

## MARS. THE RED MIRROR



**Exhibition at the CCCB - 25 February to 11 July 2021**

Doors open inaugural weekend from Thursday 25 to Sunday 28 February  
Free admission subject to prior registration on the [CCCB's website](#)

The exhibition *Mars. The Red Mirror*, curated by the director of the CCCBLab, [Juan Insua](#), which will run in gallery 2 of the CCCB from 25 February to 11 July 2021, explores our connection with Mars, from antiquity to the present day, by means of different approaches and disciplines. Science, art and literature interact in a major exhibition project that investigates our condition and future as a species and coincides in time with the arrival of three space missions that will update our knowledge of the Red Planet.

Since the earliest civilizations, Mars has been a mirror, a metaphor and a source of inspiration for humans. The exhibition, structured in three main parts (Mars in the Ancient Cosmos, Science and Fiction of the Red Planet and Mars in the Anthropocene), unfolds the many stories that have sprung up around Mars since antiquity, starting with present-day science and research, to the impact that the Martian imaginary has had on fiction. The exhibition also opens up spaces for reflection on what we can learn from the Red Planet, climate crisis and human life on a hypothetical planet B.

With over 400 items, including incunabula, sculptures, drawings, photographs, comics and facsimiles, films, manuscripts, collector's items and even a Martian meteorite, the exhibition is a comprehensive approach to learning about artistic, literary and scientific creation based on Mars.

The exhibition project also incorporates national and international voices from the world of creation, art, science and thought that present original works in the exhibition and participate in an extensive parallel programme of debates, audiovisuals, and educational and family activities. The start of the programme is marked by two activities related to space exploration: on 18 February, a week before the exhibition opening, we experienced one of the highlights of the historic [MARS 2020 \(NASA\)](#) mission with the live broadcast of the critical landing manoeuvre of the Perseverance rover on Mars, a mission that aims to collect samples from the planet to explore clues to past life. And on 26 February, the day after the inauguration, the writer [Kim Stanley Robinson](#), one of the world's most prestigious science fiction writers, will be talking to the cultural researcher and curator [José Luis de Vicente](#) about future scenarios opened up by exploration of the universe.

## SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBITION

### 1. Mars in the Ancient Cosmos



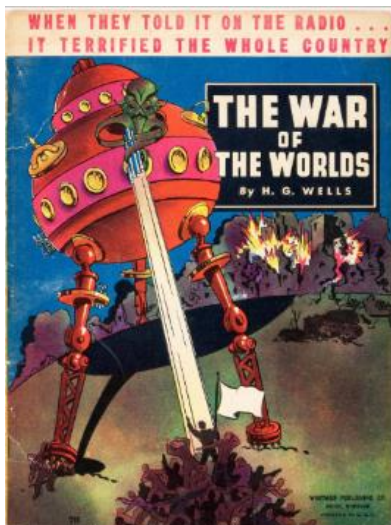
The story of this first section, including mythological representations of Mars such as *Mars Balearicus* (image), ancient astronomical science with the incunabula *Almagest* by **Claudius Ptolemy** and the forerunners of science fiction, begins in a remote past, in the indecipherable enigma of the first cosmogonies—the hymns and epics which the ancients sang to the far-off gods.

Mars has a different name in every culture, but similar attributes in all. A red star in the celestial vault, a telluric god since the start of agriculture. Ares, in Greek mythology (Mars in Roman), is one of the divine powers that have a monopoly on war-related matters. It is a constant in the various ancient traditions and cosmogonies, and an early archetypal factor associated with masculine power, the virtues of war and the fury of combat. It embodies a force that is necessary to survive and overcome, but also the immoderation of lethal energy if it is not subordinated to a higher order endowed with measure and reason. Mars, then, as a symbol of a violent masculinity running through the history of humanity to the present day. And Mars interpreted according to the place it occupies in the mental systems underpinning the order that held sway until the Renaissance.

**Image:** *Mars Balearicus*. 400 BC. Bronze. © Museu de Mallorca

## 2. Science and Fiction of the Red Planet

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The scientific and technological development of recent centuries has led to progressive knowledge of Mars as the fourth planet in the solar system, at the same time generating a heterodox literature that corresponds largely to the various phases of science fiction, from **H. G. Wells** to the works of **Ray Bradbury** and **Kim Stanley Robinson**, to mention the best known examples. A thought-provoking paradox: extraordinary scientific advances in knowledge about the Red Planet are closely related to a major cultural production in which Mars occupies a prominent place as an icon of pop imaginary.

This section focuses on the communicating vessels between science and fiction, science and literature, and science and popular culture, exploring the mutual influences of scientists, engineers, writers and artists obsessed with and inspired by Mars since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, giving us such salient examples as *Trip to Mars* produced by the inventor **Thomas Edison**, considered the first US science fiction film, and the collection of pulp magazines by the US artist **Norman Saunders**.

**Image:** Herbert George Wells (1866-1946). *The War of the Worlds*, Whitman, 1938. Cover illustration by James Gary (1905-1975). © David Saunders Collection

## 3. Mars in the Anthropocene

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The ecological catastrophe we are now witnessing due to global warming is evidence on which the scientific community agrees. We are living at a time of climate emergency, caused by the human species, which affects all living species and jeopardizes the future of new generations. The diagnosis is obvious, but the solutions are still uncertain.

Given the complexity of the situation, some propose space colonization as the inevitable way out, while others call for urgent solutions to save what can, for years, be our only possible home: planet Earth. And this is where Mars, as a probable (or impossible) planet B, reflects the significance of our global ecological crisis: Mars to look for answers about the origin of life, terrestrial and extra-terrestrial, but also to become aware of a world without us.

With missions to Mars, photographs of a very Martian Earth (or a very terrestrial Mars), speculative projects about the future of humankind on the Red Planet or Martian species processed by an artificial intelligence that are strangely familiar to us, Mars becomes a mirror in which the Earth examines its very essence.

**Image:** View from the Curiosity rover after crossing a Martian dune. 19 February 2014. © NASA

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

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### Dates and opening times

From 25 February to 11 July 2021

Open from Tuesday to Sunday and on public holidays: 11:00–20:00

Closed on Mondays except public holidays

### Venue

Gallery 2 of the CCCB

### Prices

6€ / 4€ Concessions

On Sundays from 15:00 to 20:00, admission to the exhibition is free of charge  
subject to prior registration

[Discounts and free offers](#)

High resolution images of the exhibition at  
[the CCCB's digital press room](#)

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CCCB – Montalegre, 5. 08001 Barcelona – [www.cccb.org](http://www.cccb.org)

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