

# GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



Opening on September 21, 2018

## Van Gogh to Picasso. The Thannhauser Legacy

Sponsored by

Fundación **BBVA**

The hallmarks of Fundación BBVA's identity are a drive toward scientific research and groundbreaking cultural creation, the dissemination of the most significant knowledge (both theoretical and applied) and art that have transcended the dominant paradigms, and the public recognition of how these contributions have shaped our present while mapping out our future.

Thanks to the vision of past private art collectors, the wider public is today able to enjoy an abundance of masterworks from art history. The present exhibition, *Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy*, presented by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, is the fruit of the lifelong determination of German gallery owner, dealer, and collector Justin K. Thannhauser, who bequeathed a substantial part of his collection to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in 1978.

On behalf of Fundación BBVA, I would like to express my pleasure in having participated in the realization of this show, which takes Bilbao as the temporary European headquarters of one of the most significant art collections, which inaugurated modernism in Paris. The thematic and formal ruptures constituting Impressionism and Postimpressionism appear in turn throughout these works, laying the foundations for the creations of Braque and Picasso, who led the revolution of Cubism. Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Vincent van Gogh are some of the great names present in this roster of innovators, who, between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th, were responsible for one of the most intense transformations the Western art world has seen.

Also in 2018, we have had the pleasure of exclusively sponsoring the show *Chagall. The Breakthrough Years, 1911–1919*, an exploration of the highly unique art of the European master from Vitebsk, another fascinating investigation into one of the most significant periods in the development of modern art.

For those of us at Fundación BBVA, it is an immense pleasure to know that through our uninterrupted patronage and sponsorship, we continue to form a part of the ambitious exhibition projects conceived by the Museum as well as contribute to Bilbao's ongoing place as an important cultural model on an international level, as year after year it affords its audiences the possibility of viewing the enduring work of the great figures of universal art.

It remains only for me to congratulate Juan Ignacio Vidarte and the excellent leadership team at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, as well as curator Megan Fontanella for the extraordinary design and execution of this iconic exhibition.

**Francisco González**  
President of Fundación BBVA

## *Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy*

- Dates: September 21, 2018–March 24, 2019
  - Curator: Megan Fontanella, Curator, Modern Art and Provenance, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
  - With the exclusive sponsorship of Fundación BBVA
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- Drawn from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's Thannhauser Collection, *Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy* features nearly fifty works by Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and early modern masters, including Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh.
  - The exhibition marks the first occasion that a significant portion of the renowned Thannhauser Collection has been exhibited outside of New York since its arrival at the Guggenheim in New York in 1965—over fifty years ago.
  - The Thannhauser works bring to the fore avant-gardists who sought to liberate art from academic genres and techniques in the late nineteenth century. These artists explored the fleeting effects of nature and ways to capture the spectacle of the changing city at the start of the twentieth century, and employed stylistic devices such as loose brushwork and innovative practices like fracturing and faceting the picture plane.
  - In addition to paintings, sculptures, and works on paper, the exhibition includes archival material ranging from gallery stock books to historical photographs, further documenting the Thannhauser family's engagement with some of the most pioneering artists, collectors, and dealers of their day.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents *Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy*, featuring the celebrated Thannhauser Collection gifted to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, and marking the first time the majority of the collection as such leaves New York to be exhibited elsewhere. With the exclusive sponsorship of Fundación BBVA, the show includes some fifty works by a number of the most well recognized Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and modern masters, such as Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh.

The Thannhauser Collection is a bequest of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art given to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation by Justin K. and Hilde Thannhauser. Justin K. Thannhauser was the son of the German Jewish art dealer Heinrich Thannhauser, who founded the Moderne Galerie in Munich in 1909. From an early age, Justin K. worked alongside his father in the flourishing gallery and helped build an impressive and versatile exhibition program that included the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists and regularly

featured contemporary German artists. For example, the Moderne Galerie presented the premier exhibitions of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists' Association of Munich) and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), both of which included Vasily Kandinsky, in 1909 and 1911, respectively. The Thannhausers also mounted in 1913 one of the first major Pablo Picasso retrospectives, thus initiating the close relationship between Justin K. Thannhauser and Picasso that lasted until the artist's death in 1973.

An ambitious businessman, Justin K. Thannhauser opened a second gallery in Lucerne in 1919 with his cousin Siegfried Rosengart. Eight years later, the highly successful Thannhauser galleries relocated their Munich gallery to the thriving art center of Berlin. There, the dealer organized major exhibitions of the work of such artists as Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and Claude Monet. Business operations were nonetheless hindered in the next decade with the establishment of a Nazi government bent on purging the "degenerate art" of the avant-garde. The Thannhauser gallery in Berlin closed in 1937, shortly after Justin K. Thannhauser and his family immigrated to Paris. Thannhauser eventually settled in New York in 1940 and established himself as a private art dealer.

The Thannhausers' commitment to promoting artistic innovation paralleled the vision of Solomon R. Guggenheim. In appreciation of this shared spirit, Justin K. Thannhauser gave a significant portion of his art collection, including more than 30 works by Picasso, to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which owns and operates the eponymous museum in New York. Selections from the Thannhauser Collection have been on view at the Guggenheim since 1965. A bequest of ten additional works received after the death of Hilde Thannhauser, Justin's second wife and widow, in 1991, augmented the Guggenheim's holdings and enhanced the legacy of this family of important art dealers. This landmark presentation of the Thannhauser Collection at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao will not only trace the development of modernism at the turn of the century, but also underscore the Thannhauser family's steadfast support of experimental art.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EXHIBITION

### *Gallery 305: Collecting Impressionism*

The Thannhauser Collection played a major role in expanding the range of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's holdings to include the immediate precursors to the modern era. As prominent dealers in Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Thannhauser family not only made a commitment to local contemporary artists, but also they organized important group and solo exhibitions featuring French avant-gardists from the late nineteenth century, including Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, and Édouard Manet. These rebellious artists, centered in Paris and largely associated with the loosely defined group of Impressionists, sought to liberate themselves from academic genres and techniques, exploring instead the fleeting effects of nature and urban subject matter, and employing stylistic devices such as loose brushwork in order to impart an illusion of spontaneity. They developed formal innovations that prepared the ground for the rapid proliferation of radically new approaches to art in the next century.

Manet's *Before the Mirror* (1876), for example, illustrates the unconventional new types of subject matter in its depiction of a courtesan before her *psyche*, or mirror, in a state of partial undress. One assumes the role of spectator and intrudes upon this private moment in the boudoir, as the model—back turned—grasps an extended corset string. Another painting, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Woman with Parakeet* (1871), predates the artist's Impressionist style but is nonetheless rendered with the feathery, textured brushwork that characterizes his work. The intimate scene captures a young, upper-middle-class woman playing with her pet bird, yet the stifling interior restricts the model's space, just like that of her parakeet when confined to its gilded cage. These tensions embody the daily experience of a fashionable Parisian lady. Unlike men, women were confined almost exclusively to indoor domestic spaces and were not permitted to move freely about the city.

### ***Gallery 306: Collecting Post-Impressionism and Early Modernism***

The Thannhausers' assembling of European art of the fin-de-siècle—a complex period defined by economic, political, social, and psychological turmoil, often in the name of progress—captures the diversity of artistic styles that emerged in reaction to the two dominant strains in art at the time: academic naturalism and the Impressionist adherence to the natural world. Artists such as Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh, both subjects of critical exhibitions organized at the early Thannhauser gallery in Munich, turned their artistic eye inward. Van Gogh, in particular, translated reality through the lens of personal experience and emotion. As so-called Post-Impressionists, these artists reacted against the idea of art as a “window to the world” and used sinuous lines and non-naturalistic colors to imbue their paintings with an emotive tenor.

Painted during Van Gogh's recovery from an attack of mental distress, *Mountains at Saint-Rémy* (July 1889) evokes the artist's emotional state—not to mention the awe-inspiring presence of the rock formations near his hospital grounds—through its thick application of paint and animated brushstrokes. Similarly, Georges Braque, in his Fauvist painting *Landscape near Antwerp* (1906), employed vibrant, expressionistic colors and deconstructed the landscape as a sensation of patterned light. Still other varied art forms appeared at the turn of the century, including the flattened, stylized work of the untrained artist Henri Rousseau. Set amid an unspecified forest setting, Rousseau's *The Football Players* (1908) is at once a joyful romp and a hauntingly dreamlike scene.

### ***Gallery 307: Pablo Picasso***

Drawn to Paris, which had become the international nexus of the art world, the Spanish-born artist Pablo Picasso first came to the city in 1900 for the World's Fair. *Le Moulin de la Galette* (1900), the foremost painting executed during the course of his two-month stay, reflects the young Picasso's fascination with the lusty decadence and gaudy glamour of Parisian night life. His artistic style rapidly evolved from more naturalistic to his melancholic Blue period and subsequent Rose period, before Picasso came to pioneer with Georges Braque the faceted forms and flattened spatial planes associated with Cubism. This movement

developed in the crucial years from 1907 to 1914 and is regarded as one of the most innovative and influential artistic styles of the twentieth century.

By the 1930s, with Picasso's renown established and his practice continuing to evolve, private collectors generally had little choice but to go through dealers or secondary markets for works by Picasso. Collector and dealer Justin K. Thannhauser, however, had a strong personal relationship with Picasso that started early in both men's careers, in February 1913, when the Thannhauser family gallery in Munich mounted one of the first major Picasso exhibitions in Germany. More than 30 works by Picasso—spanning 65 years of the artist's career—entered the Guggenheim Foundation's collection in 1978 and 1991 with the respective donations of Justin K. and Hilde Thannhauser.

Highlights from the Thannhauser Collection include Picasso's *Fernande with a Black Mantilla* (1905–06) and *Woman with Yellow Hair* (1931). The subject of the former painting is Fernande Olivier (née Amélie Lang), Picasso's mistress, whom he met in 1904. The artist produced more than sixty works featuring Olivier before the pair parted ways in 1912. Here Picasso depicts an enigmatic Olivier wearing a traditional Spanish mantilla. The sleeping woman in the 1931 canvas portrays another companion, Marie-Thérèse Walter. Walter became a constant subject in Picasso's work of the 1930s, the period in which she lived with him; she is often shown in a state of graceful repose or sleep—for Picasso, the most intimate of depictions.

## DIDAKTIKA

Entitled "Past and Present," the installation in the museum's didactic space will analyze the latest news, whose themes, such as migration, gender, the ideal of beauty, diversity, globalization, communication, and social relationships, are anticipated in certain works in the Thannhauser Collection. The past was never so current.

## CATALOGUE

*Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy* is accompanied by a richly illustrated publication that offers a concentrated survey of works by such modern masters as Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Édouard Manet, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh, and brings to light revelatory new scholarship on the history of the Thannhauser family and galleries and, more broadly, the cultural milieu of early-twentieth-century Europe. Texts on the individual artworks present extensive technical analyses based on the latest advances in conservation technology, offering rare insights into the artists' materials and processes. Short essays on collection highlights written by current and former Guggenheim curators and conservators illuminate the artists' stylistic innovations, and an in-depth essay by Megan Fontanella, Curator, Modern Art and Provenance, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, recounts the genesis of Justin K. Thannhauser's art collection and its eventual transfer to the Guggenheim. Outlining his ambitious career as an art dealer and collector in Europe during the interwar years and into the calamity of World War II, Fontanella explores how Thannhauser's lifelong endorsement of avant-garde art and eye for original talent helped define the artistic vanguards of twentieth-century art. The publication will be printed in English and Spanish. Edited by Megan

Fontanella; texts by Julie Barten, Susan Davidson, John K. Delaney, Lidia Ferrara, Megan Fontanella, Vivien Greene, Sasha Kalter-Wasserman, Natalia Lauricella, Gillian McMillan, Nathan Otterson, Federica Pozzi, Samantha Small, Lena Stringari, Jeffrey Warda, and Jeffrey Weiss.

**Cover image:**

**Pablo Picasso**

*Woman with Yellow Hair (Femme aux cheveux jaunes)*, December 27, 1931

Oil and Ripolin (est.) on canvas

100 x 81.1 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.59

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



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*Van Gogh to Picasso: The Thannhauser Legacy*

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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**Georges Braque**

*Landscape near Antwerp (Paysage près d'Anvers)*, 1906

Oil on canvas

60 x 81 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.1

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**Georges Braque**

*Guitar, Glass, and Fruit Dish on Sideboard (Guitare, verre et compotier sur un buffet)*, early 1919

Oil on canvas

80.8 x 99.5 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser Foundation, by exchange

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**Paul Cézanne**

*Still Life: Flask, Glass, and Jug (Fiasque, verre et poterie)*, ca. 1877

Oil on canvas

46.2 x 55.2 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.3

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**Edgar Degas**

*Spanish Dance (Danse espagnole)*, ca. 1896–1911 (cast ca. 1919–26)

Bronze

40.3 x 16.5 x 17.8 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.9

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**Paul Gauguin**

*Haere Mai*, 1891

Oil on burlap

73 x 92 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.16

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**Édouard Manet**

*Before the Mirror (Devant la glace)*, 1876

Oil on canvas

93 x 71.6 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.27

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**Édouard Manet**

*Woman in Striped Dress*, ca. 1877–80

Oil on canvas

175.5 x 84.3 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.28

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**Claude Monet**

*The Palazzo Ducale, Seen from San Giorgio*

*Maggiore (Le Palais Ducal vu de Saint-Georges Majeur)*, 1908

Oil on canvas

65.4 x 100.6 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Bequest, Hilde Thannhauser 91.3910

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**Pablo Picasso**

*The End of the Road (Au bout de la route)*, Barcelona, ca. 1899–1900

Oil wash and conté crayon on paper

47.1 x 31.3 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.33

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**Pablo Picasso**

*Le Moulin de la Galette*, Paris, ca. November 1900

Oil on canvas

89.7 x 116.8 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.34

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**Pablo Picasso**

*Woman with Yellow Hair (Femme aux cheveux jaunes)*, December 27, 1931

Oil and Ripolin (est.) on canvas

100 x 81.1 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.59

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**Vincent van Gogh**

*Mountains at Saint-Rémy (Montagnes à Saint-Rémy)*, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, July 1889

Oil on canvas

72.8 x 92 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.24

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**Édouard Vuillard**

*Place Vintimille*, 1909–10

Distemper on brown Kraft paper, mounted on canvas

Two panels, left panel: 200.1 x 70 cm; right: 200.2 x 70 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser 78.2514.74

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**Henri Rousseau**

*The Football Players (Les joueurs de football)*, 1908

Oil on canvas

100.3 x 80.3 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York 60.1583

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