



GRECO

GRAND PALAIS

16 OCTOBER 2019–10 FEBRUARY 2020

Doménikos Theotokópoulos, known as Greco, is undeniably one of the most original painters in the history of art. His unique style has given rise to many often-outlandish theories. He has been cast as a madman, a heretic and a mystic. His bold palette has even led some to suggest he suffered from astigmatism. The truth is less romantic... but no less fascinating. His extraordinary career, which took him from Crete to Venice, Rome and finally Toledo, and stubborn defence of his artistic vision made him, by sheer force of talent, one of the great masters of the Renaissance and, much later, the prophet of modernity.



STYLE AND IMAGE

The artistic scene Greco discovered on moving to Italy around 1567 was split between Titian, whose brushwork reigned supreme in Venice, and the art of Michelangelo, who had died in 1564, which still dominated Rome and Florence. Charting his own course, Greco embraced the colour of the Venetian school and reconciled it with the power of Michelangelo's design and form. In parallel, the Roman Catholic Church, as a reply to Protestant iconoclasm and to reclaim souls, was in search of new images, and Greco used his fertile imagination to devise innovative figurative solutions. For an artist keen to break into the market and make his name, the time seemed ripe. Everything - images and style - was to be reinvented. Greco decided the prize was his for the taking.

The 75 masterpieces gathered in this exhibition pay tribute to the wild and unclassifiable genius that Greco was. With simple white walls, the scenography leaves the monopoly on colour to the artist and recreates the modern gaze of the avant-garde when they rediscovered his work.

FROM EASTERN TO WESTERN

Greco was born around 1541 in Candie, now Heraklion, in Crete, a Greek island, then a Venetian possession. He trained as an icon painter in the Byzantine tradition as we can see in his *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin* [cat. 1*], but he also developed a hybrid style inspired by the Western art he discovered through engravings and paintings imported from Venice [*Adoration of the Magi* - cat. 2]. Aspiring to the title of artist acquired by the painters of Renaissance Italy, he settled in Venice. But he was soon faced with the reality of an art market with little room for a recently arrived young foreigner with no patron.

1. FROM CRETE TO ITALY - 1560-1576

When Greco arrived in Venice in early 1567, he discovered a cosmopolitan society with similar eastern influences to his native Crete. This is where he discovered Titian, his model, whose studio he

may have visited, the energetic style of Tintoretto, the architectural perspectives of Paris Bordone, and Jacopo Bassano, whose chiaroscuro style had a life-long influence on his work. It was also here that he learned the grammar of Renaissance art and the language of colour much admired in Venice. Against the practitioners of design, led by the Tuscan Giorgio Vasari [cat. 19], he sided with the champions of colorito. His artistic style was transformed by his early years in Italy, from 1567 to 1570. Inspired by engravings but even more by the observation and direct intuition of painting, he abandoned the decorative art of the icon to pursue the ambitions of the Renaissance. *The Modena Triptych* [cat. 03], the cornerstone of his development, echoes this shift. His two *Adoration of the Magi* [Benaki Museum - cat. 2, and Lázaro Galdiano Foundation - cat. 6] show how far and fast he had come and paved the way for his first truly Venetian paintings. When Greco failed to break into the highly competitive Venetian market, he decided to try his luck in Rome.

THINK BIG, PAINT SMALL

From Venice to Rome, Greco primarily painted small-scale works on wood. Intrinsic to iconic art, wood was long one of his preferred media. It allowed him to hone his skills and experiment with new solutions, as we can see in the iconography of *Saint Francis* [cat. 11, 12]. Virtually unknown in Italy and not trained to paint frescoes, he was unable to win commissions for large decorative works or altarpieces. The market for small devotional and cabinet paintings was easier for him to access.

The Pietà [cat. 13] and *The Entombment of Christ* [cat. 14] are typical of his Rome years and his critical response to Michelangelo's art, which he was keen to reformulate and «correct». In 1572, his arrogance towards Michelangelo may have been the reason for his expulsion from the Farnese Palace, where he was staying. The same year, his name appeared on the register of the painters' guild of Saint Luke. A misreading of the entry gave rise to a long-held belief that he was listed as a miniature painter. Although this was not the case, he did have an abiding interest in small-scale paintings, at which he excelled, and readily depicted Saint Luke, patron saint of painters, as an illuminator [cat. 10].

2. PORTRAITS

Greco's ability as a portrait painter was not the least of his talents. During his years in Rome (1570-1576) he seems to have established a strong reputation in the genre. In his letter of recommendation to Cardinal Farnese, the miniaturist painter Giulio Clovio mentions a self-portrait by Greco admired by every painter in Rome. Although the painting is now lost, others vouch for his success as a portraitist. As in his other works, he evolved from a distinctly Venetian style to one that was powerful and more personal.

At the Farnese Palace, he moved in humanist circles, giving him access to the learned society of his day. Many became friends, supporters and patrons throughout his life. Like a hall of fame, his portraits capture the features and intelligence of these brilliant characters - some profound, others powerful - who posed for him in Rome and then Toledo.

3. FIRST MAJOR COMMISSIONS

Rome proved no more open to Greco than Venice. His arrogance has long been seen as the reason for his continued lack of success. But we should not underestimate the problems he might have faced as a foreign painter. Greco did not have a patron, he had an imperfect grasp of Italian and did not paint frescoes, making it difficult to carve out a space in a city controlled by dynasties of well-established artists. He hoped Spain would be his *Eldorado*. Philip II, a great admirer of Titian, was said to be looking for painters to decorate his vast El Escorial monastery. Luis de Castilla, a Spanish friend he met in Rome, assured him of the support of his father, dean of Toledo cathedral.

Before the rise of Madrid, Toledo was the most prosperous city in Castile. Greco saw his opportunity. In 1577, he signed two contracts with Diego de Castilla: one for *El Expolio* in the cathedral sacristy [cat. 15], the other for the high altar and two side altars of the convent church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo [cat 35, 36, 37]. Greco at last had the chance to show the breadth of his talent. Shortly afterwards, around 1578-1579, the king commissioned him to paint *the Adoration of the Name of*

Jesus [cat. 18], a declaration of the Christian faith, which received widespread praise. Phillip II then commissioned him to paint an altarpiece for a chapel in El Escorial dedicated to the martyrdom of Saint Maurice, but this time, accused of lacking piety, the work was not well received. He was not given a third chance.

4. EL GRECO AND TOLEDO

Toledo was renowned as one of Europe's leading artistic and cultural centres. Greco felt at ease with its cultivated clientele, who shared the humanist spirit of his Italian years. The old imperial city became the setting - and almost a minor character - for many of his compositions, with the cathedral, Alcazar, Alcántara bridge and other landmarks serving as his backdrop. *Saint Martin and the Beggar* [cat. 32] is an outstanding example.

The spread of private devotion led many families in Toledo to found their own chapels and oratories. This increased demand for paintings. Greco quickly took advantage of the situation by setting up a studio to meet orders for ordinary works while he himself focused on larger commissions. He also devoted much time and energy to legal disputes over payments from patrons, often the Church, which tried to bargain down the price of his works once delivered.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Variation was central to Greco's creative process. Should we see this as a legacy of his Byzantine training and its repetition of prototypes? Or was it inspired by practices observed in the studios of Venice? Either way, this permanent tension between invention and variation animates his art. It provided him with the opportunity to rework a formula, identify alternatives and develop original and refined solutions for each variation. To some extent, this original technique paved the way for the serial work of the Impressionists and Cézanne. It also led Greco to create his own artistic alphabet and to assert his canons through a catalogue of images and types. A testament to his incredibly fertile imagination, it also led him to produce self-referential works that eventually formed a closed world, self-sustaining and sovereign but increasingly isolated.

EL GRECO, ARCHITECT AND SCULPTOR

From his early years in Italy, Greco showed an obvious interest in architecture. He admired Sebastiano Serlio (c. 1475-1564) and particularly Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), who he met. His library included *Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius [cat. 45], architect and Latin theorist, republished in 1556 by Daniele Barbaro. His own heavily annotated copy suggests he may have planned to write a treatise himself. Although no constructions have been identified as the work of Greco he created, certain temporary structures, now lost, along with designs for altarpieces commissioned from him, which leave no doubt as to his authorship. His tabernacle for the Taverna Hospital [cat. 40] is one outstanding example. This miniature monument also contained a sculptural ensemble which the contract of 1595 specified he design himself. *Only The Risen Christ* has survived [cat. 39]. This is one of the very few examples of Greco's work as a sculptor and the only one beyond doubt.

5. EL GRECO AND DRAWING

Greco placed painting above all other arts. In the debate between design and colour, he clearly sided with the latter. His rarely conserved drawings were not central to his work and fulfilled a simple functional role in his creative process. Only seven sheets can now be attributed to Greco with any certainty: two, from his Italian period, are meditations in the style of Michelangelo [cat. 43, presented at the beginning of the exhibition]; three are preparatory drawings for the high altarpiece of Santo Domingo el Antiguo in Toledo [cat. 41, 42]; the final two were produced for a major commission for the Colegio de Doña Maria de Aragón in Madrid [cat. 44].

STUDIO

In 1585, Greco moved his family and studio to three apartments rented from the palace of the Marquis of Villena. The studio allowed him to develop the commercial side of his work by producing multiple copies of the same composition, which on occasion he retouched and even signed. This made it possible to produce works at a steady and, from the early 1600s onwards, increasingly fast pace.

It is very tempting to attribute part of this production to his son, [cat. 72] but this is not borne out by the evidence. The archives suggest that Jorge Manuel would have preferred to be an architect, which he became after his father's death. From 1603, however, his name does appear in contracts alongside Greco. This guaranteed the painting would be finished in the event of Greco's death. This precautionary measure reassured clients that he would be able to make good on his many contracts.

CHRIST DRIVING THE TRADERS FROM THE TEMPLE 1570-1614

One of his best-known series, *Christ Driving the Traders from the Temple* allows us to trace, through a single theme and composition, Greco's evolution from his early life in Italy to his final years in Toledo. Not only does the artist's style, technique, format and medium vary from painting to painting, he also finds new sources of inspiration to reinvent himself.

The subject must have struck a particular chord with Greco. Did he identify himself with the angry Christ purifying the Temple, just as he intended to purify painting of those he felt had betrayed it, failed to appreciate it or were reluctant to reward artistic creation at its true value? Whatever his motives, he returned to this composition throughout his career. It borrows alternately from Venetian and Roman architecture, ancient sculpture and the works of Michelangelo. Greco finally referenced himself in this composition by including in the painting for the church of San Ginès in Madrid [cat. 53] the motif of the altarpiece he made for the church of Illescas. Like a persistence of vision, the frightened figure, arms in the air, reappears over the years in *The Modena Triptych* [cat. 03], *The Dream of Philip II* [cat. 18] and *The Adoration of the Shepherds* in the National Museum of Art in Bucharest (1596-1600). At the very end of his life, it became the main character in *The Vision of Saint John* [cat. 76].

6. FINAL SPLENDOUR - 1600-1614

By the time Greco died in 1614, Caravaggio had already been dead four years. Who would have thought that this style of painting could still be possible so late in what was soon to be called the

“Baroque” century? This anomaly is due solely to Greco’s artistic resistance and the proud isolation of Toledo, now his citadel. In many ways, however, his chiaroscuro style, heightened declamatory effects, and free spirited approach foreshadow the art of some 17th century painters. After falling into almost total obscurity, Impressionists and avant-garde artists rediscovered and understood Greco to such an extent they made him their prophet, and even, more intimately, their fellow pupil in the unruly classrooms of modernity.

* Find all the exposed works in the catalogue *Greco*. The numbers indicate the works’ order of appearance in the publication.

Exhibition curator: Guillaume Kientz, Curator of European Art, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, USA

Associate curator: Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau, Curator of Spanish and Portuguese Painting, Department of Paintings, Musée du Louvre

Exhibition curator for the Art Institute

of Chicago: Rebecca Long, Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Associate Curator of European Painting and Sculpture before 1750, The Art Institute of Chicago

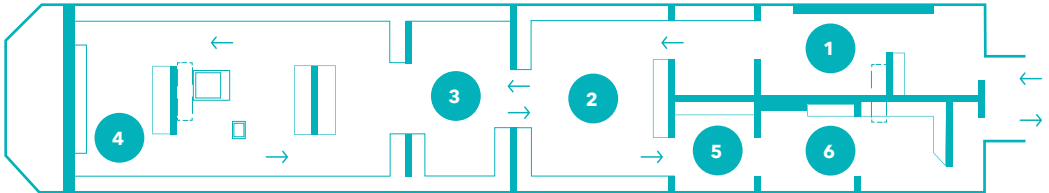
Set designer: Véronique Dollfus

Graphics: Claire Boitel, atelier JBL

This exhibition is organised by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux – Grand Palais, the Musée du Louvre and The Art Institute of Chicago.



EXHIBITION MAP



AROUND THE EXHIBITION

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Admission to the auditorium on the Champs Elysées, Square Jean Perrin, is free of charge. Priority access with an invitation available on grandpalais.fr

WEDNESDAY MEETINGS – 6.30 PM

Wednesday 16 October

Greco. To the limits of painting

Presentation by Guillaume Kientz, Heritage Curator, Curator of European Art, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, USA, and Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau, curator of Spanish and Portuguese painting. Musée du Louvre, Department of Paintings, both curators of the exhibition

Wednesday 23 October

Greco, Lautrec: the forgotten encounter

Conversation between Guillaume Kientz and Stéphane Guégan, curators of the "Greco" and "Toulouse-Lautrec" exhibitions

Wednesday 13 November

Guest: Gérard Garouste, painter and sculptor

Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau, co-curator of the exhibition, in conversation with Gérard Garouste, a major figure in French painting and great admirer of El Greco.

Wednesday 20 November

The Wild Renaissance: a factor in today's Renaissance?

by Guillaume Logé, Associate Researcher in History and Theory of Arts and Environmental Philosophy at Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne University. At the end of the conference, Guillaume Logé will sign copies of his book *Renaissance Sauvage. L'art de l'Anthropocène* (Puf, 2019)

Wednesday 18 December

The strange Doménikos Theotokópoulos

by Jérémie Koering, CNRS researcher, Centre André Chastel

Wednesday 8 January

Imperial Toledo, Erudite Toledo, Sacred Toledo.

The refuge city of El Greco at the end of the 16th century

by Cécile Vincent-Cassy, Hispanist and Art Historian, Université Paris 13

Wednesday 22 January

Extravagances of El Greco? A look at his diversions

by Anne Corneloup, Associate Professor, University of Strasbourg

MONDAYS ON STAGE – 6.30 PM

Students from Robin Renucci's class at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique "Saying and reading verse and prose" evoke the life and work of El Greco "the writers' painter" through a selection of texts.

Monday 2 December: El Greco, the mystery of Toledo

Monday 9 December El Greco, in the eyes of the world

FRIDAY FILM SCREENINGS – 12 NOON

"BODY AND SOUL" SEASON

Friday 15 November

Blood and Sand by Rouben Mamoulian, 1947, with Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell and Rita Hayworth, 2h05, English with French subtitles

Friday 20 December

Passion by Jean-Luc Godard, 1982, with Isabelle Huppert, Hanna Schygulla and Michel Piccoli, 1h30

Friday 10 January

Take My Eyes (Te doy mis ojos) by Iciar Bollain, 2004, with Laia Marull, Luis Tosar and Candela Peña, 1h25, Spanish with French subtitles (all rights reserved). Preceded by: *Fuego in Castilla* by José Val del Omar, 1961, 17'

MUSIC

GRECO CLASSICAL OR ELECTRIC?

Sunday 12 January - 2.30 pm

A Night At The Opera

Acoustic immersion with Sonarium. Listening to Queen's legendary album in its entirety, in high fidelity. Presentation and discussion led by Julien Bitoun, Professor of Rock History at Science Po, journalist and writer.

Saturday 18 January – 6.30 pm

In the footsteps of El Greco, a musical journey

Directed by: Jérémie Papisergio

With students from the Department of Early Music at the Paris Regional Conservatoire and the Baroque MIMA, Sorbonne University

In collaboration with the concert cycle of the Paris Department of Early Music in Paris
Manager: Jean-Christophe Revel.

DOCUMENTARIES

El Greco, Painter of the Invisible Miguel Ángel Trujillo, 2014, 52'

at 4 pm: Wednesdays, 16 and 23 October, 13 and 20 November, 18 December, 8 and 22 January

Greco Rouge Greco by José María Berzosa, 1973, 1h15 minutes at 1.30 pm on 15 November, 20 December and 10 January

LOUVRE MUSEUM AUDITORIUM

Information and reservations on louvre.fr

Thursday 17 October, 6.30 pm

Round table *Viva El Greco* : Eisenstein and the master of Toledo, followed at 8.30 pm by the screening of *Ivan the Terrible* by S. M. Eisenstein, 1943, 3h06

Friday 8 November at 8 pm

Film *El Greco* by Luciano Salce, 1966, 1h35

Wednesday 20 October at 12.30 pm

Presentation of the exhibition by Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau

AROUND THE EXHIBITION

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

AUDIOGUIDES

In French, English, for children in French

On site, from €5 or using the app, from €2.29

GUIDED TOURS [book at grandpalais.fr](http://book.at.grandpalais.fr)

ADULTS

Guided tour

Explore the life and works of one of the great geniuses of the Renaissance.

Duration: 90 min. Price: €23 €24 Concessions: €16

Tribu ticket offer (for a group of 4 paying visitors, including 2 young people aged 16 to 25): €62

Guided tour with two guides

Discover the exhibition with a lecturer and a specialist in the 16th and 17th centuries, who will explain the literary and cultural context and texts in their original language. *Tour partly in Spanish.*

Duration: 90 min. Price: €23 Concessions: €16

Tribu ticket offer (for a group of 4 paying visitors, including 2 young people aged 16 to 25): €62

Dates: Saturday 18 January 2.30-4 pm; Wednesday 22 January 7-8.30 pm; Wednesday 5 February 7-8.30 pm

Workshop tour for adults

Dessins en promenade

Take a tour with our tour guide and complete the pages of a sketch book featuring creations inspired by the artist and his bold formal research.

Drawing equipment not provided.

Date: Tuesdays 10 December and 5 February, 2 pm

Duration: 2 hrs Price: €30 €24 Concessions: €22

PUBLICATIONS

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Greco, edited by Guillaume Kientz, 22,5 × 31 cm, bound, 248 pages, 200 illustrations approx, €45

JOURNAL OF THE EXHIBITION

Greco. The exhibition journal, by Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau, 28 × 43 cm, 24 pages, 32 illustrations, €6

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Interactive family tour (suitable for children and young people aged 7 to 16)

Accompanied by a guide, discover a major artist in the history of art as a family through games and interactivity.

Duration: 90 min. Price: €23 €24 Concessions: €16 Family ticket (2 adults and 2 children aged 16 and under): €53 Tribu ticket (2 adults and 2 young people aged 16 to 25): €62

DISABLED

French sign language tour

Explore the fascinating world of El Greco over the course of two hours with a sign language tour guide.

His style, recognisable by all, is a powerful and original account his journey through Renaissance Europe.

Duration: 2 hrs Price: €7 for disabled card holders. Price for assistants: €10

Audio-guide

Free visit of the exhibition with Audio description (en) on the Grand Palais app (Google Play, Appstore)

tinyurl.com/appligrandpalais

MULTIMEDIA

THE GRAND PALAIS APP

The essential tool for keeping up to date with the latest news and programme at the Grand Palais, enjoy exhibitions and events, save your favourite works and the best parts of the tour.

Free access to the Discovery Tour **THE COLOURS OF EL GRECO** - a dozen emblematic works to understand El Greco's palette -, tour of the exhibition Room by Room, cultural programme.

Free download on Google Play and the Appstore:

tinyurl.com/appligrandpalais

Price of audioguides: €2.29

ONLINE:

Find articles, videos, games and more at grandpalais.fr

Play and discover the life and works of El Greco on our Instagram [@Le_grand_palais](https://www.instagram.com/Le_grand_palais)

Play exquisite corpses with your family ("Jeune Public" young persons pages)

AUTUMN 2019 SEASON

GRAND PALAIS

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

RESOLUTELY MODERN

09 October 2019 › 27 January 2020

Although often reduced to the culture of Montmartre, the work of Toulouse-Lautrec transcends this cliché. Although the artist represented wonderfully the electricity of the Parisian night and its pleasures, Toulouse-Lautrec was motivated above all by an aesthetic ambition, that of translating the reality of modern society and its many faces.

MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENGLISH PAINTING

FROM REYNOLDS TO TURNER

11 September 2019 › 16 February 2020

Built around masterpieces from the Tate, this exhibition showcases one of the richest periods in English painting, from 1760 to 1820. From Reynolds to Turner, it is an opportunity to rediscover the great classics of British art, rarely exhibited in France.

GRECO

16 October 2019 - 10 February 2020

AT THE GRAND PALAIS, SOUTH-EAST GALLERY, ENTRANCE H

OPEN EVERY DAY EXCEPT TUESDAY

MONDAY, THURSDAY AND SUNDAY FROM 10 AM TO 8 PM

WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY FROM 10 AM TO 10 PM

During the autumn half-term holidays from Saturday 19 October to Sunday 2 November 2019: open every day, except Tuesdays, from 10 am to 10 pm

During the Christmas holidays from Saturday 21 December 2019 to Saturday 4 January 2020: open every day, except Tuesdays, from 10 am to 10 pm

Closed on Friday 25 December 2019

This exhibition is supported by Aurel BGC, Sanef and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.



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