



Exhibition «Scenes from the Raval»
11/03/1998 - 24/05/1998

The open district

The Raval is the CCCB's district, our immediate surroundings. We see the people of the Raval, we pass one another, look at one another, and, sometimes, speak to one another. For many years, the Casa de la Caritat, or workhouse, dominated the northern part of the district. It was an institution characteristic of the times, when social assistance and shutting people away, charity and repression went hand in hand. The time of the Casa de la Caritat passed; over the ruins of that closed space we built an open space: the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. Culture understood as a meeting place between diverse people. *Scenes from the Raval* extended an invitation to the local community to explain their lives, their links with the neighbourhood, their recollections, their experiences, and invited others to share experiences with a community with intense yet fading memories.

Things happened on the scenography for *Scenes from the Raval*. It wasn't an exhibition, it was a work in progress and this book is the penultimate component in this work. The penultimate one because the dialogue which the event left in its wake, directly or through the internet, is still open. This scenography was not some mere artist's whim, it was made up of those elements which the Raval's community considered most expressive of the district. Every evening there was an appointment in the Raval: a conversation with witnesses. This book bears witness to this long series of encounters, and seeks to make a contribution to the memory of a district which is in the midst of a profound transformation. The city is change. But change doesn't take place over a void. Power tends to destroy memory, because unity is built on forgetting and it is always more expedient to domesticate homogeneity than diversity. Nevertheless, democratic culture is based on memory. The best way of ensuring that change will continue to create a civic network is to preserve this memory. And in a district which has the honour of being the only truly multicultural neighbourhood in Barcelona, the encounter between the memory of long-time residents and the memories brought by those who have come from far-off places is indispensable if the network of civil coexistence is to remain intact.

Scenes from the Raval sought to contribute to everyday dialogue. This was often difficult because there are a lot of barriers separating us. However, the Raval is used to difficult lines of separation in a labyrinthine but not closed space. *Scenes from the Raval* took advantage of the diversity of the district in an attempt to establish a dialogue which would not just be interior, but would extend outwards. The visitors to *Scenes from the Raval* were the first intermediaries. But the website was an open door which many members of the community passed through. This book is the event which completes *Scenes from the Raval*, leaving a record of a district and a dialogue with many voices.