

THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO

presents on November 19, 2013

**Selections from the
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Collection IV**



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■ **Opening date: November 19, 2013**

■ **Curator: Petra Joos**

■ **Location: Gallery 105**

- This is the last in a series of exhibitions begun in 2010 offering a thematic review of the works in the Bilbao Collection, which currently boasts 128 works by 73 different artists
- The show compares and contrasts works by two generations of contemporary artists who use a variety of creative languages to transcend reality: Elsie Ansareo, Manu Arregui, Juan Manuel Ballester, Prudencio Irazabal, Darío Urzay, and Juan Uslé

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents [*Selections from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection IV*](#), the fourth in a series of exhibitions that began in 2010 and will conclude on August 31, 2014. The aim of this series is to showcase the works in the Bilbao Collection, put them in context, and offer the public a comprehensive vision of its focus.

Curated by Petra Joos, Deputy Director for Museum Activities at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, this presentation features eleven works by two generations of contemporary artists—Elsie Ansareo, Manu Arregui, Juan Manuel Ballester, Prudencio Irazabal, Darío Urzay, and Juan Uslé—who analyze the transformation of reality from multiple perspectives, venturing into the unknown and the realm of experimentation.

“I believe that reality means bursting the banks, courage. Imagined things are part of reality, they happen.”
Adonis [Ali Ahmad Said Esber]

The artists in this exhibition investigate spaces of presence and absence. Through their creations, they undertake to transform a reality that ranges from human relations and references to art history to cosmic and microscopic visions. Each artist approaches reality in a different way, but they are united by the intention of experiencing a revelation. As a result, reality ceases to be a “prefabricated” certainty and becomes a unique experience, where art sheds its rhetoric to establish a direct, immediate connection with the whole of existence.

In this show, the works have been divided into two clearly differentiated areas: the first, with a theatrical dimension, is dominated by figuration, while the second is given over to abstraction.

Encapsulated Time, the Ego and the Other

Elsie Ansareo (b. 1979, Mexico City) offers a reflection on the stage and the spectator by presenting images with a baroque, theatrical appearance that observers find unsettling. *The Dance of the Flâneuses* (*La danse des flâneuses*, 2007) is a large mural of photographic panels in which the characters coexist on a stage of light and shadow. The panoramic format reveals exchanged glances that invite us to wonder about the meaning of representation. The reference to dance in the title with its implications of dynamic energy contrasts with the obvious stillness of the subjects.

Ansareo produced this mural in black and white, like many of her works, which heightens the sensation that time has stopped and the image has been frozen. Through photography, the artist expresses her aesthetic preoccupations and poetically explores concepts like representation, identity, relationships with others, and the subjective nature of time.

Disarmingly Cute (*Irresistiblemente bonito*, 2007) by **Manu Arregui** (b. 1970, Santander) revolves around Vanesa Jiménez, a severely handicapped child who is known in Spain as the “girl with glass bones.” Vanesa became quite popular thanks to appearances on several TV talk shows, which upheld her as an example of someone who has surmounted tremendous difficulties. The work consists of two high-definition videos projected face-to-face. One is a recording of the real girl, while the other presents her virtual image as if it were her reflection. This interplay of real and virtual images allows the artist to explore the dichotomy between the person and the character shown by the media.

With an Effeminate Air (*Con gesto afeminado*, 2011), one of Arregui’s most recent creations, is a video and a sculpture piece. Based on a 1935 film about the Ballets Russes entitled *Spring Night*, Arregui uses this piece to question the imperatives of maleness and the individual’s inability to adjust to society. The artist subverts the original footage by incorporating new political attributes, and he interrupts the film’s linear progression with a chat window to reveal details about the production. In this way, he exposes the artificiality inherent to every process of representation, while simultaneously contextualizing his work in the contemporary technological era.

The Poetics of Empty Space

The photographs of José Manuel Ballester (b. 1960, Madrid,) seems to encapsulate time and limit it to the present moment by immersing spectators in empty spaces, taking an interest in the impressions and reflections people leave behind. His large-format works reflect on the solitude of the individual and the contradictions of the modern world through architecture, and invite the audience to participate in a singular metamorphosis of reality.

Ballester’s quest for a poetics of the void led him to produce the series *Hidden Spaces* (*Espacios ocultos*) in which he reinterprets masterpieces from art history. By digitally altering photographs of historical paintings, Ballester creates disturbing absences. The exhibition will be the first public showing of the three works from this series that the artist donated to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 2011.

In *The Third of May* (*3 de mayo*, 2008), Ballester reinterprets Francisco de Goya’s *The Third of May 1808: Execution of the Defenders of Madrid*. In his version of the tragedy, the artist has removed the people from the scene; all that remains is a pool of blood on the ground, dramatically illuminated by the indirect light of a lamp. Despite the alteration, we can still recognize the setting Goya used to represent this historical event.

Velázquez's most famous painting, *Las Meninas*, is a complex composition that offers a profound reflection on the art of painting, from the use of perspective and light to capturing a historical atmosphere. This well-known masterpiece inspired Ballester to compose the photograph *The Royal Palace (Palacio Real, 2009)*, in which the painting's depth of field is emphasized by the absence of characters, forcing the viewer to focus on the artworks shown in the picture, the light, and the composition itself.

Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*, an icon of French Romanticism, depicts the hours after the wreck of a French frigate off the Mauritanian coast in 1816. Over one hundred people spent several days adrift on a hastily built raft, and only fifteen survived. Ballester's photograph shows the remnants of the raft, devoid of human presence, after the survivors were rescued and the bodies of the dead had disappeared. Like his reinterpretation of *The Third of May*, this work evokes a historical event that lives on in the public imagination.

The Gaze of Abstraction

Selections from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection IV continues with the work of three artists who look at reality from a more abstract angle: Prudencio Irazabal, Darío Urzay, and Juan Uslé.

The paintings of Prudencio Irazabal (b. 1954, Puentelarrá) seem to have been created immediately and instantaneously. However, they contain numerous references to art history drawn from his extensive knowledge of pictorial language gleaned through technical and formal exploration.

The placing of one strata over another gives us some clues as to Irazabal's interests. On the one hand, there is a certain incredulity of his own medium, which leads him to use a microscope to analyze a paint sample and create a diagrammatic elaboration on the painting itself. But there is also a telling confidence in the accessibility of the immaterial (time, spirit, abstract concepts) through the patient and painstaking analysis of the material.

Untitled #767 (1996) is made up of four vivid red panels, each one equal in size and approximately human-scaled. The panels are arranged with a separation between them, making the sensuality between the four pieces also visible. In this way, the painting is more like an amiable conversation between different yet consensual characters, creating a unified image rather than what the heroic dimensions of the work might suggest.

This exhibition will also be the first time that the two versions of the work *In a (Microverse) Fraction (En una [Microverso] fracción, 1997)* created by Darío Urzay (1958, Bilbao) are shown together. *In a (Microverse I) Fraction* (1997) was acquired by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 1997 for the Collection, while the second piece, also from 1997, was donated to the Museum by the artist in 2013.

Urzay describes these pieces as "a dizzying trip from the micro-world to the macro-world; from a distance it looks like a galactic, cosmic thing, but as soon as you come close it transforms and you see something like veins". Both pieces belong to the series entitled *Camerastrokes*, begun by the artist in 1991, which he defines as photographs that "[...] have been made by imitating the brushstrokes of a gestural abstract expressionist painter, where light is the 'material' used" [Darío Urzay, *Camerastrokes*, Photomuseum, Zarautz, 1994].

Finally, the works of Juan Uslé (b. 1954, Santander) are autonomous pictorial spaces that convey his particular view of reality in an abstract way. In the early 1990s Uslé abandoned figuration and began to produce more analytical, conceptual pieces.

Uslé's works reflect some of his own private intellectual or emotional processes. *I Dreamt that You Revealed XI (Airport)* (*Soñé que revelabas XI [Airport]*), 2002, is the eleventh picture in a series that Juan Uslé began in 1997, characterized by horizontal bands of methodically repeated vertical brushstrokes of black paint. Every row alternates between dark and light tones, creating the sensation of a slow or pulsating movement. The mechanical repetition of the brushstrokes reveals a systematic, process-oriented approach, but it is also a visible trace of the body and its physical activity; as the artist notes: "The black works represent how I let myself go when I'm in my studio. In them I seek repetition, the automatic, which is why they are very similar." The presentation of this work is accompanied by the latest addition to the series, entitled *I Dreamt that You Revealed (Congo)* (*Soñé que revelabas [Congo]*, 2013).

Selections from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao IV brings to a close a cycle that has allowed the public to see an important part of the Museum's holdings and review some of the most significant movements in the history of art, from the mid-20th century to the present day.

Educational Area

The exhibition is complemented by the educational space Zero Espazioa, located in the Museum entrance beside the ticket office, where visitors can learn more about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection through audiovisuals, catalogues, books, and other materials.

For more information:

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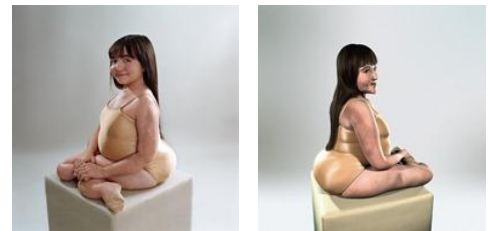
At the press area (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password).

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.es

1. **Elsie Ansareo** (Mexico City, 1979)
The Dance of the Flâneuses (La danse des flâneuses), 2007
12 black-and-white Lambda prints
200 x 180 cm each
Edition 1/3 + A.P.
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



2. **Manu Arregui** (Santander, 1970)
Disarmingly Cute (Irresistiblemente bonito), 2007
Two-channel HD video screening, with sound
Duration: 3 min. 27 sec.
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



3. **Manu Arregui** (Santander, 1970)
With Effeminate Air (Con Gesto Afeminado), 2011
HD video. 10min 15 sec
Epoxy resin covered with enamel on high density polystyrene and metal
82 x 152 x 74 cm
Collection of the artist



4. **José Manuel Ballester** (Madrid, 1960)
The Raft of the Medusa (La balsa de la Medusa), 2010
Photographic print on canvas
491 x 717 cm
Unique edition
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



5. **José Manuel Ballester** (Madrid, 1960)
The Third of May (3 de mayo), 2008
Photographic print on canvas
268 x 347 cm
Edition 1/2 + 1 A.P.
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



6. **José Manuel Ballester** (Madrid, 1960)

The Royal Palace (Palacio Real), 2009

Photographic print on canvas

276 x 318.4 cm

Edition 1/2 + A.P.

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



7. **Prudencio Irazabal** (Puentelarrá, Álava, 1954)

Untitled #767, 1996

Acrylic on fabric on wooden panels

211 x 346 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



8. **Darío Urzay** (Bilbao, 1958)

In a (Microverse I) Fraction [En una (Microverso I) fracción], 1997

Mixed media on wood

170 x 850 cm

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9. **Darío Urzay** (Bilbao, 1958)

In a (Microverse II) Fraction [En una (Microverso II) fracción], 1997

Mixed media on wood

170 x 850 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



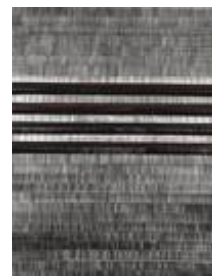
10. **Juan Uslé** (Santander, 1954)

I Dreamt that You Revealed XI (Airport) [Soñé que revelabas XI (Airport)], 2002

Vinyl, dispersion, and pigment on canvas

274 x 203 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



11. **Juan Uslé** (Santander, 1954)

I Dreamt that You Revealed XI (Congo) [Soñé que revelabas XI (Congo)], 2013

Vinyl, dispersion, and pigment on canvas

274,5 x 203 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

