

Exhibition: **WHISTLER - MUSIC. VENICE**

21st July to 25th September 2005

Organized by: IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curator: Margaret MacDonald



FUNDACION CAIXA GALICIA

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The exhibition, organized by the IVAM and sponsored by Fundación CaixaGalicia, is the first in the world to be devoted to comparing the work of James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) and Zoran Music (1909–2005), two fundamental artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. The exhibition, curated by Margaret MacDonald, a specialist at Glasgow University's Centre for Whistler Studies, offers a dialogue between these two artists who, though belonging to different eras, have a common reference point in the influence that the city of Venice exercised on their work. Famous for its light, labyrinthine and elusive in the layout of its streets, the legendary city on the lagoon has fascinated artists, writers and other visitors throughout history.

The exhibition consists of a hundred and thirty small-format works, with a predominance of etchings, pastels and drawings. Whistler's works come from major museums such as the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, MoMa in New York, the Hunterian Art Gallery at Glasgow University, the British Museum, the Art Institute in Chicago and the National Gallery in Washington. Zoran Music's works come from the Zanei collection, the Zelman collection and the artist's collection.

In 1879 James McNeill Whistler received a contract from the Fine Art Society in London to travel to Venice with a view to producing a set of twelve etchings. The artist, then in dire financial straits, made his way to Venice with his model and mistress, Maud Franklin. Captivated by the magic of the city, they prolonged their stay – initially intended to be very short – for over a year.

Venice inspired some of his greatest and most important works, for during the time that he spent there he did about a hundred pastel drawings and fifty etchings. Whistler was especially attracted by the city's quiet canals and the little side streets with their magnificent Renaissance *palazzi*. Although part of his output reflects the taste of the time in representing typical views of the city of the canals or scenes of the everyday life of ordinary people, Whistler really seemed to be fascinated with showing this isolated setting amidst the vast expanse of the lagoon, presenting it as a gleaming silhouette touched by the light of dawn or dusk. His portrayals of the nooks and crannies of a legendary city enveloped in the mist and shadows of the night come close to the fascination that the artist Zoran Music felt for its solitary nocturnal scenes a century later.

In the twentieth century, specifically during the Second World War, Venice became a place of welcome for artists and intellectuals from all over Italy, fleeing from fascism. In 1943 Zoran Music travelled to Venice for the first time. There he exhibited his series *Dalmatian Themes* and *Venice*. In 1944 he was arrested by the Gestapo, accused of collaborating with anti-Nazi groups. He was sent to Trieste and from there deported to the Dachau concentration camp, where he secretly drew a chilling chronicle of its horrors. After the liberation in 1946, with his health seriously impaired, he returned to Venice. There he painted his first self-portraits, although without giving up landscape figuration, incorporating a powerful, colouristic quality of light which is captured in the series of watercolours included in this exhibition.

The city of Venice will always be present in the life and work of Zoran Music. Between 1981 and 1984, after a long interval, he produced a new series of works about the city which reveal his maturity and expressive mastery. His late works based on Venice form part of an oeuvre devoted to meditation on the self-absorption of the individual, as if reflected in a mighty mirror or self-portrait, in windows and façades and in the shadows of the night.

A catalogue has been published in connection with the exhibition, containing texts by the Director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar, the curator of the exhibition, Margaret MacDonald, the IVAM's Artistic Director, Raquel Gutiérrez, the Professor of Art History Kosme de Barañano, and the Director of the Museo Morandi in Bologna, Marilena Pasquali.

The exhibition organized by the IVAM with the sponsorship of Fundación CaixaGalicia offers an innovative view of the work of James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) and Zoran Music (1909–2005), two fundamental artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The exhibition provides a dialogue between these two artists of different eras with a reference point in common: the influence on their work of Venice, one of the most beautiful cities in the world,

where art and water mingle intimately in everyday life. The exhibition organized by the IVAM consists of a hundred and thirty works, including etchings, watercolours and pastels, presented in the Sala de la Muralla. The curator is Margaret MacDonald, a renowned specialist at Glasgow University's Centre for Whistler Studies.