

Modernity.

Progress and Decadentism

The 20th Century was born under the sign of technological modernisation and the prominence of the new urban popular classes. New tensions arose, and new horizons scanned. Photography and cinema were the media that represented these changes. Spain joined the process while in the midst of a deep crisis affecting social, political and economic structures. The problem was not only to rescue the country from centuries of delayed development, but also to solve the eternal conflict between tradition and progress, between conserving a specific historical identity and social modernisation.



The 20th Century starts with the push of the ideology of progress that relies on technological advances and industrial growth, an ideology which hides behind it an enormous load of violence: the sustained violence of social inequality and the more punctual but intense violence of the wars which mark the entire period. The century also starts with the consolidation of the working class and the development of a new type of popular culture linked to the technological media of reproduction and communication and to the rhythms of urban life, work, leisure, and consumerism. The theme chosen by the brothers Lumière, Auguste (1862–1954) and Louis (1864–1948), in 1896 for their film *Sortie d'usine III* (Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory), bears eloquent witness to the interweaving of all these ingredients in the definition of the cinematographic medium which would dominate the new century.

Modern art will be the standard-bearer of the utopic promises of the new era, but also the witness of its contradictions, of which this art itself participates. With a head start of one hundred years, Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) embodies the position of the artist before a world which he can't stop responding to, whether through testimony and accusation, such as in the *Desastres de la Guerra* (The Disasters of War, 1st edition, 1863) or through hallucination and dream, such as in *Caprichos* (1st edition, 1799), and *Disparates* (1st edition, 1864).

This room reproduces the plural and dissonant nature of the representations that meet in these beginnings of the century in Spain. To the left are the paintings by Ramón Casas (1866–1932) and by José María López Mezquita (1883–1954) which narrate so-

cial conflicts and police repression from a Bourgeois moralist realism. Beside them, the photographs of Alfonso Sánchez García (1880–1953) and his son Alfonso Sánchez Portela (1902–1990) use the new medium of producing images to portray the spaces of modernity and its inhabitants who, nonetheless, overflow the models of customs and manners which these two apply to them.

To the right, in counterpoint, representations of progress and the utopia of modernity are arranged. On the one hand, the photographs of the public works commissioned by the Government of Madrid to create the image of a modern, productive, and technologically advanced Spain. On the other, the documents relating to the Free Institute of Learning, an educational project founded by Giner de los Ríos, which aimed for the transformation and modernization of the country through a lay and liberal education that would rescue Spanish society from ignorance, poverty, and superstition which would have inspired such bitter comments from Goya at the end of the 18th Century.

New acquisitions

Documentary archives:

Revista *Por España: impresiones gráficas*, 1920

The grotesque and Carnavalesque distortion of reality which the Galician dramaturge Ramón María del Valle-Inclán would baptize is the peculiar mode by which the culture of the Spanish avant-garde reacts before the contradictions of a modernity which doesn't manage to break away from the ghosts of the old regime. The acidic gaze of Goya with respect to the world which surrounds him again serves us again as interpreter for the reading of the suffocating images of José Gutiérrez Solana (1886–1945).

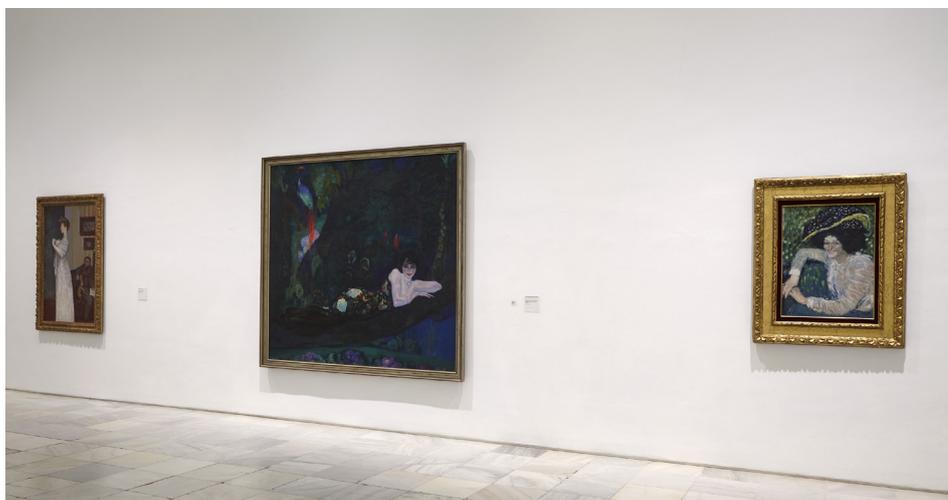
Bibliography

Caballero Carrillo, María Rosario. *Inicios de la historia del arte en España: La Institución Libre de Enseñanza (1876–1936)*. Madrid: Departamento de Historia del Arte, Instituto de Historia, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002.

Coloma Martín, Isidoro. *La forma fotográfica. A propósito de la fotografía española desde 1839 a 1939*. Málaga: Universidad de Málaga; Colegio de Arquitectos en Málaga, 1986.

Symbolism, Modernism and the Generation of '98

From the artistic standpoint, the *Noventayochistas* were demanding a new image for the country, a critical image, in answer to the search for what it meant to *be Spanish*. This questioning of Spanish identity gave rise to a whole new way of looking at the landscapes and nature seen as an idealised expression of the soul and very essence of Spain.



On approaching the end of the 19th Century, art sees itself pierced by the tensions derived from the conflict between its own tradition and its will to express the new dimensions of modern experiences. In the face of Impressionism, whose fundament was the objective representation of a visual impression, certain artists now advocate for recovering the significance of the work and to convert it into an expression of its subjective relationship with the world. Medardo Rosso (1858–1928) represents a new form of conceiving of sculpture which dissolves the image in the material through effects of light and movement, giving the work a density of significances that goes beyond the classical synthesis between subject and artistic values. The painter Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), for his part, will contaminate the representation of the everyday, typical of Impressionism, with subjective connotations of these scenes, fundamentally belonging to the feminine universe. The representation of women and their spaces will be one of the principal battlegrounds in which these modern conflicts will dissolve. This is debated between the domestic realm –the pure and virginal mother of the Pictorialism of the photographic portraits of *Camera Work*, the cases of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879) and Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934)– and the public realm, the *femme fatale*.

The passage to the 20th Century in Spain showed a country at a major crossroads. Different reactions against positivism and realism, signs of the new times, came together in the art world. Nostalgia for the past and anxiety in the face of the future were expressed in a flight toward fantasy, the mysterious, or the unconscious. The Madrid period of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), during which he painted an entire world of marginalization and decadence, is framed in this context. In the face of bourgeois morality, the bohemian lifestyle prevailed in the art world, whose emergence in Spain was affected by various factors: the

model of the Parisian artistic lifestyle, the confrontation of a young art with traditional styles, and the increase of the acquisitive capacity of the small middle class that bought art. Misery and marginality took on a central role in the Bohemian poetic. *Mujer en azul* (Woman in Blue), 1901, by Picasso, considered emblematic of modernity, revolves around the subject of the female courtesan, a refined version of the bordello prostitute, who attended salons and distinguished parties. His friend Isidre Nonell (1872–1911), for his part, showed the image of a black Catalunya, with which he hoped to magnify marginality, through his works of sick and disadvantaged people, presenting it as something inherent to the industrial civilization.

In Spain, an autochthonous version of the international erotic myth of the *femme fatale* developed, which was adapted to the national canons. Julio Romero de Torres (1874–1930) and Hermengildo Anglada Camarasa (1871–1959) created Castillian versions of women like Salomé or Ofelia. In the case of the former, the eroticism is seen through a dimension of the anxiety and the tragedy of the sin. Julio

New acquisitions

Medardo Rosso. *Bambino malato*,
ca.1893–1895

Medardo Rosso. *Bambina che ride*,
ca.1889–1890

Romero de Torres, constantly defended by Valle-Inclán as a "painter of ideas", was one of the greatest representatives of the folkloric representation of what is Spanish, exploiting the Andalusian image. In this case, the regionalist art joined a modernist and symbolist aesthetic, and the rapid acceptance of both currents is explained thanks to the facility with which the painters adapted to the reigning genre of customs and manners.

These processes are framed within a deep crisis of national identity. The transition of the 19th Century to the 20th Century produced every class of catastrophic prognostication of millennial inspiration. The Generation of '98 connected with European concerns through a Regenerationist process that was taking place throughout the Western world. According to Azorín, that generation, stimulated by the experience of *the disaster*, had done nothing but foster the social and political criticism that had already been brewing since the era of Mariano José de Larra. Although the theme of national decadence of the Generation of '98 movement is associated with the bold expressionism of Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945) or José Gutiérrez Solana (1886-1945), prototypic image of "La España Negra" (Black Spain), one must note that it often offers a lyric evasion and an intimate sensuality, in contact with Modernism and which summarizes the idea of "La España Blanca" (White Spain).

The landscape which, in the words of Gómez de la Serna was no longer "just a physical organism, but rather a historic and moral one", was the realm where the different movements most-clearly differentiated themselves around 1900. On the one hand, we find ourselves with the Post-impressionism of Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913), the Luminism of Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923), and the Fauvism of Francisco Iturrino (1864-1924); on the other, with the Symbolism of Santiago Rusiñol (1861-1931), whose gardens precede the chromatic synaesthesia of Abstraction. The first were inspired both by the Regenerationism of the Generation of '98 as by the photographic production of the romantic image of Spain, such as was the case of Charles Clifford (1819-1863).

Bibliography

Herrera Navarro, Javier. *Picasso, Madrid y el 98: la revista "Arte Joven"*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1997.

Moure, Gloria [edit.]. *Medardo Rosso*. Santiago de Compostela: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 1996.

Litvak, Lily. *El tiempo de los trenes. El paisaje español en el arte y la literatura, 1849-1918*. Barcelona: Serbal, 1991.

López Fernández, María. *La imagen de la mujer en la pintura española, 1890-1914*. Madrid: Machado Libros, "La Balsa de la Medusa", 2006.

Pena López, Carmen. *Pintura de paisaje e ideología: la generación del 98*. Madrid: Taurus, 1983.

The “Black Spain”

The transition from the 19th to the 20th century produced all kinds of end-of-the-century predictions of catastrophe. The Generation of '98 connected with the concerns of Europe through a regenerationist process taking place throughout the western world. This generation, driven by the experience of *El Desastre* (as Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War became known) intensified their political and social criticism, best represented by painters such as Ignacio Zuloaga and José Gutiérrez Solana.



In contrast to the earlier image of the countryside as a timeless Arcadia, ruralness is proof of a secular backwardness in the myth of “España negra” (Black Spain). This became established in 1899, due to the publication of *España negra* (on display here) written by Émile Verhaeren (1855–1916) and illustrated by Darío de Regoyos (1857–1913), which related a journey they had both undertaken through the Iberian Peninsula. In the book an aesthetic of fascination for decrepitude, death, and religious fanaticism flourishes, a series of elements that they wanted to see as inseparable from the Spanish festivals and habits. Verhaeren, a representative of Belgian Symbolism, brought from his native land an attraction for provincial life, old cities, and melancholy atmospheres. In effect, the gloomy and sordid vision that they directed toward all that they found was nothing more than a preconceived image that they sought to corroborate through the selective collection of experiences. For this reason it's important to note the foreign component of the myth of the “España negra”, whose vision was not only imbued with the turn of the century European decadence, but was moreover made up of the internalization of a border-crossing imagination rooted centuries ago, especially from Romanticism. “España negra” was, definitively, a mystification of a dark and obscurantist Europe versus the progress of a supposedly-civilized Europe.

Painters such as Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945), José Gutiérrez Solana (1886–1945), or Darío de Regoyos recreated a dark and terrible world of popular images, interpreted as manifestations of a national character to which they tied a concept of noble tragedy of the Spanish people. Their “España negra” is indebted to Realism and Expressionism, but also to the Romantic myth, insofar as it reproduces the somber and tragic image of what is Spanish. The writers of the Generation of '98 such as Unamuno, Baroja, Valle-Inclán, or Azorín also understood it to be so.

Miguel de Unamuno was an impassioned defender of Regoyos and Zuloaga; for him, these artists expressed a specific and distinguishing vision of Spain that consisted of austerity, gravity, and a deep feeling of Catholicity.

Zuloaga's *El Cristo de la sangre* (Christ of Blood, 1911) supposes a synthetic representation of this Generation of '98 ideology. The members of the sisterhood of Christ, joined to a confraternity of clergymen and peasants, make up a scene that has as its backdrop a medieval city of Castile, emblem of religiosity. Apollinaire would say of this work that “with its extenuated characters in the style of Greco, the candles, the pale and bleeding Christ, [and] its female rider, is a fairly precise image of the mystic and sensual religion which underlies the beliefs of a Spain in which processions of flagellants are still celebrated and where the joy of pain can still transport souls like in the times of Saint Teresa.” This is an undramatic description of the idiosyncrasy of the Spanish people, also reflected by Solana in *La visita del obispo* (The Bishop's Visit, 1926), an evocation of a traditional Spain that refuses to break with its most ancestral past. The debate between “the two Españas” was the dichotomy between the austere, grave, and Catholic of the “España negra” which these works embody, and the pagan, vital, and optimistic works of the “España blanca” (White Spain), who had its greatest exponent in the Luminism of Joaquín Sorolla (1863–1923).

Bibliography

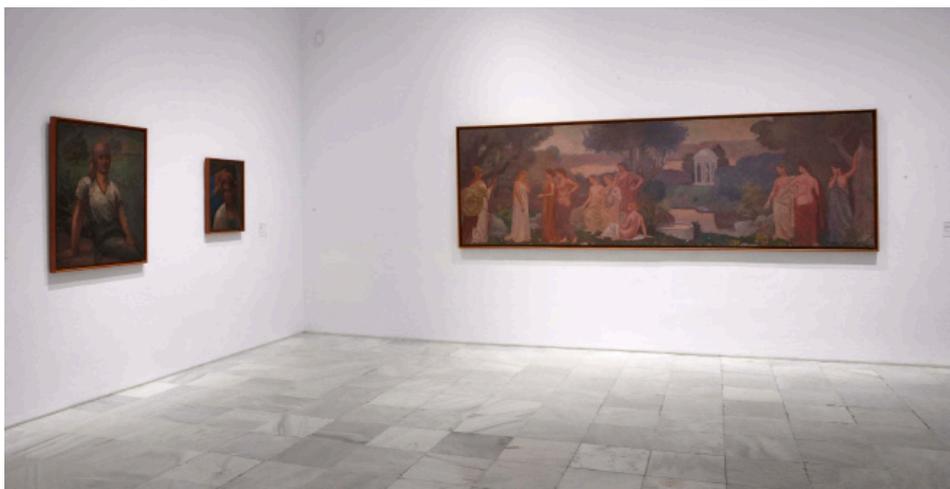
Huici, Fernando; Trapiello, Andrés [eds.]. *Plástica y texto en torno al 98*. Madrid: Consejería de Educación y Cultura de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid; Círculo de Bellas Artes, 1998.

Pena López, Carmen [comis.]. *Centro y periferia en la modernización de la pintura española (1880-1918)*. Madrid: Centro Nacional de Exposiciones y Promoción Artística; Barcelona: Àmbit Serveis Editorials, 1993.

Tusell, Javier; Martínez-Novillo, Álvaro [comis.]. *Paisaje y figura del 98*. Madrid: Fundación Central Hispano, 1997.

Mediterraneanism and *Noucentisme*

Throughout Spain's industrial modernization, a primarily liberal and bourgeois national consciousness was progressively consolidated in Catalonia. Consequently, a political and cultural movement arose from the bourgeoisie committed to Catalan identity, which collaborated with intellectuals and artists to build Catalonia as a region that could govern itself with autonomy.



The *noucentisme* movement was hatched in 1906 with the appearance of the *Glosari*, a daily column and press "commentary" penned by Eugeni d'Ors. Even though the movement emerges from principles reacting to nineteenth-century romanticism, its notions of beauty, truth and nature were not far removed from Catalan modernisme, despite its resistance to these terms. Both movements formed part of one and the same process in which modernisme signified the age of enthusiasm, expansion, liberty and a certain anarchy, while *noucentisme* represented serenity, calmness and a certain return to order. Its positivist utopian spirit stood in contrast to the fatalist somber vision of "Black Spain".

At the heart of this movement, writers and artists aimed at situating Catalan culture on the same level as other, more prominent European cultures, while asserting a cultural tradition that desired to distinguish and preserve Catalan identity. Both elements were reconciled with the myth that Catalan identity belongs to a Greco-Roman cultural tradition, which was reaffirmed at the time by archaeological findings in Ampurias: the sense of belonging to the Mediterranean basin established the foundation for a new aesthetic and cultural project.

For d'Ors, Mediterraneanism was the racial expression of classicism turned into a cultural referent and a spiritual category, similar to Mediterraneanist doctrines developing in France and Italy. In the case of Joaquín Torres García (1874-1949), this classicism should not be limited to artistic forms but should aspire instead to erecting a kind of spirit beyond time and space. *La Filosofía presentada por Pallas en el Parnaso (Filosofía Xª Musa)* [Philosophy Presented by Pallas on Parnassus (Philosophy of the 10th Muse), 1911], represents an untimely Arcadia where models of Greco-Roman antiquity manifest themselves with monumental tendencies, idealized realism and a search for serenity and sobriety. The classical composure of its bodies alludes to Cubism's new artistic language and foresees Torres García's later interest in Constructivism, as it did for all *noucentisme* artists.

The aesthetics of *noucentisme* also acquired a popular sense, espousing simplicity in cultured man while exhibiting a particular attraction to peasants, occupations in manual labor and all that could be represented in popular traditions. Manuel Hugué (1872-1945) created loyal representations of laborers, peasants and bullfighters, which reflect a bohemian interest in the "idyllic" lives of workers. With its calculated aesthetic, suggesting a classical tone without excessive references to folklore, an idealized mythology was constructed around the working classes.

The female archetypes by Julio González (1876-1942) convey the harmony of forms and their relationship to their surroundings as a synthesis of Mediterranean culture, interpreted as a metaphor for the Earth, its peoples and customs. His small-format sculptures are produced in direct contact with nature, linked to a classical essence and Naturalism. In the case of Joaquín Sunyer (1875-1956), regarded by d'Ors an artist who truly captures Catalan identity, the prototype of the Catalan woman in *noucentisme* produces an identification with idealized representations of nature in which lines, color and light are used as instruments to convey meaning.

Bibliography

Peran, Martí; Suárez, Alícia; Vidal, Mercè [eds.]. *El Noucentisme. Un projecte de modernitat*. Barcelona: CCCB, 1994.

Sureda Pons, Joan. *Torres García. Pasión clásica*. Madrid: Akal, 1998.