

Exhibition: **Juan Asensio. Geometry without limits**  
IVAM, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern  
28 June – 27 August 2006

Organized by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curators: Raquel Gutiérrez and Rafael Sierra

Sponsored by: CYES

The exhibition *Juan Asensio. Geometry without limits*, which can be seen at the IVAM until 27 August, presents a total of 25 sculptures which the artist has made specially for this show. Five of the sculptures are made of stainless steel. This is the first time that the artist has used this material and it marks the beginning of a new register and orientation in his artistic career. The exhibition is sponsored by CYES, and Galería Elvira González in Madrid has collaborated closely with the IVAM in its preparation.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication of a complete catalogue with introductory texts on Asensio's work by Consuelo Císcar, Rafael Sierra, Raquel Gutiérrez, Carlos Marzal, Lyle Rexer, Antonio Lucas, Manolo Valdés and Martín Chirino.

Juan Asensio was born in 1959 in Cuenca, where he studied and worked until he was 19. His first works were small sculptures – portraits and anatomical studies – made of wood or clay. He moved to Madrid in 1987, but before that he had discovered the work of Oteiza and Chillida at the Museo de Arte Abstracto in Cuenca, and also the Informalist ideas of the El Paso group. When he took one of the figurative models that he had made in clay and tried to transfer it to marble, he deciphered and penetrated the process involved in the carving of that material. Its qualities of density, power and fragility captured his attention and it became the vehicle and physical form for his investigations and ideas.

The basis on which Juan Asensio's sculpture is established and developed is a principle that appears in nature, in its imperfect geometrical forms, which can be approached by means of Euclidean geometry. Asensio avoids pure improvisation. He likes to sketch his initial ideas on paper and then reproduce them, using the materials around him: plaster, clay, sheet iron, cardboard, etc. He then makes a stone model, which provides an opportunity to appreciate the particular nuances of each sculpture and study and perfect them. After he has analysed the results achieved by the model, mechanical processes define the pre-established forms in the final material. It is in the treatment of what Juan Asensio defines as the sculpture's skin that he applies his personal care and his way of seeing and working, in search of formal simplicity and exactness, textural sobriety and expressive austerity.

Juan Asensio has won various prizes, including first prize in the Caja Madrid 20th Visual Arts Contest in 1996, the year of his first solo exhibition at Galería Elvira González. In 1999 he started working with cleaner stones, without the streaks or accidental features that might alter or distort the essentiality that he

seeks in sculpture. He discovered Belgian black marble and white marble, materials with purer lines. He also began to familiarize himself with ochre sandstone from Tafalla, which he added to his catalogue of favourite surfaces. Together with this list of materials and masses capable of yielding to his ideas, there are three artistic references that accompany Juan Asensio: Constantin Brancusi, Isamu Noguchi and Anish Kapoor. Yet what he draws from them is only a common interest in a timeless spirituality in which essence propitiates communion between man and nature. From Brancusi he takes a geometry close to the world of nature, from Noguchi the notion of the universality of art and from Anish Kapoor the ability to direct the viewer towards a meditation on space and time.

The idea of purity in Asensio's work, rejecting all that is anecdotal or superfluous in aesthetic ideas, can be found not only in his geometrical forms but also in the materials that he uses, always uniform in colour. Asensio avoids right angles, the intersection of perpendiculars, focusing instead on the study of the curved line, things that emerge as paradoxes with a special quality residing in the synthesis of his artistic ideas, which he empties of content in an attempt to avoid all processes of contamination.

Juan Asensio's "inner landscape" suggests an idealized setting, an intimate space which leads us to meditation. With his subtle, elegant alphabet, the sculptor explores geometry in conjunction with nature, creating private, intimate spaces in which peace and tranquillity reign. His abstractions bring us to the essence contained in his metaphors, in a personal world full of symbols which condition the awakening of our senses and the enriching of our existence. As this exhibition shows, his work postulates concepts such as purity, the passing of time, stability and restrained immobility, which form the existentialist basis of our philosophy.

"On the contemporary art scene, nowadays, it is unusual and gratifying to come across sculptors like Juan Asensio who are capable of combining mastery and a command of their material, and to find that the activity of art causes fascination. Creation and realization – these observations are ever present in Juan Asensio's work, in which he refines form until it becomes beauty and perfection, and with the exquisiteness of his forms he makes sculpture which is both conceptual and real; by great refinement of form and volume he stealthily brings us closer to forms of great purity, eliminating all the incidental aspects that a work of art might have." (Martín Chirino)