

bilbao **museoa**

BBKateak **Utamaro – Guiard**

Arte Ederren Bilboko Museoa
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

bbk 

Utamaro – Guiard

Room 8

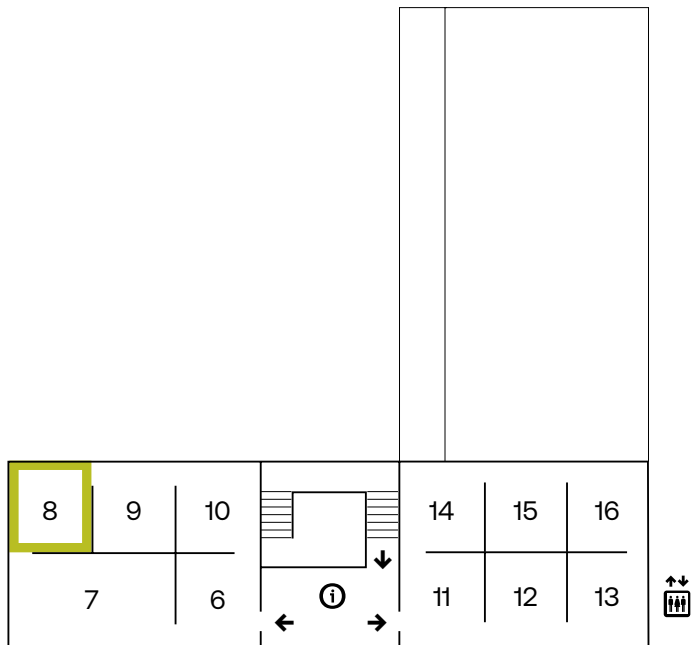
Old building

First floor

Paintings from the floating world

Ukiyo-e, a kind of Japanese print in which Utamaro is a master, is defined by this beautiful expression. It was in vogue in Paris in the late nineteenth century, where many artists collected it, including Adolfo Guiard, who had moved to the capital city at the tender age of 18. The son of a photographer, he soon adopted the off-centre framings, impressionist colouring and poetics of symbolism to capture life according to the mild rhythms he learned from these prints. José Palacio felt this same fascination with the East, and half a century later, he, like Guiard, travelled from Bilbao to Paris to collect the invaluable collection which he bequeathed to our museum.

1 Old building First floor



Kitagawa Utamaro

1753-1806

A painter and engraver, he is one of the top representatives of the Golden Age of Japanese *ukiyo-e* printing, a kind of woodcut print. These works, which were admired and collected by countless late nineteenth-century painters like Manet, Degas and Guiard himself, were one of the earliest examples of Japanese art that reached the West. Utamaro lived and worked in Edo (currently Tokyo) in the late eighteenth century, where he specialised in making idealised representations of women of different social classes, some of them prostitutes from the city's red-light districts. His elegant style and compositional talent also captured scenes of leisure and worldly distractions in numerous illustrated books.

Utamaro portrayed the bustling urban life in Edo and excelled with his images of 'female beauties' (*bijin-ga*) shown in busts or half-body portraits over empty backgrounds which highlight the decorative precision of the lines. In them, he captured archetypes, expressions and attitudes of women, as seen in these prints. We see one of them concentrating on reading a letter; another getting out of the bath, her robe open as she dries her hands; and a third one smoking a pipe. With black hair and painstaking coiffures, they are portrayed in action, as if capturing an instant. In another print, the poetess Ono no Komachi, the respected author of erotic themes and the prototype of classical beauty, is being courted by another famous poet, Daisojo Henjo, who is sliding an amorous message into the sleeve of her robe.



**Untitled (Woman Reading a Letter). From the series
Fujo ninsō juppon (Ten Classes in Feminine
Physiognomy)**

c. 1792–1793. Coloured woodcut print on paper

Donated by María de Arechavaleta from the collection of José Palacio in 1953



Untitled [Uwaki no sô (The Fancy-Free Type)]. From the series Fujin sôgaku juttai (Ten Feminine Physiognomies)

c. 1792-1793. Coloured wood cut print on paper

Donated by María de Arechavaleta from the collection of José Palacio in 1953



Hyōgorō / Hinakoto (The Courtesan Hinakoto of the House Hyōgo. From the series Bijin Kiryō kurabe (Comparison of the Attractions of Beautiful Women))
c. 1795. Coloured wood cut print on paper

Donated by María de Arechavaleta from the collection of José Palacio in 1953



Go shiki zome rokkasen (Five Colours of Love of the Six Immortal Poets)

c. 1798. Coloured wood cut print on paper

Donated by María de Arechavaleta from the collection of José Palacio in 1953



Rikōmono (The Know-It-All). From the series Kyōkun oya no me kagami (Spyglass for Vigilant Parents)

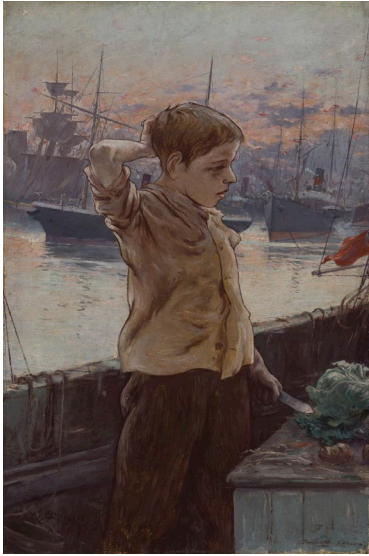
c. 1802-1803. Coloured wood cut print on paper

Donated by María de Arechavaleta from the collection of José Palacio in 1953

Adolfo Guiard

1860-1916

He started his artistic apprenticeship in Bilbao and Barcelona and was the first Basque artist to further his training in Paris, where he lived between 1878 and 1886. There he was permeated with the impressionist and symbolist trends and got in touch and interacted with Degas, Monet, Gauguin, Puvis de Chavannes and other artists who were updating art. When he returned to Vizcaya, he introduced impressionism into Basque painting. He first moved to Bilbao and later to Bakio, Murueta and Deusto, locations which enabled him to freely paint *au plein air*, in nature, yet without losing touch with the social and cultural life in the capital city. Even though he did not hold many exhibitions, his paintings, refined drawing and subtle colour palettes, primarily focusing on the landscape and customs in a rural world in the midst of transformation, sparked numerous controversies.



The Ship's Boy

1887. Oil on canvas

Txo was the nickname that Basque fishermen gave to the shipboy who did odd jobs, including cooking. Still boyish yet looking haggard, Guiard has caught this lad off-guard in a moment when he was taking a break from his work, a knife in one hand as he scratches his head with the other. The painter places him in the foreground, slightly backlit, and his figure—for which the painter's younger brother, Teófilo, posed—is drawn with sinuous, rhythmic lines, clearly standing out over the background depicting the riverscape in Bilbao with several ships sailing through it.

Contributed by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia in 1923



The Estuary at Desierto

1897. Oil on panel

Water and sky, the latter cloudy with smatterings of smoke coming from the factory smokestacks, are featured in this apparently spontaneous, casual composition, even though Guiard uses resources from Japanese prints and photography, such as the fragment of the stern of the large ship moored on the right, which seems to casually encroach into the scene. It is set on the Nervión River, in an area whose owners allowed him to paint there. On the left, countless boats carrying iron are moored on the loading and unloading docks.

Donated by Emiliano Uruñuela in 1924

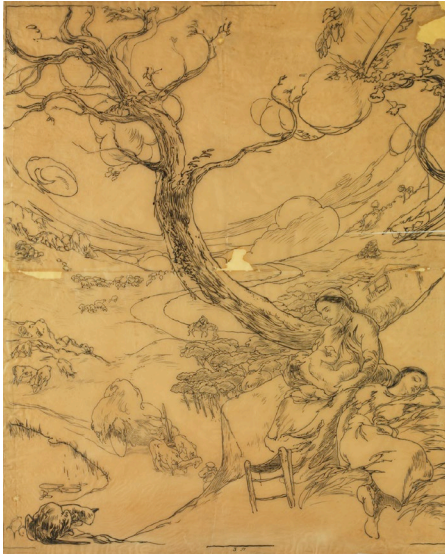


Project for a stained-glass window (six panels)

c. 1901-1902. Oil on panel

This series is from a commission from the Provincial Council of Vizcaya to design stained-glass windows for the Casa de Juntas building in Guernica. The artist uses different times of day, between sunup and sundown, to recreate the evolution and economic and technological progress of humanity, from our nomadic and pastoral start to the development of agriculture, fishing and mining. Later obscured by the fratricidal war in a single scene with no human figures, the recovery and final rest, with the sunset, would come via trade and navigation, according to Gaiard.

Contributed by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia in 1913



The Life. Preparatory drawing for a stained-glass window

c. 1902-1903. Ink and graphite on vegetable parchment paper

This is a sketch of a stained-glass window for a private collection. The Life includes numerous images alluding to the passage of time and death, such as female figures of differing ages, the pathway, the tree of life and sleep. The scene takes place in a deep valley bisected by a path that zigzags to the horizon where human beings and animals coexist peacefully. The off-centre composition and undulating, decorative lines show the influence of Japanese prints on Guiard's work.

Acquired in 1992



Country Girl with a Red Carnation

1903. Oil on canvas

This scene, which is divided in two by the main figure, is set in Elorrieta, a peripheral neighbourhood near the river that was absorbed by Bilbao's urban development. Guardi had his studio there, amidst peasant fields and sailors' houses. Facing forward, the young girl is looking directly at the spectator, her left hand on the handle of a milk jug she is holding on her head. The position of her arms introduces an undulating movement into the composition, which is echoed in the tree trunk. The blue dominating the painting creates an enveloping atmosphere in which the red carnation in her mouth contrasts.

Contributed by the Provincial Council of Bizkaia in 1913

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.