

# GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



Opening on January 29

# BILBAO AND PAINTING

Sponsored by





There are few more genuine and legitimate reasons for pride than showing the beauty of the place where you are from. For this reason, Iberdrola is truly pleased to be sponsoring this exhibition, *Bilbao and Painting*, devoted to the art produced during the historical period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the capital of Biscay embarked on an unstoppable modernization process. In this show, almost thirty large-scale paintings capture different aspects of the landscape and the society which promoted the innovations in manufacturing and economic changes that ushered in modern life in Bilbao.

The roots of our company—today one of the three largest electric companies in the world, present in dozens of countries and a benchmark in the energy transition—lie in that transcendental transition at the turn of the century.

Two of the companies that were the seeds of Iberdrola were founded in Bilbao in the early 20th century with capital from Biscay: Hidroeléctrica Ibérica in 1901 and Saltos del Duero in 1918. Just like so many other projects which made the industrialization and progress of that period possible, these initiatives emerged from a collective project that joined engineers' cutting-edge technical knowledge with the efforts of countless workers and the investors' financial capacity.

In addition to the purely aesthetic values which the public is sure to admire in *Bilbao and Painting*—including the innovations that connect the painting from the Basque Country with the best European modern art—through the impressive views of its landscape, the toil in the mountain and seaside villages, and the joyfulness of its festivals and ceremonies, the exhibition also conveys underlying values like effort, talent, commitment, tenaciousness, and trust. They all permeate the people and institutions which undertook the radical transformation that placed this city on the front lines of modernity.

Thanks to these values and a steadfast mission to promote innovation and sustainability, today, just like yesterday, Iberdrola is working from Bilbao to anticipate the energy and environmental needs of society as a whole, supplying over 100 million people all over the world.

I would like to welcome the public to this exhibition, which spirits us back to an exciting past and shows us that with ingenuity and effort it is in our power to build a better future.

Ignacio S. Galán  
President of Iberdrola

## *Bilbao and Painting*

- Dates: January 29 to August 29, 2021
  - Curated by Kosme de Barañano
  - Sponsored by Iberdrola
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- At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, Bilbao is a town that expands in every sense of the word, both from an urban as well as an industrial perspective, which is reflected in painting.
  - The works depict very diverse scenes, such as the boats and terraces on the river, the everyday life of the commercial bourgeoisie, and that of the village folk; popular festivities, the heroes of new (imported) sports, or the daily tasks in a fishing port.
  - Both the sea and the ships are a recurring theme in the paintings of Bilbao at the turn of the century, which most artists conjure in an effort to capture their color and thus reflect their vital role in the town's commerce and culture.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents *Bilbao and Painting*, an exhibition sponsored by Iberdrola, that brings together a selection of paintings created by artists working in Bilbao in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who traveled to Paris and incorporated the ideas of modernism from French Impressionism and the Avant-gardes. At the turn of the century, Bilbao became one of the most prosperous cities in Spain, thanks to its naval, and iron and steel industries, and its commercial, banking, and cultural activity. There is, at this period, among the citizens of Bilbao a craving and an earnest wish to succeed and steadily advance towards a better future for all, a sort of empathy that unfortunately will be shattered with advent of the Civil War of 1936.

The exhibition represents and conceptualizes different moments in the history of Bilbao through large-scale paintings that portray, among other scenes, the commercial ships in the river and the terraces given to leisure, the life of the bourgeoisie and the village folk, the rowers, the struggle and death at sea, sporting heroes, the daily tasks in a fishing port or the festivities in a Biscayan *anteiglesia* (village district).

### TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

In the exhibition's introductory space, the visitor delves into 19th century Bilbao through large photographs; this area also contextualizes the figure of Bilbao-born sculptor Paco Durrio, creator of one of the most important public art sculptures of 20th century Spain: *Monument to Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga*. Located in front of the Bilbao's Museum of Fine Arts, this sculpture dedicated to a composer does not depict his figure, but rather symbolizes his work and premature death. Durrio played an important role in the history of art for, on the one hand, he was Paul Gauguin's executor, who entrusted him with all his pictorial work before undertaking what would be his last trip to Polynesia in 1895 and, on the other, passed

Gauguin's baton of innovation to a young Pablo Picasso who had just landed in Paris in 1901, and to whom Durrio generously lent his studio so that the latter could make his first sculptural pieces.

### First Gallery

This space holds a selection of works by Adolfo Guiard, Ignacio Zuloaga, Anselmo Guinea, Manuel Losada, and José Arrue that display the various panoramic views that comprise the new economic, social, and urban landscape of Bilbao at the end of the 19th century. *The River at Axpe* and *On the Terrace*, painted by Adolfo Guiard in 1886, present visions of ships anchored on the river and the sea from the terrace of a spa open onto the outer port. These large-format canvases usually decorate the rooms of the headquarters of the Sociedad Bilbaina, a cultural & recreational society founded in 1839 that was pioneer in its resolve to support the art since its inception.

On the other hand, *Dawn*, by Ignacio Zuloaga, *The Valkyries*, by Manuel Losada, and *The Fountain of Health*, by Anselmo Guinea, portray the enlightened bourgeoisie through various members of the Kurding Club, a club created in 1894, officially called "El Escritorio" (The Desk). The characters painted in these works are young Bilbao businessmen who happened to be music lovers, and who commissioned these painters—their schoolmates—recently returned from Paris, a number of murals to decorate the club's walls. These young men play a key role in the creation of musical institutions in Bilbao, which are still in existence, such as the Philharmonic Society, the Biscay Music Academy (forerunner of the Conservatory), or the Symphony Orchestra, and also in the new industrial and banking fabric. With a lithe and modern style, the murals of the Kurding Club capture the leisure-like atmosphere of Bilbao in quotidian scenes, such as that of the church of San Nicolás in the Arenal at dawn, or the rural scene with village folk and *bertsolaris* (Basque minstrels) in a mountain setting by Zubiaurre.

### Second Gallery

The paintings exhibited in this room bring sea and mountain scenes face to face. Despite the geographical proximity between the two, the fishing villages and rural hamlets use very different color codes, which can be appreciated in the distinctive chromatic range, linearity, and proportion of the painting of ships and farmhouses, for example.

The sea is a recurring theme in the paintings of Bilbao at the turn of the century, which most artists invoke in an effort to reproduce its color and reflect its vital importance for the town's commerce and culture. Examples of both cases are Ramón Zubiaurre's *The Basque Sailor Shanti Andía*, *The Bold*, who stares out onto the horizon in the middle of the gale, or the triptych *Lyricalism and Religion* by Gustavo de Maeztu, which captures the people's shock towards death upon the arrival of some fishermen to dry land.

As far as the rural world is concerned, the paintings reflect scenes that go from the villager who gathers the harvest in Adolfo Guiard's *Harvest*, in which the green of the fields is transformed into ochers and yellows, to the life of cattle and festivities of Francisco Iturrino's paintings, such as *The Picadors* or *Country Scene*, two contrasting examples of Post-Impressionism and Fauve painting which these artists learned in Paris and introduced in Spain. The space closes with Aurelio Arteta's *War Triptych* and Agustín Ibarrola's *Totem*, which depicts the villager's tools, the tools of life in the farmhouse, as if they were sculptures.

### Third Gallery

The paintings in the third gallery make up an ethnographic vision of folklore, in which the artists document, among other aspects, the symbolism of dance. Thus, visitors will discover the costumbrist painting of Manuel Losada *Don Terencio and Chango, The Txistulari* (traditional flutist), the dance in the *anteiglesias* (village districts) in Aurelio Arteta's *The Pilgrimage Festival 1*, or Jesús Olasagasti's autumn scene of the *Apple Harvest*. Different aspects of the pilgrimages and religious festivals are also on display, one in a neighborhood of Bermeo, with the sea on the horizon, and yet another in Arrancudiaga with the rocks in the background, in the unique works of José Arrue.

The room is completed with José María de Ucelay's *Souletin Dances*, a painting that provides an encyclopedic vision of one of the oldest dances in the Basque Country, the Masquerade in Zuberoa, a dance that brings together the entire town and dates back to the domestication of horses.

### DIDAKTIKA

As part of the Didaktika project, sponsored by BBK, the Museum conceives special activities that complement the exhibitions.



### Introductory Talk to the Exhibition *Bilbao and Painting* (January 27)

Kosme de Barañano, curator of the exhibition, reveals, in this talk, keys to the exhibition, as a prelude to the opening. This activity will also be broadcast in streaming.

### Shared Reflections

Unique visits led by professionals from the Museum's Curatorial and Education areas, who offer different points of view on the contents of the new exhibitions.

- Curatorial Vision (February 10): Petra Joos, Museum curator, will tour the exhibition's main works.
- Key Concepts (February 17): Luz Maguregui, Education Coordinator, will talk with participants regarding the works' general and didactic aspects.

\* Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre.

### Creative Session: Paco Durrio, Goldsmith. Modernism and the Avant-garde (March 4)

Introductory workshop to jewelry design, taught by designer Matxalen Krug, who combines experience with a relaxed and laid-back learning.

### Architectural Tour of Ricardo Bastida and Aurelio Arteta's Bilbao. Connections to the Exhibition (April 17 and May 1)

Walking tour of the city starting from the Museum's esplanade, led by the architect Borja Vildosola, who, moreover, will share with the participants details of the installation work and design, as well as the exhibition's works.

**Basque Dance. *Moving Dialogues: Ibis Albizu and Jon Maya (Kukai Dantza)***

This activity, split in two sessions, will highlight the importance of dance in the development of the human mind and the local, national, and international cultural context.

**- Ibis Albizu Talk (May 20)**

Ibis Albizu—a philosopher and a specialist in theory of dance and the analysis of the creative processes triggered by the moving body—will give an overview of dance in general, and specifically of Basque dance and its connection with classical dance from a philosophical and theoretical perspective.

**- Choreographed Action Kukai Dantza/Jon Maya (May 22)**

A live choreographic action that will be held in the gallery presenting *Bilbao and Painting*. The action will be performed by Kukai Dantza and directed by dancer and choreographer Jon Maya (MAX Award Winner in 2009 and 2015, and National Dance Award Winner in 2017 —Kukai Dantza—).

**CATALOGUE**

The exhibition catalogue, by Kosme de Barañano, presents an extensive journey that addresses numerous social, economic, or political aspects of Bilbao's development, as well as a detailed analysis of the thirty-odd painting scenes that comprise the exhibition, which allow the reader to "delve into our city's history" and see [...] "history as a continuum that brings us closer to the Bilbao of 1800 and suggests how to discern the future".

**Cover:****Adolfo Guiard**

*On the Terrace*, 1886 (detail)

Oil on canvas

110 x 470 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection

**For further information:**

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Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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For more information, you can get in touch with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao press area at tel. +34 944 359 008 or email [media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus](mailto:media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

**Adolfo Guiard**

*The River at Axpe (La ría en Axpe)*, 1886

Oil on canvas

115 x 295 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection



**Adolfo Guiard**

*On the Terrace (En la terraza)*, 1886

Oil on canvas

110 x 470 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection



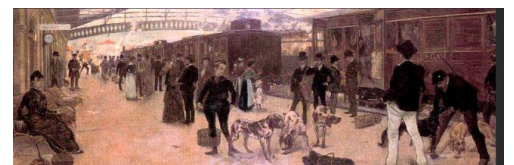
**Adolfo Guiard**

*Hunters at North Station (Cazadores en la Estación del Norte)*, 1887

Oil on canvas

116 x 310 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection



**Adolfo Guiard**

*The Harvest (La siega)*, ca. 1892

Oil on canvas

220,7 x 158,5 cm

Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. On loan from a private collection.

**Manuel Losada**

*Don Terencio and Chango, The Txistulari (Don Terencio y Chango, El txistulari)*, 1894

Oil on canvas

195 x 220 cm

Sociedad Filarmónica de Bilbao

© Manuel Losada

**Manuel Losada**

*The Valkyries (Las Walquirias)*, c. 1894

Oil on canvas

190 x 361 cm

Sociedad Filarmónica de Bilbao

© Manuel Losada

**José Arrue**

*Regattas in Abra Bay. Alfonso XII at the Algorta Lighthouse (Regatas en el Abra. Alfonso XIII en el faro de Algorta)*, 1908

Gouache

43 x 150 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection

© José Arrue

**José Arrue**

*The Team of the Athletic Club (Equipo del Athletic Club)*, 1915

Gouache on paper

52.5 x 103.5 cm

Colección Athletic Club Museoa-ren Bilduma

© José Arrue

**Aurelio Arteta**

*Arratian Eve (Eva arratiana)*, 1913

Oil on canvas

152 x 286 cm

Sociedad Bilbaina Collection





**Julián de Tellaeché**

*Ships in the Port (Barcos en el puerto)*, c.1925

Mixed media of chalk and pastel on paper

280 x 98 cm

Bizkaiko Foru Aldundia / Diputación Foral de Bizkaia

**Gustavo de Maeztu**

*Lyricism and Religion (Lírica y religión)*, 1922

Oil on canvas

200 x 350 cm

Juntas Generales de Bizkaia Collection

© Gustavo de Maeztu

**Aurelio Arteta**

*War Triptych (Tríptico de la guerra)*, 1937-38

Oil on canvas

Alava Fine Arts Museum

On loan from the Fundación Juan Celaya Letamendi, Vitoria-Gasteiz

**José María de Ucelay**

*Souletin Dances (Danzas suletinas)*, 1956

Oil on canvas

152.4 x 270.3 cm

BBVA Collection

© José María de Ucelay

