

bilbao **museoa**

BBKateak

Cassatt – Sistiaga

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

bbk 

Cassatt – Sistiaga

Room 19

Old building

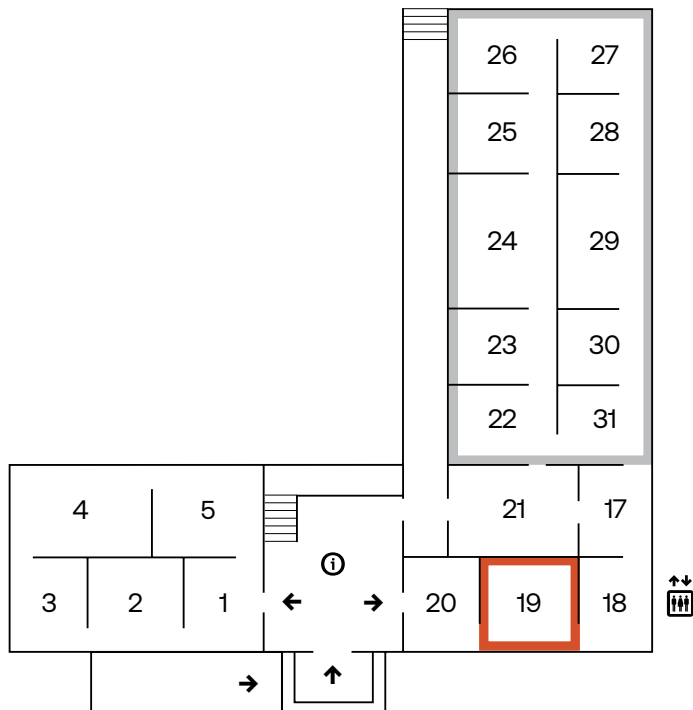
Ground floor

East in West

In April 1890, the major exhibition *Maîtres japonais* [Japanese Masters] was unveiled in Paris, which gave rise to the fashion of Japonisme. It influenced many artists, including the American Mary Cassatt, who was part of the impressionist group. She shared with Oriental art a thematic interest in women, and that same year she used vigorous, dry brushstrokes to create this unusual composition. On the recently restored large canvas, Sistiaga maximises the gesture of painting and drags the pigments over the white preparation, leaving the trail of his struggle to capture movement, light and colour... the essence of the art of painting in a particular calligraphy with echoes of Zen.

O Old building

Ground floor



Mary Cassatt

1844-1926

She was trained at the Pennsylvania Fine Arts Academy (Philadelphia) and from a young age often travelled to Europe and visited many museums. In 1865, she moved to Paris to further her training with Jean-Léon Gérôme and regularly showed her works at his salons between 1870 and 1876. She permanently moved there in 1875. Her scenes of everyday life featuring women and children from her family, as well as her theatrical or opera themes, inspired admiration in Degas, who introduced her into the circle of impressionist painters. Her interaction with these artists, with whom she often showed her works, influenced her subsequent output, which earned her critical and commercial success in the last decade of the century, when she held her first solo exhibitions in Europe and the United States.



Seated Woman with a Child in Her Arms

c. 1890. Oil on canvas

This work was acquired by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia at the First International Painting and Sculpture Exhibition held in Bilbao in 1919. The lacquered Louis XVI-style chair suggests a bourgeois interior, and the medallion-shaped back inspires the enveloping shapes of the composition. The contact between the distracted child and the woman with her back to the spectator who is occupied with grooming, as well as the soft colour palette, create an enormously intimate scene that hints at tenderness yet without sentimentalism. The loose brushstrokes and sketchy feel of the painting imbue it with a freshness that is perfect for the theme depicted.

Contributed by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia in 1920

José Antonio Sistiaga

1932-2023

A self-taught artist, he began his career in the early 1950s, and in 1955 he moved to Paris, where he developed an interest in avant-garde film, theatre and music and got in touch with lyrical abstract and informalist painting. During that time, he abandoned any reference to the landscape or human figure—themes that, however, reappeared in his works after 1974—in favour of *pure* art expressed in an important series of works of ink on paper and oil on canvas. He and Oteiza, Chillida, Zumeta and Basterretxea were the founders of the Gaur group (1966). His work as an artist has also extended to film—in 1968 he produced the experimental work *Ere erera baleibu izik subua aruaren...*—and to art education. In 2016 he was awarded the Gure Artea prize by the Basque government.

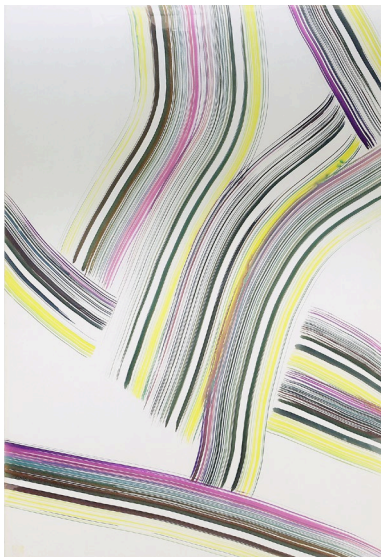


Vital Action. Homage to our Ancestors

1970. Oil on canvas

The artist's spontaneous gesture and his physical action when executing this large, luminous painting are the hallmarks of Sistiaga's work during the 1970s, when he was interested in the more gestural side of informalism. Free of any rationalism, the painter confronted the blank canvas without any preconceived ideas and allowed himself to be led by chance, as in musical improvisation, in a working process that includes the quick application of colour and the use of expressive brushstrokes to represent that movement.

Acquired in 1979



Current Basque Landscape

1973. Ink on cardboard

References to the landscape, the sky and the cosmos are common in Sistiaga's works, including this ink on cardboard, in which the parallel coloured lines painted with a brush created especially by the artist evoke topographies or perhaps geographic folds. Reduced to its essential forms, the Basque landscape which the title mentions has been reinterpreted beyond any realistic connotations.

Commodatum by Ipiña-Bidaurreazaga Collection in 2014



Untitled

1979. Wax crayon on paper

Signed and dated on the woman's arm, this delicate nude made with Prussian blue crayon is related to the drawings from the *Suite érotique* that Sistiaga created between 1980 and 1992, one of his most unique works. With its velvety, sensual texture, this work was made quickly without looking at the paper and instead with his eyes trained on the body and the model's movements.

Bequeathed by Javier Mugarza Zubikarai in 2021

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.