

1808
1809

Los Sitios
de Zaragoza

The Common grave of Macanaz

At the time of Zaragoza's surrender on 21 February 1809, the city was in a hellish state; the streets were littered with thousands of corpses, caused both by the fighting and above all, by the typhus epidemic that broke out during the siege. To improve sanitation in the city, on 7 March 1809, Marshal Lannes ordered that these corpses, and any that there might be in the future, should be removed from the city. To this end, two large pits were dug to hold the bodies of the thousands of dead.



José de Yarza, *Plan of Zaragoza* (1861). Detail showing the location of the Macanaz Saltpetre Works. Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza. 4-2_0274.

The first of these was opened in the garden of the former convent of Santo Domingo, approximately where the current streets of Ramón Celma, Santa Lucía and Paseo de Echegaray y Caballero are; among many others, the remains of Mariano Cerezo were buried there.

According to Faustino Casamayor's diaries, the second and largest of the graves consisted of an extremely deep trench dug in the so-called Saltpetre Works in the grove of Macanaz, a large building used for obtaining saltpetre which, during the Second Siege, closed off the defensive line of the Arrabal. This grave, in which more than 10,000 bodies were deposited, would be located in the vicinity of the current streets García Arista, Arquitecto Aguilera and Avenida de los Pirineos.



Francisco de Goya "Cartloads to the cemetery", *The disasters of war* (Disaster 65).



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The monument to the Common Grave

On 21 February 2023, the monument known as the “Fosa Común” (Common Grave) was unveiled in Macanaz Park, at the confluence with the Santiago Bridge. The work of local artist Jesús Gazol, it aims to honour the thousands of people in Zaragoza who died during the Sieges and to preserve the memory of the grave in which their bodies were buried.

The piece is a bronze sculpture in high relief, measuring 300 x 100 x 25 cm, which, according to the artist, represents “the horror of war through characters who express pain, anguish and loss”.

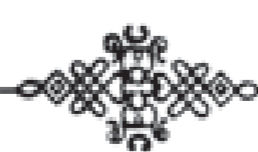


The sculpture is placed on a concrete pedestal bearing the following inscription.

“ZARAGOZA IN HONOUR OF ITS ANONYMOUS DEFENDERS BURIED HERE IN THEIR THOUSANDS, VICTIMS OF WAR AND DISEASE, IN THE SIEGES THE CITY UNDERWENT IN 1808 AND 1809”



Francisco de Goya “Dead collected”, *The disasters of war* (Disaster 63).



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