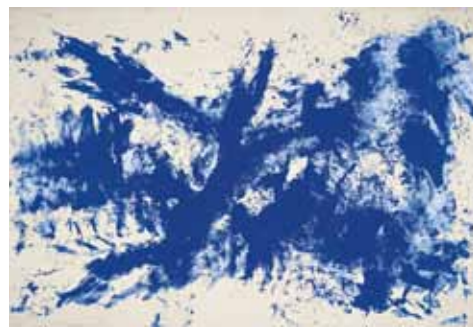


GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on November 26, 2015

Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection

Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection

- Curated by Lucía Agirre
- Dates: November 27, 2015–April 3, 2016

Having recently reached maturity, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents a selection of its artistic assets in the exhibition *Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection*, which includes significant pieces of contemporary art from the second half of the 20th century. Thus, a new approach to artistic programming is born, which answers, among other issues, the need to have a suitable, permanent space to admire the most representative pieces of the Collection.

Among the most important works of this exhibition is the luminous *Untitled* (1952–53), by Mark Rothko; *Large Blue Anthropometry (ANT 105)* (ca. 1960), by Yves Klein, dominated by the unmistakable bright blue tone patented by the artist; *One Hundred and Fifty Multicolored Marilyns* (1979), by Andy Warhol; Robert Rauschenberg's highly expressive, screenprinted *Barge* (1962–63); and *Nine Discourses on Commodus* (1963), by Cy Twombly.

The Basque masters Eduardo Chillida and Jorge Oteiza provide a reference to post-war sculpture with their works. German artists Anselm Kiefer and Gerhard Richter, as well as Americans Julian Schnabel and Jean-Michel Basquiat, are represented in this showcase of important works. Also included in the exhibition is a significant part of the group of canvases that make up *Mother's Room* (1995–97), by Francesco Clemente, a work that evokes the great decorative murals of medieval and Renaissance palaces. Some important pieces reflect the return to painting that occurred in the 1980s, with movements like Neoexpressionism and Transavantgarde, and other works represent the recovery of pictorial expression, like *Flood* (1990), by Miquel Barceló.

Exhibition Tour

Gallery 304. Post-war Art

After World War II, Europe was a divided, devastated continent. Many prominent European artists fled the desolation and found refuge in the United States. In this context, a series of painters emerged on both sides of the Atlantic, whose diverse aesthetic proposals paved the way for a pivotal period in the modern visual arts. One of these movements was the gestural painting of American Abstract Expressionism, which encompassed Action painting—represented here by works like Willem de Kooning's *Villa Borghese* (1960)—as well as the style cultivated by the Color Field painters, or “painters of silence”—seen in Mark Rothko's *Untitled* (1952–53). This expressive trend was secretly used, without the artists' knowledge, for political purposes during the Cold War, when it was touted as the antithesis of “rigid” Socialist Realism.

In 1953, Antoni Tàpies held his first solo show in the United States, and this brought him into close contact with Abstract Expressionism, a movement with which he shared several things, most notably an interest in Surrealism. In *Ambrosia* (1989), the Catalan artist creates a work that resembles the

surface of a wall due to the mix of ground white marble dust and pigments, as if the work was made of the legendary nectar that brought immortality to the Greeks.

Meanwhile, new artistic interests were blossoming in the mind of the young Yves Klein, whose first foray into painting came in Madrid, in 1954, when he published *Yves Peintures*, a small booklet filled with works that did not exist and yet marked the beginning of his artistic career. In this gallery, we can admire *Large Blue Anthropometry (ANT 105)* (ca. 1960) by this artist.

Gallery 301. Chillida and Oteiza

In the 1950s, two Basque sculptors loomed large on the international scene. Eduardo Chillida received the Diploma of Honor at the Milan Triennial in 1954, and in 1958 he won the Grand Prize for Sculpture at the Venice Biennale. Jorge Oteiza was granted the Diploma of Honor at the Milan Triennial in 1951 and the International Sculpture Prize at the São Paulo Biennial in 1957. Though the two artists had very different beginnings, their paths converged in several major artistic projects, like the Aránzazu Basilica and the founding of the GAUR group, part of the Basque School movement.

Oteiza's oeuvre defies easy classification and transcends the sculptural object, for each piece is merely the end result of a long process of experimentation with mass and space, developed in groups or series of pieces that share a common concept. A case in point is his *Conclusive Works*, which include *Empty Boxes* and *Metaphysical Boxes*. This exhibition presents *Empty Box with Large Opening* (1958) and *Metaphysical Box by Conjunction of Two Trihedrons. Homage to Leonardo* (1958), which signal the evolution toward a purely receptive space—the void or emptiness—, which Oteiza associated with the microlithic cromlechs of the Basque Country.

Chillida was also fascinated by the structures of ancient civilizations and drew parallels between those of the Basque Country and other nations connected to this region. For example, *Space for the Spirit* (1995) is a piece of pink granite harvested from a quarry in India using traditional methods. The cubic opening at the top of the stone allows light to flood the interior, revealing the material's intrinsic geometry. For Chillida, the force and power of stone resided in its ability to modulate and contain space. In working with granite, he hoped that the rock itself, like a mountain, would offer an architectural experience.

Gallery 302. Kiefer and Richter

Though part of a generation that grew up in the devastated, dismembered landscape of post-World War II Germany, Kiefer chose to tackle the horrors of its recent history head-on. His conviction that the preservation of memory is the only way to deal with historical trauma is expressed in representations linked to the history of National Socialism and works that pay tribute to the poet Paul Celan, who miraculously survived the Holocaust. In his work, Kiefer constantly questions the place that humans occupy in the cosmos and analyzes the relationships between German history, mythology, literature, identity, and architecture. The artist, influenced by the work of the 17th century English occult philosopher Robert Fludd, who believed that there was a connection between the microcosmic reality on earth and the macrocosmic realm of the heavens, creates monumental pieces that blend painting, collage, and sculpture, combining an almost monochromatic palette with

unorthodox elements such as lead, wire, straw, plaster, clay, seeds, sunflowers, ashes, and dust, which can be appreciated in *The Renowned Orders of the Night* (1997).

Gerhard Richter was born shortly before the outbreak of World War II, in Dresden, a city that became part of East Germany after the conflict ended. His interest in Art Informel and Expressionism being practiced on the other side of the Iron Curtain soon led him to leave his hometown. In 1961, he settled in Düsseldorf, where he met a number of fellow artists, including Sigmar Polke, Blinky Palermo, and Konrad Fischer. Richter has stated that the pieces he created during those years marked a new beginning and a turning point in his career. Within this category of works, he developed a series of seascapes, including *Seascape* (1998), which considers the nature of visual perception.

Gallery 303. The 70s

The 1960s was one of the most turbulent decades of the twentieth century for culture and politics. The United States had become an industrialized society, preparing itself for the dawn of the Information Age, and economic growth created a vigorous consumer culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Pop art—a movement that began in Britain but reached the height of its fame with American artists like Andy Warhol—was countered by German Capitalist Realism, one of whose leading exponents was Sigmar Polke. Both trends focused on the common and the everyday, but with different intentions. Pop art can be interpreted as a critique or celebration of pop culture while the critical message of Capitalist Realism was more dogmatic, unequivocally reproaching the German “economic miracle” and consumer society.

Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly are two important actors who had already developed their own distinctive visual languages by the mid-1950s. In 1963, the Jewish Museum in New York hosted Rauschenberg’s first major retrospective, where he presented *Barge* (1962–63), one of the best examples of the dynamic silkscreened paintings he began to produce in the 1960s. The following year, Twombly returned to New York to present *Nine Discourses on Commodus* (1963), his first work comprising a group of individual yet indivisible canvases, at the Leo Castelli Gallery. In this piece, Twombly weaves a frenetic narrative inspired by the delirious reign of Emperor Aurelius Commodus. Both *Barge* and *Nine Discourses on Commodus* were harshly criticized when they were first unveiled; however, in the years that followed, they became iconic works in the history of 20th century art.

Gallery 305. The 80s: The Return of Painting

In the 1980s, several trends took a renewed interest in figuration and expressiveness in art, drawing on the formal language of early 20th century German Expressionism and moving away from the Conceptual and Minimal art of the previous two decades. Majorcan artist Miquel Barceló is one of the best exponents of this return to painting, producing works where matter is used to form the images. The apocalyptic *Flood* (1990), for example, is presented as a gray, melancholic landscape created by making cuts in the surface of the canvas and applying an abundance of matter.

This inundated scene by Barceló stands in harmonious contrast to the “scorched-earth” European landscape that provides the context for Anselm Kiefer’s *Sun-Ship* (1984–95), a reference to the vessel which ancient Egyptians believed was used to make the journey from day to night and from life to death. These works are accompanied by two of Kiefer’s artist’s books, *Iconoclastic Controversy* (1980) and *Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Cedar Forest II* (1981), whose handcrafted production blur the boundaries between painting and sculpture and where layers of history are represented by strata of material applied page by page.

Georg Baselitz is another of the most prominent exponents of German Neo-Expressionism. *Mrs Lenin and the Nightingale* (2008) was inspired by Otto Dix’s painting *The Artist’s Parents II* (1924), but in his work, Baselitz replaced the two central figures with an upside-down portrait Lenin and Stalin, alluding to the history of his native East Germany as well as the history of German art.

Gallery 306. *Mother’s Room*

Italian artist Francesco Clemente created *Mother’s Room* (1995–97), a cycle of paintings reminiscent of the large decorative murals found in the stanze of Renaissance palaces, as a site-specific commission for Gallery 203 of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. However, on this occasion, eight of the panels that comprise the cycle have been installed in a different space, offering visitors a chance to see and interpret it in a new light.

This artist’s oeuvre is considered part of the Transavantgarde, a term coined by art critic Achille Bonito Oliva to define the Italian movement that burst onto the public stage in 1980, characterized by the use of human figures and traditional materials that distanced it from the Conceptual aesthetics, which dominated the art scene of the late 1960s and 70s. In his work, Clemente uses a wide iconographic and metaphorical repertoire culled from classical, Judeo-Christian, and oriental tradition. He depicts figures that have been deformed, contorted, or transformed, often set against riotous floral backgrounds and, less frequently, simple monochromatic abstractions. In *Mother’s Room*, references to the elemental forces of earth, water, wind, and fire are juxtaposed with an intense symbolism drawn from sources such as Indian culture, the history of religions, astrology, and certain contemporary themes. A theater curtain serves as a backdrop, contributing to the lyricism of this work.

Gallery 307. *The 80s on both sides of the Atlantic*

Enzo Cucchi, another leading exponent of the Italian Transavantgarde, considers that art needs catastrophe to eliminate preexisting structures and then manipulate the elements of a work so that it can move freely between painting and sculpture. This belief is clearly illustrated in *Occidental Deposit* (1986), a piece that addresses the theme of time travel as a metaphor for the New World, with an Italian ship anchored in an American harbor, suggested by the metal circle at the bottom of the work.

In the United States, one of the most important advocates of the return to figuration and expressiveness in art is Julian Schnabel, who uses a wide variety of elements, including the written word, to weave narratives in works like *Fakires* (1993) and *Spain* (1986). In the latter, shards of broken

plates are assembled to depict a bullring and an enormous bovine head. The theme of ritual animal sacrifice is also found in Miquel Barceló's *Male and Female Goats* (1992), in which the two animals, composed with bits and pieces of matter and shown with hanging heads, seem to be on the verge of being skinned or sacrificed.

American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, one of the most celebrated painters of his generation, concludes this review of the 1980s with *Man from Naples* (1982) and *Moses and the Egyptians* (1982), both vital to understanding how Basquiat's pictorial style evolved over the course of the 1980s. *Man from Naples* reflects the artist's feelings of resentment toward his wealthy Italian patron, whom he scornfully refers to as a "pork merchant." Most of the pictorial surface is taken up by a chaotic jumble of scrawls, words, numbers, symbols, and colors. The resulting effect is that of a crowd of shouting, echoing, responding voices. The repetitions, variations, cross-outs, and spelling mistakes are reminiscent of graffiti. The more restrained, balanced *Moses and the Egyptians* is based on an episode in the Bible, which can be linked more generally to African history.

A new approach to artistic programming

In order to offer the public the opportunity to properly admire the most emblematic works of the Museum's Collection as well as its temporary exhibitions, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has rethought the suitability of its spaces for different types of displays for its annual artistic programming.

Without reducing the number of new projects in the Museum's annual program nor diminishing their quality, the division of the Museum floors resulted in a new approach to its artistic programming. First of all, the unconventional galleries on the third floor (304, 301, 302, and 303), with their varying shapes, capacities, and dimensions, were ideally suited to permanently showcase a selection of the most significant works from the masterpieces of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection. The classic galleries on the third floor, perfect for displaying smaller pieces, will serve as an introduction to the contemporaneity of our collection. They are ideal spaces for exhibitions of pre-war art, and the third floor in its entirety has been reserved for the foundations of modern art.

The galleries on the second floor are used to house temporary exhibitions of great curatorial significance and international impact. Currently, and until February 21, 2016, this floor welcomes the show *Making Africa—A Continent of Contemporary Design*.

The galleries on the first floor, except for those dedicated to the Permanent Collection and those that house the works of Richard Serra and Jenny Holzer, will focus on the latest trends in contemporary art. Around the Atrium, Gallery 105, with more than a thousand square meters, will present experimental exhibitions or those that serve to contextualize the Collection's works within an artist's career or highlight some singular aspect of his work. Currently, this space houses a selection of landscapes by Alex Katz, whose works are also presented in the Museum's Collection, entitled *Alex Katz, This is Now*. Finally, the Film & Video Gallery, also on the first floor, is dedicated to outstanding works in video art and video installation. Currently, and until November 22, this gallery

will show *Parallax* (2013), by the artist Shahzia Sikander, which will be followed by *The Cloud of Unknowing* (2011), by Ho Tzu Nyen.

Didactic area: Discover

In the didactic area, under the rubric *Discover*, brief straightforward texts about the artists and works in the exhibition provide additional insight. This information pills cover all the artistic periods illustrated and have the following artists as a subject matter: Eduardo Chillida, Francesco Clemente, Anselm Kiefer, Jorge Oteiza, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, and Cy Twombly.

Educational activities:

Contemporary dance: *Oskara* (December 17–20, 4 performances daily, 15 minutes)

- *Oskara in progress* I 12 and 6 pm
- *Oskara in progress* II 1 and 7 pm

Two choreographers and figures of contemporary dance, Jon Maya (Kukai) and Marcos Morau (La Veronal), have created a special program for this occasion as a tribute to ancient Basque culture, embodied in the work of Chillida and Oteiza, whose creations will be on display as part of the exhibition *Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection*. This activity to be held at the Museum Atrium is the product of a new artist residency program that will be touring the Basque Country from February 2016. It will be presented in Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Pamplona, San Sebastián (as part of the European Cultural Capital program), and Bayonne.

Sponsored by LABORAL Kutxa.

Venue: Museum Atrium. Free with the price of admission.

Creative process – *Oskara* masterclass (Wednesday, December 16, 19:00–20:00)

Jon Maya and Marcos Morau will explain their creative process and how they came up with the *Oskara* project. An excellent opportunity for contemporary dance and Basque traditional dance lovers. Ages 13 and over.

Venue: Museum Auditorium

Tickets: €2, €4 members, available at the admission desk and on the website.

Shared Reflections

Discover the highlights of the exhibition, the behind-the-scenes work, and curious details about the exhibitions on special tours led by museum professionals.

- Curatorial Vision (Wednesday, December 2). Led by Lucía Agirre, Curator.
- Key Concepts (Wednesday, December 9). Led by Marta Arzak, Associate Director of Education and Interpretation.

Meeting point: Information Desk

Tickets: €3, €2 members (price of admission not included). Tickets only available at guggenheim-bilbao.es. Minimum of 8 people per group.

Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre

Gallery guides

Visitors can consult the gallery guides for more information on the works shown through a free service of the Museum, available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information:

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Complete information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.es (press room).

Press Images for
Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Online Photo Service for Press Images

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).

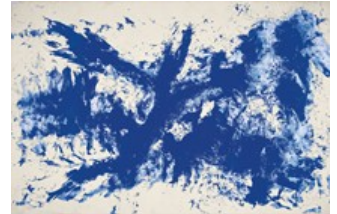
For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.es

Yves Klein (Nice, France, 1928–Paris, 1962)

Large Blue Anthropometry (ANT 105) [*La grande Anthropométrie bleue (ANT 105)*], ca. 1960

Dry pigment and synthetic resin on paper, mounted on canvas
280 x 428 cm

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Mark Rothko (Dvinsk, Rusia [actualmente Daugavpils, Letonia], 1903–New York, USA, 1970)

Untitled, 1952–53

Oil on canvas

300 x 442.5 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Jorge Oteiza (Orio, Gipuzkoa, 1908–San Sebastián, 2003)

Metaphysical Box by Conjunction of Two Trihedrons.

Homage to Leonardo (Caja metafísica por conjunción de dos triedros. Homenaje a Leonardo), 1958

Steel

28.5 x 25 x 26, 5 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Anselm Kiefer (Donaueschingen, Germany, 1945)

The Renowned Orders of the Night (Die Berühmten Orden der Nacht), 1997

Acrylic and emulsion on canvas

510 x 500 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



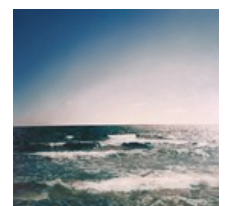
Gerhard Richter (Dresden, East Germany, 1932)

Seascape (Seestück), 1998

Oil on canvas

290 x 290 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Robert Rauschenberg (Port Arthur, Texas, USA, 1925–Captiva Island, Florida, USA, 2008)

Barge, 1962–63

Oil and silk screened ink on canvas

203 x 980 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

and Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa, with

additional funds contributed by Thomas H. Lee and Ann Tenenbaum; the International Director's Council and Executive Committee members: Eli Broad, Elaine Turner Cooper, Ronnie Heyman, J. Tomilson Hill, Dakis Joannou, Barbara Lane, Robert Mnuchin, Peter Norton, Thomas Walther, and Ginny Williams; and funds from additional donors: Ulla Dreyfus-Best; Norma and Joseph Saul Philanthropic Fund; Elizabeth Rea; Eli Broad; Dakis Joannou; Peter Norton; Peter Lawson-Johnston; Michael Wettach; Peter Littman; Tiqui Atencio; Bruce and Janet Karatz; and Giulia Ghirardi Pagliai



Andy Warhol (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, 1928–New York, USA, 1987)

One Hundred and Fifty Multicolored Marilyns,

1979

Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas

201 x 1,055 cm

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Cy Twombly (Lexington, Virginia, USA, 1928–Rome, Italy, 2011)

Nine Discourses on Commodus, Rome, 1963

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Eduardo Chillida (San Sebastián, 1924–San Sebastián, 2002)

How Profound is the Air (Lo profundo es el aire), 1996

Alabaster

94 x 122 x 124 cm

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Miquel Barceló (Felanitx, Majorca, 1957)

Flood (Le Déluge), 1990

Mixed media on canvas

230 x 285 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Georg Baselitz (Deutschbaselitz, Germany, 1938)

Mrs Lenin and the Nightingale, 2008

Jonathan does not know that before the invention of penicillin experiments had been made with poisoned stamps (Jonathan weiß nicht, daß es schon vor der Erfindung des Penicillins Versuche mit vergifteten Briefmarken gab), 2008

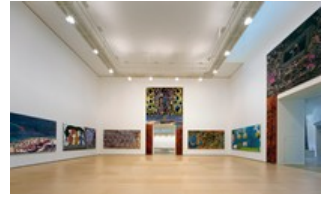
Oil on canvas

300 x 250 cm

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Francesco Clemente (Naples, Italy, 1952)
Mother's Room (La stanza della madre), 1995–97
Oil and tempera on linen
Seventeen panels
8 panels: 239 x 480 cm
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Jean-Michel Basquiat (Brooklyn, New York, USA, 1960–New York, USA, 1988)
Man from Naples, 1982
Acrylic and collage on wood
122 x 244.5 cm
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Julian Schnabel (Brooklyn, New York, USA, 1951)
Fakires, 1993
Oil, resin, and cardboard on cotton drop cloth
275 x 214 cm
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa
Gift of Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich

