

bilbao **museoa**

# **BBKateak**

## **Ribera – Oteiza**

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa  
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

**bbk** 

# Ribera – Oteiza

## Room 5

Old building

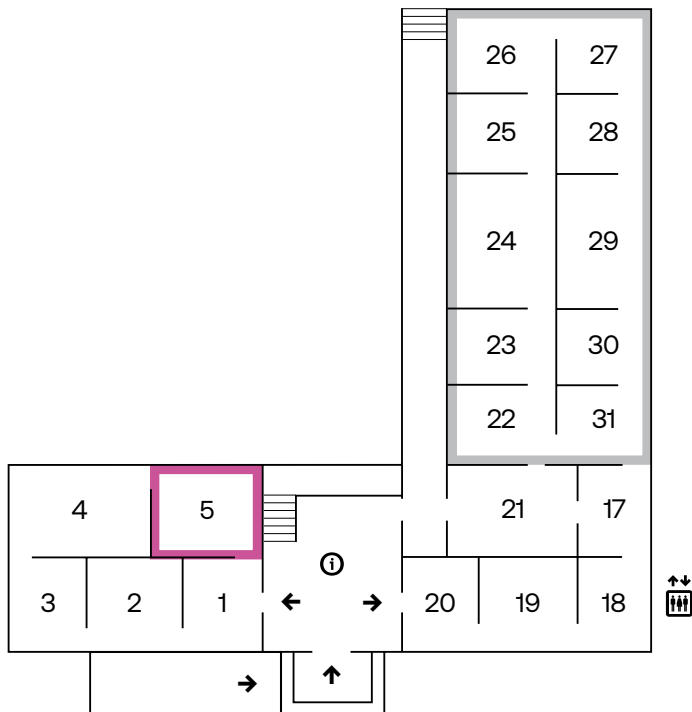
Ground floor

## Harria

There is something essentially monumental in this Ribera painting. The two saints—like two mineral statues—occupy the space around the martyr's body, creating a secret diagonal line from the dark concaveness of his bloodless hand. He raises his eyes towards that shady vertex reclined on the pedestal of a rock. Oteiza's macles combine hard edges and curves, solids and empty spaces in the mysterious tectonics of black marble, finally steady after the turbulent fury of a spiritual exercise.

# O

Old building  
Ground floor



# **José de Ribera**

1591–1652

A forerunner of the Caravaggesque aesthetic and prominent master from the Neapolitan school, Ribera's entire career unfolded in Italy, but because Naples was a viceroyalty of Spain at the time, many of his works reached this country and went on to influence subsequent painters like Velázquez and Murillo. Even though he is better known for his religious paintings, often with gruesome scenes of martyrdom, he also painted mythological themes and was a celebrated engraver, a genre in which an extensive body of his works is still conserved. His colours became lighter towards the end of his career under the influence of painters like Van Dyck.



## **Saint Sebastian Tended by the Holy Women**

c. 1620–1623. Oil on canvas

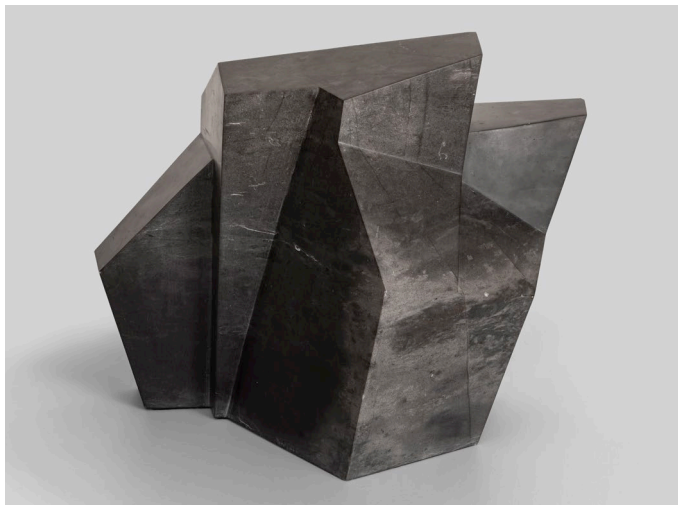
In this work from his youth, Saint Sebastian is reclining nude, with one arm still suspended from the tree where he has been tortured. Beside him, Saint Lucy is removing his bolts and Saint Irene is applying a healing salve on his wounds. Two angels are displaying the crown and the palm, symbols of martyrdom. A master of tenebrist realism, Ribera distributes the lights and shadows to spotlight the three figures and highlight the impeccable anatomical study of the saint's body, which is depicted with a bold foreshortening.

Acquired in 1924

# Jorge Oteiza

1908–2003

He abandoned his degree in Medicine in 1931 to instead devote himself to sculpture. After earning several awards and living in South America for 13 years, he returned to the Basque Country in 1948. Two years later, he made the statues for Arantzazu monastery in Oñati (Gipuzkoa), and in 1957 he earned the International Grand Prize at the São Paulo (Brazil) Biennial. A poet and art theoretician, as well as an activist and cultural agitator, in 1963 he published his main work: *Quousque Tandem...! Ensayo de la interpretación estética del alma vasca*. A defender of an analytical aesthetic and an ethical and political approach to artistic activity, Oteiza is one of the key figures in post-war Spanish art and had a decisive influence on what is called the New Basque Sculpture.



## **Ternary Macle with the Malevich Matrix or Round Conjunction of Three Malevich Matrices or Homage to Juan de la Cosa**

1973–1974. Black marble

The configuration of this work represents the merger of different mineral figures, but while in some macles they are joined flat, in this one elements are superimposed. In this sculpture, Oteiza plays with contrasting ideas: it refers to an abstract laboratory piece, yet it also evokes a figure of geographic dimension, the clash and creation of geological formations like a mountain or the flysch on a coast. The sharp, oblique lines seem to work upward. The presence of the sea comes through the person it pays tribute to, Juan de la Cosa, a Cantabrian navigator and cartographer who participated in the earliest expeditions to the Americas.

Deposited by the Basque Government in 1989



## **Macle of Two Open Cuboids**

1974. Black marble

The title refers to the irregular cube comprised of the six figures of a trapezoidal figure. According to Oteiza's particular iconography, trapezoids refer to the figures used by Malevich, which the sculptor calls the 'Malevich Unity'. Oteiza makes new cylindrical (open) cuts in the cuboids and joins them (like a macle) to create a new figure. The contrast or right angles with semicylindrical empty spaces generate an extraordinarily dynamic work, where the sharp rising edges take centre stage. The play between cubes and rising angles evokes strategies from suprematism, which was heavily influenced by cubism and futurism. The piece appeals to the absence of pre-existing figures or references.

Deposited by the Basque Government in 1989





## **Portrait of an Armed Gudari called Odysseus**

1975–1979. Steel

Using trapezoidal and cut-out steel planes, Oteiza builds a box which reveals glimpses of a portrait. Inside, an eye and a nose which lead to the head and neck can be identified. Due to its material and the space it encloses, it may also evoke a cubist helmet. The work questions the usual division between the abstract and the figurative, encouraging viewers to appreciate the relations between both worlds. The play of opposites can also be seen in the title, which relates the mythical figure of Odysseus, who fought the gods to return home to his family and house, with the Basque warrior.

Acquired in 1982

# BBKateak

*BBKateak* is an exhibition proposal which seeks to offer the collection new stories while construction on the enlargement is underway. Via a dynamic programme of presentations which are periodically updated, each of the galleries in the old building shows an unexpected face-to-face interaction between two artists in the collection and their works; their names may be distant in time and/or in their cultural and geographic provenance, but they suggest a look at art transformed and under construction. The museum's metamorphosis is thus reflected in a constantly changing collection.

This opens the *Thirteen to Centaurus* programme, a sculptural project by the artist Sergio Prego inspired by the emptying of the galleries.