THE BEAUTY OF KNOWLEDGE:
The Enrique Carlos Martín Rodríguez Gift (2026)

The Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville, has organised this exhibition to publicly present and, at the same time, express its gratitude to Mr Enrique Carlos Martín Rodríguez for his generous gift of twelve artworks that will undoubtedly enrich and complement the museum's collections, particularly as many of them pertain to under-represented periods or artists. His is the most important donation of paintings and sculptures received in recent decades.

This carefully curated, eclectic group includes works in a variety of media—paintings on panel and canvas, sculptures and drawings, all of remarkable quality—that span more than three centuries, from the early 1500s to the mid-1800s. Their geographical origins are also diverse, as the authors represent various European schools, including the Flemish, Dutch, French and Italian. Of the Spanish works, two were made in Seville and the other two are from Granada and Madrid.

This gift has been made using a novel formula whereby the donated works enter the museum's collections but the donor retains the right to enjoy them during his lifetime.

ARTWORKS

Nursing Madonna, c. 1520
Flemish school
Oil on panel

This work features an iconographic theme that was depicted numerous times by European Renaissance artists: the *Madonna Lactans* or Virgin nursing the Christ Child on her lap. The solid figure of Mary is seated on a green marble bench with a classical air and a small fountain, before a little table with an unusual still life on top.
Behind the maternal scene we see an open landscape with angels on the right, playing with fruit from the trees (a reference to the apples of original sin), and Mary as the new Eve. On the left, the artist painted a realistic recreation of a small village. As we often see in Flemish painting, the villagers' daily lives are portrayed with an abundance of trivial details, like the sign advertising what appears to be an inn above the door to one of the houses.

Mary Magdalene, c. 1520
Master of the Parrot (Antwerp, first third of the 16th century)
Oil on panel

This as-yet unidentified Flemish painter conventionally known as the Master of the Parrot had a large workshop in the city of Antwerp that distributed his creations throughout Europe. Several of his works ended up in Spain. Recent studies suggest that the author may be Cornelis Bezalaere.
Mary Magdalene is a frequent subject of this painter's oeuvre, appearing in very similar versions with minor variations. One noteworthy detail in this particular work is the pentimento to the right middle finger.
She is always elegantly attired, decked out in gold jewellery and a headdress of pearls. In keeping with her traditional iconography, she holds the perfume jar that she used to wash Christ's feet with her hair. A prayer book sits on the table. The simple composition, with a handful of elements set against a neutral dark background, ensures that the woman is the unrivalled centre of attention.

Virgin and Child with Saint Francis of Assisi, c. 1636
Pietro Novelli (Monreale, 1603–Palermo, 1647)
Oil on canvas

This work is attributed to the Sicilian painter Pietro Novelli, who did not have a presence in the museum's collections until now. Known as "Il Monrealese", Novelli was the foremost exponent of Baroque painting in the city of Palermo and rarely depicted anything other than religious themes.
The simple composition uses the three figures' heads to form a triangle, extending it into the lower register to include the rest of their bodies. At the apex is the Madonna, gazing at the viewer as she wraps her arms round the saint and the Christ Child. Her physical features clearly conform to Novelli's typical female figures. Saint Francis's contemplative expression contrasts with the childish vivacity of Jesus, whose leg the saint is tenderly grasping. This elegantly classicist composition denotes the influence of Van Dyck's sojourn in Italy, particularly in the more idealised figures of the Virgin and Child. Saint Francis is more naturally portrayed in a manner that seems to be indebted to Ribera. Both painters had an impact on the pictorial style of their southern Italian contemporaries.

Suffer Little Children to Come unto Me, 1635
Gijsbert Jansz Sybilla (Weesp, Netherlands, c. 1597–1655)
Oil on panel
Signed lower left: "G. I. Sybilla fecit / A. 1635"

The title refers to the words of rebuke uttered by Jesus when his apostles tried to keep children from approaching him. Instead, he welcomed and blessed them, emphasising the importance of innocence, simplicity and humility as essential qualities for entering the kingdom of God.
In the lower half of the composition, a crowd of mothers is bringing their little ones to see the Lord. The artist gave the scene a rather theatrical air, evident in the poses of the people scattered around Jesus and standing in the foreground, watching events unfold. The physical features of the main characters confirm a northern Europe provenance. The classical architecture serves as a backdrop but is quite impressive in its own right, as it takes up nearly half of the pictorial surface.
Interestingly, the work is displayed in an eighteenth-century French Baroque frame that was adjusted to fit the panel.

The Queen of Heaven, c. 1641–1653
Ignacio de Ríes (Seville, 1616–[?])
Oil on canvas

For a long time, this painting was believed to be the work of an anonymous follower of Francisco de Zurbarán because the palette and draperies are so similar to his. In any case, it is undoubtedly an outstanding example of Zurbarán's influence on other members of the Seville school, among them Ignacio de Ríes.

Here Mary is depicted as the Queen of Heaven or *Regina Coeli*, a singular iconography that has some elements in common with the Coronation of the Virgin and Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, such as the crown—richly bejewelled in this case as a token of her royalty—and the crescent moon beneath her feet. The Virgin is embracing a globe that symbolises her power and authority over the world. An angel holds up the globe while the Christ Child sits on top of it.

Mary's shortened figure and disproportionate body, which looks to be kneeling, can be traced back to the sixteenth-century German print that the Sevillian artist copied exactly when painting this canvas.

Louis XV as Dauphin, c. 1712
Pierre Gobert, attributed (Fontainebleau, 1662–Paris, 1744)
Oil on canvas

The blue sash and medal of the Order of the Holy Spirit—the highest distinction in the French monarchy, bestowed upon the royal heir or dauphin at birth—identify the subject as Prince Louis of Bourbon, destined to inherit the throne of France and rule as Louis XV. Any doubts about his identity are dispelled by the obvious physical resemblance to other portraits of the prince.

His position on a lavish "state bed", adapted to his tender years, is a statement of his lofty social standing. This regal piece of furniture appears in many French court portraits of children, and Spanish children's portraits began to do the same when the Bourbon dynasty ascended to the throne of Spain and imported the customs of their native France. The artist deliberately created a contrast between the boy's bare white flesh and the luxuriant fabrics surrounding him, and between his childish pose and the solemnity of such images, commissioned to offer proof of the royal successor's physique and vigour.

The work is attributed to the French painter Pierre Gobert, a portraitist at the court of Bourbon France who specialised in this genre. He painted several other portraits of Louis XV as a child, one of which is now in the Museo Nacional del Prado.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, c. 1760–1765
Juan de Espinal (Seville, 1714–1783)
Oil on canvas

Juan de Espinal, considered the last great representative of the Sevillian Baroque, worked almost exclusively as a painter of religious subjects. He produced several images of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, whose close resemblance to this painting made it possible to confirm his authorship. Here the artist opted for an almost perfectly symmetrical composition. The Virgin's eyes are meekly downcast, her hands are clasped, and she is wearing a crown of twelve stars with the moon beneath her feet. Cherubs and angels surround her, while one of them plays with her mantle.
Although Espinal did not stray too far from the model established by Murillo, who set the standard for this iconography in Seville, his depiction of this Marian apparition is more modern and closer to the Rococo style. The particular significance of this theme in Seville, a city renowned for its fierce defence of the dogma of Mary's virgin birth, meant that it continued to be depicted by local painters until well into the nineteenth century.

***The Mairena Fair*, 1860**
Manuel Rodríguez de Guzmán (Seville, 1818–Madrid, 1867)
Oil on canvas
Signed lower right: "M. R. de Guzmán/1860"

Rodríguez de Guzmán was one of the most fascinating exponents of Sevillian Romanticism, considered the silver age of the Seville school. His work is characterised by the traditional Spanish genre scenes of the *costumbrista* style and the depiction of popular types.
This crowded composition pictures Andalusia's oldest livestock fair—a sheep fair, in this instance—and one of the first to add a more festive component, the fair of Mairena del Alcor. A large open space is populated by a motley array of figures, arranged horizontally and at different depths in the picture plane. In the foreground, for example, we see popular types like the shepherd on the left or

the two women in folk costumes sitting on the ground, probably livestock dealers, mingling with elegantly dressed individuals on horseback, out for a leisurely ride.
As he moved towards the middle and background, the painter made his brushwork looser to create an impression of depth. The muted palette grows brighter in the distance, illuminating the sky behind the roughly sketched buildings of the town.

Bust of the Mater Dolorosa
José Montes de Oca, attributed (Seville, 1668–1754)
Painted wood

Based on its formal characteristics, this sculpture was made by an artist of the Seville school sometime between the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century. Of the various religious image carvers active in the city during that period, the strong facial features are consistent with the style of José Montes de Oca. This artist gave his *Mater Dolorosas* very definite traits to convey her suffering, like the deeply furrowed, expressive brow, the shape of her mouth and the distinctive cleft chin. As we see in this work, the sculptor tended to carve the grieving Madonna with her head bowed and tilted to one side, a gesture calculated to heighten the piece's dramatic pathos and dynamic, lifelike quality.
The bust's formal characteristics indicate that this carving was meant to be dressed in lavish robes, while its size suggests that it may have been intended for processional use.

Saint John the Baptist as a Child
José Risueño, attributed (Granada, 1665–1732)
Painted wood
This piece is attributed to José Risueño, a prolific sculptor of the Granada school active in the late 1600s and early decades of the 1700s, or his circle of assistants. The shape of the face and body are in keeping with this artist's carving style. His catalogue includes numerous examples of these small devotional sculptures, for which there was a huge market in Granada.
The carving has lost its original pedestal, an element that often yields valuable information about possible authors or schools. Little Saint John's pose, with his right index finger pointing at the Mystic Lamb of God, tells us that the lamb is missing, and possibly other original elements of the work that would shed more light on its maker.

Diana and Cupid

Domenico Campagnola, circle of (Venice [?], 1500–Padua, 1564)

Pen and sepia ink with touches of blue and ochre watercolour on paper

Based on medium and style, this drawing can be linked to the Venetian Renaissance, and more specifically to Domenico Campagnola. A painter of German descent who adopted the surname of his master, Giulio Campagnola, he spent his career in Venice and Padua. His style is very similar to Titian's, who inspired his female nudes.

The most interesting thing about this work is the rarity of the subject, as it depicts Cupid with the goddess Diana instead of Venus. The presence of a bow beside the reclining female figure identifies her as the goddess of the hunt.

It should be noted that Campagnola's drawings and prints were highly prized for their delicate, detailed background landscapes. In this drawing, the use of a blue wash gives the work a very attractive final appearance.

Male Academy, c. 1783

Ángel Bueno (Silos, Burgos, 1758–[?])

Red chalk on paper

Signed verso: "Angel Bueno"

This drawing is unusual because we know so little about the man who signed it, a virtually unheard-of artist with hardly any works to his name.

This particular kind of sketch, known as an "academy", is associated with the education imparted at such institutions, specifically the life drawing classes in which students learned to capture the anatomical proportions and movements of a naked model on paper. The neoclassical admiration for antiquity inspired eighteenth-century academies to insist on the nude as a cornerstone of artistic training; copying the human body, whether from life or from classical statuary, was deemed an essential exercise for anyone who aspired to become a good painter or sculptor.

This composition is marked by the diagonal lines drawn by the three male bodies, which are represented from three different angles and outlined with very precise draughtsmanship. The work also stands out for its painstaking study of shadows.