

Exhibition: **Juan Barjola**
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
18 January – 19 March 2006

Co-produced by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern and
Museo Barjola, Gijón

Curator: Felipe Garín

The exhibition of Juan Barjola (1919 – 2004) at the IVAM, co-produced by the Museo Barjola, Gijón, is the first retrospective selection presented since the artist's death.

It contains a total of 106 works (9 drawings and 97 oils on canvas), offering an approach to Barjola's paintings from the viewpoint provided by a selective exhibition in which the various stages of his artistic career can be seen. The exhibition shows the recurrences and connecting strands that articulate his creative evolution, in which he proves to be a painter of intensity, always pursuing pictorial expressiveness. His work also presents traces of a tragic view which appear in his various creative periods, from his early explorations (figures and landscapes) until his discovery of a special personal world inhabited by solitary presences.

The exhibition catalogue includes illustrations of the works presented and contains texts by Felipe Garín, Antón Patiño, Guillermo Solana and Raquel Gutiérrez.

Juan Galea Barjola (Torre de Miguel Sesmero, Badajoz, 1919 – Madrid, 2004) received his first lessons in drawing at school in his native town, and he later

learnt from the carver Genaro Remedios and the painter Julio Núñez. He subsequently enrolled at the Arts and Crafts School in Badajoz.

The Spanish Civil War affected Barjola profoundly. His work is partly a reflection of the tragic episodes that he was fated to witness or experience. In 1943 he went to live in Madrid and enrolled as an external student at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, studying with Julio Vicent. He also attended the Arts and Crafts School in Calle de La Palma, where his teacher was José Nogués. During his frequent visits to the Museo del Prado he admired the work of Velázquez, Goya, Brueghel, El Greco and Bosch.

In 1950 he devoted himself fully to painting, and that year he was awarded the Drawing Medal at the *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Madrid. In 1959 he embarked on an important stage in his evolution, which led him to an abstraction of forms in which one can see faint gestures of Expressionist brushwork conceived in tempered tones. The overall effect of these works is a harmony of colours and composition, leading some critics to describe this stage as New Figuration. His paintings gradually became more expressive, using much more violent brushwork to convey disturbing subject matter. The special quality of his painting has to do with its projection of fear as an “existential category”.

In the seventies Barjola’s work developed along Expressionist lines, with characteristics derived from Informalism, Abstract Expressionism and figuration and connections with the work of artists such as Bacon, Picasso or De Kooning. His work became involved with sordidness and violence and even a kind of eroticism, conceived in terms of flat colours with more violent hues, bringing him closer to Pop Art in some respects. In his paintings he delighted in space, working on “a picture within a picture” and using mirrors in his compositions, which led to a complete disintegration of space.

His first exhibition in Madrid (Galería Abril, 1957) marked the start of a tireless progress: the exhibition at the Ateneo in 1960; Second Medal at the *Exposición Nacional* in 1962 for *La siesta* (The Siesta), now at the Reina Sofía; the solo show at the gallery of the Fine Arts General Directorate in 1963 and, some years later, the National Visual Arts Prize in 1985, the great exhibition at Mapfre in 1993, and the Tomás Francisco Prieto Prize, awarded by the Fábrica Nacional de Moneda y Timbre in 2001.

All these different periods, combined with his constant, methodical activity, make Juan Barjola, in his life and work, one of the most significant artists of twentieth-century Spain, and this exhibition seeks to provide a systematic survey of all his creative periods.