for people with reduced mobility

For further information, go to: <https://monestirpedralbes.barcelona/ca/visita/accessibilitat-serveis>



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The monastery was promoted by Queen Elisenda of Montcada, who financed the work out of her own income. But her contribution did not end there: although she never donned a nun's habit, she took part in the major decisions concerning the monastery from the time it was founded and she ensured that it never lacked funding or protection. Thanks to her efforts, the monastery remained under the direct protection of Barcelona and the Consell de Cent government, becoming a major religious centre for the Crown of Aragon.

The monastery was surrounded by a perimeter wall, of which two towers and two gates remain intact. Inside the walls there was also a bakery, a butcher's, the convent, servants quarters, etc. All in all, it shows us that monasteries

were important centres for the political and economic life of their surrounding area.

Monastic women

Since its construction, the monastery has belonged to the Order of St. Clare, made up exclusively of women. In the Middle Ages, a religious or monastic life were the only possible alternatives to marriage within the social and political system of the time. Despite the arduous nature of monastic life and obedience due to the abbess and other high-ranking church officials, the nuns were able to have their own identity and live a freer life within the canons of Christianity, where they could dedicate themselves to study and other tasks inherent to monastic life (praying, caring for the sick, music, medicinal garden, etc.).



Most notable from an artistic point of view are the recently restored 14th-century Sant Miquel chapel and the cloister

Life in the monastery was highly organised: from the time of its creation in Italy, the Order of St. Clare had followed the rules of St. Francis, but from 1215, they started following the rules of St. Benedict instead. Finally, in 1253, St. Clare drafted her own version of the rules. These are the only religious order regulations written by a woman in the Middle Ages, and these were the rules followed by the nuns of Pedralbes Monastery from the outset.

QUEEN ELISENDA (1292-1364)

Queen consort of the Crown of Aragon, the wife of James II the Just, King of Aragon. She belonged to one of the most powerful families in Catalonia, the Montcada lineage, and she actively participated in the political and cultural life of the period. Her dream was to found a monastery of St. Clare nuns near Barcelona. She chose the Pedralbes site because it had fertile land and water, as well as being near a quarry. Work began in 1326, and one year later, the basic structure, the cloister, the church and the outbuildings were already functional. That same year, Queen Elisenda was widowed, and she moved into the palace she had built next to the monastery, where she would live until her death, at the age of seventy-four. In her will, she left all her belongings to the community of nuns and asked for her palace to be demolished.



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②

Queen Maria Cristina Square

Address: **Plaça de la Reina Maria Cristina**



Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility

Date included in the nomenclature: **1939**



Public space



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Elisenda of Montcada is buried in a double-sided tomb: one side faces the church, where she appears dressed as a queen, while on the other side, facing the cloister, she is dressed as a nun

In accordance with the rules, the abbesses exercised authority over the nuns and the monastery's dominions, as true feudal noble women. The abbess had the power to name officials, bestow benefits, make canonical visits and impose fines and punishments. In order for women to enter the Monastery of Pedralbes as nuns, they had to provide a dowry. It was therefore reserved for women of high standing.

With these financial resources, the monastery became a great cultural and political centre, where aristocratic women could exercise their power and live a more self-sufficient life. There are currently seven St. Clare nuns living in the monastery.

Most of what we know about the community's history is due to Sister Eulàlia Anzizu, who published the chronicle *Historical Pages of the Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes* in 1897. This nun, poet, musician and historian was orphaned at an early age. She joined the monastery in 1890, and lived there for twenty-six years. She occupied nearly all the possible posts (lawyer, archivist, secretary, teacher, etc.), but it is through her literary work that we know so many details about the monastery's history.

Women's role in the monarchy in the modern era and at the beginning of the contemporary period were marked by the same type of patriarchal structure and ideas that determined the lives of all other women in the society of that period.

For this reason, most queens of the modern era were not monarchs as individuals but rather consorts or regents, i.e., always the wives or mothers of kings. However, their role was essential for perpetuating the power structure, through the bloodline of the royal lineage. For this reason, they were often respected and could actively take part in the politics of their time. Their main role was to provide heirs to the throne, as well as being an example of virtue and poise.

MARIA CRISTINA OF HABSBURG-LORENA

(1858-1929)

Queen Consort of Spain from 1879 to 1885 due to her marriage to King Alfonso XII, she was Queen Regent from then until her son Alfonso XIII came of age in 1902. So, we can see that because she was a woman, she was forced to play a secondary role and could only exercise power in the absence of a man.

Her reign was characterised by a period of institutional stability supported by a two-party system that featured two monarchist parties, and Barcelona being the scene of major events, such as the 1888 Universal Exposition. This was the start of a period deeply marked by a series of social and labour struggles that we will discuss later on.

3

Gardens of Clara Campoamor

Built in: 1994

Address: Avinguda Diagonal, 609

Date included in the nomenclature: 1994



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Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility

Public space



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The suffragette movement is the feminist movement that fought, and still fights, to secure votes for women. This movement began in Great Britain at the end of the 19th century, under the leadership of the activist Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the Women's Social and Political Union. The first place to achieve women's suffrage without any restrictions was New Zealand, in 1893, and since then, the suffragette movement has expanded all over the world.

Suffrage reached Catalonia and the rest of Spain at the beginning of the 20th century and served as the basis for founding organisations that not only fought for this right, but also demanded women's equality in employment, social, cultural and legal matters. These organisations include the National Association of Spanish Women

CLARA CAMPOAMOR RODRÍGUEZ (1888-1972)

A politician, lawyer and writer, in 1931 she was elected as a member of the Congress of Representatives for the Radical Republican Party. A great defender of women's rights —she introduced the Children's Rights Act and the Divorce Act— after a great media and political battle, which even led her to confront her own party, she achieved equal voting rights in Spain with universal suffrage. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, she went into exile, first in Paris and then in Buenos Aires, ending up in Lausanne, where she died at the age of eighty-four.

(ANME), founded in 1918, which had the most members and was active for the longest time. In 1921, it called the first feminist demonstration in Spain, during which manifestos in favour of votes for women were distributed.

Leading figures in Catalonia included Francesca Bonnemaison, Carme Karr, Àngela Cardona and Dolors Monserdà. In 1931, with the Second Republic, a paradoxical situation came about: women could become members of parliament, but they could not vote. Some sectors of the conservative parties did not want to accept this, because they considered that women were intellectually inferior, while some factions of left-wing parties feared that a supposed religious influence over women would favour the right wing.

Thanks to the constant struggle of people like Clara Campoamor and Carmen de Burgos, as well as thousands of anonymous women on the streets, women were able to vote in Spain for the first time during the



Women's suffrage was approved on 1 October 1931, with 161 votes in favour and 121 against

general election of 1933. Women's suffrage had been approved two years earlier, on 1 October 1931, with 161 votes in favour and 121 against. Clara Campoamor's party was against, but it was supported by the Spanish Workers Socialist Party, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, part of the right wing and other individual members of parliament. When the Franco regime took over, these and other rights were repealed, but the feminist struggle has continued until the present day.

4

Les Corts women's prison

Built in: 1936

Address: Carrer d'Europa, 13



Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility



You may touch the sculpture



Public space



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Barcelona's Provincial Prison for Women was in operation from 1936 to 1955. The perimeter of the site ran from the present-day Plaça de la Reina Maria Cristina to Carrer de Joaquim Molins and Carrer de les Corts at the Jardins de Clara Campoamor. It was formerly a refuge for the instruction of young girls. During the Spanish Civil War, the Republican Government of Catalonia turned it into a prison, and detained right-wing, Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist political prisoners there.

At the start of the Franco dictatorship, in 1939, governance of the prison was given to the religious order Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, and it became a prison for women subjected to reprisals by the Franco regime.



In 1939 a total of 1,763 women prisoners and 43 children were living there

The building had not been designed as a prison and had become severely dilapidated during the war. It had a capacity for one hundred prisoners, but during some periods it housed nearly two thousand women and forty children, under subhuman conditions. The testimonies of some of the prisoners have made it possible to build up a picture of what life was like in the prison and its various areas: the cells, the library, the chapel, the kitchen, the commissary, the school, the infirmary, the guardrooms, etc. In addition to terrible living conditions, there was also forced labour in the vegetable garden, the farm and the dressmaking workshop.

During the Franco regime, women's prisons served a dual function: to punish women considered to be criminals by the regime and to serve as a warning to all other women in society so they would comply with the expectations of the Franco regime: to be housewives and good Catholics.

During the early years of the Franco regime, twelve women were shot at the prison. Finally, in October 1955, the centre was closed, and the 263 prisoners and nineteen children were transferred to the Model prison, which was for men.

At the end of 2019, a memorial was opened, promoted by the Former Les Corts Women's Prison Promotion Group. It is comprised of five information stands and six large rocks from various locations, symbolising the territories

where most of the prisoners came from: Barcelona, Madrid, Almeria, Lleida, Murcia and Segovia.

MARIA SALVO IBORRA (1920)

An anti-Franco activist born in Sabadell, she lived in Les Corts throughout her childhood and youth. She joined the Unified Socialist Youth of Catalonia (JSUC) at the age of sixteen. Following Franco's victory, she went into exile in France, later returning to Madrid. In 1941, she was discovered acting as an intermediary for the anti-Franco resistance. She was interrogated and tortured, suffering consequences that prevented her from having children. She was put on trial and sentenced to thirty years in prison, two of which she spent in the Les Corts women's prison. She was pardoned in 1957 and since then she has fought for the recognition and memory of the anti-Francoist movement. She promoted the foundation of the Catalan Association of Former Political Prisoners.

5 Civic centre Tomasa Cuevas - Les Corts

Opened in: 1997

Address: Carrer de Dolors Masferrer i Bosch, 33-35



A facility that is fully accessible for people with reduced mobility



Accessible signage and raised lettering



Accessible signage and lettering in Braille



Accessible services for people with reduced mobility

A programme of accessible shows (audio description, on-screen subtitles, magnetic ring, sign-language interpretation, anticipative and tactile visit). For more information, see: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ccivics/tomasacuevas>



Public space with opening times



© Quim Roser

Tomasa Cuevas was a leading figure in the anti-Francoist struggle, who compiled and narrated the memories of many women who were imprisoned and tortured during the dictatorship, in order to give greater visibility to their struggle. This civic centre is a leading venue for the performing arts, especially for disciplines such as circus, urban dance and theatre for adults. It also provides support for social and local-resident initiatives and cultural creation. In 2015, it was named after Tomasa Cuevas, and at the entrance there is a memorial space telling her story.



Tomasa Cuevas compiled the memories of women who were imprisoned during the Franco regime

TOMASA CUEVAS GUTIÉRREZ (1917-2007)

A militant Spanish communist from the age of fifteen, she was born in Castile-La Mancha. At the start of the Spanish Civil War, she was actively involved in the defence of the Republic, and for that reason she was imprisoned in 1939, although she was released five years later. Now in Barcelona, she joined the PSUC. She was arrested again and tortured in the Via Laietana prefecture, before being sent to the Les Corts Women's Prison..

After once again being granted parole, she continued her struggle against the regime underground, before finally going into exile in France. A tireless fighter, with the arrival of democracy, she wrote about the lives of women prisoners during the Franco regime and about the role of women in the anti-Francoist struggle. In 2004, she was awarded the Sant Jordi Cross.

6 Dolors Masferrer i Bosch Street

Address: Carrer de Dolors Masferrer i Bosch

Date included in the nomenclature: 2002



Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility



Espai públic



The new economic system, based on industrialisation, which was first introduced in the 19th century, established a new social class: the middle class. Socially, the middle class was constructed on the idea of a separation between classes and genders, and between the private and public spheres. Middle-class women were relegated to domestic tasks, forced to be, first of all, good daughters, and then later, good wives and mothers.

However, middle-class women had access to culture and education, especially in artistic fields. They could also get jobs, for example as a nurse, if necessary. At that time, science affirmed that women were biologically inferior and completely dominated by their emotions; they were considered to be prone to hysteria and totally dependent on men.

In spite of attempts to relegate them to the family sphere, well-to-do women participated in their social context and formed part of political movements such as the suffragist movement, they ran family businesses, managed properties and promoted social improvements in the city, as was the case of Dolors Masferrer i Bosch.

DOLORS MASFERRER I BOSCH (1857-1905)

A leading figure of the middle class and social life of Les Corts. The heiress of Can Sol de Dalt on her mother's side, she provided the land for building the first municipal schools in Les Corts, donated the bells for the clock tower of the Santa Maria del Remei parish church and gave the City Council a space for the urban development of Plaça de Comas. Her husband was local industrialist and leader Josep Comas i Masferrer, who went on to become president of Barcelona Provincial Council.

7

La Maternitat complex

Built in: 1883–1957

Address: various entrances, one of which is at Travessera de les Corts, 159



Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility



Accessible services for people with reduced mobility



Public space with opening times



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Blue Wing. © Quim Roser



Pink Wing. © Quim Roser



Breast-feeding Wing. © Quim Roser

Barcelona's Casa Provincial de Maternitat i Expositors is a series of former hospital buildings. It was built due to the need to adapt the city's medical and care network to modern times. From the 16th century onwards, orphans were housed at the Hospital de la Santa Creu, located in the Raval neighbourhood, where the mortality rate was over 70%. In the 19th century, with industrialisation and population growth, the number of abandoned children increased, overwhelming the capacity of Santa Creu.

For all of these reasons and based on the new currents of political and social thinking associated with the liberal revolution, it was decided to create an institution for maternity and child care. It was initially housed in the Casa de la Misericòrdia on Carrer de les Ramelleres, before

finally moving to the land of Mas Cavaller, in Les Corts, with rational buildings that followed the new scientific ideas of the late 19th century. The change led to a reduction in the mortality rate and allowed children to stay at the centre until the age of nine, improving their education, which was based on ensuring their subsequent integration into society.

The institution's other task was to help women during labour. With new, improved techniques and new spaces, they were able to increase the annual number of births from thirty to two hundred, while also reducing the mortality rate. In spite of these improvements, motherhood outside of marriage continued to be a taboo subject until the end of the 20th century: unmarried pregnant women often arrived at La Maternitat in secret; if they were discovered they

risked being marked for life and marginalised by their social circles.

In 1936, still during the Second Republic period, Àurea Cuadrado was named La Maternitat's director. She initiated improvements, such as the creation of maternity workshops and the dissemination of ways to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Under her management, it was possible to carry out abortions.

During the Franco regime, everyone at the institution in a position of responsibility was purged and use of the Catalan language was prohibited, along with a number of medical improvements. During the Transition, a new network of social and medical services was developed, and the Casa Provincial de Maternitat, now in a desperate state, was closed. The site is

now owned by Barcelona Provincial Council and houses various facilities and institutions.

ELISABETH EIDENBENZ (1913–2011)


She was a Swiss teacher who arrived in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War as a volunteer, to help mothers and children. With the victory of the Franco regime, she moved to Roussillon with other exiles, seeking out pregnant women in the internment camps and trying to improve their living conditions. To this end, she founded the Maternitat d'Eina, an institution dedicated to providing support for women exiled by the Spanish Civil War. In 2018, Carrer de la Maternitat was renamed Elisabeth Eidenbenz, in order to pay tribute to this Swiss citizen who saved the lives of nearly six hundred children, the sons and daughters of Spanish refugees from the Second Republic and of young women during the Second World War.

8

Conxita Supervia Street

Address: Carrer de Conxita Supervia

Date included in the nomenclature: 1953

 Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility

 Public space



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As in other fields of knowledge, women's contribution to music was largely unknown until fairly recently. The history of classical music is full of the names of great composers, all of them men. The performance of music was also almost exclusively reserved for men, and until quite recently, women could only sing or play in small concerts. In spite of this, many women defied their times and dedicated themselves to music.

In the 19th century, with the arrival of the middle classes, music became an acceptable leisure activity for well-to-do young women. This became normalised in the 20th century, but society continued to frown upon girls who dedicated themselves to show business. Conxita Supervia would certainly have had to face a great deal of prejudice due to her itinerant lifestyle and her decisive temperament.

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The musical performances of Conxita Supervia were remastered and republished in 2009

CONXITA SUPERVIA I PASCUAL (1895-1936)


A renowned Catalan mezzosoprano, born in Barcelona. After studying at the Conservatori Superior de Música del Liceu, she immediately found fame through her performances at the Liceu and the Palau de la Música of works such as *The Lovers of Teruel*, *Samson and Delilah* and *Carmen*. However, her most outstanding role was as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. Supervia wanted to revolutionise the performance of this character, in order to get back to the original tone.

9

Can Bruixa Street

Address: Carrer de Can Bruixa

Date included in the nomenclature: 1943

 Fully accessible for people with reduced mobility

 Public space



Source: Barcelona Municipal Archives.



© Quim Roser

Historically, Les Corts was renowned for its extensive fields and many farm houses, thanks to fertile soil and an abundance of water. Carrer de Can Bruixa retains the name of a masia farmhouse built in the 18th century by the Piera family. The masia was a working farmhouse, housing generations of farmers, until the 1940s, when the City Council decided to extend the old Barcelona road (the present day Carrer del Marquès de Sentmenat) and the family who owned the building provided the land on the condition that its name was conserved.

It seems that the name Can Bruixa (Witch House) originated with the unusual good luck that the various generations of the Piera Llopart family, and especially its womenfolk, had with animals. The family used to acquire

animals in a poor state of health, cure them and resell them at a higher price; these abilities were considered to be witchcraft by their contemporaries and it seems that the name stuck in people's collective memory for that reason.

Women in farming

Agricultural and livestock work was the main basis of the economy prior to industrialisation in the 19th century. Despite the rigid social and cultural context of the modern era, and women being considered as inferior beings, the rural world often offered women greater freedom and equality: work in the field did not distinguish between the sexes. However, it should be said that women farmers found they had to do two jobs; working in the fields and also looking after the house.

17

Montserrat Abelló Library

Built in: 2018

Address: Carrer dels Comtes de Bell-lloc, 192-200



A facility that is fully accessible for people with reduced mobility



It has a collection of large print books, audio books, hand-held and table magnifying glasses and an accessible computer programme for people with visual impairment



Accessible services for people with reduced mobility

For further information, go to:

<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/biblioteques/bibmontserratabello>



Public space with opening times



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The Montserrat Abelló Library is a cultural facility located in the old Benet i Campabadal factory building. At the request of the Les Corts Women's Committee, the District Council named the library after the writer Montserrat Abelló i Soler, to commemorate the centenary of her birth.

The Benet Campabadal factory made silk ribbons for haberdashery and dressmaking. It was open from 1915 to the 1980s. It was one of the most important factories to be opened in what is now known as the District of Les Corts, employing many women from the local area. The textile industry employed mainly women and children; when the Benet Campabadal factory was at maximum production, over two hundred women worked there.

* Women played an essential role in Catalonia's industrial revolution

The Library is currently home to a permanent exhibition on the historical memory of the factory, placing special emphasis on the role of the women who used to work there. It also has an area dedicated to the life and work of Montserrat Abelló.

The working woman

Women played an essential role in the industrial revolution, which took place in Catalonia over the course of the 19th century. With the introduction of the steam engine in these

new workplaces, women joined the industrial job market. It should be said that, prior to industrialisation, women were already working outside the home, actively participating in all aspects of work in the fields, in workshops and family guild shops.

In industry, women were paid lower wages and experienced worse working conditions, as well as having a double workload: their paid jobs were in addition to their unpaid housework. A woman's wage was understood to be a complement to her husband's wages, something which was used to justify the difference between the two wages. Ideologically, the paradox was that working-class women had to stay at home, following the model of middle-class women, but they were forced through necessity to work in factories for miserable wages.

Women workers organised to defend their rights and they played a leading role in struggles like the Barcelona Bullangues riots, Tragic Week and the general strikes during the 20th century.

MONTSERRAT ABELLÓ I SOLER (1918-2014)

A Catalan poet, writer and translator, she is considered to be a key figure in Catalan literature. Her works include the poetry books *Foc a les mans* and *Memoria de tu i de mi*, as well as translations of Anglo-Saxon feminist poets, such as Sylvia Plath, and English translations of Catalan classics, such as Mercè Rodoreda and Maria-Mercè Marçal. Among many other prizes, she received the Catalan Literature Award of Honour and the National Culture Award. During the Franco dictatorship, she went into exile in France and the United Kingdom, where she helped war refugees. She later lived in Chile.

The memory of women

On this route through Les Corts we've been able to get a glimpse of reality, demonstrating that women played an active and decisive role in our past, despite the invisibilisation they were subjected to.

The gender perspective shows how women reference figures in all kinds of fields are vital if today's generations are to understand that effective equality between men and women is indispensable. And this is why working to rediscover the history of women is so important.

There are increasing numbers of initiatives that aim to showcase the lives of these women. It should be remembered that anything without a name does not exist, and it is therefore very important to take steps in this regard, such as the feminisation of nomenclature, where historically, women were almost completely absent, or appeared

only under their surnames, making it impossible to recognise the role that they played.

Fortunately, there are now many streets in Les Corts where you can stop and remember the accomplishments of great women. In fact, there are so many, that it is impossible to include all of them in a single route: in Carrer de Constança (11) (1274-1302) we'd be talking about the reign of Queen Constance of Catalonia, Aragon and Sicily, who actively intervened in the politics of that period; in the Jardins d'Àurea Cuadrado (12) (1894-1969) we would recall the director of the Casa de la Maternitat during the Spanish Civil War, who actively fought to improve the situation of women and who was a pioneer in performing abortions during the war; in Carrer d'Aurora Bertrana (13) (1892-1974) or Carrer de Maria Barrientos (14) (1883-1946) we would remember the passionate lives of



© Quim Roser

the writer and cellist, and the internationally renowned soprano; in Passatge de Rosa Leveroni (15) (1910-1985), the life of the poet and her struggle to preserve the Catalan language and culture during the Franco regime, etc. There are many women, with first names and surnames, that we can remember and pay tribute to, but there are many more anonymous women who contributed decisively to achieving the rights we enjoy today.

This tour is only a glimpse of what we may discover about the history of women in Les Corts. We invite you to continue looking for information in libraries and archives, and then sharing it. To start with, we recommend the following resources:

- *Dones de les Corts. Itineraris històrics*, by Isabel Segura Soriano. Barcelona City Council, 2010.
- *Elles! 65 dones oblidades de la història*,

by Agnès Rotger. Catalan Institute of Women, 2017.

- *Els carrers de Barcelona: les Corts*, by Jesús Portavella. Barcelona City Council, 2000.
- *La veu de les dones de la presó de dones*. An interview with Maria Salvo, by the Promotional Group for the Future Monument to the Les Corts Women's Prison.
- *Moments històrics de les dones a Catalunya*, by Núria Jornet, Maria-Milagros Rivera and M. Elisa Varela. Catalan Institute of Women, 2010.

These are anonymous women who, day after day, forged alliances to survive, to bring us knowledge and struggles that endure to this day. But the work doesn't end there: we still need spaces for participation and protest which fight day in day out to give women back their rightful place in history. It is everyone's job to make this possible.

**Districte de
les Corts**