

Ten Treasures of the Hispanic Society

Dr. Domenech shares a few of her favorite
pieces at this hidden gem of a museum



Dr. Cristina Domenech

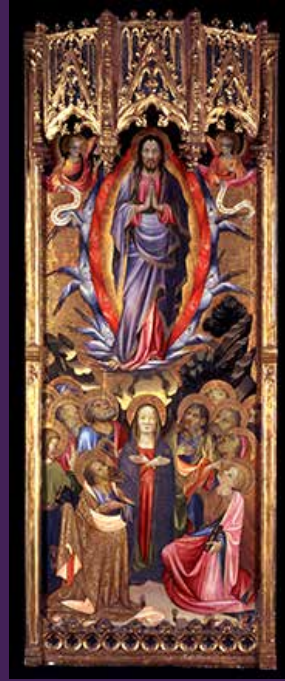
The Queen Sofía Spanish Institute is proud to announce the incorporation of Cristina Domenech, Ph.D to the Cultural Advisory Committee, focusing in the fields of fine arts and education. The QSSI's cultural advisory committee gathers leading experts in a variety of disciplines to provide insight and enrichment on activities, grants, and other collaboration efforts to advance our mission.

Since 2014, Dr. Domenech has directed the Education Department at the Hispanic Society Museum & Library, an institution in New York City with the greatest collection of Spanish and Hispanic art objects outside of Spain itself. Previously, she worked at the Royal Academy of History of Spain and the Sorolla Museum. An expert in Spanish art, in particular artists from the turn of the twentieth century like Joaquín Sorolla, Domenech has taught in the University of Valencia, Spain, the Accademia di Brera in Milan, and Fordham University in New York City. She has published several articles and essays about the artistic relationship between Spain and the United States. Domenech holds a PhD from the University of Valencia, Spain and is currently finishing a Master's Degree at the CUNY Graduate Center with a thesis about the artist John Singer Sargent in Spain.

As an art educator, Domenech is widely knowledgeable about the collections of the Hispanic Society Museum and Library, and in years past has organized and led many tours of the collection.

Join Dr. Domenech as she shares a few of her favorite pieces at this hidden gem of a museum.





Valencia Altarpiece

Miguel Alcañiz, ca. 1422–30
Tempera on wood.

The Hispanic Society Museum is a unique museum because of its dedication to collecting objects that show a comprehensive view of the Hispanic world. This means not only collecting paintings and sculpture but objects of cultural significance. We start this tour with the Valencia Altarpiece showing the Ascension of Christ and Saint Vincent, which is in the International Gothic style found across much of Italy, France, and Spain. Some scholars attributed this piece to Gherardo Starnina, but now it is presumed to be a work by Alcañiz. This is my favorite artwork from the museum's collections because it has an intimate personal connection with me. This altarpiece belonged to the Church of San Juan del Hospital, in Valencia, which is located just across the street from my childhood home.



Diego Velázquez is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable artists of the Hispanic world and an icon of the Spanish Golden Age and the baroque period. Velázquez worked as court painter for King Philip IV, during which he painted Gaspar de Guzmán y Pimentel, Count-Duke of Olivares, Philip's advisor and prime minister. Small details across the painting demonstrate the tremendous power that Olivares held such as a golden key in his belt (signaling his role as Master of the King's Bedchamber), a riding crop (referring to his being Master of the King's Horse), and his hat, which symbolizes his position as Grandee of Spain. Viewers always uncover new details while in front of this impressive portrait, getting pulled into the deep blacks of the baroque style and the gravitas that Olivares holds.

*Gaspar de Guzmán,
conde-duque de Olivares*

Diego Velázquez, ca. 1625-1626

Oil on canvas



Portrait of Pedro Mocarte

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes

ca. 1805, Oil on canvas



The next stop on this virtual tour of the treasures of the Hispanic Society is the Portrait of Pedro Mocarte by Goya. This portrait holds particular significance to the museum as it was a favorite of the founder of the Hispanic Society, Archer Milton Huntington, the great philanthropist of the early 20th century. The sitter for the portrait, Mocarte, was a friend of the artist and, although dressed similarly to a bullfighter or a majo, was a professional singer who was losing his hearing and vision at the time he was painted. The theme of bullfighting, often heavily associated with the culture of Spain, is recurring in Goya's works outside of this portrait in his paintings and prints





The Ecstasy of Saint Mary Magdalene

Luisa Roldán, ca. 1690

Polychromed terra cotta

In the Spanish Golden Age or Siglo de oro, the Spanish empire was flourishing as were the arts and literature. Luisa Roldán, known as La Roldana, worked as a sculptor for the court of Charles II during this Baroque Era of art. La Roldana is noted for being the first woman sculptor documented in Spain, and she remarkably did this work outside of a convent. This piece was recently conserved, and the colors are bright and breathtaking. It depicts the ecstasy of Saint Mary Magdalene, surrounded by angels and cherubs in a pastoral setting. I chose this piece for our tour in particular because Luisa Roldán was one of the most talented female artists in Europe at the turn of XVII to XVIII centuries. She was the head of her workshop, something totally unusual in a time when the art business was monopolized by men. Luisa was the first female artist in Spain appointed as Court Sculptor, and she worked for the courts of Kings Charles II and Philip V.

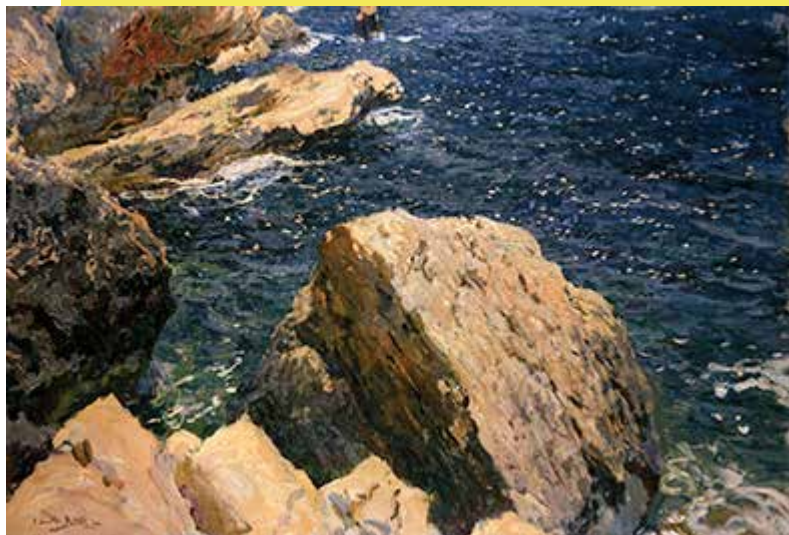


The Hispanic Society of America has an incredible collection of the works of Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923), the Spanish painter known for his incredible ability to capture light in landscapes, seascapes, portraits, and works with social themes and an impressionistic style. Sorolla is from my home of Valencia, and this painting depicts the coast just south of the city in the summer of 1905. I find that in this piece in particular, the bright and penetrating light so typical by the Spanish seaside is depicted marvelously through many varied tones of greys, blues, browns, purples, and greens. It is said that Sorolla painted al fresco and then took the pieces indoors to complete them, yet he doesn't lose the sensation of the water rushing up against the rocks or the heat of the summer.

Rocks of the Cape, Jávea

Joaquín Sorolla, 1905

Oil on canvas



For many years, the Hispanic Society Education Department has been teaching drawing classes in New York City schools, using the incredible works of the collection including this preparatory drawing of David and Goliath. This biblical story is a point of entry for these young students who appreciate its drama, and the story was similarly a popular subject matter at the time of its drawing. Ribera, from just outside of Valencia, Spain, was highly influenced by Italian artists like Caravaggio and Guido Reni and displayed a strong proclivity towards chiaroscuro and tenebrism throughout his oeuvre. In this work, Ribera used a two-chalk technique including red chalk, or sanguine, and you can see an inscription from the collector Francisco de Solís in the upper right-hand corner.

David and Goliath

Jusepe de Ribera, ca. 1625–30

Chalk



Old Man on a Swing
(Viejo columpiándose)

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes
ca. 1824–28

Black chalk and lithographic
crayon on laid paper.



2021 is the 275th anniversary of Goya's birth, and it is also a year where there is an exhibition of the drawings and etchings of Goya at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Goya's work, especially those that were not commissions like his drawings or the "black paintings," tend to lean towards morbid and grim themes. This drawing, labeled "58" in Album H is from his final album. At the end of his life when Goya drew this piece, he was living in Bordeaux, France. Bedraggled yet blissful, this elderly man swings forward in a blank setting. Many scholars liken it to other etchings and prints of people on swings, for example an etching on the other side of the place of an old woman on a swing located at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Another program that the Education Department offers students through the Queen Sofía Spanish Institute is the Maps & Globes program, where students learn about cartography and its role during the Age of Exploration. In one of the lessons, students explore the Map of Tequaltiche, a map made by the indigenous Caxcan people living in Teocaltiche in 1584 as part of the “Relaciones Geográficas” for the Viceroyalty of New Spain by the order of King Philip II. This map pairs with a questionnaire prepared by Hernando de Gallegos that can be found today at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition to displaying topographical features such as a mountain range and rivers, the map shows Aquano, who formerly controlled that land, and his two sons, one named Yecotl who currently governed the village. It also depicts a battle scene between the Spanish and Caxcans called the Mixtón War, where after an initial Spanish defeat, viceroy Antonio de Mendoza gained control of the region with the help of Aztec and Tlaxcalan peoples. Once thought to be “lost,” the museum honors the importance of this object. Maps like this one are incredibly special because they tell many simultaneous stories and represent complex historical moments and people.



Map of Tequaltiche

Teocaltiche, Jalisco, Mexico

1584

Watercolor and ink on paper





Saint Michael Striking Down the Rebellious Angels

Sebastián López de Arteaga

ca. 1650–52

Oil on copper.

Sebastián López de Arteaga was trained in Seville, but moved to Mexico, where this work was painted. Arteaga is known for having brought the style of tenebrism to the Americas. This painting was completed within the last two years of his life, which ended due to a violent sword duel. The painting, shows the story of Saint Michael as described in the Bible's Book of Revelation where Saint Michael fights against a dragon in a war in heaven. I include this piece in our tour because of both the dramatic and dynamic composition and the beauty of the Saint in contrast with the ugliness of the demons. It has always been a particularly striking image in my eyes.



Our last stop on the tour of my favorite works of the collections of the Hispanic Society Museum & Library is in the library. In addition to the over 250,000 books in the library, the rare books collection contains over 30,000 works printed before 1830. This first edition of *Tirant lo Blanch* is one of 250 incunabula (books printed before 1500), and the museum also has a unique copy of the second edition of 1497, also one of the incunabula. The book is a classic chivalric novel and one of the best-known works of medieval literature written in Valencian. Miguel de Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, owned a copy of *Tirant lo Blanch* and described it as a treasure. It should be noted that the HSM&L also holds the first edition of both parts of *Don Quixote* and many other early editions and translations. When I was very young, I read *Tirant lo Blanch*, and I was instantly captivated by the adventures of Tirant and his love story with princess Carmesina. The book is written in Catalanian/Valencian which is the language of my cultural background.



Tirant lo Blanch

Joanot Martorell

1490



This concludes the curated tour of my top ten favorite works of the Hispanic Society of America. With a museum so full of treasures from across the Hispanic world, it was incredibly difficult to narrow down the selection, so I encourage you to explore the collections online and join us for the virtual programs that we conduct on a regular basis. In this tour, I shared the pieces that warm my heart, that bring me joy, and that continue to astonish me with their historical significance and aesthetic beauty. Every person who has stepped foot into the Hispanic Society, or who has seen our traveling exhibitions across the country and the globe, finds at least one piece that truly resonates with them. I hope you find yours.

- Dr. Cristina Domenech

This tour was made possible by the

