

bilbao museoa

BBKateak

El Greco – Zuloaga

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

bbk 

El Greco – Zuloaga

Room 8

Old building

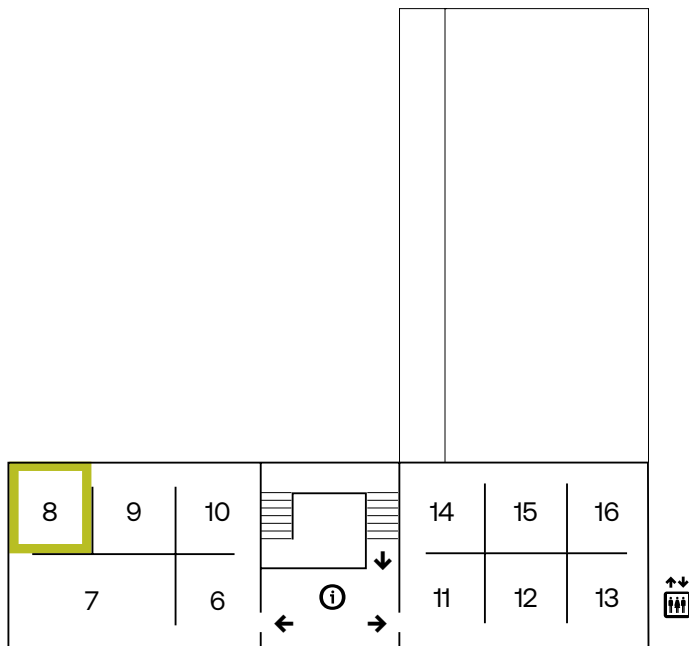
First floor

Grecomania

Zuloaga shows his passion for the Spanish painting tradition in his impressive representation of a cardinal in an interior space that opens up to the arid Castilian landscape, illuminated by a uneven sky. The gleam and opulence of the cardinal is the opposite of the young clergyman, perhaps the scraggy face of Francisco—the artist's usual model—who is reminiscent of Saint Francis of Assisi, whom El Greco masterfully interpreted, absorbed and mystical, in his seclusion on Mount Alvernia.

1 Old building

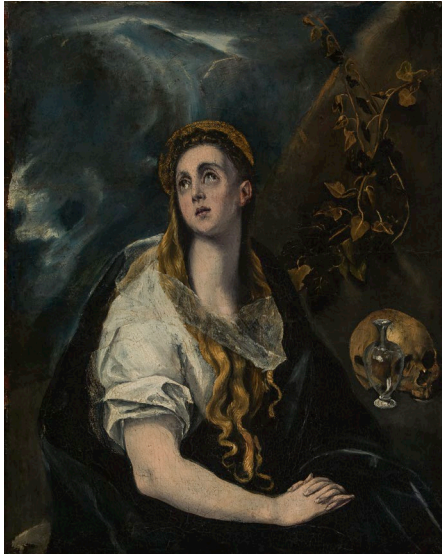
First floor



El Greco **(Doménikos Theotokópoulos)**

1541-1614

There are three milestones in the life and artistic career of this painter, whose roots on Crete led to his early job of painting icons. As a Venetian citizen—Crete belonged to the Republic of Venice at the time—, in his youth he travelled to that city, where he was struck by the colours and technique of Titian and Tintoretto, among other artists. After that, in Rome he interacted with painters influenced by Michelangelo's and Raphael's *maniera*. After that period of apprenticeship, he moved to Madrid in 1576 and later to Toledo. He received his most important commissions there, at the peak of his career, which made him one of the most original creators in Spanish art.



Copy of El Greco **The Penitent Magdalene**

c. 1640-1660. Oil on canvas stuck to panel

Mary Magdalene illustrates one of the values promoted the most by the Counterreformation: redemption through repentance. This depiction comes from one of the many typologies that El Greco developed in his countless versions of this theme and precisely matches the larger-sized one conserved in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. The jar with ointments is an attribute that identifies the saint, while the ivy symbolises persistence and the skull penitence. In a dim atmosphere of intimate reclusion, the image is imbued with a lovely spiritual candour.

Bequeathed by Laureano de Jado in 1927



Saint Francis in Prayer Before the Crucifix

c. 1585. Oil on canvas

Giovanni di Pietro Bernardone, Saint Francis of Assisi, is shown at the moment just before he received the stigmata during his seclusion on Mount Alvernia. The three knots on the rope that cinches his coarse robe symbolise the Franciscan vows: chastity, poverty and obedience. The skull represents salvation thanks to penitence in the Counterreformation mindset. El Greco made numerous variations of this theme with the saint in different postures to meet the high demand for this type of image among convents and wealthy Catholics in Toledo. This one, one of the most outstanding versions, comes from the Convent of the Discalced Carmelites of Cuerva in Toledo.

Acquired in 1940

Ignacio Zuloaga

1870-1945

He got his start by copying the great Spanish masters at the Museo del Prado. In 1889, he travelled to Rome and later to Paris, where he trained with Henri Gervex and Eugène Carrière. After 1905, he had a succession of exhibitions of his art in numerous cities around Europe. His career gained ground in the United States thanks to his works for The Hispanic Society of New York and his tour after the First World War. A painter of landscapes, Spanish archetypes and portraits, his works connected with the updating of traditional Spain launched by the members of the Generation of '98. He is one of the most celebrated Spanish painters from the first half of the twentieth century and one of the ones to garner the most international recognition during his lifetime.



The cardinal

1912. Oil on canvas

Francisco, one of the artist's regular models, lends his face to a gruff cardinal, accompanied by contrast with a young priest whose figure refers to El Greco. In this court portrait, which carries on the Spanish tradition, the stout physiognomy of the prelate contrasts with the splendid clothing and the studied theatrical composition, with Sepúlveda in the background. Zuloaga shows off his talents as a draughtsman, his skill at handling colour and his masterful treatment of the chiaroscuro he learned from Ribera. The direct, self-assured impasto brushstrokes result from a surprising spontaneity.

Donated by Javier Horn Prado in 1966



Portrait of doña Rosita Gutiérrez

c. 1914-1915. Oil on canvas

Considered the portrait of a procuress until recently, perhaps because she is shamelessly showing a fan bearing the image of Goya's nude maja, it has recently been discovered that she is actually the granddaughter of the Argentine general San Martín who married with Mexican diplomat Fernando Gutiérrez de Estrada. This illustrious widow, a respectable lady of Parisian society, was admired for her philanthropy and her work in asylums and hospitals during the First World War, which earned her honours from the French government. The painting exemplifies Zuloaga's skill as a portraitist and his ability to convey his sitters in a lifelike way.

Acquired by public subscription in 1915



La Rioja Landscape

c. 1935. Oil on cardboard

Zuloaga's rural landscapes are a kind of Romantic return to nature. They often serve as the backdrop for figuration and are discreetly represented with a very low horizon line in which the sky occupies much of the surface. In this view of La Rioja, rendered with a palette of silvery tones and impasto applied with the loose, gestural brushstrokes characteristic of the artist, the main subject is the rugged landscape. As he often did, Zuloaga likely started with a photograph and later transferred to canvas this landscape, the heir to El Greco in its depiction of the atmosphere.

Donated by Javier Horn Prado in 1966

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.