The Pope Family’s Grand Tour

Episode 5, Madrid, Spain, 1888

Young and impressionable, Theodate was coming into her own during her Grand Tour. While visiting the second major metropolis of the trip, she begins to respond to the diverse works of art that she comes across on her travels to Madrid.

Drawn to the work of Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), Theodate compares his art to that of Spain’s Diego Velázquez (1599-1660). Through the looking glass of her journal, it is clear she prefers the old world to the new, the conservative to the avant-garde and experimental.

Earlier on, the architectural marvels of Paris created a compelling case for Theodate’s critique of modernist megaliths such as the Eiffel Tour. At the same time, her love of the Sacré-Cœur Basilica demonstrated her devotion to the old-world Revivalist style. In a similar vein, her preference for the portraits of van Dyck versus masterpieces of her own century, such as Francisco Goya’s Third of May, 1808, as well as her comparison to other van Dyck paintings she had previously seen in Paris, evidence her artistic and intellectual development. During her visits to the Prado, she began to digest the arrangement of composition, the artist’s aesthetic, and the series of decisions that led to the creation of their masterpiece. It is these early beginnings of her art historical analysis and budding connoisseurship that would prove invaluable to her future career as an architect and discerning art collector.

December 7, 1888 - Madrid

"Harris took me up to the Royal Palace to see the change of guards for the day. Two bands play. Heard the royal march, which is very pretty. It is played very slow, and the soldiers have almost to swing their feet out in order to march in time to it. They march miserably."

Madrid in 1888

Philip II moved the Royal Court to Madrid in 1561, symbolizing the capital of the unified Kingdom of Spain, and taking the place of the various capitals of the formerly independent Spanish states. It was important for Philip to choose a 'neutral' location, rather than show favor to one regional group by locating the capital of the unified Kingdom of Spain in one of the major cities:
Burgos - Castille
Zaragoza - Aragon
Toledo - Visigoth
Córdoba - Moor
Sevilla - Moor

The Meadow at San Isidro, by Francisco Goya (1746-1828), depicts a view from the opposite side of the river Manzanares, with the Royal Palace on the left of the painting.

Madrid sits on a plateau populated by several rolling hills, which rises about 2,200 feet above sea level. It is near the geographic center of the peninsula. The elevation of the city and its exposure on an unbroken, wind-blown plain, in concert with the nearby Sierra Guadarrama mountain range, produces some challenging and changeable weather conditions. In winter, when the wind comes from the northwest, icy storms, rain and sudden drops in temperature can afflict the city. A local saying warns 'Hasta la cuarenta del Mayo no te quites el sayo' - wait until the 40th of May before you put your cloak away!

This painting of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid shows a dreary, rainy day in 1898 (after electric trams started operating, but with many horse-drawn carriages still in use).
Questions:

• Do you know the name of the musical from 1956 that contains the lyric "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain"?

• Can you find out what the symbols on the coat of arms for the city of Madrid mean?

Despite locating the capital in Madrid, the focus of Philip II's building efforts was 37 miles away, at El Escorial. It was only in 1738 when Philip V began construction of the Palacio Real de Madrid (Royal Palace), that significant building activity began in Madrid. The Royal Palace took 16 years to complete and is regarded as one of the largest palaces in Western Europe, with more than 3,400 rooms. The Palace stands on the site of a small castle built in the mid-9th century by Muhammad I of Cordoba. The last Spanish monarch to live at the Royal Palace was Alfonso XIII (1886-1941). Alfonso was only two years old when the Popes visited Madrid; his mother, Maria Christina of Austria, was serving as regent.

The Spanish Royal family no longer lives in the Palacio Real, but the building is maintained for state ceremonies. Visitors can watch the changing of the guard ceremony once a month.

To learn more:

https://kids.kiddle.co/Madrid
https://youtu.be/eHrtko6zC-U
https://kids.kiddle.co/Royal_Palace_of_Madrid

www.hillstead.org
December 7, 1888 – Madrid (continued)

"We drove from there to the picture gallery. I had another long look at Velasquez's portrait of a sculptor... Saw two fine Van Dyck's today. One of himself and Count of Bristol the other of a young man reading a letter. They are the best Van Dyck's I have yet seen, excepting always the full-length portrait of a man in the Secretan collection."

The Museo del Prado was converted from its original use (as an academy of natural history) on the orders of King Ferdinand VII and opened to select members of the public in 1819 with an initial display of 311 paintings from the royal collection. Over the next twenty years, additional masterpieces were relocated from the royal collection at the Palace to the Prado, and the full collection was transferred to state ownership in 1868. The early focus was on works by Spanish painters and, even though there were soon many masterworks from Italian, Flemish and French artists, the Museum is still the best place to experience the history of Spanish painting. The French author Prosper Mérimée was an early visitor to the Prado, making many visits in 1831, and he published an article in the first issue of a Parisian periodical L'Artiste. The article related the history of the Museum described the practicalities of arranging a visit and expressed his favorable views of the works of Velázquez and Murillo. This article was one method by which awareness and appreciation of Golden Age Spanish painting proliferated within the French art world. The Louvre Museum in Paris opened a suite of galleries devoted to Spanish paintings in 1838. Over the decades that followed, many of the artists represented in the Hill-Stead Museum collection traveled to Spain specifically to visit the Prado.

Theodate mentions the portrait by Diego Velázquez (1599 - 1660) of a 'sculptor.' The consensus opinion is that the sculptor in question was Juan Martínez Montañés. This sculptor was active a generation before Velázquez; in this painting, Montañés is shown working on a bust of Philip IV. Unusually, the "sculptor as an artist" is the focus of Velázquez's painting, rather than the model of the king. Montañés is dressed in formal clothing and gazes in a clear and dignified manner at the viewer.

Another significant painting by Velázquez that hangs in the collection of the Prado is Las Meninas - and at more than 10 feet high by nine feet wide, it is significant in more than one sense of the word.
Completed in 1656, the painting captures Philip IV and Mariana of Austria, the King, and Queen of Spain. The two are reflected in the mirror at the back of the room as they have their portrait painted. This painting places viewers squarely in the position of the king and queen. This perspective portrays the viewer as both spectator and participant. The royals are attended by Infanta (Princess) Margarita Teresa (their only daughter at the time), dressed in a formal white gown, and surrounded by her meninas (female companions) and other members of her entourage. Although there are three members of the royal family depicted in this painting, it is quite different from a standard royal portrait. A "snapshot" of an informal, intimate moment, the light from the window spotlights the Infanta. Still, another source of light intrudes through a rear doorway where a member of the household staff appears to be pulling aside a curtain, casually spotlighting the artist. There is another famous painting where a mirror at the back of the room reflects two figures who appear to share the point of view of the spectator, and Velázquez was intimately familiar with it. The Arnolfini Wedding, painted by Jan van Eyck in 1434, was hanging in the Alcazar Palace in Madrid at the time that Velázquez painted Las Meninas. By the time of Theodate’s visit in 1888, The Arnolfini Wedding had made its way to the National Gallery in London, which Theodate visited in May 1889.
Questions:

Pablo Picasso was so entranced by this painting that he created 58 versions in the space of one year. Compare the original painting of Las Meninas (1656) with The Maids of Honor (Las Meninas, after Velázquez), completed by Pablo Picasso in 1957.

- What similarities can you find between Picasso's interpretation and the original painting?

- Can you create a family portrait in the style of Las Meninas? Be sure to include any pets in your picture!

Theodate's tour of the Prado continued, and next, she noticed the double portrait by Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) titled Endymion Porter and Anthony van Dyck, painted in 1635.

Theodate's diary mentions a portrait of the artist with the Count of Bristol, but this is likely a misunderstanding. The gentleman in white, Endymion Porter, was the secretary to the Duke of Buckingham and responsible for acquiring artworks for the collection of Charles I, King of England. He was a supporter of van Dyck's during the artist's visits to London between 1632-1641; Porter helped to arrange for several royal commissions for van Dyck.
Hill-Stead connection:

Two of the earliest paintings in the collection at the Hill-Stead Museum are a pair of works by Juan de Arellano (1614 - 1676); they depict luscious bouquets against subdued backgrounds. Arellano frequently produced these paintings in sets of two, intended to be hung together. Although Arellano also painted portraits early in his career, from the age of 30, he concentrated on painting flowers. When asked why he had given up painting figures, Arellano responded that he worked less and earned more when painting flowers!

This pair of Arellano paintings hang in the Ell Room at the Hill-Stead Museum.

To learn more:

https://kids.kiddle.co/Diego_Vel%C3%A1zquez
https://smarthistory.org/diego-velazquez-las-meninas/

Hotel Accommodation in Madrid, and the Puerta del Sol

Theodate and her traveling party spent several days in Madrid, exploring the capital city from their base at the Grand Hotel de la Paix on the central square named Puerta del Sol. By 1888, there were at least four hotels of similar appearance to the Hotel de la Paix, clustered around the square.

The hotel advertised itself as one of only two French hotels in the city; it had both an Otis elevator...
and electric lighting, both hallmarks of great luxury in the 1880s. One Spanish report of the day complained that in the larger hotels, the menus were printed in French and featured mainly French dishes.

Puerta del Sol is the most important plaza in Madrid. However, the original east-facing "gate of the sun" was removed in 1570 to accommodate the city's expansion. The last major building work on this plaza took place in 1856; at the same time, Baron Haussmann was overseeing major public works projects in Paris. By 1860, Puerta del Sol boasted ten different roads leading into it and served as the Kilometro cero of the entire Spanish road network. All roads in Spain may not lead to the Puerta del Sol, but all measurements start from here.

The Puerta del Sol remains a social hub in Madrid, and crowds gather here each New Year's Eve, in a similar fashion to Times Square in New York City. A local tradition on New Year's Eve is to eat a single grape with each strike of the clock, twelve altogether, to ensure good fortune in the coming year.

Questions:

- In parts of the United Kingdom, 'first-footing' is a tradition connected with the celebrations of the New Year. Can you discover what is involved with 'first-footing'?

- This picture was taken around 1890 on the Calle Alcalá, an avenue leading from the Plaza del Sol to the northeast. Look closely at the traffic - can you see something unusual?

  Hint: The remarkable thing changed in Madrid on October 1, 1924.
According to the Guinness Book of Records, the world's oldest continuously operating restaurant is the Sobrino de Botín in Madrid. The name translates to "the nephew of Botín," in honor of the founder, Jean Botín. The Casa Botín was founded in 1725, and it continues to cook with the original wood-fired oven. The restaurant serves traditional, rustic Castilian food, and its most popular dishes are roast suckling pig, roast lamb, and clams in a spicy tomato broth.

Questions:

- What is the oldest restaurant in America, still operating today?
- Which famous painter worked as a waiter at the Cafe Botin in 1765, while he was waiting for his acceptance to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts?

Hint: He painted a wide range of topics, from formal portraits of the Royal Court to a gripping representation of an intensely political moment, May 3, 1808, in Madrid.

December 7, 1888 – Madrid (continued)

"We all went to a little Spanish theatre this evening, taking Laulke to interpret for us. They give three or four plays in one evening, charging about a franc a play, so the audience is constantly changing...The third play had only got a good start when we found that it was getting dark, the electric lights were giving out. Men [##started] began lighting matches to see, & as the actors kept on the audience finally shouted to make them stop as they did not want the play to go on until they could see better. Candles were lighted but they gave a very feeble light...Well the audience shouted & hissed but the light did not come up so we were finally told that the play would be given up and our money refunded."
Local theatre

The Pope family were enthusiastic attendees of the theater and opera in America, and it is not surprising that they took the opportunity to experience a popular form of entertainment during their stay in Madrid. The theater scene in Madrid was booming in the 1880s, with 11 theaters operating year-round, and up to 20 summer-only theaters; at this time, the population of Madrid approached 500,000. The most popular form of entertainment were one-act plays, frequently incorporating music and songs. Several plays would be performed in one evening, in a manner called Teatro por horas, with a different play each hour. As with the Popes, a theatre goer could choose to buy a ticket for one or tickets for a series.

The sudden failure of the lights in the theater, while surprising to Theodate, was not an uncommon occurrence during the late 1880s. The first use of electric lighting in public took place in 1878 when the streets and buildings lit up to celebrate the wedding of King Alfonso XII. The general electrification of Madrid began in 1883, but it was some time before there was a reliable power supply.

One act in a play traditionally lasts as long as it takes a candle to burn down; after an act, in the days before electricity or gas lighting, it was time to replace the candles.

December 9, 1888

"Our night cars were very comfortable. The seats pulled down, making good beds... Papa & Harris had the next compartment. The only way we had of communicating with them was to hang out of the windows and shout back & forth."

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It took 15 hours for Theodate and her family to travel the 300 miles from Madrid to Seville. Still, she appears to have enjoyed a comfortable journey. The carriages did not have an internal connecting corridor, which would have made passing messages between compartments difficult, if not dangerous!

December 9, 1888 (continued)

"The landscape we passed by today looked as I have always imagined Spain would. Olive & orange groves & hedges of century plant and cactus."

The train traveled slowly enough that Theodate would be able to enjoy views of the high plain between Madrid and Seville, catching sight of a landscape that lived up to her imagination.

Question:

- Theodate mentions several types of vegetation - the century plant was imported to Spain by explorers returning from the New World in the middle of the sixteenth century. What is a century plant? What are some of the common uses of this remarkable plant?

Theodate’s senses heightened, she leans out the train window, entranced by the sounds, scents, and stunning vistas enveloping her. As the train weaves through
La Mancha and Andalusia to Seville, the diverse landscape—from its jagged mountains to its shimmering gardens—stirs her emotions and enriches her soul. At last, Theodate sees Spain as she imagined it.

Next stop, the Alhambra, a watchtower standing guard on its ridge above the modern city where Theodate would continue to observe the world around her.

Created by Hill-Stead Museum: Beth Brett, Kate Ebner, Holly Maynard, Anitra Powers, Anna Swinbourne, and Lavell Thompson

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