



## ROSARIO DE VELASCO

18 June to 15 September 2024

Curators: Toya Viudes de Velasco y Miguel Lusarreta

The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza is jointly presenting with the Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia an exhibition on the Spanish figurative painter Rosario de Velasco (Madrid, 1904 - Barcelona, 1991). Curated by Miguel Lusarreta and Toya Viudes de Velasco, the artist's great-niece, the exhibition brings together around 30 paintings from the 1920s to the 1940s - the earliest and the most important from Velasco's career - and also has a section on her work as an illustrator.

The exhibition, which is benefiting from the support of the Region of Madrid and the City Council of Madrid, aims to present and draw attention to the work of one of the great Spanish women artists of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to well-known paintings from museum collections, such as the famous oil *Adam and Eve* (1932) from the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *The Massacre of the Innocents* (1936) from the Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia, *Maragatos* (1934) from the Museo del Traje, Madrid, and *Carnival* (before 1936) from the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the exhibition features works still with the artist's family and in private collections and others that have only been rediscovered and located in the past few months. Following its showing in Madrid, the exhibition will be presented at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia from 7 November 2024 to 16 February 2025.

Rosario de Velasco's work represents an outstanding example of the so-called "return to order" in Spain, a movement parallel to German New Objectivity and Italian Novecento with a style that combined tradition and modernity. Velasco admired painters such as Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, Velázquez and Goya, but also avant-garde figures such as De Chirico,

**Images, from left to right:** Rosario de Velasco painting *Laundresses*. Rosario de Velasco family archive; *Laundresses*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 209 x 197 cm. Private Collection. © Rosario de Velasco, VEGAP, Madrid, 2024.

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Rosario de Velasco, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, 1936. Oil on canvas. 164 x 167,5 cm. Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia

Braque, Picasso and the exponents of the “return to order” in Germany and Italy, whom she encountered via magazines and exhibitions held in Madrid in the 1920s.

The exhibition also focuses on Velásco’s activities as an illustrator, revealing a graphic artist of great versatility. This is evident, for example, in her illustrations for the 1928 edition of *Stories for dreaming* by María Teresa León and *Stories for my grandchildren* (1932) by Carmen Karr.

### Rosario de Velasco (Madrid, 1904 – Barcelona, 1991)

Born into a very traditional and religious family in Madrid, Rosario de Velasco began to study art aged fifteen at the academy of the genre painter Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor, a member of the Royal San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts and two-time director of the Museo del Prado. Dating from that period is her *Self-portrait* (1924), which she signed with a monogram consisting of the initials R, D and V. Inspired by Dürer’s monogram, it has been fundamental to locating some of the artist’s paintings.

The young artist was, however, aware that she needed to go beyond tradition and assimilate the new trends and avant-gardes in her desire to compete as an equal in a largely male world. Her openness and cultural curiosity led her to associate with numerous creators of her generations, particularly women painters and writers such as Maruja Mallo, Rosa Chacel and María Teresa León. Other women friends included Mercedes Noboa, Matilde Marquina, Concha Espina and Lili Álvarez, the tennis champion whom Velasco painted in the 1930s and with whom she enjoyed playing the sport. De Velasco was also a tireless traveller and enjoyed mountaineering, skiing and rock climbing.



Rosario de Velasco. *Maragatos*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 210 x 150 cm. Museo del Traje, Madrid.



Rosario de Velasco, *Adam and Eve*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 109 x 134 cm. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

In 1924, the year she completed her studies, the artist participated in the National Fine Arts Exhibition in Madrid and also produced her first illustrations. By the 1930s Rosario de Velasco had established a considerable reputation, taking part in numerous group shows and competitions, such as the National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1932 in which she presented the canvas *Adam and Eve*, which earned her a second prize medal in the Painting category. The work was exhibited together with all the other entries in the Palacio de Exposiciones in the Retiro park and in various exhibitions organised by the Society of Iberian Artists held in Copenhagen and Berlin, where it was warmly praised by critics



for its power and originality and Velasco was singled out as the major discovery of the season. The work is startling in its play of perspective, employing a bird's-eye view, a device also used in various still lifes and in *(Untitled) The Children's Room* (1932-33), another work in the collection of the Museo Reina Sofia, in which the artist disrupts the space through an original arrangement of objects that recalls Cubism.



Rosario de Velasco. *Things*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 45,5 x 65,5 cm. Private collection.

The majority of Velasco's most important works date from that decade: *Maragatos*, which was awarded second prize in the National Painting competition of 1932; *The Massacre of the Innocents* (1936), which for many years was attributed to Ricardo Verde due to the signature "RV", until it was correctly attributed to De Velasco in 1995; and *Laundresses* (1934), a wedding gift to her brother, Dr Luis de Velasco, who appears in another work in the present exhibition.



Rosario de Velasco. *Gypsies*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 95 x 132 cm. Private collection.

In 1935 *Gypsies* was selected to participate in the Carnegie International, an exhibition of artists from different countries organised by the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. Velasco's work shared space with that of Carlo Carrá, Otto Dix, Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe, as well as Picasso and Dalí. Lost for years, the painting has only recently been located and is one of the major discoveries made during the preparation of this exhibition.

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War the artist's membership of the Falange and her family context led her to leave Madrid. She went first to Valencia and later to Barcelona, to Sant Andreu de Llavaneres where she met a doctor, Javier Farrerons, who later became her husband and who succeeded in liberating her from the Modelo prison in Barcelona where she was being held. After the war the artist settled in Barcelona with her husband and their daughter María del Mar.

In 1939 Velasco participated in the National Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture in Valencia and in 1940 presented her first solo exhibition, in Barcelona. Over the following years she continued to exhibit in Madrid although less often, for example at the National Fine Arts Exhibitions of 1941 and 1954, and at various galleries. In 1944 Velasco was selected for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Salón de los Once, organised by the Academia Breve de Crítica de Arte, founded by Eugenio d'Ors to promote art of the immediate post-war period. D'Ors was one of the well known figures in the artist and her husband's circle of friends, together with Dionisio Ridruejo, Pere Pruna and Carmen Conde, among others.



Rosario de Velasco. *The Blue Bird*, 1927. Drawing for the cover of the book *Cuentos para soñar* by María Teresa León. Mixed media on paper. Colección González Rodríguez

The recent search for works by Velasco which was undertaken via the social media and the media in general has resulted in the identification in private collections of both celebrated works of which all trace had been lost, such as *Things* (1933), *Motherhood* (1933), *Gypsies* (1934) and *Pensive Woman* (1935), as well as various illustrations for books and a preparatory drawing for the oil painting *Carnival* (before 1936). It has also brought to light some previously completely unknown works such as *Still Life with Fish* (ca. 1930) and *Girls with a Doll* (1937).

## **EXHIBITION DETAILS**

**Title:** *Rosario de Velasco*

**Organised by:** The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia

**With the collaboration of** the Region of Madrid and the City Council of Madrid

**Venue and dates:** Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, from 18 June to 15 September 2024; Valencia, Museo de Bellas Artes, from 7 November 2024 to 16 February 2025.

**Curators:** Toya Viudes de Velasco and Miguel Lusarreta

**Technical curator:** Elena Rodríguez, Exhibitions department, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

**Number of works:** 68, including paintings, work on paper and books

**Publications:** Catalogue with texts by Estrella de Diego, Víctor Ugarte Farrerons and the exhibition's curators

## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

**Address:** Paseo del Prado, 8. 28014, Madrid. Temporary exhibition galleries, first basement level.

**Opening times:** Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 7 pm; Saturdays, 10 am to 9 pm. Closed on Mondays.

**Summer opening hours, 28 June to 31 August:** Monday, 12 to 16, free entry; from Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10 to 9 p.m.; Sundays, 10 to 7 p.m.

**UNIQLO Saturdays:** free entry on Saturdays from 9 pm to 11 pm

**Ticket prices:** Combined ticket: Permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. Standard: 13 €; Reduced price ticket: 9 € for visitors aged over 65, pensioners and students with proof of status; Groups (7 and more people): 11 € per person; Free entry: visitors aged under 18, officially unemployed Spanish citizens, disabled visitors, Large Families, working teachers and holders of the Youth Card and European Youth Card. Advance ticket sales at the museum's ticket desks, on its website and from tel: (+ 34) 91 791 13 70

**More information:** [www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

## **PRESS INFORMATION:**

<https://www.museothyssen.org/area-privada/prensa/dosieres/rosario-de-velasco>