

DARÍO DE REGOYOS

Aspects of his training, life and works



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**BILBOKO ARTE
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Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913) is greatly appreciated today as the first Spanish Impressionist and for his rare ability to capture atmosphere and light. However, one hundred and fifty years after his birth, too little is known about his personality, his training and his experiences, all of them vital to a fuller understanding of his works and the motivations behind them. This essay, written to mark the anniversary, aims to fill some of the gaps, taking advantage of the twenty-five Regoyos paintings the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum possesses, one of the most important collections of the artist's work today.

Regoyos was born in Ribadesella (Asturias). Although his early years remain shrouded in mystery, we do know that he spent his adolescence in Madrid, in the district of Argüelles, where he grew into a young man of independent spirit little inclined to observe the rules his father laid down. On the back of the board support for a painting entitled *Palacio Real* (*Royal Palace*, c. 1878) [fig. 1], Regoyos left a penned note summarizing some of his thoughts and preoccupations of those years [fig. 2]. He called the note "Castles in the Air" and in it he talked of his tastes and his refusal to be an architect, as his father wanted, because it meant learning mathematics, when his preferred occupations were music and painting. As an expert guitarist, the former stayed with him until 1890 (when he was 33); the latter, painting, became his profession. But the note also hinted at another inclination: travel. He continued to travel until his death, in search of themes for his painting or to counteract health problems, particularly in his later years. Even so, his mobility, both as a bachelor and married man, was quite astounding.



1 and 2. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Royal Palace, c. 1878
 Oil on cardboard, 18.5 x 27 cm
 Private collection
 Obverse and reverse



Castles in the Air. Sn Antonio de la Florida

I owe it all to Choncha¹. My love for her decided my artistic career, as although I always enjoyed art greatly, the desire to marry her pushed me into taking this free career seriously so I should not have too long to wait as a bachelor. I adored music and painting and in evidence, my attendance at all those concerts and my sketch books full of botches, and my desire to learn watercolour and play an instrument, but D. Eduardo treated me badly as teacher, for years keeping me at mathematics and other nonsense that I never understood. I finally sent him packing and started at the Academy of San Fernando to study painting, a bit late on when I realized that Choncha didn't love me I was bored ages, I wanted to leave Madrid and my walks almost always took me to the level crossing at la *Florida* to watch the trains come out and how the machines manoeuvred, so I used to tell myself I was going to the station to catch a train. That place consoled my unrequited love. I planned journeys I never made and wracked my brains in vain. I was indifferent to my friends they called me unsociable and I couldn't sleep for thinking about leaving Madrid forever. I won my mother over and as she couldn't go abroad I made her leave Madrid and go with all her goods and chattels to Aranjuez with the intention of spending the autumns and springs there, winters in Andalusia and summers abroad. All to take Choncha off my mind a little, just by not seeing Argüelles. We stayed in Spain looking after the estates and my fine ideal of settling abroad I saw as something that simply might never be achieved.

1 Choncha was the daughter of playwright José de Echegaray, and appears to have been his first love.

Training and influences

Regoyos was able to enrol at the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts only after the death in 1876 of his father Darío de Regoyos Molenillo. His mother allowed him to start in the 1877-1878 academic year, in the landscape-elementary section studying under Belgian teacher Carlos de Haes. Although in this class he only learnt drawing, he discovered art in Belgium and who Haes's maestro was there. His friends Enrique Fernández Arbós and Isaac Albéniz, who were honing their musical skills at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, sent him comments and praised the city's artistic atmosphere. The desire to see Brussels for himself grew in Regoyos, who fulfilled his wish in the summer of 1879, when his friends invited him to attend the end-of-year Conservatory prize giving. His mother consented to him travelling to Brussels and staying on there.

So the young Regoyos, just 21 years old, embarked on his true training as a painter. Following the advice of Carlos de Haes, he enrolled for the 1879-1880 year at the Brussels Royal Academy of Art, in *Dessin d'après la tête antique*, taught by Belgian painter Van Severdonc. There he was to meet future friends and founder members of the Circle of 20, painters Frantz Charlet, James Ensor and Rodolphe Wytzman. In class he learnt about drawing the human figure, which explains the frequent appearance of portraits in his oeuvre and his sketchbooks full of drawings of gypsies, old people, women and workers, and why his landscapes have so much human activity in them. Clearly, it was not just landscape painting that attracted him.

As the months passed, he became rather less assiduous about attending class in the Academy, largely because he refused to accept the rules and the timetables. However, he decided to round off his training by getting in touch with the studio of De Haes's old teacher, painter Joseph Quinaux², who gave him private classes in landscape painting in 1880 and 1881. Indeed, Quinaux became his true maestro, as Regoyos later acknowledged in a letter of 25 September 1910 to his friend, art critic and Pau Museum director, Paul Lafond³, in which he talks about his motivations as an artist and what he found most interesting and attractive in Quinaux and De Haes.

Regoyos's training was enhanced by these contacts and his art gained in depth and interest thanks to long talks with artists of all kinds that he met or lived with during his time in Brussels. These contacts included the great patron of the arts Edmond Picard⁴, the poet Émile Verhaeren⁵, the man of letters Camille

2 Joseph Quinaux (Namur, 1822-Schaerbeek, Brussels, 1895), Belgian landscape artist, from 1876 to his death teacher of *Paysages et fleurs* at the Brussels Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

3 Letter from Regoyos to Paul Lafond: "LAS ARENAS (BILBAO 25 de septiembtre (1910) / Cher ami: / J'ai lu avec plaisir votre étude sur Carlos de Haes que j'aime beaucoup surtout la fin. Il y a des petites fautes que j'ai taché de corriger. Fournis n'est-ce pas Fourmis? Mais comment vous pouvez savoir tant des choses surtout de la vie intime des gens. Monastique de Pied au lieu de La Pied Torridoniens. Ces erreurs n'ont pas d'importance mais ce qui est plus important c'est son atelier de la Calle de Atocha ou il a vécu presque toute sa vie artistique et je crois qu'il est mort là. Quelques mois avant sa mort en 1898 je suis venu chez un ami à lui et voisin et m'a dit que Haes était toujours à la calle de Atocha. Je l'ai toujours connu là étant son élève très peu car je n'ai fait qu'un cours de dessin dans sa classe mais après je l'ai visité étant presque belge de passage à Madrid. Il était charmant homme et grand piocher mais vous avez raison en disant qu'il était plutôt un caractère qu'une personnalité. Ses gris sont toujours les mêmes monotones et la coloration ne donne pas la différence des pays. Quinaux aussi a été mon professeur à Bruxelles. Haes m'avait envoyé à lui quand j'étais jeune homme libre qui voulait connaître Bruxelles, la Flandre, la Hollande, voyager pensionné par ma mère. Quinaux m'a dit ne copiez jamais, le meilleur professeur c'est la nature allez à la campagne elle vous apprendra. J'ai profité de son conseil et aimant la liberté la boîte à couleurs la guitare j'ai profité trop de sa permission. De temps en temps je venais chez Quinaux et il disait aux autres élèves. Cet espagnol est un anarchiste de la peinture mais j'aime le laisser en liberté. Il me fait des signaux de chemin de fer rouges et verts au crépuscule et au milieu de la campagne désolée. En vérité c'est Quinaux mon seul professeur qui a duré. Haes ne compte pas pour moi je l'admire mais j'aimais le voyage et je l'ai quitté de bonne heure. Si Quinaux a duré chez moi c'est parce qu'il me laissait en complète liberté et parce que j'aimais la Belgique ou j'ai passé des années. En fin de Haes a été un vaillant en Espagne ou l'académie dominait absolument, il est venu au beau moment de faire comme vous dites très bien ou moment de conduire le paysage à la vie. / Bien a vous / Darío".

4 Edmond Picard (Brussels, 1836-Dave, Namur, 1924), Belgian lawyer, man of letters, jurist and journalist who helped to found *L'Art Moderne* art journal in 1881, which he used to defend the Circle of 20. A notable patron of the arts, Picard eventually became a senator.

5 Émile Verhaeren (St. Amand, 1855-Rouen, 1916), internationally acclaimed Belgian writer and poet, who studied Law at Louvain, where he took an active part in the university's literary life. He worked in Edmond Picard's office and contributed to *L'Art Moderne* and *La Jeune Belgique*. Founded another journal, *Le Coq Rouge*, with Georges Eeckhoud.



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3. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Place à Segovia (Square, Segovia), 1882
Oil on cardboard, 30 x 42.2 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/14



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4. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Portrait of Miss Jeanning, 1885
Oil on canvas, 65.5 x 85.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 00/1

Lemonnier⁶, the sculptor and painter Constantin Meunier, the writer and magnificent pianist Octave Maus, who would become director of the Circle of 20, and painters James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Theo van Rysselberghe, James Ensor, Frantz Charlet, Willy Schlobach and Anna Boch.

In the circles favoured by Picard, Regoyos, with the unquestionable aid of Émile Verhaeren, gradually developed his social and artistic awareness, which begins to become clear from 1886 in the works of his series *La España Negra* (the *Dark Side of Spain*). His character and drive made him very popular with his fellow artists, as did his musical performances with the guitar, playing to popular Spanish songs, which also made him at the time a much sought after attendee at meetings and conferences. Proof of his popularity can be found in the eleven portraits of Regoyos by Whistler, Van Rysselberghe, Meunier and Ensor, which show him playing the guitar. In one, Regoyos actually wrote in sgraffito on the canvas the lyrics to one of the *coplas* he used to sing.

L'Essor and the Circle of 20

In 1881 Regoyos became the only foreign member of the L'Essor circle, the most innovative of its kind in Belgium; he began exhibiting with them in 1882, in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. In L'Essor he met other painters with similar concerns to his own, and with them he founded the famous revolutionary, intransigent Circle of 20 in 1883, with the mission to liberalize art. The Circle continued active until 1894, when the majority of its members decided to dissolve it, largely because they thought it had achieved its original aims. In L'Essor, Regoyos rounded off his training and began to mature thanks to the annual exhibition of twenty artists and twenty guests⁷, where he had to shake off pressures from the art critics, who attacked their works continually. The attacks brought the members closer together and convinced them they had to carry on, admitting new members and ruthlessly expelling anyone who did not fully hold to their ideals or who tried to direct their works towards more commercial channels. Regoyos did not escape criticism from the media, one of the reproaches being that his works were too small and that he produced very little art, certainly in comparison with his obvious gusto for the guitar. He reacted at the time by producing large paintings more frequently, despite his preference for the small formats that enabled him to get out of the studio and paint from nature.

From the earliest years of the 20, American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler⁸ exhibited as a guest, with the consent of some members, including Théo van Rysselberghe, Willy Schlobach, Regoyos, the poet Verhaeren and Octave Maus. Their friendship with Whistler led to a visit to London in 1885 by Schlobach, Verhaeren and Regoyos; the Spanish artist saw the American's art, particularly enjoying his portraits of beautiful women before mirrors, some with Oriental touches, which undoubtedly influenced Regoyos in some of his paintings, particularly *Portrait of Miss Jeanning* (1885) [fig. 4], an extraordinary work painted in London, clearly linked to Whistler in the colouring and the Oriental staging. Without having recourse to realism, Regoyos gives the scene an intimate atmosphere in which the transparent veil covering the model's face in the mirror—a very Whistlerian touch, this—plays a central role. Nothing is known about the model or how Regoyos came to know her; all we have of her is the name, Miss Jeanning, that Regoyos gave the painting in 1885.

6 Camille Lemonnier (Ixelles, 1844-1913), prolific Belgian writer who came to literature through his work as an art critic. He was known as the "Belgian Zola" for his militant naturalism. The scandal surrounding the publication of his work *Un Mâle* (1881) made him very popular with artists. He published essays on art in French and Belgian journals.

7 Thirty-two artists became members of the Circle of 20, with 128 guest artists from 11 different countries selected for their avant-garde leanings, suggesting that at least twelve of their members were rejected. It also reflects the sheer variety of styles and thought the Circle housed, which gave Regoyos access to all the trends of the time in Europe and helped him to appreciate the difference in the way art had evolved in Spain.

8 James Abbott McNeill Whistler was born on 11 July 1834 in Lowell, Massachusetts, and died in London on 17 July 1903.



5. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Electric Light. Aragon, c. 1890
Oil on panel, 31.8 x 21.2 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/133

During the visit to London, Whistler produced a sketch-portrait of Regoyos advertised by the *L'Art Moderne* journal; unfortunately, despite a good deal of exploration and investigative work, the portrait has never come to light. Another consequence of the friendship was the suggestion, supported by the group of Whistler's friends and painter Frantz Charlet, that the American painter should join the Circle of 20; however, the other members of the circle, James Ensor included, vetoed the invitation, arguing that any new members should be Belgian artists. Besides, they added, Whistler was already famous.



6. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Taureaux à Passages (Bulls in Pasajes), 1898
 Oil on canvas, 61.3 x 50.4 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/129

The *Dark Side of Spain* and pointillism

In 1886 Regoyos began his series entitled *La España Negra*, or the *Dark Side of Spain*, devoted to themes showing the traditions and culture of Spanish society, so radically different from the image of Spain popular abroad. Illustrating the sad, harsh face of the country, it combined criticism of male attitudes with an emphasis on the self-sacrificing resignation of the women, upkeepers of tradition and the family. The series also criticised the superficiality of people who were attracted to bullfights by the showy side of the *fiesta nacional*, and the possibility of seeing a bullfighter gored, profoundly unaware of the art involved, of the effort and bravery of bullfight professionals and blissfully unaware of the other victims of the *fiesta*, the horses. The works in *La España Negra* were enthusiastically supported by the poet Émile Verhaeren, with whom Regoyos travelled for the first time around Spain in 1888, the year in which, only months apart, their respective mothers died. The loss provoked new works by the poet, which some years later Regoyos would use for a book published in 1899⁹ entitled *España Negra*, adding his own observations and experiences and the engravings, drawings and vignettes he produced during his travels. On this occasion, Regoyos was seeking to emulate the kind of production then extremely popular in France and Belgium, involving books written by poets, men of letters and great writers and illustrated with vignettes, frontispieces and engravings executed by notable painters and engravers. *España Negra* was the first book of this kind made in Spain, and clearly pointed the way for the works and interests of the famed Generation of '98.

⁹ The book *España Negra* was published in Catalanian journal *Luz* as a preliminary edition in 1898 and published in 1899 by Pedro Ortega's press in Aribau Street, no. 13, Barcelona. This edition contained twenty seven reproductions of drawings and seven woodcuts drawn and carved by Regoyos. Sales of the book were low, according to Regoyos, fewer than fifteen copies sold.

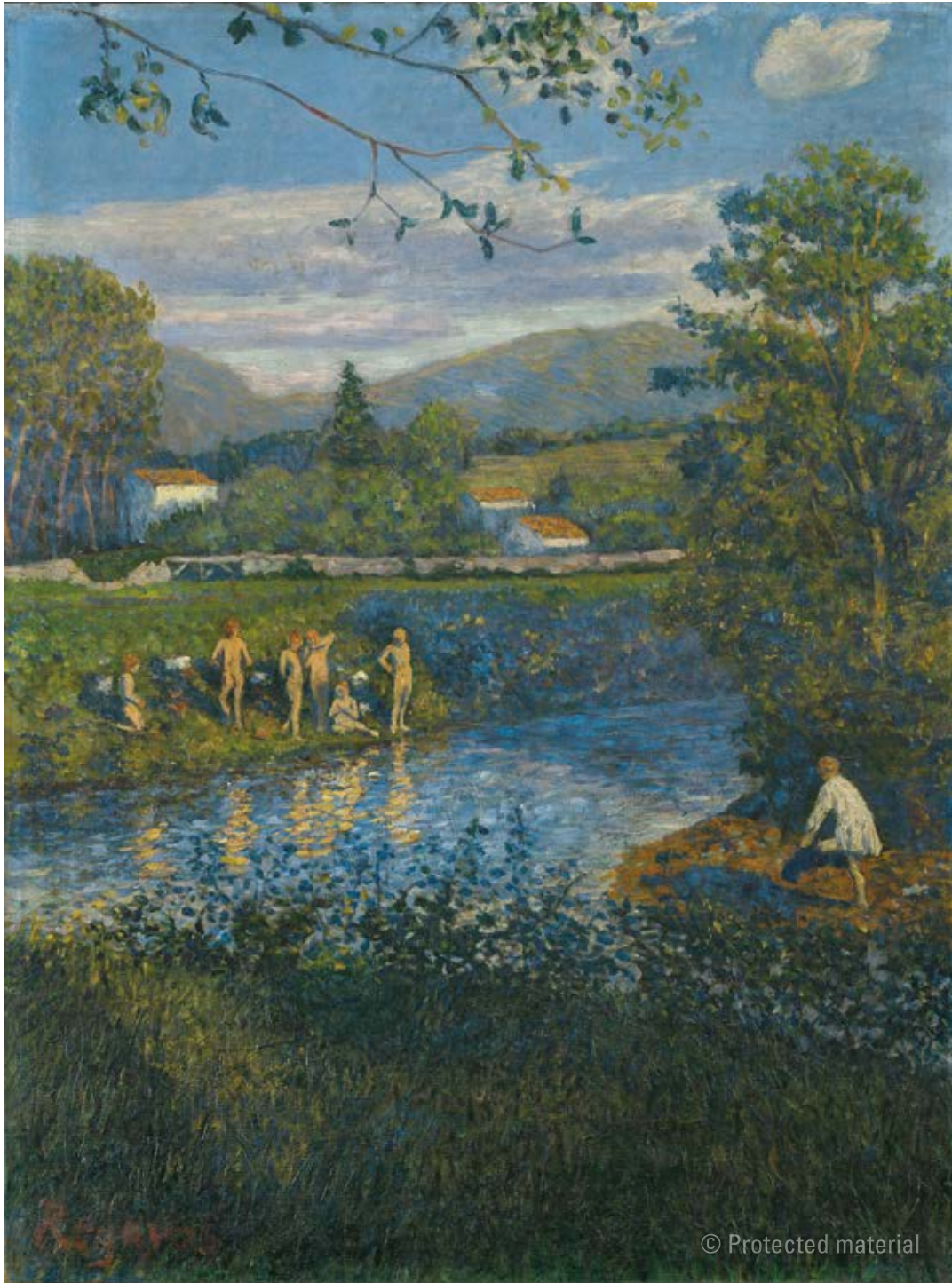


7. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
*L'église de Lezo. Pays Basque (The Church
 in Lezo. The Basque Country)*, 1898
 Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/134

In 1898 and 1899 Regoyos went to Barcelona on a number of occasions while trying to get the book published and in his capacity as technical editor of a journal entitled *Luz*, a post he had recently been appointed to. From 1894 Regoyos had enjoyed unconditional and long-lasting support from the Modernist artists in Catalonia, which would culminate in 1899 with the publication of the book and the exhibition organized for him at Els Quatre Gats to inaugurate "La Sala Gran" (The Large Gallery), which included only works from the series. One member of the Catalanian group, a young artist called Pablo Picasso, saw the exhibition and greatly appreciated the silhouettes and attitudes of the women Regoyos had portrayed, as well as the images of the dead horses in the *grattage* entitled *Victims of the fiesta*¹⁰, which would later coincide with the notions of women held during his blue period and the horses in some of his tauromachias.

La España Negra comprises oil paintings, watercolours, pastels, drawings, *grattages*, etchings, lithographs and woodcuts produced continuously over a decade to 1896, alternating pre-Impressionist, Impressionist and Pointillist works. Years later he would sporadically return to the themes in *La España Negra*, as in *Good Friday in Castile* (1904) [fig. 10], which on this occasion combined religious tradition with the modernity of the railways, a spectacular contrast bearing in mind the very recent appearance of this form of public transport, the most advanced in the country's pre-industrial society, compared with the solitude and the antiquity of a dawn procession, with the black-robed penitents and the float bearing the Virgin, watched with interest by the engine-drivers, who have reduced speed as a sign of respect for the penitents' introspection. The canvas was painted near Pancorbo, Burgos.

¹⁰ The *grattage* titled *Victims of the fiesta* (1894; 31 x 45 cm), in the Casa Museo del Pintor Abelló collection in Mollet del Vallès (Catalonia), was used as the central page of the book *España Negra*. It was also one of the sketches he used for the 90 x 120 cm pastel on paper work of the same title.



8. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Bathing in Rentería, 1900
Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 57.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/146



9. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
On the Road to Miracruz, c. 1900
 Oil on canvas, 66 x 43.5 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/141

In 1887 Georges Seurat exhibited his masterwork *Un dimanche d'été a l'île de la Grande Jatte* (1886) at the Circle of 20, creating a storm amongst Belgian artists and prompting the creation of a pro-Pointillist group in the Circle itself¹¹, clearly attracted by the new form of painting. Captained by Van Rysselberghe, the group also included Regoyos. Belgian art critics refused to take Pointillism seriously, subjecting the painters and their works to all kinds of sarcasm and satire, which was hardly surprising considering the technique was the greatest deviation from academic practice and the most innovative at the time. It also created an internal division within the Circle, the Pointillists being more avant-garde than the other members.

One result of the group's appearance was an increase in contacts with the French Impressionists, leading to Paul Signac's inclusion as a member of the Circle of 20. This enabled Regoyos to receive training in Pointillist technique direct from Signac, with whom he had frequent contact, even sailing in the French artist's boat, the Olympia, in the company of Van Rysselberghe, from les Landes to the Cote d'Azur, by way of the Garonne canal.

However, Regoyos only produced Pointillist paintings from 1892 to 1895, largely because of the painstaking method required. This went very much against the grain of his dynamic temperament, which pushed him to capture the impressions he saw as quickly as possible. Besides, Pointillism kept him longer in the studio, which was one of the reasons why he finally decided to give it up, although continuing to use it partially to improve the quality and texture of his works, as is clear from *Bulls in Pasajes* (1898) [fig. 6], *Bathing in Rentería* (1900) [fig. 8], *Road to Miracruz* (c. 1900) [fig. 9], *May Morning* (1907) [fig. 16] and *School, Dax* (1909) [fig. 19]. A particularly fine example is *Bathing in Rentería*, one of his most Impressionist paintings in terms of colour selection (typical of his mature period) and theme, choosing a landscape with children taking dips in the river, recalling so many Impressionist paintings of the time, in which nudes and nature were a symbol of rupture and modernism. The light and shadow of late afternoon are also done in the Impressionist manner.

¹¹ The group of painters from the Circle of 20 favourable to "optic" painting comprised Anna Boch, Frantz Charlet, Willy Finch, Darío de Regoyos, Jan Toorop, Henry van de Velde, Théo van Rysselberghe, Guillaume Vogels and Georges Lemmen.

A major feature is the green foreground with the river and the reflections of the blue sky and the youngsters. Regoyos makes full use of his Pointillist know-how to achieve the colour of the earth, of the green field and flowing water, in a frame marked by trees to right and left and rounded off above by branches and sky. In this view, definition and tone graduate from the foreground to the horizon, giving the scene depth and harmony. The same occurs in *School, Dax*, painted in 1909 in the city to which he had moved with his whole family. In the foreground, Regoyos applies the same Pointillist treatment for the ground, the closing wall and the green zone, capturing the playtime atmosphere in a school in which at least one of his four children was almost certainly studying. In this urban view, Regoyos combines the accumulation of buildings, peaking with the church, with the school area and the surrounding trees under a cloudy sky, where whites, blues and mauves complete the scene.

It needs to be remembered that Regoyos was the only Spanish artist in the Pointillist group. Indeed, when Georges Seurat died, the late artist's family sent him one of the works donated to the pro-Pointillist artists. Called *Trois dos*¹² the work, for reasons unknown to us, eventually became the property of Paul Signac.

After the winding up of The 20 in 1893, a new circle, called *La Libre Esthétique* (1894-1914) was set up, which was to involve invited artists and members from outside the world of art only. In this circle, Regoyos exhibited as an invited artist five times without actually going to Brussels. However, he did extend his exhibitions to other countries like Germany and France, which he occasionally visited. What is certain that, from 1893 he returned artistically to Spain, where he had always avoided exhibiting, particularly in Madrid, owing to the classicism prevailing in all the national art institutions. Settled since 1882 in the Basque region, and temporarily in Brussels, Regoyos returned as a painter to Spain to tackle the same problems he had encountered in Belgium, where with his companions he had managed to liberalize art. Here in Spain, the job was going to be a lot tougher, as the Pyrenees still acted as an effective block to new trends.

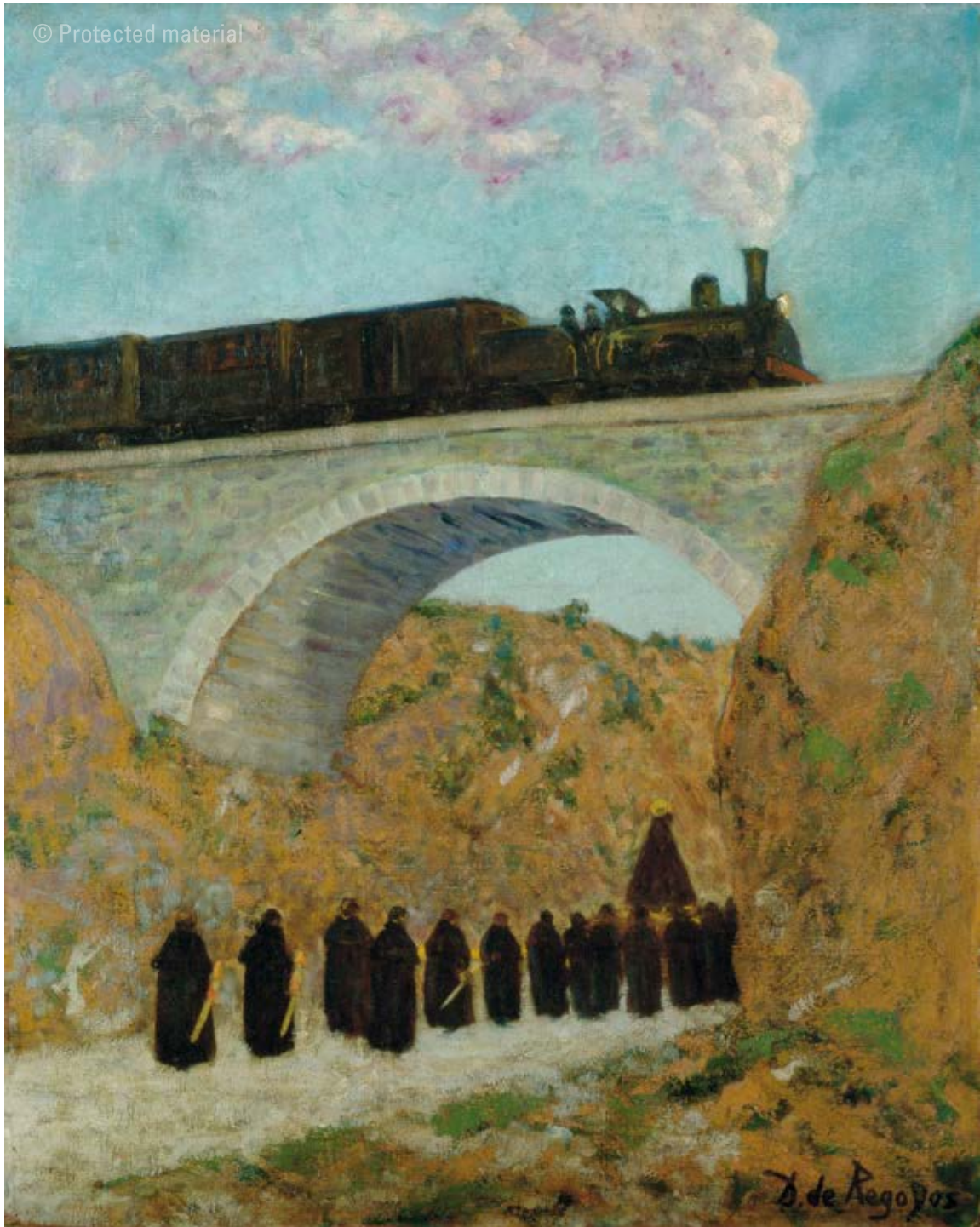
His training ended around this time. From this time on, Regoyos started to help painters he'd met in the Basque Country, working with them disinterestedly to create associations and organize exhibitions. He also encouraged them to defend their ideas in the media and reject the prevailing classicism. In Spain he exhibited in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and San Sebastián, while abroad he had shows in Paris, Brussels, Frankfurt, Dresden, Amsterdam, Venice, Buenos Aires and Mexico.

Stylistic developments

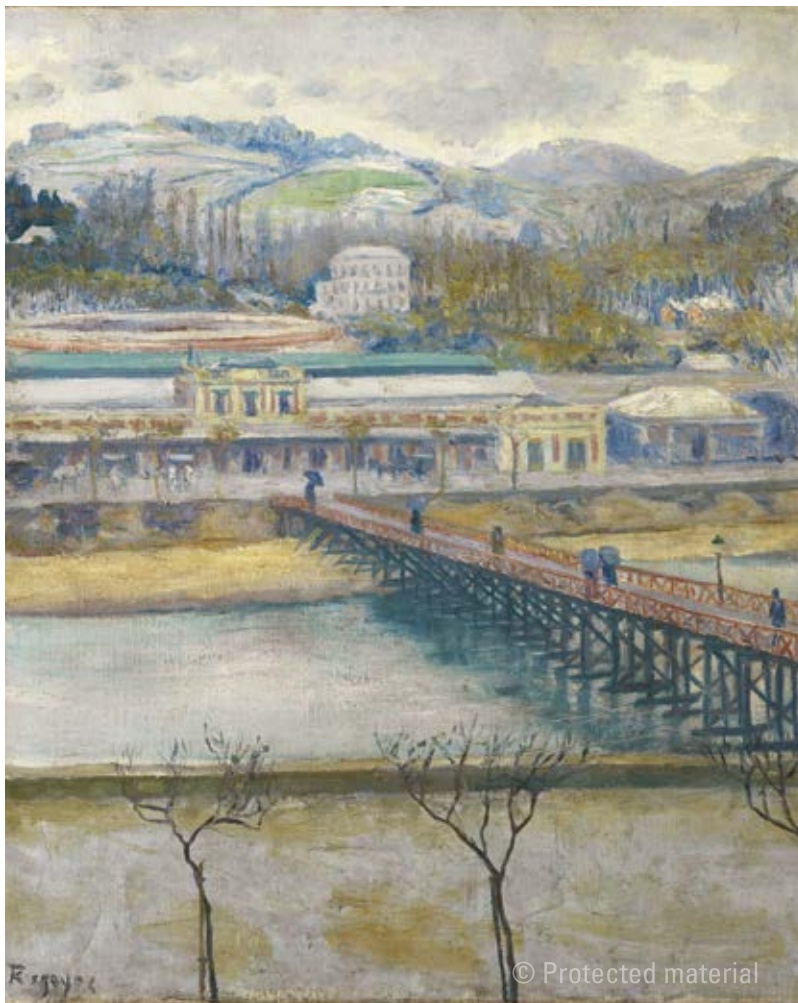
Briefly, the themes of Regoyos's oeuvre were landscape, scenes with trains, historical monuments (bridges, castles, convents, monasteries and churches), portraits of family and friends or of certain social types, the effects of daytime and night time light and interior scenes. The still life was a much rarer, almost non-existent theme. His developing style and palette never changed his choice of theme, as he always painted what he liked, regardless of what the market demanded. He hated *trompe l'oeil*, preferring by far notes that were spontaneous and sincere.

Although in the early stages of his career the occasional Belgian motif appeared in his work, he concentrated very largely on Spanish themes, as if seeking to use his personal manner of interpretation to show his home country to the circles in Brussels where he exhibited until 1890. From his beginnings to the early 1890s he almost always used the spatula. His subsequent move to the brush coincided pretty much with his first steps in Pointillism in 1892. A similar change took place in the artist's palette. To begin with, his blues,

¹² For Regoyos's membership of the Pointillist group and the details of the work passed to him by the Seurat family, see César M. de Hauke. *Seurat et son oeuvre*. Paris : Gründ, 1961, vol. I, pp. XX and 122.



10. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Vendredi Saint en Castille (Good Friday in Castile), 1904
Oil on canvas, 81 x 65.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/130



11. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
The Urumea River, 1904
 Oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/139

yellows, whites and greens were more intense, with mauve almost entirely absent, as *Place à Segovia* (1882) [fig. 3] shows. The definitive colours that appeared towards the end of the century are clearer and softer, with mauve being pretty much continually present. The transition between the colours used at the end of the early period, shortly before the change, and the definitive ones, may be appreciated by comparing works painted in 1898, *The Church at Lezo. Basque Country* [fig. 7] and *Bulls in Pasajes* [fig. 6], with *Road to Miracruz*, painted around 1902 [fig. 9], *The River Urumea*, in 1904 [fig. 11] and *School, Dax*, in 1909 [fig. 19]. The change occurred as he exhibited more often in France and came into contact with the French Impressionists, mainly Camille Pissarro and Maximilien Luce, in the late 1890s.

Camille Pissarro in particular was in frequent touch with Regoyos, giving him all sorts of advice on the latter's form of painting and his themes, contacts that became much more regular when, in late 1896, Georges Manzana Pissarro¹³, who was living in London at the time with his brother Felix (Titi) fell ill and needed a

¹³ Georges Manzana Pissarro (Louveciennes, 1871-Menton, 1961), painter, watercolourist and engraver, Camille Pissarro's second son. Felix Pissarro (Pontoise, 1874-London, 1897), painter, engraver and caricaturist, Camille Pissarro's third son.



12. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Auresku in the Rain, Mondragón, 1905
 Oil on panel, 34 x 46 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/128



13. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Town of Lerma, 1906
 Oil on panel, 31.7 x 41.2 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/132

change of residence for a complete cure. Georges' father decided that he should go to San Sebastián, with his brother for company, where the climate was more benign, and where Regoyos could keep a watchful eye on both of them. In a letter to Georges dated March 1897¹⁴, Pissarro gave his opinion of Regoyos, who was probably not unaware of what Pissarro thought of him. Unfortunately, the correspondence between Pissarro and Regoyos has not survived, as all the letters held by Regoyos' family disappeared during the Spanish Civil War. With the advice he received from Pissarro, and fully persuaded that he needed to change, he gave up for good what he called neurasthenic painting (in reference to the *La España Negra* series) and took up Impressionist painting, direct from nature, using colours much closer to the Impressionist palette, moves he had already timidly assayed and which the advice and opinions of his fellow painter helped to make bolder and permanent.

14 Letter from Camille Pissarro to his son Georges Manzana Pissarro: "Paris, 1 rue Drouot / 17 mars 1897 / Mon cher Georges: / Ci-inclus quatre cents francs que j'ai pu avoir plus tôt en ayant déjà demandé pour payer ma quinzaine ici. C'est terriblement cher, j'ai pour mille francs par mois sans faire d'extras que le vin et le bois indispensables; heureusement que mes tableaux marchent et se finissent, mais ces diables de gris des rues de Paris sont tellement difficiles à faire qu'il faut y revenir longtemps. Et dire que Durand Ruel n'aime que les effets de soleil! Et justement hier, il me disait à propos des tableaux de Darío que c'était triste et gris, que c'était plus difficile de faire du soleil, je t'en fiche! On voit bien qu'il n'a jamais mis la main à la pâte. Darío a mal choisi ses tableaux, l'orage, la rue de Londres, le coup de vent avec l'église, etc., sont d'anciennes choses qui ne sont pas réussies au point de vue de l'air. C'est des tableaux faits à l'atelier qui manquent d'imprévu et d'intérêt, mais trois ou quatre récentes choses dénotent un tempérament de peintre, seulement, c'est vraiment trop peu. Mais il n'a donc pas fait de plus grandes choses sur nature? Nous avons causé longuement des tableaux d'atelier, je lui ai dit qu'il fallait joliment être fort pour les faire et même avec ces grandes qualités, on n'a pas l'imprévu et l'originalité sans recherche, du moins à mon sens. Il y a évidemment des peintres comme Delacroix qui l'ont fait, mais cela n'est certes pas si beau qu'une belle figure de Corot. J'ai vu dernièrement une figure ancienne de Corot admirable. Cela fait beaucoup de rapport avec les figures de Lucien par la naïveté, le dessin simple et précieux, mais avec une couleur grise étonnante, peinte grassement!... Darío vous fait dire bien des choses, l'ouverture de son exposition a lieu le 19 et il repart le 20 courant. / Je vous embrasse, écrivez-moi. / Votre père affectionné. / C.Pissarro".



14. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Santa Lucía. Durango, 1907
Oil on canvas, 65 x 55.3 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/131

1894-1913: extending his themes

To understand Darío de Regoyos fully, one also needs to understand the reasons behind his continuous travels and changes of address. In his early period, up to 1894, when he was still a bachelor, his changes of address were not that frequent, although he travelled regularly, usually for cultural or artistic reasons. Unfortunately, his nerves often interfered with his health, causing gastric problems that eventually limited his movements, and even stopped him from painting and exhibiting, something that occurred in 1891, the only year he did not exhibit works. In his travels around Spain he visited virtually all of the Basque Country, Castile, León, Andalusia, Levante, Aragon, Galicia, Toledo, Pamplona, Asturias, Barcelona and Madrid; abroad he saw Belgium, Holland, France, Italy and Morocco (Tangiers). He also made four artistic excursions, the first in the company of fellow painters and art critics, and the other three with poet Émile Verhaeren, with whom he visited Spain, London and the south of France and Italy, reaching Florence together. On these excursions Regoyos painted some of the works that now belong to the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, including *Place à Segovia* (1882) [fig. 3] and *Portrait of Miss Jeanning* (1885) [fig. 4], both mentioned above, and *Electric Light. Aragon* (c. 1890) [fig. 5].



15. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Elorrio, 1907
 Oil on panel, 26.7 x 35 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/127



16. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
May Morning, 1907
 Oil on canvas, 56.2 x 42.7 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/147



17. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Peñafiel Castle, 1908
 Oil on cardboard, 27 x 35 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/148



18. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
End of Market, Dax, 1909
 Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/135

The oil painting *Electric Light. Aragon* probably dates, at least on the evidence of the signature and the place depicted, from around 1890, when Regoyos visited Saragossa and the part of the Pyrenees in Aragon, where his only sister Amalia lived. This oil painting shows the artist's interest in capturing the arrival of the electric light in towns and villages in Spain. The theme appears in a number of his works, in which the new light simply dazzles, as it does in this painting where the lighting outreaches to the back façade, throwing up more accentuated shadows, both from the building itself and from the carriages, trees and the bench. Particularly interesting are the effects of the trees, the varying intensity on the ground and the precision with which the carriages are painted. The painting provides a sort of testimony to the arrival of a new era, in a scene where light and solitude are given central roles.

Perhaps a little surprisingly, his marriage in 1895 did not bring the artist's travels to an end. On the contrary, to his journeys were now added frequent changes of address, sometimes in search of new artistic milieus, other for family reasons or to reduce his costs (rent, problems with the building and so forth). Finally the changes were made for health reasons, both his and his wife's. Their problems obliged them to seek warmer climates, where the cold, the humidity and the wind were less abrasive. This happened in Granada and Barcelona, in which Regoyos lived for ten months each.

In this second period, from 1894 to 1913, Regoyos travelled throughout the Basque Country, Andalusia, Asturias, Valencia, Salamanca, Castile, León, Madrid, Toledo, Cantabria, Pamplona and Barcelona. In the company of Verhaeren he also enjoyed an excursion in 1901 to the Basque Country, Castile, Toledo and Navarra. However, the changes of residence were more important. It is really quite surprising to see how well his family took such regular upheavals affecting their daily routine, the children's schooling and the moves themselves, which occasionally meant they had to keep two houses open, with the subsequent additional costs.



19. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
School, Dax, 1909
 Oil on canvas, 57.5 x 44.5 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/1430

By 1896, at the age of 39, Regoyos was recently married¹⁵ and had just had a daughter. His economic situation, which had once been quite buoyant, deteriorated quite seriously, as Regoyos refused to worry about the lack of income from sales of his works and continued to defend honesty and ideals in art, which led to dwindling sources of cash over a number of years. To the wedding expenses were added those caused by the regular moves, his continual travels, the purchase of materials needed for him to paint, the frames, the cost of shipping his paintings in Spain and abroad for exhibitions, customs duties and so on, all of which took their toll on his already overstretched assets. The changes of address are such an important feature of his life that it seems a good idea to give a brief summary of them.

In San Sebastián he lived at six different addresses from 1894 to June 1900 and from December 1902 to 1907, which, in chronological order, were as follows: 1 Hernani Street, main floor, left; 14 General Echagüe, 3rd floor; 2 San Martín Street, Villa Paloma (Ategorrieta); Música Enea Street (behind the Jai Alai) and 8 Trueba Street (in the city's Gros district).

In Irun, at just one address: Buenavista, Juli 1900 to November 1902.

In Durango, two: 6 Artecalle, in 1905, and 46 Olmedal, in 1907.

In Bilbao, two: 22 Espartero Street, from September 1907 to January 1908, and Station Street, in Las Arenas, from February 1908 to 1913. During this time he had other residences, but this address remained his base.

¹⁵ On 19 October 1895, in the Basilica of Nuestra Señora de Begoña (Bilbao), Regoyos married Henriette de Montguyon y Vingart, daughter of the Count of Montguyon, and born in France on 1 May 1876, nineteen years younger than her husband. Their first child was Isabel Regoyos, born in San Sebastián on 27 October 1896.



20. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
San Vicente de la Barquera. Ruins, 1910
 Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/13



21. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
San Vicente de la Barquera. Castle, 1910
 Oil on panel, 35 x 55 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 85/314

In Dax, one: 38 Boulevard de la Marine (Chez M. Daleau), March 1909.

In Ontaneda, one: House of Isidro Martínez, summer 1910.

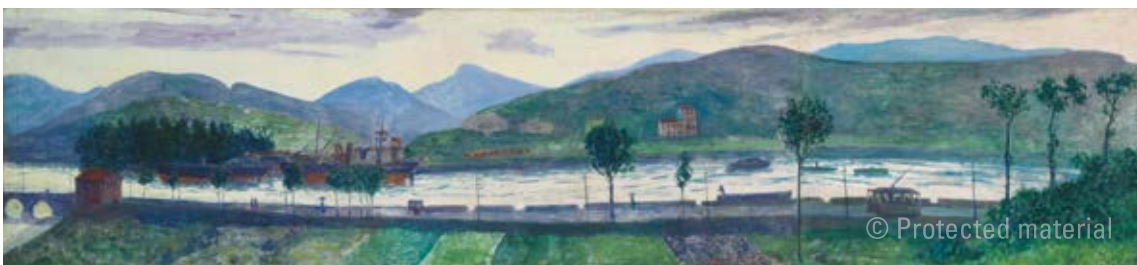
In Granada, one: 15 Mariana Square, 3rd floor, left, from 1910 to 1911.

In Barcelona, two: 11 Universidad Street, from 1911 to 1912, and 4 Figuerola Square (San Gervasio), where the artist died, from 1912 to 1913. Prolonged periods away from his home addresses, accompanied by his wife and children, were spent in Dax, Granada, Ontaneda and Barcelona, giving a total of fifteen partial or complete changes of residence, meaning the artist was almost constantly on the move. This gives a good idea of the kind of support he received from his wife, who accepted with resignation these changes in eighteen years of married life, with an average of nearly one move a year. The couple had six children, one of whom died young, which meant that each move affected seven people and the schooling of his five surviving children. This shows the kind of life the artist lived, which permanently conditioned his ability to paint and the size of his paintings.

The result of this mobility from 1894 to 1913 was the production of works dealing with issues from some very different areas, all of them Spanish with the exception of Dax, San Jean de Luz and Landes. At the



22. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Still Life, c. 1910
 Oil on canvas, 66.5 x 81 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/136

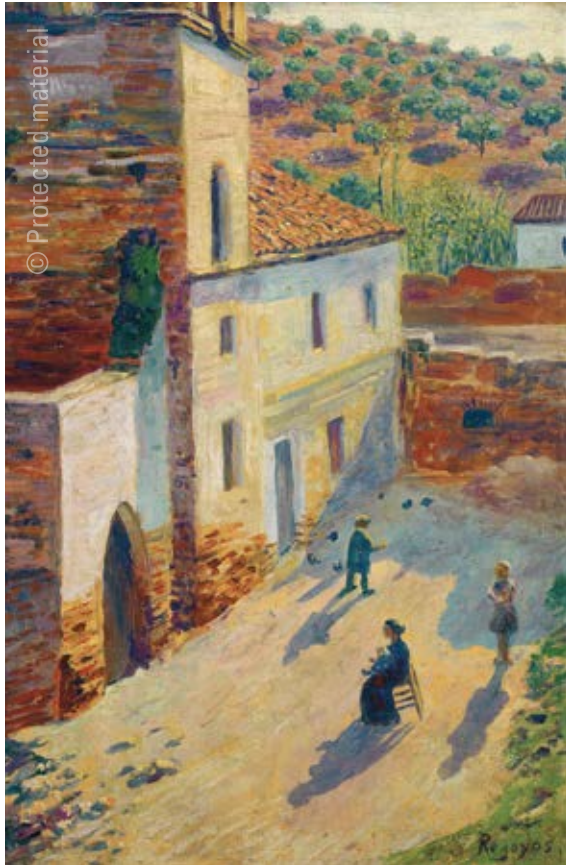


23. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
The River, Bilbao, c. 1910
 Oil on canvas, 49.1 x 208.5 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 94/12

end of this period, his interest in historic architecture led to him to produce paintings of castles, country mansions, churches and monuments, in the hope too that they might interest museums or collectors and thus improve his sales. Not that they signified any loss in artistic integrity, as the paintings offer a lot more than just portraits of buildings or particular pieces of architecture. Amongst these motifs are the castles of la Mota, of San Vicente de la Barquera and of Peñafiel, the gateway to San Gregorio, the Chapel of the Reyes Católicos, the monasteries of San Millán de la Cogolla, Poblet and Bugedo de Juarros, churches in the Mudejar style in Sahagún, San Tirso and San Lorenzo, a number of oil paintings of the cathedral at Burgos and so forth.

Bilbao Fine Arts Museum has a good selection of all these themes, given in chronological order below.

Fruit of his travels and sojourns in the Basque Country are *Bulls in Pasajes* (1898) [fig. 6], *The Church in Lezo*. *The Basque Country* (1898) [fig. 7], *On the Road to Miracruz* (c. 1900) [fig. 9], *The Urumea River* (1904) [fig. 11] (all of which I've mentioned above) *Auresku in the Rain*, *Mondragón* (1905) [fig. 12] and *The River, Bilbao* (c. 1910) [fig. 23]. Although the execution, colouring and themes make all of them major works, perhaps the most singular production is *The River Urumea*, largely owing to some very challenging grey tones. On this occasion the artist, like the good Impressionist he was, tried to capture the reality of life in San Sebastián on



24. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Sunrise in Granada, 1911
Oil on canvas, 49 x 32.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/145

a cold, disagreeable day. To that end he painted the passers by walking to the station, the people standing in front of it, and the horse carriages taking passengers or loads to and from the station. Without this human presence, the landscape would be just as beautiful and simpler to paint, but Regoyos clearly wanted to get down everything he saw. Despite being a sunless day, we can see the thin shadow of the bridge reflected in the water, which is just cloudy enough in that area to hint at movement and flow. Mauve shadows also appear between the buildings and in the station canopy, giving a little relief to the scene as a whole. The artist also adds a touch of colour in the green meadow on the central hill, indicating light snowfall. The reds of the bridge and the ochres and browns of the river banks and the station complement each other and enliven the work, which is remarkable for the suave harmony of its colouring. Also interesting are the blueish variations with red reflections from the bridge, which brighten up the water, and the beautifully achieved impression of melting snow on the lower bank.

Another painting worthy of special mention here is the large (49.1 x 208.5 cm) distinctly Impressionist *The River at Bilbao* [fig. 23], painted while he was living in Las Arenas. It shows the river estuary at dusk. Regoyos was interested above all in capturing the life and the milieu, and here he dots the painting with vessels, a tram and several people. In the foreground are the walkway and a series of allotments with colourful plants and produce that enhance the work; further back is a depth-filled landscape, with a fine sky capturing the passing moments of late afternoon to perfection. Very few works by Regoyos measure more than two metres, all of them being commissions for decorative purposes. That's the only real justification for the size of this and other paintings of similar dimensions.



25. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Sierra de Mulhacén. The Pale Ray, 1911
 Oil on panel, 26.6 x 35 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 82/142

In *Town of Lerma* [fig. 13], from 1906, the year he made a number of visits there, Regoyos chose to paint some old, rather modest houses, over which hang the trees on the riverside behind, against a typical Castile horizon with a sky full of clouds. Far from painting just the street, Regoyos included the people there and the things hanging in the houses, preferring to paint this scene rather than go for other, more attractive themes available in the town. This would suggest he was more interested in capturing the daily life of ordinary people and the precariousness of their means than in depicting convents or country mansion houses.

Besides the paintings mentioned above from an earlier period done in the Basque Country, the museum has two more from the Durango area, called *Santa Lucía. Durango* [fig. 14] and *Elorrio* [fig. 15]. Both were painted in 1907 during his stay in the first of the two places. *Santa Lucía. Durango*, is fully Impressionist in theme and execution. In it Regoyos uses pointillism as a complementary technique to achieve colours and textures. Presiding over the scene, in light and shadow, is the crag of Santa Lucía, partially lit by the sun, while animals watched over by the locals graze in the fields. Once again the painter fulfilled his perennial ambition to be faithful to what he saw.

From 1908, *The Castle of Peñafiel* [fig. 17] is the result of the excursion Regoyos made to the town, when he put up at an inn called La Fonda del Comercio. Regoyos complained of the plaster-like colour of the mountains and hills and the burning sun. Unlike Sorolla, he preferred to paint with less light, and wait for the harmonics, something he was evidently unable to do in this painting, where the brilliant light burns on everything.



26. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
Landscape near Ripoll, 1912
Oil on cardboard, 32.3 x 40.3 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/144

Market closing, Dax [fig. 18] was painted in March 1909, when Regoyos took his family to the town for health reasons, in an attempt to avoid colds brought on by cold, damp air and draughts. He encouraged his children to perfect their French while he painted market scenes. As ever, the artist was attracted by the social side of the market, and this painting is no exception; it is dusk, in a corner of the market in shadow. He portrays the activity in the market, while in the street and on the pavement people chat and take their ease.

San Vicente de la Barquera. Ruins [fig. 20] and *San Vicente de la Barquera. Castle* [fig. 21] are from summer 1910, when Regoyos was living in Ontaneda, which he used as a base for a number of excursions around the province of Cantabria. The theme of the first of these paintings comes as something of a surprise. We don't know why he chose to paint these ruins, although the title is the artist's own, and the painting itself is one of a group of non-commercial works, being a harmony of blues and greens. In the other painting, a view of the castle in late afternoon, light and shade create a relief effect and Regoyos masterfully reproduces the texture of the historic old building and the plant-life on the hill. Above is a sky full of white, blue and mauve clouds, in telling contrast to the greens and ochres of the hill, making this a highly colourful landscape.

Bilbao Fine Arts Museum also owns one of only two still-life paintings Regoyos ever painted, the large (66.5 x 81 cm) one called *Still-life* (c. 1910) [fig. 22], which once belonged to his friend and fellow artist Manuel Losada. Regoyos produced the painting in the Impressionist manner during his sojourn in Bilbao, showing a rustic white wooden table, with a ceramic vase, a glass of wine and part of a loaf of bread, all touched by the light. The background of fabric and a blue and white wall teems with subtle shades and nuances.



27. Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913)
La Diagonal (Barcelona), 1912
Oil on canvas, 49.6 x 60.5 cm
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
Inv. no. 82/137

In October 1910 Regoyos and his family arrived in Granada for the winter, once again for health reasons. Here he stayed until April 1911 when he returned to Bilbao. During his time in Granada he produced some thirty works, including *Sunrise in Granada* [fig. 24] and *Sierra de Mulhacén. The pale ray* [fig. 25], both painted in 1911. The colouring and execution of the first of these make it a work of extraordinarily fine quality in which Regoyos concentrates on the life and customs of ordinary people. This winter sunrise lights up a scene of a mother holding her baby, appreciable from the obliqueness of the chair, while a man feeds the hens and another young girl soaks up the sun. Far removed from commercial themes, Regoyos paints a humble house on the outskirts of the city, with countryside and trees in the background. The length of the shadows shows how early it is. One interesting feature is the care with which Regoyos reproduces the house and captures the play of sunlight and shadows, the patio and the people, the garden wall, complete with bread oven, which encloses it and the landscape behind.

In 1912, while he was living in Barcelona, at number 15 of the long gone street called calle de la Universidad, he painted the works *Landscape, Ripoll* [fig. 26] and *La Diagonal (Barcelona)* [fig. 27], the first the result of a painting excursion to Ripoll and San Pedro de Torelló. The painting shows a lonely stretch of the road leading to Ripoll, a rapid impression taken on a grey day, beside one of the stopping places for the vehicles that covered the route. It captures quite beautifully the atmosphere of that day and the complete absence of traffic, which underscores the loneliness of the place. Like many of his works, the other painting is taken from a high viewpoint that lets the artist get a look at the hills and the rest of Barcelona. He probably painted it from his

house, near Pedralbes, beside the Diagonal. Here Regoyos depicts the relative activity on this major avenue at the time, on a day in which a few clouds muffle the sun's intense light. This was important to the painter, because it gave him the chance to play with light and shade on the hills and get his beloved harmonics into the picture, giving the scene great depth. To that end, he found further support in the variation of the colours used in the hills and the blue of the sky and the white of the far-flung clouds.

In 1913, when he was living at 4 Figuerola Square in Barcelona, his health took a turn for the worse, a cancer of the tongue being diagnosed very late on. In April, unaccompanied by his heavily pregnant wife, he went to Heidelberg for treatment from some highly qualified doctors expert in this kind of disease. He stayed at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel until finally the doctors decided it was too late to operate, his only chance being radiotherapy treatment to contain the illness. On his return to Barcelona, Regoyos, weak and in pain, stopped in Geneva, where he painted several pictures, as he had also done in Heidelberg. Finally, after several months of intense suffering during which he was unable to speak even, Regoyos died in Barcelona on 29 October, after a life devoted to art and the sacrifice of his own interests in defence of artistic freedom.