

EXHIBITION: **IGNACIO PINAZO (1849-1916)**
Los inicios de la Pintura Moderna

IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
19th December 2005 – 19th February 2006

CURATOR. JAVIER PÉREZ ROJAS

PRODUCTION: Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA Madrid
February – April 2005

TRAVELLING TO: Madrid, Fundación Cultural MAPFRE
VIDA
Valencia, IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
December 2005 – March 2006

The exhibition organised by Javier Pérez Rojas, Professor of Art History at Valencia University, comprises over one hundred works between canvases, drawings and SMALL panels by Ignacio Pinazo, one of the most original and creative artists in the late 19th century and the great pioneer of the modern school of painting in Valencia. The exhibition gives an overview of the important themes and shows the enormous modernity of his painting, and presents a large number of unknown works. The importance of the

exhibition resides both in the fact that it is an opportunity to have another look at the career of an artist who is fundamental to the modernisation of Spanish painting and that it presents aspects of his career and genres previously overlooked but forming a crucial part of his trajectory: his portraits, decorative pieces and nudes. A catalogue has been brought out for the exhibition with a comprehensive study by the curator, Javier Pérez Rojas, which constitutes an updating of Pinazo's work, and an anthology of vintage texts, fundamental to understand the artist.

Ignacio Pinazo Camarlench (1849-1916), an orphan from a modest family of craftsmen, worked from childhood as a silversmith, gilder, tile decorator and hatter, among other trades. Meanwhile he attended free night classes in painting at the Academia San Carlos, the Valencian fine arts school. Around 1873 he made a trip to Italy and met Fortuny, who became a decisive influence on his career at that time. In 1876 he won a five-year scholarship from Valencia Diputación to study painting at the Spanish Academy in Rome. During this period, he made the traditional historical paintings that scholarship holders were expected to send to the Diputación, as well as countless drawings and landscapes. On his return to Valencia, he was appointed colour professor at the Academia San Carlos for a few years. During the cholera epidemic in 1885, he and his family sought refuge in the house the Jaumandreu family possessed in Bétera, near Godella, where, among other things, he painted for his patrons the four seasons series, comprising four magnificent portraits, three of which are included in this exhibition. After that, the Valencian bourgeoisie held him in the highest regard; he made numerous portraits and important decorative works, including the portrait of Don Augusto Comas (*El invierno*), 1885, and the four large panels he designed for the bar El León de Oro, included in the exhibition. Meanwhile, he continued to portray his own family in a skilful

and spontaneous way on canvas and little panels. In 1896 he was appointed a member of the Valencian Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, where he pronounced an inflammatory inaugural speech (reproduced in the catalogue), “De la ignorancia en el arte”, where he sang the praises of the natural ignorance of the people as opposed to the petulance of people considered educated. From this time onwards, recognition of his artistic work was constant. In 1903 he moved to Madrid, where he was appointed a member of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando and a teacher of artistic drawing at the Escuela Superior de Artes e Industrias. In 1912, already with failing health, he was awarded the long-awaited Medal of Honour at the National Fine Arts Fair in Madrid. He died four years later at his home in Godella (Valencia).

Blatantly class-conscious, especially because of his humble origins, Pinazo was very much appreciated by everyone for his honesty. “He is the simplest, most honest, most beloved and best man in the world!” they said in the pages of *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. Nevertheless, his introverted, reserved character, which led him to hide away in Godella, deprived him of the international fame enjoyed by his fellow countryman Sorolla. For his contemporaries, however, Pinazo represented the new artist who looked straight at nature and paved the way for modern painting. “The young people of that time are greatly indebted to him,” Sorolla said years later. Pinazo was the epitome of the contradictions of a 19th century artist: whereas, on the one hand, we can see him as an academic, realistic painter who faithfully produced historical paintings and was awarded medals and honours, on the other hand, we find a marginalized revolutionary artist. In his most ambitious paintings, Pinazo starts out with a Velázquez-style naturalism, which he renovates by exclusively plastic means. Pinazo’s modernity partly resides in his peculiar way of bringing his immediate

surroundings close to reality with exquisite sensibility. His selfportraits, the portraits of his wife Teresa and of children, especially his own, transmit the tenderness and vibrant spontaneity with which he depicted his private life. The enormous expressiveness of Pinazo's painting is achieved by the daring plastic treatment he gave his works, applying his paint with spatulas, scratching it afterwards, combining some very detailed motifs with sketchy ones or heavily painted areas with spaces of the canvas treated only with a primer. Thus we discover a great artist who starts to work on a specific subject but transcends anecdote by means of exclusively plastic devices until he reaches the limits of pure painting.