**Beat: Entertainment**

# The Heart of Catalonia Beats Toward the Sky

**The Catalan Art of Human Towers**

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**USPA NEWS -** Tarragona and the XXX Concurs de Castells: When Man Becomes a Monument
By Roberto Magni
Director of Foto ReD Photographic Agency and ReD Magazine

We at Foto ReD Photographic Agency, together with our photographers and journalists Roberta Reggiani and Franco Bentivoglio, had the privilege of attending the XXX Concurs de Castells in Tarragona, the world's most important event dedicated to the spectacular human towers of Catalonia.
An extraordinary event that goes far beyond the sporting or folkloric dimension and represents one of the most fascinating expressions of European popular culture.
Entering the Tarraco Arena during the Castells Competition means witnessing something unique in the world: thousands of people united by a single objective, literally building a human cathedral that rises toward the sky, defying gravity through strength, mutual trust, and perfect collective harmony.

A Heritage of More Than Two Centuries
The Castells originated between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Catalan regions of Camp de Tarragona and Penedès as an evolution of the Ball de Valencians, ancient folk dances from the Valencian Community that concluded with the construction of small acrobatic figures and human towers.
Over more than two hundred years, this tradition evolved into a social and cultural phenomenon of enormous significance.
Today, nearly one hundred colles castelleres are active throughout Catalonia and involve thousands of people of every age and social background.
In 2010, UNESCO recognized the universal value of this tradition by inscribing the Castells on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
A well-deserved recognition for a practice that continues to preserve its original charm while adapting to contemporary society through inclusion, safety, and collective participation.

Força, Equilibri, Valor i Seny
The Castellers' motto encapsulates the essence of this discipline:
Força, Equilibri, Valor i Seny
or
Strength, Balance, Courage and Common Sense.
Four words that perfectly define the spirit of those who climb a human tower.
Strength is required to support the weight of the structure.
Balance enables the tower to remain stable during its construction.
Courage accompanies, above all, the youngest participants, who are entrusted with reaching the highest point.
Common sense guides every movement, ensuring that every achievement is the result of technique, preparation, and responsibility.

Tarragona, the World Capital of Castells
In Tarragona, Castells are not merely a cultural tradition.
They are an integral part of the city's identity.
The social life of the city revolves around its historic official colles:
• Xiquets de Tarragona
• Colla Jove Xiquets de Tarragona
• Xiquets del Serrallo

• Castellers de Sant Pere i Sant Pau
These associations are true landmarks within their neighborhoods, places where hundreds of people gather every week to train and share a common passion.
Walking along the Rambla Nova, one encounters monuments dedicated to the Castellers, murals, photographs, and countless reminders of how deeply rooted this tradition is in the soul of the city.

The Human Architecture of Castells
Observing a Castell for the first time leaves one astonished by its apparent impossibility.
Yet every element is the result of meticulous organization.
The structure consists of three fundamental parts.
The Pinya forms the massive supporting and safety base.
The Tronc represents the central body of the tower.
The Pom de Dalt, composed of the youngest children, forms the upper section of the structure.
Here we find the most iconic figures:
the Dosos, the Aixecador, and above all the Enxaneta, the child who reaches the summit and raises an arm toward the sky in the symbolic gesture known as Fer l'Aleta.
At that moment, the Castell is officially completed.
It is an emotional instant that triggers an explosion of enthusiasm and excitement among spectators and participants alike.

The XXX Concurs de Castells
The history of the Tarragona Competition dates back to 1932.
The first edition took place on October 2 of that year in the city's bullring and had the great Catalan cellist Pau Casals as president of the jury.
Since then, the Concurs de Castells has grown to become the most prestigious event in the Casteller world.
To qualify for the final stages, teams are selected according to the Ranquin Estrella, a points-based ranking system that takes into account each group's best performances during the current season. Based on this ranking, the eighteen colles placed from 13th to 30th compete on Saturday, while the top twelve teams advance to Sunday's final session at the Tarraco Arena.
The thirtieth edition delivered a spectacle that can only be described as unforgettable.
On Saturday, the Marrecs de Salt stood out with 4,415 points, successfully completing, among other structures, an exceptional 4de9f (a nine-level tower with four people on each level, reinforced by a folre).

On Sunday, the twelve best colles from across Catalonia produced a competition of the highest technical level, offering the audience some of the most challenging towers ever achieved.
Victory went to the legendary Castellers de Vilafranca, who secured first place with 59,830 points and entered history by successfully completing, for the first time ever within the competition, the monumental 9de9f, an impressive structure composed of nine levels with nine people on each level.
Second place went to the prestigious Colla Vella dels Xiquets de Valls, whose remarkable performance featured the extraordinarily difficult 3de9sf, achieved without the support of a folre.
The Colla Jove Xiquets de Tarragona claimed third place, thrilling the home crowd by successfully completing the first 4de10fm in its history.

A Challenge at the Limits of the Possible
Catalan media described this edition as one of the most extraordinary ever held.
La Vanguardia referred to it as a true "stratospheric Casteller battle," capable of pushing teams beyond previously known limits.
The competition, slowed by heavy rain that forced organizers to postpone the schedule, became a marathon of emotions that culminated in a memorable evening destined to remain in the annals of Castells history.
The atmosphere inside the Tarraco Arena was simply electrifying.
Thousands of spectators followed every ascent while holding their breath until the decisive moment when the Enxaneta reached the summit.
Each successfully completed tower was greeted with a liberating roar as the entire arena transformed into one immense collective embrace.

Much More Than a Spectacle
What impresses most when observing the Castells is not only their technical complexity.
It is their extraordinary human value.
In an age dominated by individualism, Castells remind us that the greatest achievements are accomplished together.
Every person matters.
Those standing at the base are just as important as those who reach the top.
There are no absolute protagonists.
There is only a community working in unison to achieve something that appears impossible.
And this is probably why, after more than two centuries, Catalonia's human towers continue to inspire and move people around the world.
In Tarragona, we witnessed men, women, and children transform, for a few moments, into a single living organism capable of rising toward the sky.
Not simply human towers.
But authentic monuments to trust, solidarity, and humanity's ability to achieve the impossible when it chooses to do so together.

Behind the Lens, Inside the Soul of the Castells
Beyond the numbers, rankings, and extraordinary technical achievements, what we will carry home from Tarragona above all are the emotions experienced firsthand.
For us at Foto ReD Photographic Agency, reporting on an event means living it completely. Our accredited photographers and journalists, Roberta Reggiani and Franco Bentivoglio, had the privilege of witnessing every moment of this incredible celebration of collective strength, trust, and team spirit.
Behind every photograph there is not merely an image, but an emotion: the tension-filled silence before an ascent, the courage of the youngest participants climbing toward the summit, and the explosion of joy that accompanies every completed Castell.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Ivan Rodon Tenas, Director of Communications for the Concurs de Castells, and to the entire organization of the XXX Concurs de Castells de Tarragona for their professionalism, hospitality, and invaluable support provided to our correspondents. The attention and kindness shown to Roberta Reggiani and Franco Bentivoglio made our experience even more meaningful.
We return to Italy with thousands of photographs, but above all with the privilege of having witnessed one of the most extraordinary displays of unity and passion that Europe has to offer.
Because Castells are not simply human towers: they are proof that, together, it is truly possible to achieve the impossible.
Roberto Magni
Director of Foto ReD Photographic Agency and ReD Magazine

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