

Julio González

27 MAY - 17 OCTOBER 2021

Previously included in the "From Miró to Barceló. A Century of Spanish Art" exhibition, these works by Catalan sculptor Julio González (1876-1942) come from the Musée National d'Art Moderne (Mnam) in Paris. Alongside the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM), the Mnam keeps the largest collection of sculptures and drawings by the artist, mainly acquired through the donations and bequest from his daughter, Roberta González, between 1953 and 1978.

The exhibition reveals the main periods of a career focused from the beginning on metalwork, with the classicising nudes and figurative portraits in hammered copper of the 1910s and 1920s, or the cut-out reliefs and the first sculptures in forged and welded iron. These prepared the way for his large schematic works in iron of the 1930s, when he developed the concept of "drawing in space" that he explored during his collaboration with Pablo Picasso between 1928 and 1932.

The preparatory drawings on display around the sculptures show the technical process and formal diversity of the linear metal sculptures, such as *Femme se coiffant I* [Woman Combing Her Hair I] (1931) and *L'Ange, L'Insecte, La Danseuse* [The Angel, The Insect, The Dancer] (1935), and the dynamic energy of his metamorphic, lyrical figures of the late 1930s.

Echoing the first pastel *Autoportrait* [Self-Portrait] of 1914-1918, the final self-portraits he drew and engraved testify to the strong, ascetic personality of Julio González, considered to be the father of 20th century iron sculpture.



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First works. Hammered masks



The first portrait sculptures by Julio González were made of copper using the repoussé technique. He used the metal's malleability to shape them with great sensitivity. The hammered lines are smooth. The faces of the models, often his own sisters Lola and Pilar, are austere as though absorbed in their inner self, and reveal little of the individual. The dark patina on the metal accentuates the melancholic air, symbolist by nature, of the physiognomies.

Young Girl With Ewer [1926-1928]. Hammered copper. 25,5 × 18,5 × 2 cm
© Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Philippe Migéat / Dist. RMN-GP

Cut-out reliefs. First iron sculptures.

A new sculptural language developed in the 1920s. The forged iron motherhoods were simplified and their outlined silhouettes schematised. Iron plates were cut like cardboard to create forms with very light reliefs. The *Masque découpé de Pilar au soleil* [Cut-out Mask of Pilar in the Sun] is made of layered sheets of iron. Its corporeality is not suggested by a closed volume but by the assembly of two metal planes, one forming the back and the other the front. *Tête en profondeur* [Head in Depth] develops the same principle of constructing volume using independent, bent and welded planes. The schematisation of the features, summarised by a simple protruding curve, flirts with abstraction.



Cut-out Mask of Pilar in the Sun, 1929. Welded cut-out iron.
19 × 16 × 8 cm © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Philippe Migéat / Dist. RMN-GP

Sculptor of emptiness

In his series of linear sculptures forged in the 1930s, González invented a mode of expression that was specific to metal. The forged iron rods welded in place define empty forms reduced to geometric shapes like a “drawing in space”. This concept was fostered by his work with Picasso between 1928 and 1932, and defended in his essay entitled “Picasso and the Cathedrals, Sculptor Picasso” (1931-1932, Institut Valencià d’Art Modern archives). It takes concrete form in his 1931 work *Femme se coiffant I* [Woman Combing her Hair I], whose frame is held up by rods delineating empty planes and solid sheets that give it volume.



Woman Combing Her Hair I [1931]. Welded wrought iron. 168,5 × 54 × 27 cm
© Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Philippe Migeat / Dist. RMN-GP



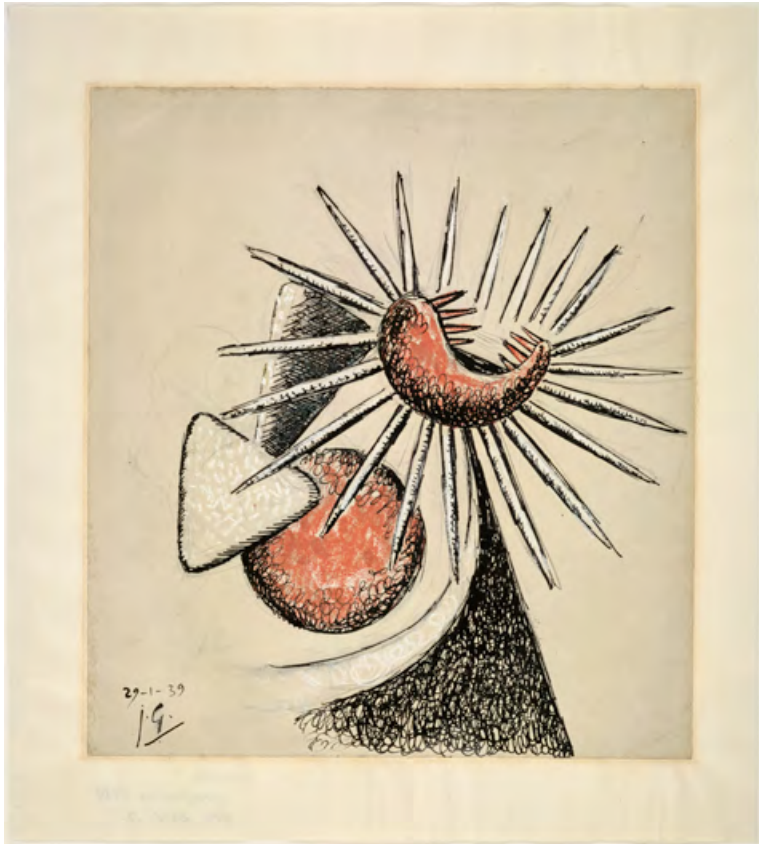
The Angel, The Insect, The Dancer [1935]. Welded wrought iron on stone base. 163 × 41 × 35 cm © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Bertrand Prévost / Dist. RMN-GP

The Angel, The Insect, The Dancer

The theme of dance was a familiar one for González and lends itself to the study of movement, as shown by the series of preparatory drawings for the sculpture. They form a sort of short animated film in which the mechanical figure is presented in a choreographic way. The sketches serve as technical diagrams, indicating the location of the welding points and each forged piece, and also testifying to the metamorphosis of the figure. Initially titled “L’Insecte” [The Insect], it was renamed “L’Ange” [The Angel] by Picasso while keeping the generic name of “La Danseuse” [The Dancer]. This triple identity underlines its iconographic complexity. A hybrid and metaphorical sculpture, it holds its elytrons erect like scythes, like an Angel of Death.

Metamorphic work

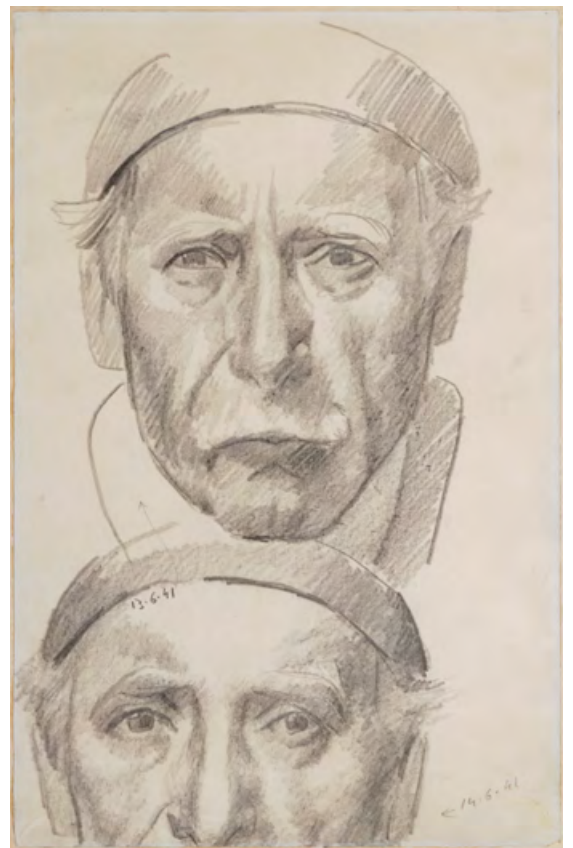
The colourful drawings presented here summarise González's final formal research. Hybrid figures - half plant, half human - leap across space with a new energy. The works return to familiar themes that would later be used for the large allegorical sculptures of the late 1930s, such as *Daphné*, *Homme cactus* [Cactus Man] and the majestic *Femme au miroir* [Woman with a Mirror] from 1936-1937 (Institut Valencià d'Art Modern), his final masterpiece displayed in the pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris.



Composition. Fantasy Head,
29 January 1939. Ink and colour pencil
on grey paper. 27,3 × 25 cm © Centre
Pompidou, MNAM-CCI / Bertrand
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Last self-portraits

The Second World War cast a shadow over the final years of González's life. In 1941, he sought refuge in a free zone in the south-west of France, where he was deprived of his studio and concentrated on drawing and metal engraving. His final self-portraits were close-ups, confronting old age and death with uncompromising realism. According to his daughter Roberta, his final words, on 27 March 1942 in Arcueil, were: "I know where I am going now, it is all clear to me".



Two Self-portraits, 13-14 June 1941. Graphite on
paper. 31 × 20 cm © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-
CCI / Georges Meguerditchian / Dist. RMN-GP

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CATALOGUE

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The mediation team offers you guided tours to discover a selection of works from the exhibition, in an active and sensitive way.

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Visit in Spanish included in the price of the ticket. Inscription on the same day at the reception.
15 people maximum.
Wednesday at 6:00 pm

Groups

From a group of 8 people. In Spanish, English and French, by prior reservation: educacion.centrepompidou@malaga.eu

INFORMATION

OPENING HOURS

9.30 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., every day
Ticket offices close at 7:30 p.m.
The museum is closed on Tuesdays (except holidays and days before holidays), 1 January and 25 December

PRICES

Entry to temporary exhibitions: €4, concessions: €2.50
Entry to semi permanent exhibitions: €7, concessions: €4
Entry to semi permanent and temporary exhibitions: €9, concessions: €5.50

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