

Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection

The Thyssen collection, made up of over 770 works of different styles and periods, has some of the most important paintings from each of the schools.

The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum owes its existence to baron Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza's love of art, which led him to acquire a great number of works. By the 1920s he had gathered an important collection of paintings by classic German, Dutch, Italian, French, Flemish and Spanish artists. This collection was installed in **Villa Favorita**, a mansion that he purchased in Lugano (Switzerland).

The current baron, Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, inherited the his father's collection and passion for art, and he expanded the collection with impressionist, expressionist, cubist and other style works.

Between 1984 and 1986, the collection was exhibited in many countries around the world, including **Spain**, and baron Thyssen, driven by the fact that Villa Favorita had become too small to house the collection, began to search for a new site. Despite the interest expressed by Germany, England, the United States or Japan, Hans Thyssen decided to bring it to our country.

In 1988 the loan was signed for nine and a half years of the most important part of the collection to Spain, with most of the works in Madrid, except for a small part in Barcelona. On 8 October 1992 the **Madrid Museum** was finally inaugurated and the following year the Barcelona site was opened.

The 775 paintings were definitively acquired by contract by the Spanish State on 21 June 1993.

The main site of the collection is the **Villahermosa Palace** in Madrid, a Neoclassic building from the late 18th, early 19th centuries built by Antonio Lopez Aguado. The Spanish State bought the palace and turned it first into an exhibition hall for the Prado. Later, the Villahermosa Palace was remodelled by the architect Rafael Moneo, who gave the building, while respecting the façade, a modern yet palatial air.

The rooms of the Palace are distributed among three floors around a large central lobby.

The part of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection that is in Barcelona, 72 paintings and 8 sculptures, is set in two rooms of the **Pedralbes Monastery**. Both the old dormitory of the nuns of the order of St. Clare and the Main Hall of the Palace have been rehabilitated by the architects Josep Maria Julia and Pere Lopez Iñigo.

At both the Madrid and Barcelona sites this extremely important collection, with several masterpieces, which represents over 70 years of collecting, can be observed.

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The Villahermosa Palace collection was installed following a historical route. The second floor displays the cycle of the **Renaissance** and Classicism, from Duccio

and the followers of Giotto to the Venetian painting of the 18th century. There are also sections on this floor dedicated to Flemish and German painting, as well as some representations of French and Spanish painting. The first two rooms on this floor are dedicated to Dutch painting.

The rest of the Dutch painting, which is doubtless one of the highlights of the Museum, is located on the first floor, whose primary trend is **Realism**, from Frans Hals (12 century) to Max Beckmann (20th century). Most of the impressionist and postimpressionist paintings are on this floor, as well as two very significant chapters in the Thyssen collection: 19th century American painting and German expressionism.

The ground floor is dedicated to 20th century paintings, from **Cubism** and the vanguard trends of the early decades to Pop Art.

The part of the collection located in the **Pedralbes Monastery** includes Medieval, Germanic Renaissance, Italian Renaissance, Baroque and late Venetian Baroque works of art.

Most representative works

The masterpieces on display at the Villahermosa Palace are:

- Diptych of "The Annunciation": by Jan Van Eyck, made up of two oil paintings on panel dated between 1435 and 1441.
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- "The Resurrected Christ": Bramantino painted this oil in 1490.
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- "Jesus Among the Doctors" (1506), by Albrecht Dürer.
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- "Portrait of King Henry VIII": work by Holbein Hans the Younger, painted between the years 1534 and 1536.
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- "Saint Jerome in the Wilderness" (1575), by Titian.
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- "Saint Catherine of Alexandria", painted by Caravaggio in 1597.
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- "The Toilet of Venus", by Peter Paul Rubens, after 1629.
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- "Asensio Julià", oil painted by Goya in 1798.
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- "The Thaw at Vétheuil", painted by Claude Monet in 1881.
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- "At the Milliner's", pastel on paper done by Edgar Degas in 1883.
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- "The Stevedores in Arles", by Van Gogh, dated in 1888.
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- "Man with a Clarinette" and "Harlequin with a Mirror". Works by Pablo Ruiz Picasso dated in 1911 and 1923, respectively.
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- "New York City", oil, pencil, coal and ribbon on canvas by Piet Mondrián (1942).
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- "Express", by Robert Rauschenberg. Oil on canvas with silkscreen printing from 1963.

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Of note at the Pedralbes Palace in Barcelona are:

- "The Madonna of Humility", by Fra Angelico (1433-35).
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- "Il Bucintoro, Venecia", oil on canvas painted by Canaletto between 1745 and 1750.

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