

## JULIO GONZÁLEZ



*Gran maternidad, 1934*  
*Large Maternity, 1934*

**DATES:** 10 March – 1 June 2009

**PLACE:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Sabatini Building, 3rd Floor (Zone A)

**ORGANISATION:** Co-produced by the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

**CURATOR:** Mercè Doñate

**COORDINATOR:** Osbel Suárez

The Museo Reina Sofía is pleased to present the largest retrospective of the work of sculptor Julio González ever seen in this country. The exhibition has been co-produced with the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), where it was recently on display.

The retrospective was organised for the purpose of showing not only the scope of this sculptor's oeuvre, but also his prominent role in the artistic avant-garde movements as a pioneer of iron sculpture and the creator of a highly personal language with which he contributed to the revival of 20th-century sculpture. The show has been curated by **Mercè Doñate**, head of the modern art collection at the MNAC and an expert on sculpture, with advice from **Tomàs Llorens**, one of the greatest connoisseurs of González's work.

Iron sculptures take pride of place amongst the approximately two hundred works selected for display. The exhibition also includes several wrought bronze pieces and posthumous bronzes of works modelled in plaster; a fair number of drawings, mainly related to the creative process behind the sculptures; examples of his activity as a painter, several pieces of decorative art and a fine selection of his work in the field of jewellery.

In addition to the pieces recently shown at the MNAC, the Museo Reina Sofía will also offer a large collection of documents selected by the exhibition coordinator, Osbel Suárez. On loan from the archives of the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM), these include letters, texts, manuscripts, period documents, etcetera, all related to the artist and his family. Many have never or only rarely been displayed previously. For example, there is an original Christmas card from 1921 made by González himself for his daughter Roberta; a letter from the Director of the MoMA, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., inviting the sculptor to participate in the March 1936 exhibition on Cubism and abstract art; a letter from José Gaos, head curator of the International Pavilion of Spain, inviting the artist to participate in the pavilion; and a letter from André Malraux addressed to the sculptor on the occasion of the inauguration of the González Gallery at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris.

Julio González (Barcelona, 1876- Arcueil, 1942) is regarded as one of the great names in modern sculpture. He trained as a craftsman at his father's artistic metallurgy workshop in Barcelona. His work with iron, which he used to create his own language, has been considered one of the most valuable contributions to the avant-garde movements of the 1930s, and yet he only devoted a decade of his life to creating artwork with this metal. González began working with iron in the late 1920s, when he was over 50 years old. Although he had previously worked with the metal to create jewellery and a range of decorative objects, it was then that he

began to make small reliefs in embossed copper and, later, to experiment with small sheets, creating female heads and figures. It was his contact with Picasso, with whom he collaborated between 1928 and 1932, that first drew his attention to the potential of iron for sculpture. In 1928 the Malaga-born artist requested his technical expertise for the creation of a series of iron pieces, including a sculpture for a monument to Apollinaire and *Femme au jardin*.

His origins as a craftsman and knowledge of the unexplored possibilities of iron, as well as the vast scope of his imagination and the sensitivity that characterises a great artist, allowed him to create a new and highly personal language. In the 1930s, when he was already in his fifties, he joined the avant-garde with his new and powerful sculptural forms and a unique language, described as abstract, whose primary aim was to marry form and space. In his sculptures, space is part of the piece itself, and this trail he blazed was later used by countless other sculptors, such as David Smith and Eduardo Chillida. González himself used the term "drawing in space" to refer to the part of his work in which he employed clay and iron rods. The filiform or linear sculptures (the ones he called drawing in space), voluminous heads and biomorphic figures are the result of a highly technical and conceptual process which ultimately earned him a place of honour among the great sculptors of the 20th century.