



Picador

Pablo Gargallo

On display

Title/Description: Picador

Artist/Maker: Pablo Gargallo

Born: 1934

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Copper

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 190 x w. 350 x d. 50 mm) Framed: (h. 290 x w. 340 x d. 85 mm)

Accession Number: 500

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Spain

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Trained as a sculptor in Barcelona, Gargallo was initially influenced by Rodin and Maillol, and characteristics of their work were to persist in Gargallo's stone and bronze pieces throughout his career. Far more original, however, was his sculpture in less traditional materials. Undoubtedly responding to the example set by his countryman Pablo Picasso, Gargallo began to experiment with sheet metal - notably copper, iron and lead - which he cut up and reassembled as masks, faces and figures. For technical help with this work he almost certainly called upon Julio Gonzalez, who was then a metalsmith, and Gargallo's influence is apparent in some of Gonzalez's earliest iron sculptures of 1929 and 1930.

The fondness for swooping curvilinear forms that can be discerned in Gargallo's early work is given full rein in his sheet metal pieces, where volume is suggested by concave or convex planes and by gracefully spiralling linear elements. This work of 1934 is a variation on a theme first explored in iron by Gargallo six years earlier (see Courthion, 1973:151, 161). It is a restrained piece, both in the number of components and in its manner of construction, and it almost completely lacks the welter of arabesques that characterises some of his works. The two main elements are the 'bowl' of the face and the broad brim of the hat.

On these forms the other features - or suggestions of them - depend. The small square eyes, for example, are actually flanges turned down from the inner edge of the hat's brim, and the splendid little goatee a continuation of the face. Picador is a fine example of sculptural wit, in which Gargallo's innate sense of decorative elegance is given particularly economical expression.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
