

bilbao **museoa**

BBKateak

Ucelay –

Lazkano

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao



Ucelay – Lazkano

Room 15

Old building

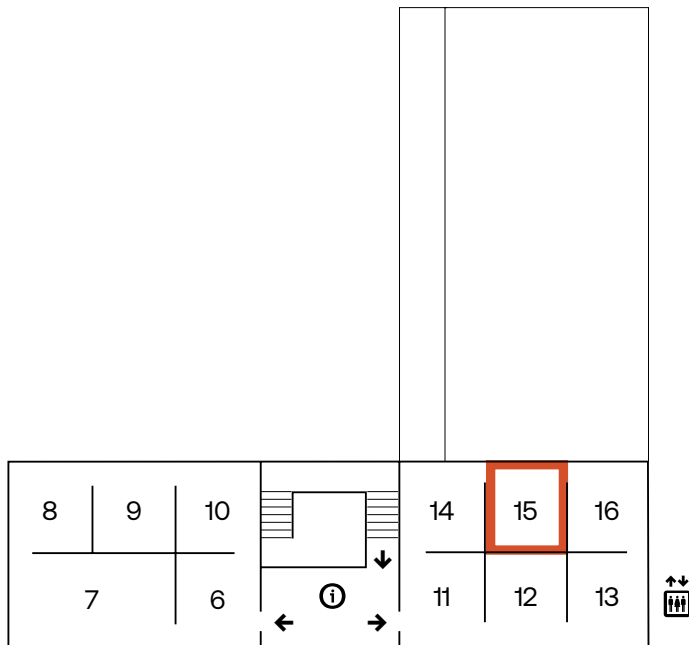
First floor

Biosphere

The sensibility towards the artistic values of the landscape, space and objects shared by the two painters seems to suggest in both of them a subtle play between reality and its representation. They also share a love of a land that they reflect through the windows of their family home and studio, respectively. But the clouds from the southern wind that Ucelay paints and Lazkano cites are what inevitably express the romantic vision of nature.

1 Old building

First floor



José María de Ucelay

1903-1979

He joined the Association of Basque Artists in 1920, and moved to Madrid two years later to study at the San Fernando Academy. At the Residencia de Estudiantes (centre of cultural and intellectual activity in Spain), he interacted with Buñuel, Lorca and Dalí, among others. He lived in Paris between 1923 and 1938 and held individual shows there and in Bilbao, San Sebastián, Madrid, Berlin and Copenhagen, always in association with the avant-garde. During the Spanish Civil War, he collaborated with the Basque government to safeguard the artistic heritage and curated the Basque section of the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Expo. He moved to London in 1938 and then returned to Bilbao in 1949, where he was a member of the Emen group after 1966.



Playing Bowls in San Bartolomé

c. 1935. Oil on canvas

Ucelay evokes this playful mountain landscape scene from the Urdaibai Reserve in Bizkaia, where he spent much of his life. However, he painted it in his studio in Paris, which partly explains the sense of unreality that this imagined work emanates. The scale of the bowls in the foreground are reminiscent of menhirs, and the mountains seem to be floating on the clouds. The painter repeatedly created this type of sky in his works from this period. All these elements are a synthesis of surrealism and magical realism which result in a dreamlike image brimming with questions and suggestions.

Acquired in 1983



Interior with Table and Fruit

c. 1951. Oil on panel

The scene is unmistakably the interior of Chirapozu palace in Busturia (Bizkaia), where the painter lived until his death. He had just come back from exile and was painting still lifes like the ones he had made in the 1930s, this time with a sense of magical realism, albeit with lighter colours. The fruit and the openwork porcelain receptacle appear slightly backlit, but Ucelay managed to achieve a beautiful luminescent effect by casting the light reflected on the walls on them. The Altamira neighbourhood, Gernika River and Mount San Miguel de Ereñozar can be seen through the window.

Acquired in 1954



Conversation Piece, cum tiffin or Urrutia and Aranoa
c. 1951. Oil on canvas

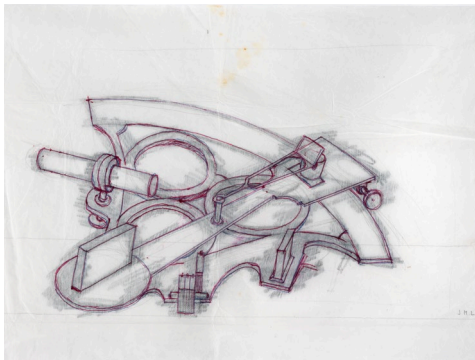
The painters Jenaro Urrutia (on the left) and Juan de Aranoa (on the right) appear in the garden of Chirapozu, Ucelay's house in Busturia (Bizkaia). In front of them, on a table, a pitcher contains both artists' names. In the foreground, a box of painting implements alludes to their shared profession. The author portrayed himself in the background painting the same work, giving rise to a sophisticated meta-painting. With this type of group portrait common in British painting, coupled with his original sense of light, Ucelay achieves a composition boasting extraordinary formal and conceptual elegance.

Acquired in 1956

Jesus Mari Lazkano

1960

He holds a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of the Basque Country. His background in the Basque country and his sojourns in New York, Chicago and Rome have shaped his artistic and thematic repertoire, always associated with architecture and landscape, as well as his painstaking technique verging on hyperrealism yet conceptual at heart. A sense of romanticism and surrealism permeates his composition, which are often scenic and large in scale. He has shown his works in the United States, China, Switzerland, Italy and Indonesia, in addition to Spain, and his works are found in prestigious museums and collections all over the world.



© Jesus Mari Lazkano, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2022

Sextant that used to belong to José María de Ucelay

Preparatory drawing for 'Nundik nola'

c. 1991. Graphite and pen on paper

Collection of Jesus Mari Lazkano



Urdaibai Series

1996. Acrylic on canvas

This set belongs to a series of 300 works (150 paintings and 150 watercolours of similar sizes) that Lazkano made between 1995 and 1996, which show the same view glimpsed from the window of his studio. The series features the changing light according to the time of day or the weather, which is capable of altering our perception of the landscape. The artist used this light-based approach to his surroundings, freezing snippets of something that is clearly boundless because of its infinite mutations, to reflect on time.

Private collection

Donated by Federico Grafe and Carmen Castells in 2015



Gure Uzelai, zeruan zarana (Our Ucelay who art in heaven). Urdaibai Series

1996-2021. Acrylic on canvas

In this work, Lazkano appropriates the sky that Ucelay used in *Playing Bowls in San Bartolomé*, but isolating it from the rest of the elements in the original and bringing it to the fore. Here, it is filtered through the particular treatment of light and smooth, streamlined brushstrokes that are the artist's hallmark, and he adapted it to the landscape format on a small canvas, which was quite common in his oeuvre. This use of this independent referent did not end in this painting, as it reappears in several paintings with the same title.

Donated by the artist in 2022



Waiting for the Unfinished Drawing

2001. Acrylic on canvas

The outside view in this painting is taken from a photograph of New York made Alfred Stieglitz, while the interior, with its rationalist lines, is a tribute to the German architect Mies van der Rohe. The realistic depiction of the materials—a variety of marble, steel and glass—along with the composition's carefully studied balance and the impeccable treatment of light give a sense of distance and timeless coolness to this work, which synthesises the artist's ideas.

Acquired in 2002

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