

Exhibition: **Pinazo. Child Portraits**
26th April – 23rd September 2007

Organised by: Institut Valencia d'Art Modern IVAM

Curated by: Javier Pérez Rojas

The exhibition “Pinazo. Child Portraits” is the latest instalment in a cycle of five exhibitions curated by Javier Pérez Rojas whose ambition is to show the whole body of work of the painter from Valencia. Each one of the exhibitions focuses on a recurrent theme or subject the artist worked with. Following the shows “Ignacio Pinazo. The Beginning of Modern Painting”, “Ignacio Pinazo: Studies and Impressions”, “Seascapes” and “Peripheries” now is the turn of his work centred on child portraits. Of the 160 works included in this show there are 107 paintings, 47 drawings plus six sculptures by the son of the artist, Ignacio Pinazo Martínez. The majority are being exhibited in public for the first time.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring essays by Javier Pérez Rojas, Aida Pons, Andrés Jiménez, José Ignacio Casar Pinazo, Begoña Enguix, Helena de las Heras and Consuelo Císcar.

Being orphaned at an early age Ignacio Pinazo had a tough childhood and was forced to earn a living in many trades while still very young. He then discovered a fascination for child portraits during his second trip to Italy, after the birth in 1879 of his first son José, whom he used as inspiration for some of his very best paintings.

His time in Italy also imbued in him an appreciation for classical culture, ancient and renaissance art. The conjunction of these factors can be seen in the profusion of studies of children with allusions to Greco-roman mythology. This in turn led to a series of paintings with a heterogeneous iconography in which children were depicted as gods, cherubs, nymphs and putti. Pinazo used the image of children to suggest and evoke pagan antiquity in works such as *Faun Child* or *Games of Icarus*. Later, towards the end of the century his bucolic visions of childhood, with little boys and girls with ribbons in their hair as little shepherds and shepherdesses, impregnated his work with refined references touching on symbolism.

Yet he also worked on a kind of painting closer to realism, where children were the subject of portraits often leaning toward domestic genre scenes. His interest for

child portraits was best expressed in his own family circle. Images of José and Ignacio Pinazo abound both in drawings as well as in oil sketches. There are depictions of a child in a cot, on the floor, asleep, laughing, crying, eating or sick in bed. One can imagine that these were a stimulating exercise and an attractive source of inspiration for the artist. With his paintings and drawings Pinazo compiled a biography of the childhood and adolescence of his sons in a kind of chronicle or family album. A particular mention is deserved for works such as *Catching Butterflies*, *Pepito with Measles*, *Soap Bubbles* and *Ignacito Crying*.

In these compositions Pinazo, who was, above all else, one of the great European portraitists of his time, meticulously studied the gamut of expressions of children, capturing all kinds of situations and moments from crying to laughing, their pranks, at rest or asleep, their tantrums and fights, and even their illnesses. It is perhaps in these paintings and drawings made for himself, for pure pleasure, without any commission or outside pressure, that we can find the most intimate and authentic Pinazo.

However, one can see in the exhibition that his child portraits were not exclusively circumscribed to his own immediate family circle. After all, Pinazo was sought after as a portraitist and he did receive some commissions throughout his career for child portraits. Finally, towards the end of his own life, he returned once again to the portrayal of children, making excellent portraits of his granddaughters María Luisa and María Teresa. Portraits of the same girls by their own father Ignacio Pinazo Martínez, the painter's son, are also on view in this exhibition.