

bilbao **museoa**

BBKateak

Bonheur –

Cárdenas

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

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Bonheur – Cárdenas

Room 17

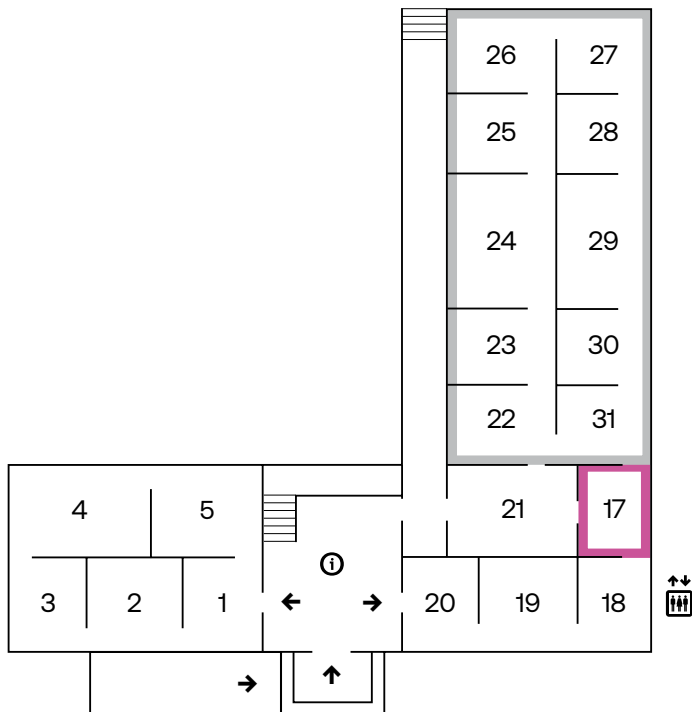
Old building

Ground floor

Animal cabinet

When she was a girl, Bonheur learned the alphabet with the animals she drew, assigning the first letter of their name to each letter. She cultivated her passion for drawing and animals her entire life and kept numerous studies that she used as ‘real tools’ for her paintings, which were celebrated for capturing each animal’s expression in an individual, noble way. When Cárdenas was a girl, she would play in treehouses, and in the middle of nature she learned how to see the flexible elegance of a cat or the rupestrian structure of a cow to capture the living world with the incredible precision of her calligraphic lines.

O Old building Ground floor



Rosa Bonheur

1822–1899

She trained with her father, the founder of a women's drawing school in Paris, where the family moved from Bordeaux in 1828. She soon turned her talent to painting animals yet to study them she had to overcome the academic limitations of the women of her time, attending university veterinary classes as an unregistered student, and visiting the Louvre, to copy Poussin, Rubens and Géricault, and the forest of Boulogne and the Roule slaughterhouse with permission to dress as a man. On the farm she installed at her home, she was also able to compose from nature. In the 1840s she won her first awards at the Paris Salon and in 1853 she achieved her greatest success. Her fame spread internationally and she received countless commissions and distinctions: she was the first female artist to be awarded the Legion of Honour, in 1865.



The Young Shepherdess Seated

c. 1849. Watercolour on paper

Bonheur could have contemplated this scene from a high meadow on a trip to the Pyrenees in 1849. There she worked constantly in the open air and drew numerous studies of mountain peaks, animals and the locals, which she would later use for her pictorial compositions. She also created pastorals, in which, compared to traditional depictions that reflected a bucolic life, vegetation and animals take centre stage over and above any human activities.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Flock of Sheep in Stable

1860. Pencil on onionskin paper

Bonheur based her artistic education on direct observation of the animal world. Alien to the official academic training of the time, vetoed for women, in her artistic practice, trips through the towns of France and visits to cattle fairs and slaughterhouses in Paris were fundamental. In this drawing, in which instantaneity prevails, she masterfully captures a group of sheep moving inside a stable. It could be considered a rarity within the artist's production, which on few occasions depicted indoor scenes.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Study of horse for 'Le Duel'

c. 1895. Pencil on onionskin paper

This hunchbacked horse with pulsating brushstrokes is one of the many studies on tracing paper Bonheur drew for *Le Duel* (*The Duel*), an extra-large painting completed in 1895, based on a story by the French writer Eugène Sue and which portrays the fierce fight between two thoroughbreds. This animal, also the centrepiece of the painting with which she obtained her greatest recognition—*The Horse Fair*—, was one of the artist's favourites. In this case, she must have kept the sketch in mind for the final composition of the painting, since in the corners one can see the marks of it having been pinned up in her famous studio in the Château de By, in Fontainebleau.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Seated Lioness

c. 1890–1899. Pencil on paper

In 1860 Bonheur, already one of the most famous artists of her time, bought a *château* in the Fontainebleau forest surrounded by three hectares which she turned into her home and workplace. There she gathered together wild and pet animals—horses, dogs, a deer, a lamb, a monkey, a gazelle, a lion and a lioness—, which she used as models in many of her works. Fathma was a lioness cub that the painter bought in 1885 and for whom she came to feel great affection. She allowed her to run freely around the castle and sometimes even played with her. As in this drawing, until her death, she was the subject of numerous artworks.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Lion Family

c. 1890–1899. Pencil on paper

An example of Bonheur's excellent skills as a sketcher, this study, crafted with firm lines, captures the majesty of a family of wild animals. The scene is recreated with naturalness, despite the effort involved in the many hours of patient work required to capture the felines' movements. The artist's interest in these animals led her dealer, Ernest Gambart, to help her buy a pair of lions around 1880, although after a few months she entrusted them to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Chamois Lying Down

c. 1890–1899. Oil on canvas

Unlike the vast majority of contemporary artists who incorporated the animal world into their works, Bonheur did not trivialise the subject by approaching it from a picturesque-based, costumbrist perspective. On the contrary, in her paintings animals play a leading role over and above any human activities or presence. In this case, she has captured with great realism and naturalness the beauty of a chamois framed by bright colours, among which the green of the pastures stands out.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Ox

Watercolour and pencil on paper

This watercolour is a good example of the type of work that characterised Bonheur's production, in which animals, portrayed realistically and meticulously, are presented in a natural setting. Here, the imposing ox, with its penetrating gaze, centres the composition, exalted by the use of vibrant colours in the pasture. It seems obvious that the painter does not intend to depict only an animal, but one more specimen of nature, in an act of exaltation of its being. This distinctive feature of the artist's painting also extended to her sculptural practice.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927

Marta Cárdenas

1944

After starting out at the Guipúzcoa Artistic Association, she continued her training in Bournemouth (United Kingdom) and in Madrid, always linked to figuration and realism. In 1969 she went to Paris with a scholarship from the French government and then began a prolific exhibitory career. From 1975 to 1978 she lived in Ottawa (Canada) and from there she made numerous trips around Europe in which the sketchbook became the vehicle for her work. In the following decade, her work became gestural and synthetic, with a clear interest in Zen that led her to visit Japan; and in the 1990s, a trip to India resulted in the irruption of colour. A painter and engraver, her meticulous technique, both in her most instantaneous work and in that resulting from more elaborate processes, defines her as one of the most important creators on the current scene.



Zoo

1983–1984. Ink on paper

Marta Cárdenas' ongoing artistic development is based, to a large extent, on an intense exploration of the themes that have captured her attention over time. The interest she developed in the 1980s for nature and the animal world was not restricted to engagement with the accessible or domestic. The artist travelled through forests and natural spaces to produce artworks and sketches characterised by the fluidity of movement and gestural instantaneity, determined by animal activity.

Donated by the artist in 2014



Siamese Cat on the Prowl (five studies)

c. 1987. Indian ink on paper

These sketches belonging to the same notebook capture in different sequences the attitudes and gestures of an animal in a short space of time. They are created using a very loose technique, in which the body language is achieved through the fluid use of Indian ink. In addition, she dispenses with colour and backgrounds to afford prominence to the synthetic image of the animal. Her quest for essentialisation through spontaneous lines, even more apparent in her works from the 1990s, resulted in an interest in Zen art and *shodō* (Japanese calligraphy), which led Cárdenas to travel to Japan on several occasions.

Donated by the artist in 2014



Forest in La Herrería

1988. Watercolour and tempera on kraft paper

At the end of the 1980s, Cárdenas became interested in the informalist depiction of the landscape, both in her characteristic black and white and in works in which she uses colour. The result of this exploration can be discerned through the development of a refined technique and by the meticulous choice of materials, since she uses all kinds of brushes, waxes, pigments, inks and papers.

Donated by the artist in 2014



Cow Chiaroscuro

1989. Watercolour on laid paper

The work on paper that Cárdenas produced in the 1980s and 1990s can be recognised by the body language of the forms and by the depiction basically of animals and human figures in their natural state. The drawings reflect the instantaneity of the moment of execution. Despite the schematism of many of her pieces, they are often the result of lengthy work processes, both conceptual and physical.

Donated by the artist in 2014

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.