

**JULIO GONZÁLEZ'S
*JEUNE FILLE NOSTALGIQUE***



**SHEPHERD
W & K
GALLERIES**

GONZÁLEZ I PELLICER, Julio 1876-1942

Spanish School

NOSTALGIC YOUNG WOMAN [*Jeune fille nostalgique*], circa 1934-1936

Sandstone. Height, from neck truncation to top of head: 11 1/8" (28 cm); depth, from rear of neck truncation to front of chin: 7 1/2" (19.1 cm); width, from temple to temple: 6 1/2" (16.5 cm).

Formerly:

Hans Hartung, Paris;

Foundation Hartung, Antibes;

Leicester Galleries, London acquired at Christie's sale, London, June 30, 1999, lot 341;

Private collection since 2002.

Exhibitions:

Julio González, Sculptures, 1ere Février - 9eme Mars, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Paris, February – March 1952, cat. no. 90, p. 20 [Tête].

Julio González 1876-1942, Les matériaux de son expression I, GDF, Paris, 1969, cat. no. 27.

Julio González, (Julio González 1876-1942, Le matériaux de son expression), Tate Gallery, London, September 15 - October 15, 1970, cat. no. 65.

Julio González 1876-1942, Les matériaux de son expression, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, November 12, 1970 - January 15, 1971, cat. no. 27.

Julio González 1876-1942, Plastik und Zeichnungen, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, March 30 - May 1, 1977, cat. no. 26.

Julio González 1876-1942, 57 sculptures - 35 dessins, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi, November 13 - December 18, 1977, cat. no. 24.

Julio González, Esculturas y dibujos, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, January - March 1980, cat. no. 26 [*Cabeza de mujer reclinada*].

Julio González, Escultures i dibuixos, Fundación Juan March, Caixa d'Estalvis, Ajuntament de Barcelona, April 11 - May 31, 1980, cat. no. 26 [*Cabeza de mujer reclinada*].

Headshots, Shepherd W & K Galleries, New York, Summer 2019, cat. no. 33.

Literature:

Julio González, Sculptures, 1ere Février - 9eme Mars, (Paris: Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, 1952), cat. no. 90, p. 20 [Tête].

Josephine Withers, *Julio González : Les matériaux de son expression* (New York: Saidenberg Gallery, 1969), cat. no. 27.

Vicente Aguilera Cerni, *Julio, Joan, Roberta González: itinerario de una dinastía* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 1973), cat. no. 168.

Josephine Withers, *Julio González, Sculpture in Iron* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), cat. no. 78.

Julio González, Esculturas y dibujos (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 1980), cat. no. 26.

Jörn Merkert, *Julio González : catalogue raisonné des sculptures* (Milano: Electa Spa, 1987), cat. no. 193.



GONZÁLEZ, JULIO | Nostalgic Young Woman

Born in 1876 to a family of craftsmen, Julio González i Pellicer started out his career working in the very material that came to define it: iron. Along with his older brother Joan (1868–1908), Julio worked at the family metal workshop, *La Metalistería Artística*, once owned by his grandfather Antonio González, originally from Galicia, then in the hands of his father, Concordio González Puig (1831–1896), a talented goldsmith and sculptor in his own right. The workshop specialized in artistic metalwork in central Barcelona, located on Rambla de Catalunya at the corner of Pasaje de la Concepción (**figure 1**).¹ After the death of his father in 1896, Joan, the eldest of the two, took over the everyday operations of the workshop. As they sought to establish themselves in the art world of Barcelona Modernisme, both Julio and Joan had aspirations of pursuing a career in fine art beyond the purview of the *La Metalistería Artística*.

The brothers frequented the recently opened Parisian style café and bar *El Quatre Gats*, where they came into contact with emerging artists such as Pablo Picasso, Santiago Rusiñol, and Ramon Casas, among others. After his first visit to Paris in 1897, Julio later returned by himself in 1899 to settle there permanently. The family sold the business in 1900 and followed Julio to Paris taking up residence in Montparnasse. There, Joan, Julio, their two sisters Pilar (1870–1951) and Lola (1874–1952), and their mother Pilar Pellicer Feñé (1840–1928) adapted to life in a new country.² Their connection to Catalonia remained constant as they hosted many of their fellow countrymen and returned to Barcelona frequently. Joan's influence on Julio was significant and the death of Joan in 1908 nearly broke him. With little desire to pursue art, friendship, or business, Julio cut himself off from much of the world for several months. After this period of mourning, González reengaged with the Parisian art scene with a more reserved and tentative demeanor.

Throughout his life, González was required to supplement his meager income with continual engagement of the decorative arts. He and his family

established a business trading in decorative art objects, among which Julio exhibited his own work. For additional funding during the difficult period of World War One, González started to work as an apprentice welder at *Le Soudre Autogène Française* at Boulogne-Billancourt outside of Paris, a company under military requisition that supplied the Renault car factory. From June 20 until September 26, 1918, González was introduced to autogenous or oxyacetylene welding, a technique that changed the course of his career.³ Using these welding skills, González developed a unique method of sculpting that bypassed the time-consuming intermediate stages required of traditional sculpture and allowed him to assemble the sculpture directly.⁴ Known today predominantly as a pioneering sculptor, it was not always clear what medium or method González would specialize in. For decades González tried



Figure 1. *Portecigarettes* [Cigarette Holder], circa 1895-1896, Galvanized bronze sheet, 8.7 x 4.1 x 4.1" (22 x 10.5 x 10.5 cm), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

his hand in different forms of art: drawing, painting, sculpting, decorative arts. It was not until 1926 at the age of 50 that he decided to concentrate on sculpture. In 1940 he stated: "My identity card mentions artist-painter. I would like...to replace artist-painter by 'artist-sculptor' so that I can continue to work and that the effort I have made is not lost."⁵

During the years between 1928 and 1932, Picasso and González collaborated on a series of 16 metal sculptures. Picasso, seeking assistance in the execution of a set of sculptures based on drawings, sought out González for his technical expertise in iron. The most famous result of this partnership was *La Femme au jardin* (Woman in the Garden) from 1930, an iron-wrought sculpture painted white that was featured in a retrospective exhibition of Picasso at Galerie Georges Petit in June 1932 (**figure 2**).⁶ A second version of *La Femme au jardin*, made by González at Picasso's request, of welded bronze, also on view at the retrospective, was intended for Picasso's garden at his home and studio in the *Château de Boisgeloup* in Normandy (**figure 3**).⁷ The 1930s represented a period of intense creativity and production for Gonzalez, a



Figure 2. Pablo Picasso next to the sculpture *La femme au jardin* during the exhibition in the Georges Petit Gallery, Paris (16 June - 30 July 1932), unknown photographer, Musée Picasso, Paris. © Succession Picasso.



Figure 3. Pablo Picasso, *Femme au jardin*, circa 1930-32, welded bronze, 82 1/2 x 46 x 23" (209.6 x 116.8 x 81.3 cm), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

time when he explored different media, techniques, and formats. One such medium included sandstone blocks which he used to create three-dimensional portraits of men and women.

In 1925, González acquired a small weekend home just northeast of Paris in the village of Monthyon, Seine-et-Marne (figures 4 and 5). The residence was located on the main street with a small, enclosed vegetable



Figure 4. *Monthyon*, 1925, pencil on paper, 6.1 x 9.6" (15.6 x 24.5 cm), Private collection, reproduced in Julio González : *Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos*, vol. III, 269, cat. no. 1763.

garden (figure 6).⁸ Some of the drawings and small oil paintings González made during this time feature what appear to be sandstone buildings similar to ones seen in photos of González and his family at Monthyon (figure 7). According to several accounts, scholars place the origin of the sandstone blocks that were used for a series of effigies to be near his weekend home. Indeed, in around 1932 González found a heap of sandstone blocks from either a construction or toppled wall that were piled in the courtyard of his property.⁹ The serendipitous discovery of such found material inspired González to take up direct carving in stone. Along with *Jeune fille nostalgique*, González explored the representation of both women and men in stone in works such as *Jeune fille fière* (figure 8), *Jeune fille mélancolique* (figure 9), and *Tête d'homme couché, Monthyon*,¹⁰ all of which are given the tentative dates of circa 1934-36. Through his stone sculptures, as well as his more planar constructions, González "developed a highly personal abstract style that, while related to Cubism,



Figure 5. *Maison à Monthyon*, circa 1925, oil on canvas, 16 1/8 x 13" (41 x 33 cm), Private Collection, reproduced in Julio González : *Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos*, vol. IV, 49, cat. no. 2146.



Figure 6. Julio in his vegetable garden, Monthyon, 1936, reproduced in *Catalogue raisonné des sculptures*, 308.

Constructivism and Surrealism, remained rooted in figuration.”¹¹ The method of sculpting, while brutal in process, appears to be delicate in nature.¹² González allows the material speak for itself and reveals just the basic physiognomy of the young woman he is portraying. The sculpture is gestural in contrast to the

highly rendered works of academic sculptors such as Rodin. *Jeune fille nostalgique* exposes much about the materiality of the sandstone. The rock itself appears to be a quartz-rich sandstone with varying degrees of mottling across the surface, the ridge of the nose revealing a natural fault line in the layers of sandstone. The horizontal striations seen on the cheek unveils the meticulous and laborious process of direct carving in stone with a



Figure 7. Julio, his two sisters, and Marie-Thérèse (in back) in the garden at Monthyon, circa 1937-38, reproduced in *Catalogue raisonné des sculptures*, 309.



Figure 8. *Jeune fille fière* [Proud Young Woman], circa 1934-36, bronze cast from sandstone, 12.2 x 7.1 x 10.2” (31 x 18 x 26 cm), Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Figure 9. *Jeune fille mélancolique* [Melancholic Young Woman], circa 1934-36, bronze cast from sandstone, 10 1/4 x 7 x 5 1/2” (26 x 18 x 14 cm), Centre Pompidou, Paris.

hammer and chisel.

One can see a certain progression and refinement of the artist's work most readily in his busts: from his early work in embossed copper (figure 10) to his various works in iron (figures 11 and 12), to the sandstone sculptures in the 1930s, to his final years when he explored plaster both out of necessity—due to the shortage of oxygen and acetylene during the Second World War—and to his curiosity of its materiality.¹³ Gonzalez never completely renounced figuration in seeking abstraction nor did he wholly adopt an established style or practice, rather he continued to explore its possibilities in different



Figure 11. *Petit buste* [Small Bust], circa 1929, iron, 3.1 x 2.4 x 0.8" (8 x 6 x 2 cm), Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Figure 12. *Tête dite «le lapin»* [Head Called "the Rabbit"], circa 1930, iron and Monthyon limestone 13 x 6 7/8 x 4 1/2" (33 x 17.5 x 11.5 cm), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.



Figure 10. *Tête aux boucles* [Head with Curls], 1921, Repoussé copper, 8.7 x 7.5 x 3.1" [22 x 19 x 8 cm], Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona.

forms, media, and presentations, letting the material guide him.

Julio González died at his home in Arcueil on March 27, 1942 at the age of 65. Most of the bronze casting was completed years after his death at the request of his daughter Roberta González (1908–1976) and her husband Hans Hartung (1904–1989) Julio

González, who was for most of his life a poor man without the resources to turn his sculptures into bronze.¹⁴ As per Roberta González's instructions only nine numbered bronze editions (1/9 – 9/9) were cast of *Jeune fille nostalgique* as well as an additional four marked 0, 00, EA (artist's proof), and HC (*hors commerce*). A further sculpture was cast and marked with M.E.A.C, Madrid for the González bequest to the Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo, now part of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.¹⁵ The present sculpture is the original *Jeune fille nostalgique*, the one used to make all the bronze editions that followed. Of all the *Jeune fille nostalgique* sculptures this alone was touched by the artist's hand, it is unique.

-Kaitlin Anne Vervoort

Endnotes

- 1 Vicente Aguilera Cerni, *Julio, Joan, Roberta González : itinerario de una dinastía* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 1973), 12; Tomàs Llorens Serra, *Julio González : Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, vol. III 1920-1929* (Madrid; Valencia: Fundación Azcona; IVAM, Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, 2013), 555.
- 2 Llorens Serra, *Julio González : Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, vol. III 1920-1929*, 555-557.
- 3 Jörn Merkert, *Julio González : catalogue raisonné des sculptures* (Milano: Electa Spa, 1987), 339.
- 4 Laura Stamps, "I Believe That Innovation Flows from Tradition," in *González, Picasso & Friends*, ed. Laura Stamps (Den Haag: Gemeentemuseum, 2017), 10.
- 5 Quoted in M. N. Pradel, "La donation González au Musée national d'art moderne," *La Revue du Louvre et des musées de France* 16, no. 1 (1966): 42.
- 6 Sculpture: Pablo Picasso, *Femme au jardin*, 1930, wrought iron, white paint, 81 x 46 x 33 1/2 in (206 x 117 x 85 cm), Musée Picasso, Paris; Photograph: Pablo Picasso next to the sculpture *La femme au jardin* during the exhibition in the Georges Petit Gallery, Paris (16 June - 30 July 1932), unknown photographer, Musée Picasso, Paris. © Succession Picasso; Llorens Serra, *Julio González : Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, vol. III 1920-1929*, 559.
- 7 Pablo Picasso, *Femme au jardin*, circa 1930-32, welded bronze, 82 1/2 x 46 x 23 in (209.6 x 116.8 x 81.3 cm), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.
- 8 Tomàs Llorens Serra, *Julio Gonzalez : Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, Vol. IV 1925-1933* (Madrid: Fundación Azcona; Valencia: IVAM, Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, 2018), 43. Accounts differ on the exact date of González's acquisition of the property in Monthyon, but all agree it occurred in either 1925 or 1926. In his catalogue raisonné of Julio González, Tomàs Llorens Serra places it in 1925. Indeed, Monthyon and its surroundings start to appear in González's oeuvre circa 1924-25.
- 9 Pradel, "La donation González au Musée national d'art moderne," 46.
- 10 Regarding the titles of the work, few of the original titles remain to this day. The titles used by the *Catalogue Raisonné* were often supplied by the artist's daughter, Roberta González, who managed his estate after his death. See Llorens Serra, *Julio González : Catálogo general razonado de las pinturas, esculturas y dibujos, vol. III 1920-1929*, 565.
- 11 Benno Tempel, "Preface," in *González, Picasso & Friends*, 6.
- 12 A recent Christie's lot essay (Christie's, London, June 30, 2016, lot 00258) identifies this sculpture as, "an extremely personal and powerful expression of Gonzales's [*sic*] despair at the rising Fascist oppression of General Franco. The sculpture has been chiselled [*sic*] from a rough sandstone block, which, according to Anthony Caro, González found amongst the building rubble near his weekend home. González has carved the brittle rock violently, almost as if in protest against the abandonment of Barcelona (once home to González, Picasso, and Miró) to the Nationalist rebels in February 1939." This assumption is problematic as the present sculpture was created between 1934-1936, before these events occurred. González did, however, devote several sculptures to the suffering of the Spanish people, most notable of which was his contribution to the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition in 1937 titled *La Montserrat* (currently housed by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam). This life-sized iron statue of a peasant woman holding a child in one hand and a sickle in the other was commissioned by the Republican Spanish Government and featured alongside Picasso's *Guernica*.
- 13 Josephine Withers, "Biography," in *Julio González : Les matériaux de son expression*, by Josephine Withers (New York: Sainenberg Gallery, 1969), np.
- 14 Roberta González, "Notes on the Sculptor González," in *Julio González : Les matériaux de son expression*, np.
- 15 Jörn Merkert, *Julio González : catalogue raisonné des sculptures* (Milano: Electa Spa, 1987), 204.