

ENGLISH

# IMPRENTA MUNICIPAL ARTES DEL LIBRO



The Imprenta Municipal – Artes del Libro, is a centre established to offer the public the opportunity to view cultural contents relating to the history of the printing press, the book and related arts. Moreover, the rich collection of works held at the Imprenta date back over the last two hundred years of graphics art, produced before the invention of the offset printer and contains not only more than 3000 pieces, but also fully functioning workshops where traditional techniques no longer in use are kept alive. This is probably the strongest and the most attractive feature of the Imprenta Municipal.

Being now in a moment of upheaval with the arrival of new information and communications technologies, the aim of the Imprenta Municipal – Artes del Libro is therefore to present itself as a centre of reference on the role of the book and the history of printing in our culture.

The invention of the printing press some 500 years ago radically transformed the method of production and the spread of written texts. Likewise, a whole range of graphic techniques has been used to produce works of arts. Furthermore, the press, the book and the graphic arts have worked together through the centuries to produce a priceless heritage that comes to us through not only the pieces on display, but through several creative techniques that are in use in our professional workshops.

The Imprenta Municipal offers the public a wealth of information about the pieces on display and the methods related to book craft, steering us towards an intellectual understanding of the important role these have played in the spread of knowledge.

## THE COLLECTION

The collection is made up of pieces of historic or artistic value, relating to the graphic arts. Among these are machinery and equipment from the old foundry workshops, typographic prints, lithographs, and tools from the field of engraving, including an important collection of printing plates and printmaking. The collection of lithographic stones and the original handmade end papers and drawings by several contemporary artists are also very attractive.

There is an exceptional collection of finishing tools cast in bronze in current use at the artistic bookbinding workshop, some of them are also on display in the main exhibition of the Imprenta Municipal.

## THE BUILDING

Designed and built between 1931 and 1933 by F. J. Ferrero Llusía and Luis Bellido, extended in 1955 by Lucio Oñoro, the present building has displays on three floors, with a main entrance located in Calle Concepción Jerónima, number 15.

This building was conceptualized with a clear functionality at a time when the development of the typographic print and the Imprenta Municipal were growing. This building becomes one of the unique examples of industrial architecture right in the centre of town.

This building designed with Art Deco characteristics stresses its striking features through the reinforced concrete structure, the brick facade and through the layout of the windows, drawing a linear symmetry.

One of the positive aspects of the design is the use of natural light, which floods in through different secon-



dary structural elements such as a central skylight, large windows and several indoor patios.

The amazing sign **IMPRENTA MUNICIPAL** adds the finishing touches with its huge letters standing proud of the facade as it was a line of movable types, paying tribute to the history of typography.

### **THE PERMANENT EXHIBITION: *PRINTING AND THE BOOK: A STORY***

The current exhibition at the Imprenta Municipal shows the history of the printing press and graphic arts from two different perspectives: a thematic and cross chronological one, dating from the invention of the manual printing press, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, to the arrival of the early mechanical print machines, and their demise with the arrival of the offset printer.

There are also two sections which look at illustration and binding techniques. Furthermore, the content is enhanced by the addition of the fully functioning typographic print workshop. The tour is divided into the following topics or sections:

#### **THE HAND PRESS PERIOD**

During the middle ages, with the growth in commercial development and the rise in the literate population within towns and cities, a more efficient means of mass production was needed to meet the ever increasing demand for written texts.

In Germany, in the middle of the fifteenth century, Johannes Guttenberg invented an efficient technique that would change the world: the printing press.

The invention used letters cast in an alloy of lead, tin and antimony and arranged in rows to produce words or whole texts. The process was more durable than woodblock printing, giving rise to typography or

movable type, and involved transferring text to paper or parchment by applying pressure to an inked surface. This system worked until the nineteenth century with just a few changes.

#### **MECHANIC PRINTING**

During the nineteenth century several events caused a significant advance in printing development: the increase in the number of readers of books, papers and magazines and secondly, advances in the techniques used in the manufacture of machinery and tooling.

#### **ILLUSTRATION TECHNIQUES**

New techniques were also developed for the reproduction of images. The cultural importance of these was twofold and allowed not only the illustration of texts but also a means of artistic expression. Engraving with copper plate or wood cutting were the oldest, that shares the same period as typography. These new techniques were seized upon and used to great effect by artists and illustrators of the day.

Lithography is an advanced technique based on chemicals developed at the end of the eighteenth century. The images are etched onto stone plates and transferred to the paper via a lithographic press. The process is a forerunner of the offset system; the most common method nowadays.

#### **BINDERY**

The book as we know it today is actually the result of the development of a specific technique: the craft of bookbinding. Initially, binding the book was merely functional in that it held the pages together in the correct order. However, over the centuries the economic and social value attributed to books grew and bookbinding became an art in its own right, with the hard protective covers often becoming increasingly elaborate and decorative.

### **THE IMPRENTA MUNICIPAL DE MADRID**

Its origin dates back to 1853 with the establishment of The Saint Bernardino Orphanage Printing Office, where the orphans were at once trained in these traditional professions and set to work to supply the printing demand of the Town Council. Its history reaches to this day, embodied in The Imprenta Municipal – Artes del libro.

#### **INFORMATION**

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[www.madrid.es/imprentamunicipal](http://www.madrid.es/imprentamunicipal)

#### **OPENING HOURS:**

Tuesdays to Fridays 10am- 8pm

Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays 10am -2pm

Closed: Mondays, 1 and 6 January, 1 of May, and Christmas Day.

#### **GETTING HERE:**

By tube: Sol, Tirso de Molina and Latina.

By bus: numbers: 3, 6, 17, 18, 23, 26, 31, 32, 35, 50, 51, 60, 65 and M-1.

By commuter train: Sol.

#### **FREE ENTRANCE**