

# Women in the Work of Julio González

27 mar.<sup>2026</sup>—28 feb.<sup>2027</sup>



Julio González, *Daphné*, 1937  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

Press Dossier  
IVAM Centre Julio González

IVAM

Exhibition

# Women in the Work of Julio González

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Curated by: Brigitte Leal  
Coordinator: Josep Salvador



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# Women in the Work of Julio González

Bringing together 148 works, all from the IVAM Collection with the exception of four drawings from the Diputació de València's Alfons Roig Collection, the exhibition *Women in the Work of Julio González* presents a previously unseen selection that underscores the wealth and singularity of the museum's holdings relating to the representation of women in the artist's work.

The show is divided into thematic sections that emphasise the major stages in Julio González's artistic development, forging links between life and creation, intimacy and history, portraits of women in the family circle and modern women, rural and urban women, motherhood and readers, academic or abstract nudes, real and idealised figures. González's sculptures are also charged with meaning, depicting the emancipation of contemporary women and their shift from the private to the public sphere.

Paying tribute to Julio González's work is also to recall the three women who remained faithful to his legacy: his daughter, the abstract artist Roberta González, whose work still awaits study beyond the influence of her father, and her generous heirs, Carmen Martínez and Viviane Grimminger, whose donations significantly enriched the IVAM's holdings.



Julio González, *Marie Thérèse*, 1925  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

### **A Family of Artists and the Portraits of His Wife Marie-Thérèse Roux**

Born into a family of artists and craftsmen, Julio González spent his whole life surrounded by women. Together with his mother and sisters he ran the family's jewellery and decorative objects business in Barcelona and Paris. In addition, from a very early age his daughter Roberta was exceptionally talented in painting. The González family formed a close-knit artistic community.

Marie-Thérèse Roux was Julio González's companion from 1925 until his death. The many portraits he made of her—whether drawn, painted or sculpted—readily evince González's mastery in all disciplines.

### **From the Workshop to the Family Shop**

In Barcelona at the end of the nineteenth century, Julio González's father ran a workshop making small decorative metal

objects. After his death, González and his sisters took over the business in Barcelona and then later in Paris. Julio exhibited his paintings, sculptures and display cases of decorative art at art salons. In 1915 the González Bijoux-Objets d'Art shop sold jewellery and ornaments inspired by floral, plant and animal forms within the Art Nouveau style. Later, in the 1930s its brooches, rings and necklaces set with hard stones or enamel adopted the clean geometric lines of Art Deco.



Julio González, *Fleur*, 1890-1900  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

### **Eve the Temptress and Venus: The Female Body as an Object of Formal Experimentation**

Eve is described in the Bible as the first woman, created from Adam's rib and responsible for original sin. Drawing inspiration from Rodin's *Eve* (1881), González developed a series of nudes shown standing, reclining, bashful or offering themselves in provocative poses. All these



Julio González, *Sur la plage de Berck*, 1890-1900  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

figures possess a strong symbolic charge and embody stereotypes of women.

The 1930s marked the peak of González's linear sculpture. Created from slender rods of welded iron that give rhythm to their movement, his figures of dancers celebrate the plasticity and grace of the female body. Alongside these dynamic silhouettes that reject volume, González, who was now increasingly closer to abstract movements, experimented with other approaches to the human body.



Julio González, *Femme assise II*, 1935-1936  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

## The Modern Woman: A New Image of Women and the Reader

After the hardships of the First World War, Paris was reborn in the following decade with the freedom of the "Roaring Twenties". Women who had taken the place of men mobilised at the front took up professions and adapted their clothing to activities traditionally associated with men. Their close-up portraits, similar to photographs in their framing and in the luminosity of copper and brass, are characteristic of the Art Deco style. This was also the era of bodily liberation encouraged by the hygienist fashion for sea swimming and sunbathing.



Julio González  
*Jeune femme au livre II*, 1926-1928  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

The emergence of a female reading public was one of the advancements of the late nineteenth century, linked to women's literacy and their access to education, libraries and employment. The figure of the aristocratic woman reader had already appeared in

eighteenth-century painting but became more widespread in the following century. On many occasions, Fantin-Latour, Daumier and Manet portrayed their women readers alone, absorbed in their books. González returned to this motif and translated it into repoussé sheets of copper or brass.

### **The Peasant Woman: Work and Motherhood**

The theme of the peasant woman is omnipresent in González's work. His naturalistic drawings and paintings of the 1920s come to life thanks to their vivid colouring. They reflect the gaze of a sculptor attentive to the plasticity of bodies and the gestures of labour. Heirs to a long history of subordination to men, to the seasons and to the hardships of agricultural work, these women are also mothers. With a basket, a sickle and a child, they represent a link to an ancestral world on the verge of disappearing.



Julio González, *Maternité*, 1938  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

### **Daphne and La Montserrat: Women and Violence**

In Greek mythology, Daphne is a nymph pursued by Apollo, who had fallen in love with her. To escape his clutches, she sought help from her father, who turned her into a laurel tree. This episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has inspired numerous artistic interpretations, the most famous probably being Bernini's Baroque sculpture *Apollo and Daphne* (1622). The theme is unequivocally one of sexual violence. González depicts the nymph alone to emphasise the pared-down construction of her figure, while the dramatic gesture of her arms raised to the sky confirms the expressive power of drawing in space.

Between 1938 and 1942 Julio González worked on projects for monumental sculptures commemorating the horrors of war. In one of them he returned to the theme of La Montserrat, the Virgin symbolising Catalan identity. González chose the effectiveness of a popular, realist image of a simple peasant woman to embody suffering and death. Inspired by press photographs and newsreels of the period, these drawings and sculptures return to formulas used since Antiquity to express rage and mourning: the cry and the arms raised to the heavens, expressing the anger of the victims.

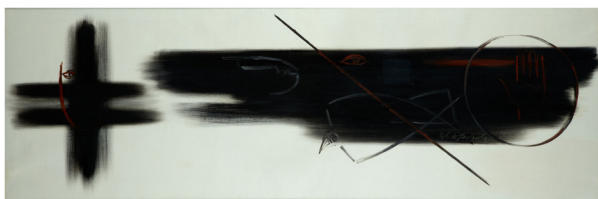
### **From Woman Combing Her Hair to Woman before the Mirror: From Intimacy to Heroism**

The theme of a woman combing her hair recurs throughout Julio González's work. In the 1920s it served as a pretext for in-depth studies of the female body;

in the 1930s it evolved with the creation of the large iron sculpture *Mujer peinándose* (Woman Combing Her Hair, 1931). Outlined by metal bars, this figure is one of the finest examples of González's drawing in space. It foreshadowed the radical synthesis of the iron works of 1934, *Femme au miroir* (Woman before the Mirror) and *La chevelure* (The Hair). With the simple addition of a sickle, González transformed the subject in *Femme au miroir* (Woman before the Mirror, 1937) into an allegory of women's heroism in the face of history.

### Roberta González

The only daughter of Julio González, Roberta demonstrated artistic talent at an early age. She trained at the Académie Colarossi in Paris and, like her father, combined painting and sculpture. Her work, often overshadowed by family connections (her first husband was the painter Hans Hartung), possesses a distinctive sensibility. Melancholic, sombre figures marked by the war continued after the conflict in the form of autobiographical works depicting tormented, surrealist-inspired figures. Towards the end of her life Roberta González renewed her practice through a highly colourful abstraction. *Chant sombre* (1960) pays testimony to the lyrical power of a painting of abstract signs vibrating in space.



Roberta González, *Chant sombre*, 1960  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat



Roberta González, *Tía Lola*, 1930-1933  
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Generalitat

### Three Major Donors to IVAM:

**Roberta González (1909-1976),  
Carmen Martínez (1928-1996),  
Viviane Grimminger (1928-2012)**

It is undeniable that without the loyalty of his daughter Roberta to his memory, González's work would not have achieved such prominence. After her father's death in 1942, Roberta donated sculptures, paintings and drawings to the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris between 1953 and 1966. In 1972 she extended her generosity to the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona and the future Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. Following her death in 1976, her two universal heirs—the gallerist and publisher Carmen Martínez and Viviane Grimminger—continued this generous policy of promoting and disseminating the work of Julio González. Between 1987 and 1997 they donated to IVAM an exceptional collection of 400 works, together with the artist's archives and library. From that moment onwards, the museum became known as the Centro Julio González.

## ACTIVITIES

### **Presentation and opening of the exhibition *Women in the Work of Julio González***

Date: 27 March 2026

Time: 7 pm. Presentation of the exhibition by the curator, Brigitte Leal

8 pm. Opening

### **Activities marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Julio González**

#### ***Escrituras cactus. A literary series inspired by Julio González***

30 April, 6 pm. Estela Sanchis

20 May, 6 pm. Andrés Neuman

30 September, 6 pm. Agustín  
Fernández Mallo

21 October, 6 pm. Manuel Baixauli

11 November, 6 pm. Alicia Kopf

**Workshop 'De voler fer un lloc'.  
Production sessions with David Bestué  
inspired by the work of Julio González**  
The intensive artist workshop will begin with sessions at the Convent of San Francisco de Asís in Chelva and will conclude with a public presentation at IVAM.

First residency in Chelva  
(22–25 April): conceptual foundations  
and material experimentation

Second residency in Chelva  
(6–9 May): space, architecture  
and collective construction

Final session: public presentation  
at IVAM (11 June)

## CONTACT

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**IVAM**

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