

Introduction

The **Let's Read** exhibition is a celebration and recognition of the reader as a central part of literature.

The Institute of Catalan Literature (*Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*) held a photographic exhibition of writers at the same venue last year. This year special attention has been given to another fundamental pillar of literature: the readers and reading.

To bring us closer to the reading phenomenon the exhibition, organized by the **Institute of Catalan Literature** (*Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*) and overseen by writer and journalist **Ada Castells**, is based on the six basic questions in journalism: “Who?” “What?”, “Why?”, “How?”, “When?” and “Where?”, which also highlights Kafka's idea that reading is about asking oneself questions.

The aim of **Let's Read** is for visitors to have access to texts related to reading and to recognise themselves as readers. We hope visitors leave the exhibition feeling inspired to read and convinced that life is better when you read.

Let's Read is the second exhibition in a series of three about literature. The first, which opened in the spring of 2005, was dedicated to the **authors** and the third, planned for April 2007, will focus on the **intermediaries**; all those who play a part in the process of turning a manuscript into the final product on the bookshop shelf.

Exhibition Criteria

The exhibition is based on two levels of reading: reading for pleasure, which asks visitors to participate by recommending books or by giving reasons for reading and an intellectual level, seeing as the exhibition is a labyrinth of thoughts on reading from the literary world.

Description

Let's Read provides the reader/visitor with around thirty quotations from writers who have reflected upon WHAT, WHO, WHEN, HOW, WHERE and WHY we read. We'll come across the thoughts of Roth, Kafka, Lessing, Proust, Woolf and many more enthusiasts of this activity that unites us into one giant, universal and imaginary book club.

In each section, there's a dialogue between two fictitious readers and an interactive activity underlining the fact that the reader is an active agent of the literary process. One hundred and fifty books are mentioned in the exhibition, from literary classics to essays and manuals about reading.

Exhibition Areas

The exhibition comprises of six sections presented via an imaginary dialogue between readers and the quotations of famous writers who have reflected upon reading.

“Who do we read?” presents some books in which, as we get closer, beginnings and endings of novels appear, since it’s us the readers who bring the text to life with our viewpoint.

“What do we read?” gives us the opportunity to create a shared library of all our favourite books. Visitors will be able to take a blank book and write in it everything they think is missing. In this section, they’ll also be able to discover the favourite reads of the reading expert Alberto Manguel, the journalist Emilio Manzano, the actress Marta Marco, the footballer Oleguer Presas, the clown Totell Poltrona and the biologist Anna Veiga. The choice wasn’t limited to people specifically related to the book world because the aim was to demonstrate that there are readers from every walk of life.

“How do we read?” suggests we sit back and spy on a reader who has been filmed interacting with a book in some very strange ways. It’s a way of referring to the obsessions and habits that those of us who read would never confess to otherwise.

“Why do we read?” encourages us to pick up a pen and write our reasons for reading on a wall amongst dozens of other reasons. Philip Roth says, “Reading serves no purpose and yet it is tremendously necessary.” and Kundera claims that, “the novelist teaches the reader to comprehend the world as a question.” Here visitors can also have their say.

“Where do we read?” allows us to enjoy some silence in the midst of the hustle and bustle. We can let ourselves be carried away by the descriptions of sounds given by six writers who are convinced that reading is about controlling the world around us. Wherever we go we can carry a different universe around in our pocket. Visitors will find themselves immersed in noise and will be able to regain the pleasure of silent reading simply by putting on a pair of headphones.

“When do we read?” is a reflection upon how we fit this activity into our hectic timetables by creating an area full of all sorts of chairs where readers can flick through some of the books that make up the bibliography used to compile this exhibition. This bibliography has also been displayed as a menu on a bar, where people might also come and read.

In fact, the answer we give to the question **“When do we read?”** is **“Now”**, that’s why we’ve provided so many chairs. We want visitors to take a seat and

read. In doing so, they become an integral part of the exhibition; the focal point. Amongst the chairs, there's everything from a typical armchair to a waiting room chair or a seat at a bus stop

In this part of the exhibition, we also invite visitors to post a picture of themselves reading on a big metal notice board.

Parallel Events

Let's Read also wanted to share its enthusiasm for reading which is why it integrated readers into the exhibition and encouraged them to participate.

The Institute of Catalan Literature (*Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*) organized meetings with **five book clubs from around the country and the authors they were reading.**

All the meetings were held from 7pm onwards.

Tuesday 18th April:

Terra Baixa library Book Club, in Vendrell, will discuss *La ciutat invisible* (The Invisible City) by Emili Rosales.

Tuesday 25th April:

The Public Library Book Club in Lleida will discuss *Mos de gat* (Cat Morsels) and *Ver7s de la Terra* (Short Verses of the Land) by Dolors Miquel.

Tuesday 2nd May:

The Tecla Sala library Book Club, in Hospitalet de Llobregat, will discuss *Busco senyor per amistat i el que sorgeixi* (Wanted: Gentleman for Friendship and Maybe More) by Empar Moliner.

Tuesday 9th May:

The Public Library Book Club in Girona will discuss *El joc del mentider* (The Liar's Game) by Lluís Maria Todó.

Tuesday 16th may:

Francesca Bonnemaïson library Book Club, in Barcelona, will discuss *Lena* by Jordi Coca.

23rd APRIL: WORLD BOOK DAY

St. George's Day is of particular importance in Catalonia and it is also known as World Book Day. The exhibition welcomed all those who wanted to find a quiet place to read and get away from the hectic streets. On **Sunday 23rd April from 11am to 8pm** the patio of Palau Moja became a reading area, open to all those who wished to sit, read and relax.

More information on <http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc>