

EXHIBITION: **Marie-Anne Poniatowska.**
IVAM May18 – July 10, 2005

ORGANIZED BY: **IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern**

CURATOR: **M^a Jesús Folch**

The first solo show of Marie-Anne Poniatowska to be presented in a Spanish museum offers a broad retrospective of her artistic career. In the 67 drawings on display, reminiscences of the most classical Renaissance can be noted in her personal interpretation of figurative themes such as portrait, landscape, and ruins that dissolve between the frontiers of the poetic and the abstract. With a laborious, painstaking technique, the artist impresses an intimate and personal character on her work, in which a contained emotion is uncovered, expressed in an almost sculptural treatment of the material. A catalogue to the exhibition has been published with texts by Consuelo Císcar, Vicente Valero, Carmen Bernárdez and M^a Jesús Folch.

Marie-Anne Poniatowska (Paris, 1931) lives and works between Geneva, Paris and Venice, and from those cities she travels on a regular basis to the distant places that have always served as her inspiration. These trips have conditioned her choice of support for her works: always on paper, a material easy to transport.

Sometimes these supports reach large dimensions, openly challenging the reduced scale which has traditionally characterized the drawing. The forms are barely made

out, hinted at, and intuited, as if they only wished to show themselves to one with an attentive gaze, who wants to discover unusual aspects beside or at the heart of the vigorously heightened shadows.

Marie-Anne Poniatowska's drawing is not one of outlines or silhouettes that construct the forms. The absence of any anecdote in Marie-Anne Poniatowska's drawings contributes to our sense of purity and essence. In this artist's drawings, the landscape is above all a profound study of nature, that is to say, an approach, an approximation to the inaccessible.

Her landscapes, figures and still lifes are created in a process of vision and time in which the represented objects reveal themselves gradually, enveloped in tonal atmospheres or in linear plots that unveil them.

In her series of columns and ruins, architecture succeeds in humanizing a cold and uninhabitable landscape. The light indicates a dark, and in the case of the ruins, ancient perfection based on order and proportion. Stumping, rubbing and erasing partially, Poniatowska makes the rough outlines of the mountains that resemble her views of ruins arise out of the shadows. The effect is similar to that the first photographers achieved.

Her first experience drawing was self-taught, and due to the Second World War and to the first years of the post-war period, begun under difficult and isolated conditions in the south of France. When her family moved to California in 1947, she received her first artistic training at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and continued two years later at Scripps College in Claremont. She later broadened her studies at the École de la Ville de Paris and the École des Beaux-Arts. During a visit to Mexico City, she came into contact with the great mural painters. She met David Alfaro Siqueiros and was introduced into the complex world of mural painting—which she calls an “obsession”—first in Mexico and then on her turn to Paris where she continued in classes with Robert Lesbounit until she mastered both traditional and modern techniques. While in her formative years, Poniatowska devoted herself primarily to painting, she soon recognized that her true language was drawing. In 1961 she presented a large exhibition of her work at the Antonio Souza Gallery in Mexico City and shortly after in the Rex Evans Gallery in Los Angeles. An enriching experience for her career was without a doubt her friendship with such artists as Yuri Kuper, who held an exhibition of work at the Jan Krugier Gallery in 1983, with Ida Barbarigo, Zoran Music's wife, with Carlo Guarienti and above all with Jan Krugier whom she married.

The treatment in the early drawings announces what we will find in her later works; the forms are submerged into shadows in a kind of a chiaroscuro that blur the constructive lines. While the drawings she made in the 60's and 70's, which can be seen in the exhibition, still reveal her great drawing discipline, in her evolution, Poniatowska seeks to escape the influence of academicism definitively, while maintaining the continuous dialogue with her masters of reference. From the 1980's

and especially in the 90's, the artist opts for a drawing comprised of diffuse stains, in which a structural sense remains and never disappears altogether, characterized by the reiteration of architectural motifs and the more or less geometric spaces.

During the 1990's, Poniatońska made a large number of drawings in which one finds views of ruins that the artist developed from the small notes and sketches she'd made during her trips through Greece and Italy and which she sometimes incorporates onto the paper of the final composition, such as in *Ruines* from 1989. Other times, her gaze concentrates so closely on the architectural motif as to prevent any view of the whole.