

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Julio GONZALEZ (Barcelona 1876 - Arceuil 1942)

Women and Child with a Dog (Maternité au chien)

Watercolour, pencil and gouache on buff paper.

Signed juli at the right centre.

Inscribed (by Roberta González) Julio Gonzalez / Maternité au Chien on the backing board.

263 x 167 mm. (10 3/8 x 6 5/8 in.)

This sheet may be associated with a series of watercolour drawings of mothers and children, usually titled *Maternité*, which the artist produced between around 1904 and 1914, although the earliest dated examples were drawn in 1906. These figures, often depicted in poor urban or rural landscapes, are imbued with a distinct melancholy, and are, as has been noted, somewhat reminiscent of the figures in the Blue Period paintings of Picasso. As Llorens has described these drawings: 'Although other figures occasionally appear, the dominant figure is that of a mother with a child in her arms, standing out as a static, weightless form against a landscape of houses on the outskirts of a town, or sometimes against a flat background.'

Another scholar, Josette Gibert, notes of these early *Maternités* that, 'They are so rarely evocative of joy, of serenity. Humble women, with sad faces, hold in their arms a child which, very often, they are not looking at. Poor country or suburban houses, surrounded by trees stripped of their leaves, this is the landscape that provides a setting for these scenes.' González returned to the theme of the standing mother and child around 1925, working in his more schematic manner of drawing of this period, and he continued to treat the theme in his drawings until his death. These later drawings are, however, more obviously those of a sculptor.

In his catalogue raisonné of the artist's early drawings, Tomàs Llorens has grouped the present sheet

with one painting and sixteen other drawings by González, several of which are dated 1906. As he writes of this group, 'González abandons the type of the mother with a child in her arms. The subjects now are varied scenes with mothers and children, treated with a more descriptive, anecdotal view and in a less formalized naturalistic style than the group of early 1906.'

Provenance:

The artist's daughter, Roberta González, L'Hay-les-Roses
By descent to Carmen Martinez and Viviane Grimminger, Paris
Private collection, until 2011.

Literature:

Luigi Mallé, Julio Gonzalez, exhibition catalogue, Turin, 1967, illustrated p.47, pl.2; Josette Gibert, Julio González dessins: les maternités, Paris, 1975, illustrated p.27 (where dated c.1904-1907); Tomàs Llorens Serra, Julio González: Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, Vol.I [1900-1918], Valencia, 2007, p.176, no.157 (where dated c.1906).

Artist description:

Julio González is regarded, alongside Constantin Brancusi, Alberto Giacometti and Pablo Picasso, as one of the most innovative and original sculptors of the 20th century. Despite his professional training as a metalworker, before 1928 González was working mainly as a painter. He also drew throughout his career, and his early drawings – such as the present sheet, which may be dated to around 1906 – display the artist's origins in the turn of the century style of the School of Barcelona, despite the fact that he had been living in Paris since 1900. The influence of French painting of the same period is also readily evident. As Tomàs Llorens has noted of the first few years of the 20th century, when Picasso and González worked closely together in Paris, 'Gauguin and the style of a group of his followers, Synthetism, left a visible mark on the work which Picasso and González did during that period, especially in the case of Picasso, who was going through what he later called his "Blue Period". The works by González that we can date to those years – numerous drawings devoted to subjects such as mother and child, landscape and daily life, and a few oil paintings – sometimes show a clear resemblance to Picasso's "Blue" style, though they are graver in style and more reminiscent of Puvis de Chavannes than of the painter from Málaga.' González's friendship with Picasso ended abruptly in 1908, for reasons that are not quite clear, and was not reestablished until the 1920's, when Picasso asked for González's help and advice in working in metal sculpture.