



Chechu Álava. Rebels

27 January to 29 March 2020
Balcony Gallery, 1st floor. Free entry
Curator: Rocío de la Villa

From 27 January to 29 March 2020 the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza will be presenting the exhibition *Chechu Álava. Rebels*, a **gallery of female portraits** that celebrates the imaginary life of ancient myths and the experience of eminent women in the modern age. This ongoing series, first started by the artist a decade ago, has already brought together Eve and Venus with intellectuals, writers and artists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt, Sylvia Plath, Colette, Marga Gil Roësset, Niki de Saint Phalle, Eva Hesse, Tina Modotti, Frida Kahlo and Lee Miller. *Chechu Álava. Rebels* is the third edition in the **Kora programme**. Based on the myth of the first female portraitist in history recounted by Pliny the Elder, it presents one exhibition a year at the Museo Thyssen from a gender perspective.

With only a few exceptions, in the history of art women have always been depicted as wives and museum, constructs that reflect male desire. The present exhibition offers an opportunity to reflect on the genre of the portrait through this gallery of complex, uniquely talented and ground-breaking personalities who were often judged by the male world in which they fought to find a place. Both their lives and their careers were difficult. All were rebels in that they defied the norms represented by the myths of Venus and Eve, which in Chechu Álava's version humorously emphasise the traumas experienced by women in patriarchal societies. These figures are both rebels and heroines for the younger generations that are learning from their experiences and resilience.

It is this dimension as beacon and guide for later women that immediately strikes the visitor to this gallery of portraits illuminated through the painstaking technique of glazes. A type of painting which, when looked at again, encourages the viewer to linger on the blurred details and on the precise compositions. These generally solitary scenes evoke introspection and encourage a dialogue with the women seen in moments of relaxed privacy, sometimes vulnerable but also decisive. In the words of the exhibition's curator Rocío de la Villa, rather than representations they are inspiring presences.

Images (from left to right): Chechu Álava. *Marga Gil Roësset*, 2019. Private Collection / *Lee Miller with a headache*, 2013. Private Collection / *Frida smoking in pink*, 2019. Collection of the artist.

More information and images:

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<https://static.museothyssen.org/microsites/prensa/2020/Rebeldes/>

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The exhibition extends from the Balcony gallery on the 1st floor to other galleries of the Permanent Collection where Álava's works establish a dialogue with some of the museum's paintings: *Daydreaming Girl* (2018) and *Dusk* (1888) by Edvard Munch (Room 35); *I'm a Rebel* (2019) and *Fränzi before a carved Chair* (1910) and *Kneeling Nude in front of Red Screen* (c. 1911-1912) by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (Room 36); *Frida smoking in pink* (2019) and *Still Life with yellow Roses* (1937) by Max Beckmann (Room 39); and *Virgin Girl* (2016) and *The Virgin of the Village* (1938-1942) by Marc Chagall (Room 45).

Chechu Álava (Piedras Blancas, Asturias, 1973)

After graduating in Fine Arts from the faculty in Salamanca, in 1995 Chechu Álava received an Erasmus grant from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. She lived in London and Madrid before moving to Paris where she has lived and worked since 2001.

Álava began to participate in numerous group exhibitions from 1994 onwards and at national and international art fairs. Her work is represented in institutions such as the Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias, the DKV Collection and that of the Ministry of Culture, as well as in private collections in Mexico, France, Colombia, Germany, Portugal, the United States and Spain.

In 2014 her work was selected by an international jury for inclusion in the book *100 Painters of Tomorrow* published by Thames & Hudson.

ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

Talk-discussion with Chechu Álava and Rocío de la Villa: 27 February at 5.30pm. Free entry until all seats filled.

Explanatory talks: members of the museum's volunteer group will give talks on the exhibition in the gallery, on Mondays at 12.30pm and Fridays at 5pm. Free activity until all places filled. Prior booking not required.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Title: *Chechu Álava. Rebels*

Organiser: Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Venue and dates: Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, 27 February to 29 March 2020. Balcony Gallery, 1st floor.

Curator: Rocío de la Villa

Coordinator: Laura Andrada, Curatorial Department, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

Catalogue with text by Rocío de la Villa. Bilingual edition in English and Spanish.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Address: Paseo del Prado, 8. 28014 Madrid

Opening times: Mondays, 4pm to 8pm; Tuesdays to Sundays, 10am to 7pm.

Free entry

More information: www.museothyssen.org

PRESS INFORMATION

<https://static.museothyssen.org/microsites/prensa/2020/Rebeldes/>