

# museo**PICASSO**málaga

## TOYS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

4<sup>th</sup> October, 2010 – 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2011

- *Toys of the Avant-garde* at Museo Picasso Málaga will illustrate the way in which early 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists and writers became interested in familiarizing children with the shapes and ideas of modern art, and in projecting their own ideals for the future upon them.
- Crucial artists such as Pablo Picasso, Giacomo Balla, Alexander Calder, Fortunato Depero, Alexandra Exter, Paul Klee, El Lissitzky, Joan Miró, Alexander Rodchenko, Oskar Schlemmer, Edward Steichen, Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Joaquín Torres-García are just some of the many artists whose work can be seen at the exhibition, and who include writers such as Vladimir Maiakovski and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. They are all represented in an outstanding collection of around six hundred games, puppets, dolls, toy furniture, books and artworks .
- Curated by Carlos Pérez and José Lebrero Stals, artistic director of MPM, *Toys of the Avant-garde* examines the hitherto little-explored relationship between art and teaching, in the numerous projects for children that appeared in Europe during this revolutionary period. Nowadays, they are seen as major examples of some of the artistic and literary trends that were to set the course for art and design today

The first quarter of the 20th century saw the birth of a series of political and social ideas whose purpose was to break away from previous formulas and set up **new forms of government**. Communism, Fascism, and the democracies that arose following the decline of the old Central-European empires attracted groups of artists who eagerly hoped that their aesthetic proposals would be transferred to society and permeate everyday life, thus contributing to the advent of a new lifestyle.

These **new educational ideas** had a very special impact on the cultural aspects of education, while at the same time demanding new teaching materials that would make it possible to convey these values to the children of the period. These theories

were joined by others that were newly published at the time, such as the studies of Psychology, and which had a major influence on art, while highlighting the importance of childhood in the development of the individual.

It was for these very reasons that art and education ran along parallel paths during this period, often suffering from similar contradictions and frequently sharing the same fate. For example, Italian Futurism, which swung from collaborating to clashing with the Mussolini regime; or the Russian Avant-garde artists who were associated with the Bolshevik revolution, but were later hounded by the authorities; or the Bauhaus, which was initially applauded, but later persecuted. Between them all, these movements produced a large number of projects for the children who were to become the adults of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Exhibition

Puppets, miniature theatres, dolls, games, furniture, books... The results of the effort to integrate art and education were plentiful. *Toys of the Avant-garde* brings together an **exceptional collection of objects**; some of the most outstanding examples of these toys are on display, along with works created by other artists whose sole purpose was to entertain their family and friends.

Among the latter is a car, described as a “Wooden Toy painted by Pablo Picasso” which **Pablo Picasso** made for his son Paulo.

Besides Picasso, **Giacomo Balla, Alexander Calder, Fortunato Depero, Marcel Duchamp, Alexandra Exter, Paul Klee, El Lissitzky, Joan Miró, Alexander Rodchenko, Edward Steichen, Oskar Schlemmer, Ladislav Sutnar, Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Joaquín Torres-García** are some of the most influential 20th-century artists whose work can be seen in this exhibition. The common theme is play, with examples from a wide range of disciplines such as the visual arts, theatre, photography, design, film and literature. In this last category, writers such as **Marcel Aymé, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Neville, Vladimir Maiakovski and Jacques Prévert** are the authors of some of the children’s stories on display.

*Toys of the Avant-garde* contains various different groups of work. There is a collection of toys and constructions dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that were clearly designed with an educational purpose in mind. There is also

selection of toys and books by artists who belonged to different movements, such as Constructivism or Futurism, as well as schools such as the Bauhaus. These artists designed their items to be mass-produced and subsequently sold, as in the case of the Steichen's photo-books, or Alma Siedhoff-Buscher's educational toys. Others created one-off objects, sometimes as gifts for their own circle of family and friends. Such is the case of the television table that Picasso turned into a toy horse for his grandson Bernard, the puppets that Klee and Schlemmer made for their own children, or the travelling circus orchestrated by Calder and which has been documented in one of the five **films** that will be screened during the exhibition.

*Toys of the Avant-garde* is completed with the section "Future Promises. Blaise Cendrars and Children's Books in the USSR. 1926-1929", which restages the exhibition that the writer **Blaise Cendrars** organized in Paris in 1929. It contains books, catalogues and posters intended for children that were produced by Russian Avant-garde artists during the early years of the Soviet Revolution. After the exhibition closes, this collection will be taken to the Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y la Modernidad (MuVIM) where it will be put on display in Spring 2011.

### **Curators and publications**

The exhibition has been organized and produced by the Museo Picasso Málaga, and curated by Carlos Pérez, Head of Exhibitions at the Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y la Modernidad (MuVIM), Valencia, and José Lebrero Stals, Artistic Director of the MPM. An international advisory panel of experts also collaborated on this project. They include Juan Bordes (sculptor, architect, teacher, author and member of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid; Cecilia Buzio de Torres (expert on Torres García); Luigi Cavadini (Director of the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Lissone); Françoise Lévêque (conservator of the Historical Holdings of the Bibliothèque de L'Heure Joyeuse, Paris); Iva Knobloch (conservator at the Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague) and art historian and linguist Medea Hoch, from Zürich.

To coincide with the *Toys of the Avant-garde* exhibition, two books have been published. One of them bears the same title as the exhibition, and has been published in two versions, one in Spanish and the other in English. It contains essays by the curators and the above experts, as well as plates of the artworks on display. The second book, published in collaboration with MuVIM, covers the Blaise Cendrars section.

## Educational activities

To complement to the exhibition, an interactive area for playing and reading has been set up on the museum's Temporary Exhibitions ground floor, for adults and children alike. It will help visitors to find out more about the artistic and educational movements that inspired the objects on display. There are also copies of contemporary educational toys that are based on the designs of the Avant-garde artists, and essential information on the revolutionary and innovative features of the educational theories on which they were based.

*Toys of the Avant-garde* will also be the main theme of the **workshop visits** that are part of the educational programme MPM offers every year to schools. The workshops are titled *Imagine, Look and Play*, for pupils of Pre-school and lower Primary school levels; *Give it Life* for upper Primary-level children; and *Breaking Shapes*, which is for Secondary and *Bachillerato*-level pupils.

The exhibition will also be the subject of **Gallery Talks**, the guided tour that take place in the museum every Thursday at 6.00pm. To take part, all you have to do is register at the ticket office, as the tour comes free with the price of admission.

## Seminars

MPM has also organized three seminars on the subject of *Toys of the Avant-garde* which examine three different ways of approaching the theories, forms and aesthetics of the period, in terms of both subject matter and intensity. The first of these seminars is directly related to the exhibition, and it therefore bears the same name. It will be opened on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> October by the joint-curator, Carlos Pérez. He will be followed by Christopher Turner (14<sup>th</sup> October), Iva Knobloch (21<sup>st</sup> October) and Juan Bordes (28<sup>th</sup> October). All the talks will take place at 8.00pm. Entrance is free until all seats are taken. To make access easier, you can pre-register and reserve your place at [www.museopicassomalaga.org](http://www.museopicassomalaga.org)

The second seminar is called **Avant-garde Utopias. Arts for another world** and it has been devised as a series of study sessions for a small group of 15 pupils, who will be able to rediscover the component elements of designing and constructing a new world in order to achieve a human ideal, as devised a century ago by the European Avant-garde artists. The inaugural sessions, on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November, will be led by Félix Duque, professor of philosophy at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Duque

will be followed by Juan Luis Moraza (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November), artist and professor of sculpture at the University of Vigo Faculty of Fine Arts., and Francisco Javier San Martín, Lecturer of Art History, University of the Basque Country. The closing session (24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November), will be led by Luis Puellas Romero, lecturer of aesthetics and art theory at the University of Malaga, and event coordinator. The seminar is aimed at university students, who can pre-register on the UMA's website: <http://www.uma.es/vrue/tpropias/index.html>

The third and last seminar will focus on the architectural projects that the Avant-garde movements produced with children in mind. With the title **Architecture, Childhood and Toys of the Avant-garde**, and coordinated by José Ramón Moreno, director of the Malaga School of Architecture, four experts will discuss their knowledge of the subject. The seminar will be held in the MPM Auditorium, and the cycle will be opened by Juliet Kinchin, curator, Department of Architecture and Design, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (11<sup>th</sup> November). She will be followed by Frédéric Migayrou, director, Department of Architecture, Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris (18<sup>th</sup> November); Xavier Monteys, architect and professor, Projects Department, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona; and Takaharu Tezuka, architect, Tezuka Architects, and professor at the University of Tokyo (2<sup>nd</sup> December).

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Curators: José Lebrero Stals and Carlos Pérez

Price: 4.5 € (8 € exhibition + MPM Collection). Discounts available.

Publications: Catalogue; MUVIM publication; leaflet

Website: [www.museopicassomalaga.org](http://www.museopicassomalaga.org)