

Exhibition: **Martín Chirino Escultor**
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
31st January – 5th March 2006-02-01

Organised by: **Institut Valencià d'Art Modern**

Curators: Tomás Llorens and Boye Llorens

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The exhibition *Martín Chirino Escultor* comprises a total of 23 metal sculptures and constitutes a selection of the most important pieces from the sculptor's different creative periods. One of these sculptures, *El arco del mundo* (2003), is situated on the esplanade outside the IVAM; another, *Árbol de luz y sombra*, is in the lobby and the remaining 21 in gallery 4 of the museum. The exhibition reflects the maturity of an artist with a clearly-defined and extremely personal language and shows how, after his experience with Informalism, Martín Chirino succeeded in giving wrought iron sculpture new meaning.

One of the most outstanding features of this artist is his insistence on working with noble materials. Chirino uses iron because it is a material that conveys a mysterious primitive message. The same applies to his spiral-shaped sculptures; this form is repeated throughout his career as a symbol of *guancho* culture related with birth, fertility and development.

The catalogue of the exhibition reproduces the works contained in the exhibition and texts by Consuelo Císcar, Tomás Llorens, Boye Llorens and Mauro Varela Pérez.

To fulfil an early calling, in 1948 Martín Chirino (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1925) enrolled in the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid, where he studied with a generation of artists who brought about a radical renovation of the style in vogue at the time. His trips around Europe in the early fifties were crucial, arousing his interest in Julio González and sculptors like Arp or Brancusi, Moore or Hepworth. Since his young years at the academy of the sculptor Manuel Ramos in the Canaries, he constantly perfected his sculptural investigations at different forges before setting up his own workshop.

In the fifties he showed an interest mainly in abstraction, with linear constructions that gave way to a solid and consistent language, very much akin to Julio González's poetics. He shared the Catalan sculptor's formal gravity and austerity, his respect for the material and anthropological character of iron and his sense of the complementariness between matter and space that makes the analogy of drawing in space possible.

Martín Chirino resorted to the tradition of rural blacksmiths and attached great importance to tools in the creative process as a prosthetic extension of man. Some of the works in the first solo exhibition he held at the Ateneo in Madrid in 1958 were called *Herramientas poéticas e inútiles* (Useless poetic tools). After that year he joined the group El Paso. After the group split up, he was selected to participate in the exhibition that the MoMA in New York dedicated to the "new Spanish art" in 1960, along with Chillida, Oteiza and Serrano.

During the sixties he brought new meaning to wrought iron sculpture; bending the formal constrictions to emphasise the expressive qualities of the matter and address more universal horizons by means of an allegorical language. His work then acquires a symbolic content manifested in the expressive possibilities of matter. At this period, the spiral appears, an ancient native motif, representing the wind and symbolising the force of Nature with reference to a primitive sense of things according to *guanche* culture.

The spirals were followed by the masks known as *Afrocanes*, a new token of his interest in the primitive art underlying the modern avant-garde movements, and the *Aeróvoros*, pursuing new possibilities for research into the relation between the solidity of the material and its apparent weightlessness. During the seventies he emphasises his Canarian roots and develops the landscape, formally akin to his series *Raíces*.

With the development of organic growth, leading from one set of ideas to another and going back over his tracks to draw a trajectory of Baroque folds, his experience enables him to project the virtuous dimension of the forge on a monumental scale.

Martín Chirino's abundant artistic production is considered to be one of the most outstanding manifestations of art in Spain in the last few decades in wrought iron sculpture, and he is one of the representatives of the international prestige of Spanish abstract culture. His works are present in the most important museums and collections in the world and he has received many awards that make him a reference on an international scale.