

María Blanchard



Composición cubista-Naturaleza muerta verde con lámpara, 1916-1917
Óleo sobre lienzo
Colección LL-A.Madrid

DATES:	16 October 2012 – 25 February 2013
PLACE:	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid) Edificio Sabatini, 3rd floor
ORGANISED BY:	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Fundación Botín
CURATED BY:	María José Salazar
COORDINATED BY:	Gemma Bayón
RELATED	
ACTIVITIES:	<i>On María Blanchard. Avant-garde and identity</i> 14 November 2012, 18:00 h

María Blanchard (Santander, 1881 - Paris, 1932) belongs to the group of artists of very diverse origins who were responsible for the rupture in artistic languages in the Paris of the early decades of the 20th century. Thanks to new studies, the figure of Blanchard now emerges as an artist of key importance whose career was both coherent and in tune with the times, and as one of the pioneers of a generation of woman artists linked with the avant-garde. Despite the episodes of hostility and exclusion which she had to endure in a context dominated by male artists, and even though born with a physical deformity, she managed to make a place for herself in the effervescent atmosphere of Montparnasse, and won recognition for her commitment to the languages of modernity. This exhibition looks at her career in the various contexts of its development, from regenerationist Spain to Paris between the wars, with a central place accorded to her Cubist period (1913-1920), her socially most active years. There is a limited review of her earlier work belonging to her period of training (1903-1913), and a third group of works representative of her return to figuration during her final phase (1919-1932), when her art inscribed itself within the poetic frameworks of New Objectivity and magic realism.

María Blanchard was born in the same year as Picasso to a family of the new Cantabrian bourgeoisie. After training in Madrid with the painters Emilio Sala, Álvarez de Sotomayor and Manuel Benedito, she obtained two consecutive scholarships to study in France, first with Anglada Camarasa and afterwards with Van Dongen. The work from this period, *Mujer con vestido rojo* (Woman in a Red Dress), 1912-1914, show her already detaching herself from 19th century naturalism to plunge into the tides of modernism. She had already encountered Fauvism and Primitivism, and she had joined an avant-garde group which welcomed her as an artist alongside Ribera, Gris, Lipchitz and others. Ramón Gómez de la Serna included her in the exhibition “*Los pintores íntegros*” (“The painters of integrity”), Madrid, 1915, which caused a scandal in the straight-laced Spanish society of the period.

In 1916, her firm artistic convictions persuaded her to settle definitively in Paris, where she found an open channel for developing her work in the “second life of Cubism”, which lasted from 1915 to 1920. Léonce Rosenberg presented her at his gallery L’Effort Moderne, which continued the support for cubism previously shown by Kahnweiler, and positioned her among the leading figures in the movement. Commentaries on her painting tend to emphasize its austere conceptual qualities as a personal response to the analysis-synthesis dialectic of her

Cubist entourage. Close to the path traced by Juan Gris, Blanchard is characterized by her flatness and restraint, an attempt to redefine “pure painting” through flat colored surfaces, the architecture of the composition and the synthesis of forms.

In the early twenties, like so many other Cubists at that time, she redirected her art toward new forms that were indebted to her passage through Cubism, and reinvented her painting in the spirit of the time, the “*return to order*”. The new cultural context that appeared after the Great War employed a nationalist discourse which sought to recover its own history and tradition, and so turned its gaze toward the classicism of museums. Blanchard joined the moderately right-wing, enlightened and Catholic circle of Lhote and Jacques Rivière, and her painting withdrew into the private sphere, staging a dialogue with history. There are no decorative concessions in her work, nor does she seek realist effects. She distributes light by using color to create luminous variations all over the composition, a procedure which Cézanne had called “*irisation*” or “colored undulation”.

The critic Waldemar George pointed out the continuity of the structural sense of Cubism in Blanchard's later work, noting that her painting was an expression of her inner life, and that her taste for drama and bending of optical phenomena to meet the demands of the style were signs of her Spanish roots. Maurice Raynal wrote that Blanchard proved her ability to leap across the moat from Cubism to the present, and that the secret of her sensibility was a profound sense of reality, eluding the mysticism which might have enticed her. There is a turning point in 1927, when the artist experienced a spiritual crisis and returned to Catholicism, like other European intellectuals, possibly under the influence of Jacques Maritain. Her painting then becomes more translucent and melancholic, the outlines of her images come undone, the light is liberated and the objects are dematerialized.

PUBLICATION

On occasion of the exhibition, Museo Reina Sofía and Fundación Botín have edited a comprehensive book about the life of María Blanchard, analyzing her different artistic stages, as well as her vital facets as a woman and as an artist. Along high quality reproduction of all the exhibited works in both venues, the publication has been edited by **Carmen Bernárdez** and includes texts by **Eugenio Carmona**, **María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco**, **Griselda Pollock**, **Xon de Ros** and **Gloria Crespo**, as well as the curator of the show, **María José Salazar**.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

SYMPOSIUM. “En torno a María Blanchard. Vanguardia e identidad”

Date: 14 November

Time: 18:00 h

Place: Sabatini Auditorium

Access: free until full capacity

This symposium, first public conference held in the Museum on María Blanchard, aims to draw attention to her figure and enhance her value as an avant-garde artist in the early 20th century. The round table will include interventions by **María José Salazar**, **Eugenio Carmona Mato**, **María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco**, **Carmen Bernárdez** and **Xon de Ros**.

For further information:

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