

Exhibition: **MATTA 1911-2011**

IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
15th February – 1st May 2011

Organised by: IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern
Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao
Sociedad Estatal de Acción Cultural

Curator: Marga Paz

This exhibition, organised by the IVAM, the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao and the Sociedad Estatal de Acción Cultural, commemorates the centenary of the birth of 20th century art. The exhibition comprises 32 paintings, some large-format, including a triptych and a polyptych. Matta has been considered the last great surrealist artist because of his importance in this movement during his stay in Paris. In his years of exile in New York, he was the link between surrealism and the young American artists of the New York School, such as Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky and William Bazotes. He had a decisive influence on the development of American abstract expressionism. A precursor in the relationships between art, science and nature and the primordial role of art in the integral development of the human being, his work is characterised by its complexity, and with a myriad of themes, motifs, forms, colours and means configures a language that it is difficult to insert in any watertight category of art history.

The catalogue of the exhibition reproduces the works displayed and contains texts by Rosario Otegui, President of the Sociedad Estatal de Acción Cultural, Consuelo Císcar, Director of the IVAM, Javier Viar, Director of the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Marga Paz, curator of the exhibition, Martica Sawin and Alain Sayag.

Matta (Santiago de Chile 1911 - Tarquinia [Italy] 2002). He studied at the School of Architecture, and later travelled to Europe in 1933. He met Le Corbusier and worked in his studio for a few years. Between 1935 and 1937 he travelled all over Europe, and in 1935 spent some time in Madrid, where, through his family, he made contact with the world of culture and art, and always cherished the memory of the great impact made on him by Federico García Lorca.

When he arrived in Paris in 1935 he was attracted by the studies of physics and psychoanalysis that were in vogue. Both the teachings of the new theories of Freudian psychoanalysis and modern physics helped him construct an iconography of his own

capable of transmitting the new reality that defined contemporary man and that was at the same time the fruit of the action of the forces of the unconscious and nature. He worked on the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic for the 1936 World Fair in Paris, where he came in touch with artists like Picasso – who was painting his *Guernica* at the time – Miró, Magritte and Calder.

Through Dalí and thanks to the recommendation of Garcia Lorca, he met André Breton, who invited him to join the surrealist movement in 1937; he published in the magazine *Minotaure* and participated in the famous International Surrealist Exhibition in 1938. During this period he met important contemporary artists, among whom Marcel Duchamp occupied a privileged position, exerting a crucial influence on his work and starting a friendship that lasted many years. The influence of Marcel Duchamp's ideas on the time and the change were enormously important for the then young artist. He had already shown an interest in Man Ray's 1936 photographs of mathematical models and the discoveries of the Pavilion of Sciences at the 1937 World Fair, which he visited in Paris. His fascination with non-Euclidean geometry and Henri Poincaré's mathematical and algebraic theories stemmed from that time. It was the basis on which he constructed, through the curvature of their elements, his biomorphic forms and concentric circular models, an absolutely personal new undefined and irrational articulation of the pictorial space with which to experiment at random both with the indetermination of the oneiric universe and the spatial disorientation of the exterior world.

In 1939 he moved to New York, where his works, peopled with biomorphic forms, together with his dazzling personality and the innovative ideas and techniques of his style made him the centre of attention for the painters of the New York School, and his influence on the development of American abstract expressionism and his role as a bridge between European artistic ideas and the new American art were decisive. In 1948, after breaking away from the surrealists, he returned to Europe and settled in Rome. From then until his death, he travelled a great deal and spent his time between Tarquinia (Rome), Paris and London.

In 1957 the MoMA in New York held a retrospective of his work, which also travelled to Minneapolis and Boston. Throughout his life he held many exhibitions, including the one held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1985, and his work can be found in the collections of the most important museums in the world.

Faithful to his pledge as a committed artist throughout his life, he was involved in the social movements of his time and he made several trips to Cuba. In 1970 he visited several Arab countries, where he met artists and intellectuals, and he also painted in aid of the Angolan liberation movement. In 1972 he went back to Chile at President Allende's invitation and worked on collective murals and making numerous works in which, rather than describe social realities, he managed to reflect "emotional structures".

Matta continued to work hard until the end of his days, and left paintings, drawings, sculptures, architecture and poetry, all impossible to classify in the usual categories, which strive to immerse the spectator completely in a universe of his own portraying space and time, communication, cosmic revolution and the life of man on Earth, not to mention poetic nature, transformation, the unconscious and desire of his early works.