



## The radiance and the squalor

For those of us of a certain age, Pegasos occupy a glorious corner in the imagery of the memory. In the grey, squalid Spain of the fifties, a time of silence, restrictions and ration books, a series of cars suddenly emerged which, as I recall, were long, gleaming and powerful. A rarity, among music from the Eucharistic Congress and military parades. Racing cars and sports cars were the vehicles of wealthy countries which seemed beyond the reach of the poverty-stricken Spain of the time. But the regime wanted to give itself a treat. As the exhibition curator, Francesc Torres, says, the chance meeting between Franco's minister Suances and Ricart—the Catalan designer who had triumphed at Alfa Romeo and had to flee Italy after the fascist defeat—was one of the few moments when the regime approached the aesthetic avant-gardes. It probably didn't even know it. The adventure was soon over, just like everything done without reason or motive. Because, in fact, only the surreal ways with which this country surprises us at times, could explain a technological and artistic adventure which didn't fit in at all with the impoverished state of the country. The regime started it, but was unable to capitalise on it or continue with it.

This episode, like so many other moments during the Franco regime, had fallen into oblivion. Those who should have explained it chose to remain silent in order to avoid stirring up the past. It has fallen to the CCCB to revive this episode, its protagonists and its context. Eleven cars at the CCCB. This isn't an exercise in aestheticism; it is the chronicle of a mirage. It is a gaze over a period dominated by the absurd and intransigence, during which there were people capable of imagining devices from another planet, and workers who defended their dignity as they made these cars, by fighting against a regime which oppressed them. The splendour of the restored cars in the main hall shouldn't extinguish the sounds of the shabbiness of the official culture of the time, or erase the greyness of social and spiritual poverty. The Pegasos were the exception, the humiliation of the citizenry by a regime which was fundamentally mediocre by nature.

However, cars have an irresistible power in the collective imaginary. Something profound, some erotic urge touches this artefact which, standing at the crossroads of speed, ownership and fantasies of omnipotence, is able to fascinate so many people. This aura of the automobile—one of the few myths left to modern man—also imbues this exhibition. It was probably the car's power to fascinate which attracted Francesc Torres and led him to convince us at the CCCB of the interest in reconstructing this rare outburst of beauty in the sinister political and cultural universe of the Franco regime.