BARCELONA, SPAIN

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings from the MNAC, Barcelona



The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, or MNAC, occupies the Palau Nacional above Barcelona. Its collections run from medieval art, including Romanesque mural paintings brought from churches in the Pyrenees, to later Catalan painting. Modernisme and the years around 1900 are central to the city's artistic history, and many of the pictures chosen here belong to that period.

All twenty come from the later collections. The earliest is Torrescassana's Landscape and the latest is Mir's Waterwheel at Onclet. Santiago Rusiñol and Darío de Regoyos have several pictures each. The other painters include Ramon Casas, Isidre Nonell, Joaquín Mir, Joan Brull and Joaquim Sunyer. One picture was made to decorate a café, and another shows a café. Elsewhere there are gardens and courtyards, a domestic interior, a woman at a keyboard, a Basque celebration, a Good Friday procession, a passing train, the coast and the mountains.

Some of the pictures are best read in pairs. Nonell's portraits of two women, Consuelo and Flores, are one pair. Mir's loosely touched landscape and Torrescassana's hard-edged one are another.

Artline chose these works from the museum's documented holdings, independently of the museum. Where the linked records qualify a date or an attribution, this guide keeps the qualification.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/national-art-catalonia

The selection · 20

1. Ramon Casas and Pere Romeu on a Tandem
   Ramon Casas · 1897
2. Mr Quer's Garden
   Santiago Rusiñol · 1889
3. Romance
   Santiago Rusiñol · 1894
4. Basque Celebration at El Antiguo, San Sebastián
   Darío de Regoyos · 1888
5. The Blue Courtyard
   Santiago Rusiñol · 1913
6. Cala Forn
   Joaquim Sunyer · 1917
7. Chlorosis
   Sebastià Junyent Sans · c. 1899
8. Plein Air
   Ramon Casas · c. 1890–1891
9. Consuelo
   Isidre Nonell · 1905
10. Dream
    Joan Brull · 1897
11. Flores
    Isidre Nonell · 1910
12. Good Friday at Dawn in Orduña
    Darío de Regoyos · 1903
13. The Holy Family
    Muter Mela · c. 1909
14. Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette Park
    Santiago Rusiñol · 1891
15. Landscape
    Francesc Torrescassana Sallarés · 1864
16. Living Room Interior
    Pere Tornè Esquius · 1913
17. The Waterwheel at Onclet
    Joaquín Mir Trinxet · 1922
18. Landscape
    Joaquín Mir Trinxet · c. 1900
19. Pancorbo: A Passing Train
    Darío de Regoyos · 1901
20. Peñalara
    Jaume Morera i Galícia · c. 1891

01 / 20

Ramon Casas and Pere Romeu on a Tandem

Ramon Casas

1897 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Ramon Casas. Ramon Casas and Pere Romeu on a Tandem. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Casas painted himself and Pere Romeu on a tandem as part of the decoration of Els Quatre Gats, the Barcelona café where both men were familiar figures. The joke was aimed at the café's own customers, who would know the riders by sight. The tandem was also a fashionable machine, and it puts the pair firmly in the world of modern transport and city life.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 069806-000

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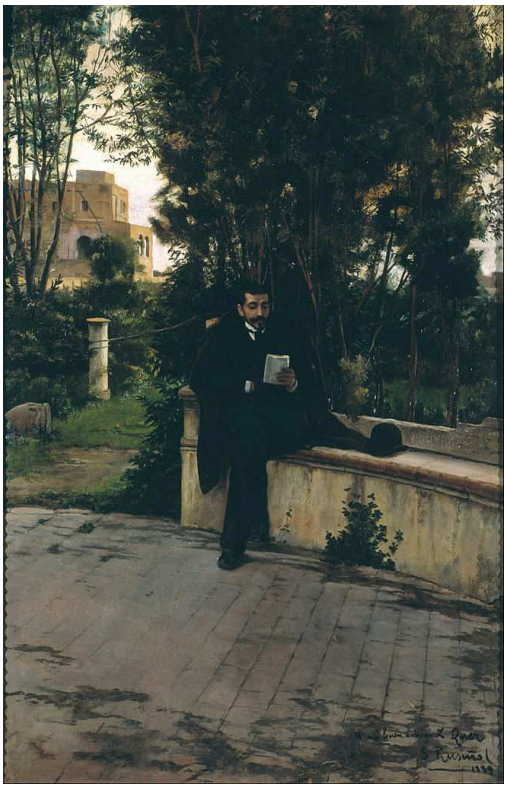
Mr Quer's Garden

Santiago Rusiñol

1889 · Oil on canvas · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Santiago Rusiñol. Mr.Quer in the Garden. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/santiago-rusinol/senyor-quer-in-the-garden-1889 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

The title names a garden, and most of the canvas belongs to it. Its paths and shade are too substantial to be a neutral backdrop for a portrait. Instead they give the small, dark figure of the man somewhere to belong, and his face is kept secondary.

Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

Romance

Santiago Rusiñol

1894 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Santiago Rusiñol. A Romance. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The woman in red sits at the keyboard and the standing man is near the music, so each has a part in the performance. The instrument gives them something in common, and it also fills the space between them. Music is plainly being made. The romance of the title is less plain, because the picture says nothing directly about their private relationship. Whatever romance there is has to be read from the way Rusiñol has placed them.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 011422-000

04 / 20

Basque Celebration at El Antiguo, San Sebastián

Darío de Regoyos

1888 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Darío de Regoyos. Basque Celebration (dance at El Antiguo, San Sebastián). Image credit: Darío de Regoyos. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The dancers form a curved chain across the ground, a boundary that holds only while the dance lasts. Regoyos sets the whole celebration inside a much wider view of the bay and hills. He keeps the musicians and onlookers at the edges, so they do not crowd into one centre. The festivity has room to spread, and it is easy to tell who is dancing and who is watching.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 065614-000

05 / 20

The Blue Courtyard

Santiago Rusiñol

1913 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Santiago Rusinol. Blue Courtyard. WikiArt: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt per-object label)

Blue is the strongest colour here. It belongs to the walls, and the pots and plants are set out against it. Rusiñol keeps most of the space shallow and close to the picture surface. That is why the one narrow passage through to a different, brighter space counts for more than its size.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 145243-000

06 / 20

Cala Forn

Joaquim Sunyer

1917 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Joaquim Sunyer. Cala Forn. Image credit: Joaquim Sunyer. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Sunyer's women, children and baskets are rounded and solid, and the forms of the coast behind them repeat that solidity. The subject is an everyday one, but nothing about the grouping looks casual. Each body is placed in relation to the tree, the village and the bay as well as to the figure beside it.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 011004-000

07 / 20

Chlorosis

Sebastià Junyent Sans

c. 1899 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Sebastià Junyent Sans. Chlorosis. Image credit: Didier Descouens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Chlorosis is a historical diagnosis, and the title records how such a subject was named at the time. A label like that can easily swamp a picture. The title makes the diagnosis. The paint itself shows a woman reclining with her head lowered and her weight against the sofa, and an open book that has been put aside.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 038927-000

08 / 20

Plein Air

Ramon Casas

c. 1890–1891 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Ramon Casas. Plein air. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

For a picture of a café, this one is short of company. The pale tables take up more room than any visible social life, and what stands out is the empty space around the seated woman. Casas paints a setting for leisure and leaves much of it unused. Any conversation the place might hold is left unstated.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 010901-000

09 / 20

Consuelo

Isidre Nonell

1905 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Isidre Nonell. Consuelo. Image credit: Isidre Nonell. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Consuelo's face is mostly hidden. Nonell divides the picture into broad areas: her red skirt, her bent body and dark hair, and the cloth around her. Without the face, her posture has to tell us what a face usually would. What it conveys is weight: a seated figure folding in on herself. It is tempting to call that sadness, but the picture does not say so.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 069008-000

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Dream

Joan Brull

1897 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Joan Brull. Dream. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/joan-brull/ensueno-1897 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Brull separates the pale figure only loosely from the bank and the water. Hanging branches and softened distances make the setting hard to divide into distinct planes. There are trees and there is water, but their edges stay uncertain, and the figure is hardly firmer. Is the figure dreaming, or part of the dream?

Object source · Open artwork

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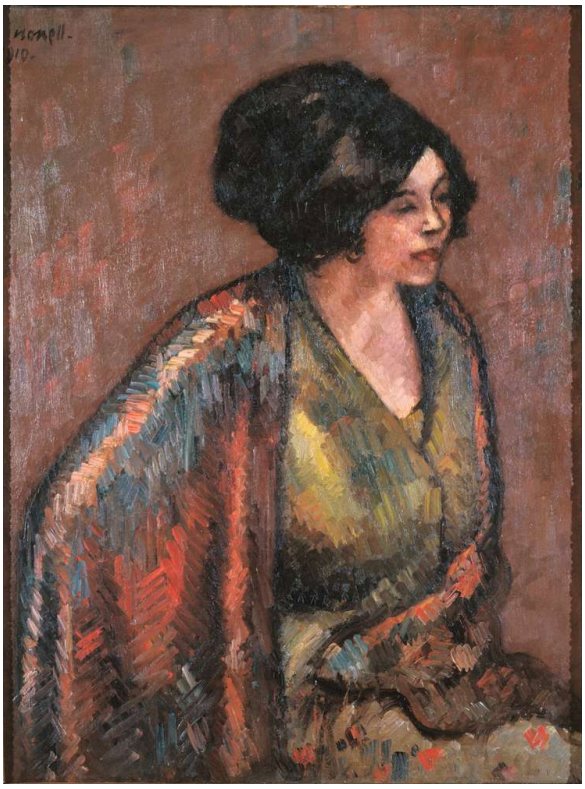
Flores

Isidre Nonell

1910 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Isidre Nonell. Flores. Image credit: Isidre Nonell. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Flores is the sitter's name; this is not a picture of flowers. Broad, visible brushmarks describe her yellow-green blouse and striped shawl without breaking the figure apart. Nonell treats her face with the same economy and simplifies it through the handling of the paint. In Consuelo he hid the face through posture. Here the face can be seen, but in simplified form.

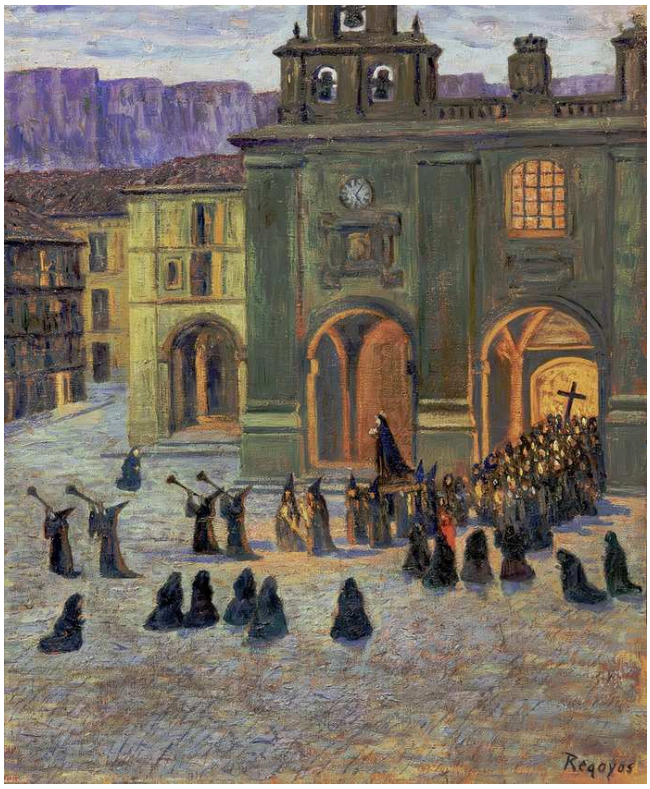
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 065619-000

12 / 20

Good Friday at Dawn in Orduña

Darío de Regoyos

1903 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Darío de Regoyos. Good Friday Early Morning in Orduña. Image credit: Didier Descouens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Regoyos gives the hour as much weight as the ritual. Warm, lit windows stand out against cool buildings and dark clothes. The procession is not cut off from its surroundings. It shares the picture with the town in the early light.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 065615-000

13 / 20

The Holy Family

Muter Mela

c. 1909 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Mela Muter. Holy Family. Image credit: [MNAC]; Source credit: { https://www.museunacional.cat/ca/colleccio/santa-familia/mela-muter/011187-000}. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · CC BY-SA 4.0

Without the title, this would be a group of women and children: a nursing child, bodies set close together, a plain show of care. There is none of the elaborate setting of a ceremonial religious painting. It is chiefly the title that makes them a Holy Family.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 011187-000

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Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette Park

Santiago Rusiñol

1891 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Santiago Rusinol. Entrance to the Park of the Moulin de la Galette. WikiArt: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt per-object label)

Rusiñol paints the way in to the Moulin de la Galette, not the entertainment itself. The red wall and open gate promise entry, but most of what lies beyond is kept out of reach. A few distant figures further along the path give the only hint of it. The Blue Courtyard, painted much later, also turns on a single way through.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 045267-000

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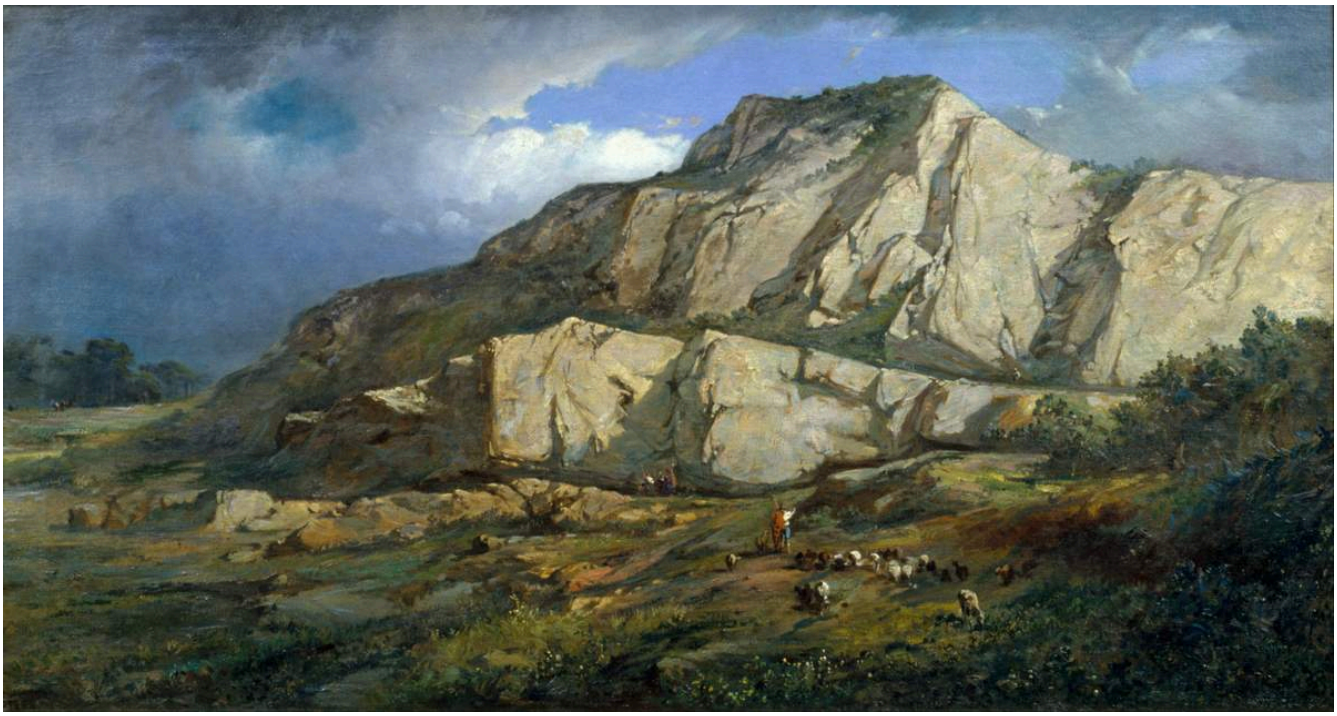
Landscape

Francesc Torrescassana Sallarés

1864 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Francesc Torrescassana Sallarés. Landscape. Image credit: Francesc Torrescassana (1845 - 1918) Born in Barcelona. Died in Barcelona. Details on Google Art Project. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Torrescassana builds the foreground from broken stones, a run of hard edges before the larger slopes begin. Plants fill the gaps but never soften the ground into one green surface. Close at hand the rock is solid and sharply described. The land beyond is less distinct, and the sky is handled differently again.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 010604-000

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Living Room Interior

Pere Tornè Esquius

1913 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Pere Tornè Esquius. Living Room Interior. Image credit: Didier Descouens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Chairs, a fireplace and a patterned cloth are easy to recognise, though none of their surfaces is described in detail. Tornè Esquius builds the room from broad areas of colour placed side by side in a shallow space. The gaps between the furniture and the red accent of the cloth do most of the describing. Rusiñol's The Blue Courtyard also dates from 1913 and also keeps its space close to the picture surface.

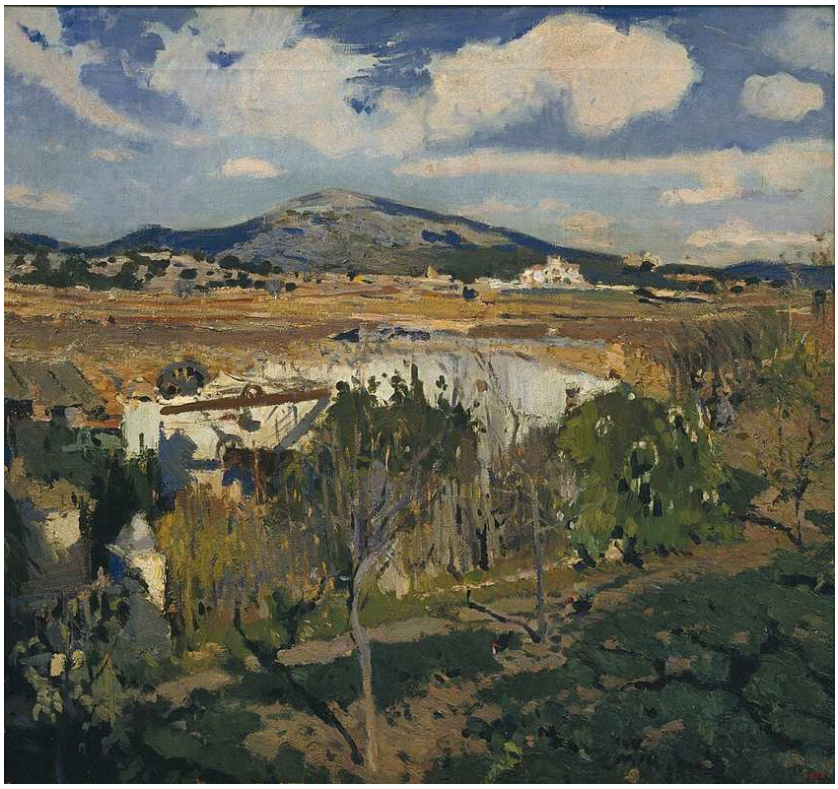
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 024668-000

17 / 20

The Waterwheel at Onclet

Joaquín Mir Trinxet

1922 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Joaquín Mir Trinxet. Onclet Waterwheel. Image credit: Joaquín Mir Trinxet; https://www.museunacional.cat/en/colleccio/onclet-waterwheel/joaquim-mir/004632-000. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joaquim_Mir_Onclet_Waterwheel_1922.jpg. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Full-frame resize and JPEG compression; applicable ShareAlike terms retained. · Public domain

The first thing to see is the light spread across the fields and trees. No figure dominates, but the land is in use. The wheel and its structures, pale built surfaces among the vegetation, are quieter evidence of work. Regoyos's train at Pancorbo interrupts its valley, but these structures belong to the scene.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 004632-000

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Landscape

Joaquín Mir Trinxet

c. 1900 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Joaquín Mir Trinxet. Paisatge. Image credit: Joaquín Mir Trinxet. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Strokes of blue, green and yellow build up into vegetation, yet each can still be seen as a separate touch. Warmer marks keep the foreground from merging into one undifferentiated mass. Torrescassana's Landscape sets out its rocky ground with hard edges. Here the terrain appears gradually, through repeated touches and shifts of colour.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 207738-000

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Pancorbo: A Passing Train

Darío de Regoyos

1901 · Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Darío de Regoyos. Pancorbo: Passing Train. Image credit: Darío de Regoyos. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The train occupies only part of the valley, but its steam makes a shape that will not last. Around it the village buildings, cliffs and slopes look settled. Regoyos's other pictures here work in a similar way: the dancers at El Antiguo and the Good Friday procession at Orduña are also passing events set within a larger, more lasting place. This time the event is a machine. It is large enough to interrupt the view, yet small beside the terrain it has to pass through.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 017453-000

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Peñalara

Jaume Morera i Galícia

c. 1891 · Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya



Jaume Morera i Galícia. Peñalara (Sierra de Guadarrama). Image credit: Didier Descouens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Small figures give the slopes their scale, but the foreground deserves as much attention. Between the viewer and the heights lies rough ground. The eye crosses the distant view with ease, but this ground would be far harder going.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 024635-000

A shorter reading

For a shorter reading, begin with the two Casas pictures, the tandem and the thinly peopled café of Plein Air. Then read Rusiñol's garden and his blue courtyard, and put Nonell's Consuelo and Flores side by side. Finish with Regoyos's train at Pancorbo. A sequence that opens on a fashionable bicycle then ends with a railway. This is an order for reading, not a route through the galleries.

Further reading

Impressionism: A Centenary Exhibition

Anne Dayez, Michel Hoog and Charles S. Moffett · Read online or download · English

This is the catalogue of a centenary exhibition of French Impressionism, a kind of painting that artists across Europe debated and adapted in the later nineteenth century. Its French pictures offer a point of comparison for the outdoor subjects and the handling of light in several paintings here, such as Mir's separate touches of colour or the steam of Regoyos's train. The book is about French painting, so those comparisons are left to the reader.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12