

Exhibition Openings in Spain October 2020

Obras maestras de la colección Valdés, Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao, 7 October 2020 – 1 February 2021.

The first exhibition devoted to the art collection of the Bilbao businessman Félix Fernández-Valdés (1895- 1976), 4 of whose paintings entered the Prado's collection after his death and others are now distributed around other public and private collections in Spain. The exhibition shows 79 works out of a total of over 400, ranging from the medieval period to the 20th century and include paintings by El Greco, Luis de Morales, Anton van Dyck, José de Ribera, Francisco de Zurbarán, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Juan de Valdés Leal, Carreño, Francisco de Goya, Eduardo Rosales, Mariano Fortuny, Darío de Regoyos, Joaquín Sorolla, Ignacio Zuloaga, Julio Romero de Torres, Daniel Vázquez Díaz, José Gutiérrez Solana. Though mainly focussing on painting the collection also includes 2 outstanding polychromed sculptures by Pedro de Mena, *Ecce Homo* and the *Dolorosa*, which had until recently been thought lost. The most important single work in the collection (now in the Prado) is Goya's *Marquesa de Santa Cruz* (1805) which Fernández-Valdés bought in 1947 for a million and a half pesetas after Franco's government had abandoned the idea of giving it to Hitler in 1941.

The exhibition reconstructs one of the most important private collections of the second half of the 20th century, and one which was not only rich in 'Golden Age' Spanish paintings, but also medieval Spanish art, with a significant triptych by Bernardo Serra, a panel by Fernando Gallego and the triptych from Quejana (in Álava), and works from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

When forming his collection Fernández-Valdés relied particularly on a group of advisers who included the art historian Enrique Lafuente Ferrari and Isabel Regoyos the daughter and daughter-in-law respectively of the artists Darío de Regoyos and Aureliano Beruete, whose own collection provided a source for that of Fernández-Valdés. His passion for art derived from his uncle Tomás de Urquijo, who bequeathed him a *Crucifixion* (1577) by El Greco, who along with Zurbarán, became one of the collector's favourite artists, his admiration reinforced by his own religious devotion.



El Greco (1541-1614). *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane or Christ on the Mount of Olives* (c. 1600). Colección Pittas.

His nineteenth-century paintings included the portrait of *Concepción Serrano, later condesa de Santovenia* by Eduardo Rosales (Prado) and other previously unknown works by Rosales

alongside paintings by Vicente López, Antonio María Esquivel, Leonardo Alenza, Martín Rico, Mariano Fortuny and Raimundo de Madrazo. His most outstanding 20th-century painting is Sorolla's *After the bath* (1902), which is shown in public for the first time, along with works by Darío Regoyos Ignacio Zuloaga, Isidre Nonell, Aurelio Arteta, Julio Romero de Torres, José Gutiérrez Solana, Joaquín Mir, Hermen Anglada Camarasa and Daniel Vázquez Díaz, with whom he had a close friendship and by whom owned seven paintings and various drawings.



Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923). *Después del baño* (1902). Private collection.

From the 1930s onwards Fernández-Valdés used his wealth, derived from a rich trade in wood, palm oil and cocoa beans imported from Spanish Guinea until its independence in 1968, to buy art from aristocratic collections, churches and religious institutions in the process of dispersing their furnishings. The curators, María Pilar Silva Maroto, of the Prado and Javier Novo González of the Bilbao museum have discovered previously unpublished photographs showing how and where the paintings were displayed in the collector's Bilbao residence. Their detailed research is also published in an accompanying 232-page exhibition catalogue (with 113 colour illustrations) available from the Bilbao Museo de Bellas Artes online shop for €45.

Gaudí & *trencadís* Museo Nacional de Cerámica, Valencia, 2 October 2020 – 31 January 2021.

An exhibition sponsored by the World Monuments Fund which investigates the origin, development and techniques used by the Catalan architect Gaudí to create his signature *trencadís*, a form of mosaic with which many of his architectural forms were covered. The display shows 53 works, 33 of which are original (four from the Valencian museum) and 20 are reproductions made for didactic purpose, by the conservator Montse Agüero. The exhibition divides into two parts, the first explored the links between the *trencadís* and ancient mosaic techniques whether as practised by Romans or Venetians, in stone or ceramics. The second section analyses the development of the technique within Gaudí's work from the Torre Güell, the first building in which he used *trencadís*, and has a special

display about the use of the technique in Valencia itself, especially on its railway station Estación del Norte and on the facades of the houses in the suburb of Cabanyal. A five-minute video in which one of the craftsmen working on the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona explains in Catalan (with Castilian subtitles) how the workshop creates the *trencadís* for the cathedral spires, is found at <https://youtu.be/hSbDvnV9A98>