

MADRID
HISTORY
MUSEUM

educational guide

PERMANENT EXHIBITION

THE MUSEUM

The museum is housed in the former **Royal Hospice of San Fernando**, founded in 1673 at the initiative of Mariana of Austria, mother of Charles II of Spain. The final phase of the building's construction (1721–1726) was carried out by the architect **Pedro de Ribera during the tenure of the Marquis of Vadillo** as Mayor of Madrid.

For more than two centuries, the hospice provided shelter for orphans and beggars, serving as a centre where they learned a variety of trades in keeping with the ideals of the Enlightenment. It experienced alternating periods of hardship and prosperity until, in the early twentieth century, when it had fallen into a state of disrepair, its demolition was considered. Thanks to the intervention of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid City Council acquired the surviving part of the building, including such distinctive features as the façade and the chapel, thereby saving it from demolition.

In 1926, the exhibition **“Old Madrid” (“El Antiguo Madrid”)** was organised, showcasing objects related to the history of Madrid. This exhibition became the foundation of the **Municipal Museum**, established in 1929.

Following extensive refurbishment work, it reopened to the public as the **Madrid History Museum** in December 2014. The museum traces the history of Madrid from 1561, when Philip II established the city as the capital of Spain, to the early decades of the twentieth century.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MADRID

The city's origins date back to the Palaeolithic period. Archaeological remains discovered between the Jarama and Manzanares rivers provide evidence of every cultural phase from prehistory to the arrival of the Romans, including the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Around 1000 BC, Madrid was inhabited by Celtiberian tribes. In 218 BC, Roman colonisation began, turning the area into an important stop along the Roman road network. From the fifth century AD onwards, the settlement became a Visigothic town.

In the mid-ninth century, Emir Mohamed I built a fortress (alcázar) on the site now occupied by the Royal Palace, while a medina developed around it. Madrid therefore has its origins as an Islamic city.

During the Reconquest, the city was the target of several attacks until it was finally conquered by Alfonso VI in 1083. In 1202, Madrid was granted its municipal charter (fuero), and it soon became a town frequented by the Castilian kings, who assembled the Cortes there and used the surrounding area for hunting.

The city's Muslim urban layout, characterised by its narrow, winding streets, remained largely unchanged throughout the Christian period until Philip II established the royal court in Madrid in 1561.

From that moment onwards, Madrid, the capital of the vast Spanish empire, entered a period of rapid growth fuelled by the constant arrival of courtiers, merchants, servants, noblemen and rogues.

During the reign of the **House of Habsburg (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries)**, several important urban and architectural projects were undertaken, including the renovation of the **Royal Alcázar**, the transformation of the Plaza del Arrabal into the **Plaza Mayor** (designed by Juan Gómez de Mora), the construction of the **Buen Retiro Palace** and its gardens, and the **Casa de la Villa**. Nevertheless, the city expanded without any real planning, gradually absorbing orchards and outlying districts into the urban fabric.

The city's principal radial streets follow the routes of the historic roads leading out of Madrid: **Calle Alcalá** (towards Guadalajara), **Calle Atocha** (towards Valencia), **Calle Toledo** (towards Andalucía), **Calle Segovia** (towards Extremadura), **Calle Fuencarral** (towards France). In **1625**, during the reign of Philip IV, the last **city wall** enclosing Madrid was built, beyond which no further construction was permitted. Built for sanitary and fiscal purposes, this wall remained in place until 1868, when it was demolished to make way for the Ensanche, Madrid's major nineteenth-century urban expansion.

Following the War of the Spanish Succession, the accession of the **House of Bourbon in the eighteenth century** brought profound changes to the capital. The new dynasty sought to transform the dilapidated city into a capital worthy of the Bourbon monarchy. During this period, several major building projects were undertaken: the **Royal Palace** (built after the destruction of the Alcázar by fire), the works of Pedro de Ribera (including the **Royal Hospice of San Fernando**, the **Conde Duque Barracks** and **Toledo Bridge**), the **Royal Customs House of Madrid** (now the headquarters of the Spanish Ministry of Finance); and the **Puerta de Alcalá** and **Puerta de San Vicente**, both designed by Francesco Sabatini. The banks of the Manzanares River were embellished with the creation of **Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto**, while **Paseo del Prado** was redesigned and embellished with monumental fountains. Scientific institutions were also established, including the **Royal Cabinet of Natural History** (today the Museo del Prado) and the **Royal Observatory**, both designed by Juan de Villanueva.

It was also during this period that the **Royal Manufactories**, established by the monarchy, began to operate.

The **nineteenth century** began with the uprising of the people of Madrid against Napoleon and the outbreak of the Spanish War of Independence. The end of the conflict brought the restoration of Ferdinand VII and the return of absolutism. During the regency of María Cristina and the reign of Isabella II of Spain, a liberal state gradually took shape, relying on the support of the army to maintain its authority. After a brief period of republican rule (1870–1873), Madrid experienced the Bourbon Restoration under Alfonso XII, together with the alternation in government between the Conservative and the Liberal parties. During these years, the city walls were demolished, and construction began on the new **Ensanche** districts, following the plan devised by Carlos María de Castro. Puerta del Sol was remodelled, the construction of **Canal de Isabel II** began, bringing water from the mountains to the capital, and work started on the **railway**, which revolutionised the transport of both goods and passengers. By the early twentieth century, Madrid had begun to experience significant industrial growth, supported by modern facilities such as the **Matadero**.

This growth was disrupted by the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Franco dictatorship. However, from the 1960s onwards, the first signs of recovery emerged, with demographic and industrial growth becoming unstoppable. The end of the dictatorship and the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy within a democratic system facilitated the integration of both Madrid and Spain into the broader European community. Today, Madrid is a modern, cosmopolitan and open city with a vibrant cultural life.

VISIT THE MUSEUM

The exhibition is organised chronologically by century and explores a series of key themes. The sections that structure the exhibition are:

MADRID, TOWN COURT AND CAPITAL
OF TWO WORLDS: 1561–1700

MADRID, ENLIGHTENED CENTRE
OF POWER: 1700–1814

MADRID, THE DREAM OF A NEW
CITY: 1814–1919

A separate section is devoted to the CARTOGRAPHY AND MODELS ROOM, where León Gil de Palacio's model of Madrid is the centrepiece.

MADRID, TOWN COURT AND CAPITAL OF TWO WORLDS: 1561–1700

Since 1561, when Philip II decided to establish the court in Madrid, the city was transformed from a modest town into the capital of one of Europe's foremost monarchies, whose territories extended across the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula (including Portugal), Italy, the Netherlands and its overseas possessions.



JACQUES JONGHELINCK
(ATTRIBUTED TO)
Bust of Philip II, c. 1571, Bronze

The need to bring an end to the itinerant nature of earlier royal courts, with their exhausting journeys made necessary by the complexities of governing an absolute monarchy, made it advisable to establish a permanent seat of government in a representative city that, as the heart of the monarchy, could govern the rest of the empire. Philip II's choice of Madrid was based on several factors: its strategic geographical location, which made it an essential communications hub; the large number of flour mills in the Sierra de

Guadarrama, ensuring the capital's food supply; the abundance of water provided by the network of underground water channels (*viajes de agua*) and fountains; the milder climate compared with Toledo; the extensive hunting grounds in the surrounding countryside; and its proximity to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, where plans were already underway to build the royal pantheon.



ATTRIBUTED TO JUAN DE LA CORTE
Royal Celebration in the Plaza Mayor, 1623



FELIX CASTELLO
La Casa de Campo, c. 1616–50 (Collection of the National Archaeological Museum)

Pedro de Teixeira, Topography of the Town as Described by Don Pedro de Teixeira, 1656

One of the earliest maps of Madrid, comprising twenty engraved sheets depicting the city during the reign of Philip IV. It shows the extent of the city enclosed by its final wall, together with its principal buildings, streets and squares.

Bartolomé González,
San Isidore in Prayer, 1622

Madrid's patron saint, whose devotion continues to this day through the annual celebration of his feast day on May 15.



Cosmopolitan Babylon

- The Royal Alcázar
- General views and maps of Madrid
- Louis Meunier: Partial views of Madrid: Puerta del Sol, Plaza de Santo Domingo and the Cárcel de Corte
- Plaza Mayor
- The Steps of San Felipe
- Manuel Castello: The Death of the Count of Villamediana
- The Virgin of Atocha
- The Miracle of the Virgin of Atocha during the Construction of Casa de la Villa
- Procession of the Virgin of Grace in the Plaza de la Cebada
- Bathing in the Manzanares River
- Royal residences (El Retiro, Casa de Campo, El Pardo and Aranjuez)

FELIX CASTELLO

La Torre de la Parada, c. 1616–51 (Collection of the National Archaeological Museum)

After the royal court was established in Madrid, the city experienced remarkable growth, attracting large numbers of nobles and aristocrats with their households and servants; members of the lesser nobility employed in the royal administration; clergymen supported by the religious foundations promoted by the monarchy; artisans and merchants; foreigners; and vagrants and the poor, who, drawn by the new opportunities created by the city's expansion, settled in the capital, giving rise to considerable social tensions.

This room should be understood as a unified whole: a setting for royal power, symbolised by the Royal Alcázar, and a panoramic view of the city whose urban spaces remain recognisable today, including the Plaza Mayor, Plaza de la Cebada and the Puerta del Sol. The city is represented in all its diversity, with street scenes depicting court festivities, equestrian displays and public spectacles (in the Plaza Mayor).

Visitors encounter people from every social background: construction workers, litigants, water carriers, passers-by, noblemen, members of the clergy, people gathering to bathe in the Manzanares, gossiping on the Steps of San Felipe, and taking part in religious processions. This room also illustrates both the daily work and the leisure activities of the people and the royal court through depictions of the Royal Sites (Reales Sitios), while the religious devotions shared by every level of society are also represented.

LOUIS MEUNIER
Plaza de la Cebada, c. 1666-68



ATTRIBUTED TO GIOVANNI BATTISTA CRESCENZI
Model of the Main Façade of the Royal Alcázar, c. 1630-45
(Collection of the National Archaeological Museum)

MADRID, ENLIGHTENED CENTRE OF POWER: 1700-1814

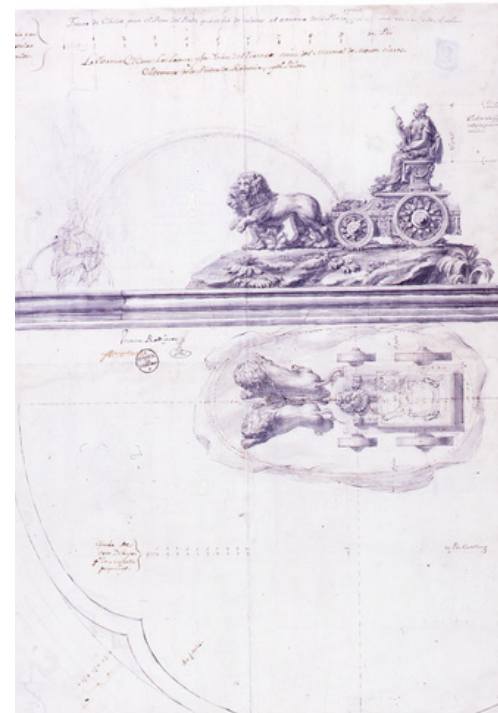
Miguel Jacinto Meléndez: Francisco Antonio Salcedo y Aguirre, First Marquis of Vadillo, Corregidor of Madrid

During the tenure of the Marquis of Vadillo as Corregidor of Madrid, and with the support of Philip V, important urban development and beautification projects were undertaken. These included the Royal Hospice of San Fernando (now the Madrid History Museum), the Toledo Bridge, which completed the reorganisation of the southern approaches to the city; the Puerta de San Vicente, marking the culmination of the Florida and Virgen del Puerto

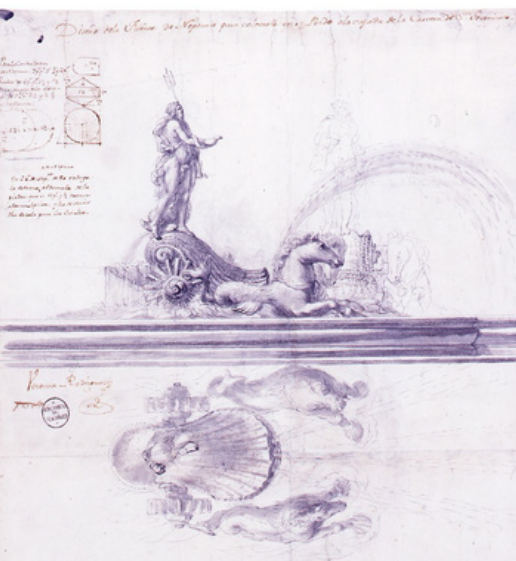
promenades; the Conde Duque Barracks; and numerous fountains, including the Fountain of Fame, now located in the gardens of the Madrid History Museum.

Arturo Mélida Equestrian Portrait of Charles III (sculpture) Series depicting the temporary decorations of various streets to celebrate the ceremonial entry of Charles III into Madrid

On the occasion of royal entries, autos-da-fé, receptions for ambassadors, royal weddings and funerals, and other official ceremonies, the city was transformed into a magnificent theatrical setting. Temporary decorative structures, including imitation marble façades, monumental arches crowned with fountains, and tapestries depicting classical, allegorical and mythological scenes, adorned streets and balconies throughout the city. The paintings in this room depict the ceremonial entry of Charles III into Madrid on 13 July 1760, when the city centre was embellished with temporary architectural decorations designed by Ventura Rodríguez.



VENTURA RODRÍGUEZ
Cibeles Fountain, 1777



Under Charles III, Madrid's structural shortcomings became increasingly evident: its streets were narrow and poorly lit; there was no sewerage system, wastewater was thrown directly into the streets—hence the expression “¡Agua va!”—and many houses were overcrowded and poorly ventilated.

VENTURA RODRÍGUEZ
Neptune Fountain, 1777

Guided by the ideals of the Enlightenment, Charles III promoted the creation of scientific and educational institutions, including the Royal Observatory, the Royal Cabinet of Natural History (now the Museo del Prado), hospitals such as the Hospital General (now the Reina Sofía National Art Museum), the College of San Carlos, and others. The Salón del Prado was conceived as a scientific and cultural space, designed for strolling, social gatherings, leisure and courtship, while also serving as a grand ceremonial axis that symbolised the ideals of the Enlightened monarchy.



JOSÉ DEL CASTILLO
A stroll along the banks of the Retiro Lake 1780
 (Collection of the Museo del Prado)



ATTRIBUTED TO LORENZO DE QUIRÓS
Decorations of Calle de las Platerías (now Calle Mayor) for the Ceremonial Entry of Charles III into Madrid, c. 1760 (Collection of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando)

Series of Tapestry Cartoons

Large-scale paintings depicting scenes of everyday life in Madrid decorate this room and reflect some of the city's most representative landmarks, including the Puerta de Alcalá and Puerta de San Vicente, as well as contemporary customs such as promenading, bullfighting and fashion. Among the artists represented are José del Castillo, Ramón Bayeu and Ginés Andrés de Aguirre. These were used as full-scale designs for the tapestries woven at the Royal Tapestry Factory.

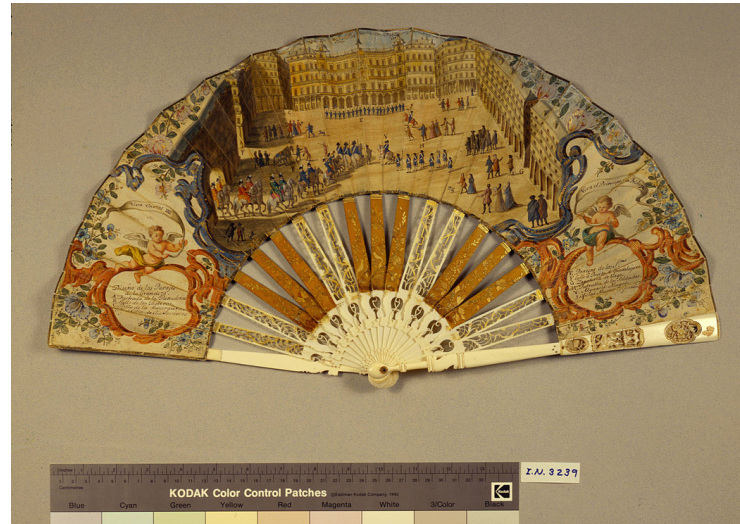
Manuel de la Cruz y Cano The Madrid Fair in Plaza de la Cebada

The same square that appeared in the seventeenth-century room as the setting for a religious procession now becomes the scene of a bustling market

selling furniture, pottery, fruits, mats and a wide variety of other goods. Its lively atmosphere is characterised by the mingling of social classes, with elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen, clergymen, majos, servants and a colourful array of street vendors sharing the same urban space.

Leisure and Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Madrid

Prints, fans, decorative boxes and models illustrate the principal forms of leisure enjoyed by the people of Madrid: the theatre (actors and playhouses), bullfighting (las suertes, the bullfighters themselves and the city's first permanent bullring, built near the Puerta de Alcalá to a design by Sacchetti), strolling along the city's promenades and open-air dancing.



PROCESSION THROUGH
the Plaza Mayor, Madrid



ROYAL PORCELAIN FACTORY OF THE BUEN RETIRO
Tureen, 1760–1784

Royal Manufactories

The Royal Manufactories, established during the eighteenth century under royal patronage, were created to encourage the production of luxury decorative arts, whose principal patrons were the royal household and the nobility. Display cases in this room contain a selection of pieces from the Royal Porcelain Factory of the Buen Retiro, originally located within the Retiro grounds, as depicted in one of the paintings on display. Its establishment was personally promoted by Charles III,

who brought skilled craftsmen from the Capodimonte Porcelain Factory in Naples. The factory was destroyed during the Spanish War of Independence. Also represented are the Royal Glass Factory of La Granja, the Royal Silver Factory of Antonio Martínez, the Royal Tapestry Factory, and the Royal Clock Factory, all of which exemplify the high level of craftsmanship fostered by the Bourbon monarchy.

Spanish War of Independence

The final section of the eighteenth-century room is devoted to the Spanish War of Independence. It includes **prints** depicting the uprising of the people of Madrid against the French and the events of 2 May 1808; a series of **satirical prints** focusing primarily on Joseph Bonaparte (the **portrait of Joseph Bonaparte by the French painter Flaugier**); the heroes of Madrid, **Luis Daoíz, Pedro Velaverde and Manuela Malasaña**; the subsequent Repression, including the executions at Buen Suceso; and finally, the famine suffered by the people of Madrid during the conflict.



ANTONIO CARNICERO
View of a bullfight in Madrid, 1791

Francisco de Goya, Allegory of the City of Madrid, 1810

Madrid is represented as a young crowned matron, dressed in white with a pink cloak, barefoot and accompanied by a small dog lying at her feet, a symbol of fidelity. This painting, and particularly the oval medallion held by this figure, encapsulates the extraordinary political upheavals experienced by Madrid and Spain throughout the nineteenth century. In 1810, the painting presented an allegory that glorified the reign of Joseph Bonaparte. In May 1812, following the withdrawal of the defeated French forces from Madrid, his portrait was replaced with the inscription "CONSTITUTION", referring to the Constitution recently proclaimed in Cádiz.

In November of that same year, after Joseph Bonaparte returned to Madrid, his portrait was reinstated. In 1813, following the definitive departure of the French, the inscription "CONSTITUTION" once again replaced his image. The return of Ferdinand VII brought about another alteration, with the oval bearing the new king's portrait until 1843, when Madrid City Council ordered it to be replaced by the inscription "The Book of the Constitution". Finally, in 1872, Vicente Palmori was commissioned to paint the version displayed today, replacing the inscription with "Dos de Mayo" ("The Second of May").



FRANCISCO DE GOYA
Allegory of the City of Madrid

MADRID, THE DREAM OF A NEW CITY: 1814–1919

The nineteenth century was a period of profound political, social and urban transformations. From 1850 onwards, the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the Ensanche reshaped the city's appearance and laid the foundations for modern Madrid. The early decades of the century were marked by the absolutist reign of Ferdinand VII (**portrait by Vicente López**), the Liberal Triennium, and the king's return, followed by a period of political repression (**portrait of General Torrijos, scene relating to the Inquisition**). Cafés became important centres of social life, political debate and conspiracy (**two paintings of the Café Levante**). Following the death of Ferdinand VII, the regent María Cristina, together with her daughter Isabella, the future queen, relied on the support of the army and the defenders of liberalism to consolidate their authority against the Carlists (**portrait of Isabel II as a child swearing allegiance to the Constitution and portrait of General Espartero**).

The century was marked by successive uprisings and political unrest, including the Revolution of 1854, led by Lucas Velázquez, and the triumphal entry of General Prim into Madrid. These events culminated in the Sexenio Revolucionario (the Six Revolutionary Years), the exile of Isabella II, the very brief reign of Amadeo I of Savoy, the First Spanish Republic, and finally the Bourbon Restoration (**portraits of Alfonso XII and María de las Mercedes**).



ANONYMOUS SPANISH ARTIST
General Prim Passing beneath the Triumphal Arch Erected in Calle de Alcalá after the Revolution of September 1868

From an urban and architectural perspective, this period witnessed some of the most ambitious projects in Madrid's history. Among them were plans to connect the Royal Palace (Palacio Real) with the Church of San Francisco el Grande, a precursor to the future viaduct the completion of the Plaza de Oriente and the Royal Theatre (Teatro Real), represented here by **scale models**; the redevelopment of Puerta del Sol, illustrated through **plans, prints and photographs**; and the visionary proposals for a "Great Madrid" developed by Ángel Fernández de los Ríos (whose **bust** is displayed in this room).



The demolition of the city walls made possible the construction of the Ensanche (**model of the monument to the Marquis of Salamanca**). The city's expansion was further supported by the arrival of water through the Canal de Isabel II (**photographs**). Other technological advances transformed daily life, including gas, electricity, and the arrival of the railway.

JOSÉ CASTELARO
Isabella II Swearing Allegiance to the Constitution c. 1844

Leisure and entertainment

During the nineteenth century, the people of Madrid increasingly took advantage of the city's public spaces for leisure. They strolled through parks and promenades (**Francisco Domingo Marqués: Entrance to Jardín Botánico from the Museo del Prado**), attended outdoor dances (**Rafael Botella, A Night Dance at the Public Garden "Paradise", 1862**), went to bullfights (**José María López Mezquita, Infanta Isabel de Borbón and the Marchioness of Nájera Leaving the Bullring, 1915; bullfight posters**), joined religious processions (**Francisco Pradilla, Good Friday in Madrid. A Procession of Women Wearing Mantillas, 1914**), and enjoyed a rich theatrical life that included opera, concerts (**model of the Royal Theatre, portraits of performers or family members: Teodora Lamadrid, Adelina Patti, María Hahn; fans with musical themes**), plays and cabarets (**Eduardo Chicharro, La mamá postiza 1920**).

CHARLES CLIFFORD
Puerta del Sol, 1862



BERNARDO RICO Y ORTEGA
Illumination of the Plaza de Oriente, 1876

Other new forms of leisure also emerged in nineteenth-century Madrid, including public bathhouses (**drawing of the Portici Baths**), horse racing and organised sports. People also began to venture beyond the city to enjoy the surrounding mountains and, among the wealthier classes, to spend the summer there.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the promise of progress attracted large numbers of migrants from other Spanish provinces. At the same time, the growth of industry and the arrival of the railway also brought poverty, begging and the exploitation of the working classes.

PHARAMOND BLANCHARD
Poor people from the San Bernardino Asylum, 1879

AURELIANO DE BERUETE
San Bernardino Asylum, 1903

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA
Façade of La Latina Hospital, 1883

JOAQUÍN SOROLLA
Hamlet in the Slums of Madrid, 1883

JOSÉ FRANCO Y CORDERO
Façade of the Royal Hospice, c. 1900



JOSÉ MARÍA LÓPEZ MEZQUITA
Infanta Isabel de Borbón and the Marchioness of Nájera Leaving the Bullring, 1915



AURELIANO DE BERUETE
Madrid from the Manzanares, 1883

Other aspects of nineteenth-century Madrid are illustrated through drawings, prints, photographs and postcards: the working conditions of women (laundresses, seamstresses and ironers), women's education, and the early stages of industrialisation (a sketch of Bellido's design for the Slaughterhouse and a selection of objects produced by Madrid's industries)

International exhibitions also became showcases for innovation and technological progress. Among the works displayed is **Alejandro Ferrant y Fischermans' The Spanish Pavilion at the Universal Exposition in Paris, 1879**



LEÓN GIL DE PALACIO
Model of Madrid, 1830 (detail)

CARTOGRAPHY AND MODELS ROOM

On the lower ground floor, visitors can see, among other exhibits such as maps and paintings, the following highlights:

Model of Madrid based on Pedro de Teixeira's map: a contemporary model reconstructing Madrid as it appeared during the reign of Philip IV.

León Gil de Palacio, Model of Madrid, 1830: an extraordinary historical model reconstructing Madrid as it appeared in the time of Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, before the urban transformations brought about by the Ecclesiastical Confiscation (Desamortización). The model shows the reforms carried out during the Bourbon period, together with the city wall built in 1625, which enclosed Madrid until the beginning of the Ensanche. It offers an invaluable record of the city before its nineteenth-century expansion and is regarded as one of the museum's most significant works, alongside Goya's Allegory of the City of Madrid.