**The CCCB in peril**

Josep Ramoneda’s legacy must be preserved. Open letter

Josep Ramoneda, the brilliant and democratic cosmopolitan who has impeccably led the renowned Centre for Contemporary Culture in Barcelona (CCCB) for seventeen years, is about to lose his job. His contract as director of the CCCB will not be renewed at the end of this year. We write to express publicly our concern regarding the implications of this decision and what it may hold for the future of the institution. The CCCB, owed in large measure to Mr. Ramoneda, has been successful because it has developed as a laboratory of cultural innovation, one that has yielded a remarkable list of internationally recognized achievements due to the Centre’s uncompromising quest for excellence in all its areas of activity. The exhibitions it often exports, the lectures, conferences and seminars, its audiovisual productions and programming, the variety of festivals it hosts and promotes, its wholesome public archive and educational programs, are all part of the model.

If the CCCB enjoys a world reputation, this is because of Josep Ramoneda – his intellectual leadership, his open and democratic style of management, his respect for the ideas of others– and the quality of the team of professionals he has recruited around him. Having had the privilege to contribute to, or participate in, the CCCB activities, we wish to express our surprise and disappointment at Mr. Ramoneda’s dismissal. We also wish to publicly register our admiration and gratitude, because we found in him, and in all his team, a grace, intellect, and capability that will be very difficult to replace. We remain bemused that his contract should be terminated.

If, however, the CCCB is to lose him, the model he has perfected should not be put in peril. His replacement must be considered with the utmost care and responsibility, for the CCCB is a one-of-a-kind world cultural institution: an agora, a place of encounter, learning, creativity, discussion, enjoyment, and the experience of citizenship. It is a space of freedom and fruitful debate.

Barcelona owes much of its contemporary cultural vitality to this exceptional institution. The city has been enriched by its offerings, and cannot afford to let this accumulated social capital to go to waste, particularly at a time in which creative thinking is very much in need and cultural freedom is under threat everywhere. For the CCCB to maintain its international reputation, it is imperative that the process of selecting the new director is impeccably rigorous, focusing on the intellectual credentials, experience and leadership capacity of candidates, and not their political loyalties. Democratic societies deserve no less. Josep Ramoneda’s legacy must be preserved.