# Portrait Gallery of the Dome

Biblioteca Museu Víctor Balaguer
Vilanova i la Geltrú

**The eight individuals portrayed in this space were leading figures in the history of Vilanova i la Geltrú during the 19th century. Their inclusion reflects the founder's wish to root the institution in the town's recent political, social and cultural history.**

**Francesc Armanyà i Font**, 1718–1803 (Painter: Anicet Pascual, 1884). Clergyman. He held the positions of Bishop of Lugo (1768) and Archbishop of Tarragona (1785). He also founded the first Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País [societies established across Spain to promote economic and scientific progress] (1784). He is depicted in one of the sculptures on the building's entrance portico, created by Manel Fuxà (1887).

**Sebastià Anton Pascual i Inglada**, 1807–1872 (Painter: Modest Teixidor i Torres, 1889). Lawyer, financier and provincial and parliamentary deputy. He assembled a remarkable art collection at his residence on Carrer de Xuclà in Barcelona, comprising both old and contemporary paintings by Spanish and European artists. His gallery was widely recognised and admired by the city's chroniclers and guidebooks of the period.

**Francesc de Sales Vidal i Torrents**, 1819–1878 (Painter: Alfons Vinyals i Roig, 1884). Lawyer, writer, playwright and politician. In 1855 he founded El Eco de Villanueva y Geltrú, a local newspaper. Considered one of the pioneers of Catalan theatre, he was a prolific author, particularly in comic and costumbrista [depicting everyday life and social customs, often with humour and local colour] genres. In 1877, coinciding with the start of the railway works, he was elected mayor of the town.

**Joan Serafí Vidal i Ballester**, 1771–1832 (Painter: Cristòfol Montserrat i Jorba, 1888). Professor of Law at the University of Cervera and practising lawyer. In March 1809, during the evacuation of Vilanova by French troops, he was taken hostage but spared because of his blindness.

**Manuel de Cabanyes i Ballester**, 1808–1833 (Painter: Joan Llaverias i Labró, 1884). Romantic poet. In 1833 he published Preludios de mi lira [Preludes of My Lyre], a collection of poems that, although it went largely unnoticed by his contemporaries, was later championed by figures such as Menéndez y Pelayo and Milà i Fontanals. He is also represented in one of the sculptures on the building's entrance portico, by Josep Campeny (1889).

**Magí Pers i Ramona**, 1803–1888 (Painter: Manuel Cusí i Ferret, 1888). Tailor, writer and politician. In 1821 he emigrated to Matanzas (Cuba), where he opened a tailor's shop and became involved in the trade of other goods, notably books. On returning to Spain, he settled in Barcelona, where he opened a tailoring academy and wrote the first manual on the subject. In 1852 he was one of the founders of the Phrenological Society in Vilanova.

**Salvador Samà i Martí**, 1797–1866 (Painter: Cristòfol Montserrat i Jorba, 1884). Businessman and slave trader. In 1811 he emigrated to Cuba, where his uncle Pau Samà i Parès ran a trading house engaged in financial and shipping activities linked to the trafficking of enslaved people, in which he became a principal partner. He also owned sugar plantations and moved in the island's most influential circles of power. On his death, he left funds to the town for various projects, including the construction of the school that bears his name.

**Josep Ferrer i Vidal**, 1817–1893 (Painter: Joan Juncosa i Morlans, 1893). Industrialist and politician. In 1849 he was one of the founders of the Fàbrica de Mar [a pioneering textile factory located by the sea]. He served as both deputy and senator, and was a staunch advocate of protectionism. He contributed to the creation of the Fomento de la Producción Nacional [National Production Promotion Society] and was president of the Instituto de Fomento del Trabajo Nacional [Institute for the Promotion of National Industry]. He was also a member of the Círculo Hispano-Ultramarino [Hispanic Overseas Circle] in Barcelona, one of the business circles most opposed to the abolition of slavery in the colonies.

## Sculptures

**Copy of the Resting Satyr by Praxiteles**
**Copy of the Venus de' Medici**
19th century: Plaster. Donated by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando (1886). BMVB-262 and BMVB-264

**Bust of de Víctor Balaguer i Cirera (1824-1901)**
Carlo Nicoli Manfredi (1843-1915)
1881. Marble. Acquisition (1881). BMVB-265
Writer, historian, politician and founder of the Library-Museum. He was one of the leading figures of the Renaixença and played a key role in reviving the Jocs Florals [history-related poetry contests that offered floral prizes]. In politics, he served as Minister of Overseas (1871, 1874 and 1886–1888), during the final years of Spanish colonial rule in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Within this colonial context, some of the institution's founding collections were formed – collections now undergoing critical reassessment and curatorial reappraisal in their display.

**Bust of Francesc Gumà i Ferran (1833-1912)**
Carlo Nicoli Manfredi (1843-1915)
1881. Marble. Acquisition (1881). BMVB-247
Gumà i Ferran, businessman and promoter of the arrival of the railway in the town in 1881, owned the land on which the Library-Museum was built. He also served on the institution's first board.
At the age of sixteen he emigrated to Cuba, where he became a partner in the company Gumà Hermanos, which engaged in financial and shipping activities and owned sugar plantations and enslaved people. On his return to Vilanova in 1871, he became one of the town's leading investors, spearheading numerous enterprises and initiatives with other returning indianos [wealthy emigrants who returned from the Americas to Catalonia].