

Raimundo
de Madrazo

Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta (Rome, 1841 - Versailles, 1920) was a member of the most important dynasty of Spanish artists of the 19th century. Grandson of the Neo-classical painter José de Madrazo and son of Federico de Madrazo, the leading portraitist of Spanish Romanticism, Raimundo was also the brother-in-law and close friend of Mariano Fortuny. In addition to being a direct descendant of two court painters and directors of the Real Museo de Pintura y Escultura (the present-day Museo del Prado), his family circle included other painters, architects, writers and art critics. While this environment undoubtedly influenced the configuration of his personality it also concealed his uniqueness as an artist.

Having settled permanently in Paris in 1862, Madrazo broke with the tradition of a career based on the presentation of large-scale compositions on historical themes at the national and international exhibitions. Rather, he opted for the lucrative art market which, supported by the newly wealthy bourgeoisie, demanded genre scenes in which anonymous figures populate inconsequential scenes with exquisitely painted settings.

Raimundo de Madrazo was a privileged witness to the vibrant artistic scene in Paris in the last third of the 19th century, in which the academic tendencies that underpinned the official competitions coexisted with new creative trends such as Impressionism which opened up alternative routes that would lead to the early 20th-century avant-garde movements. Largely unaffiliated with both options, Raimundo de Madrazo represented the so-called *juste milieu*, manifested in a type of painting located midway between the two extremes and which was widely acclaimed by the public and collectors. His genre scenes and society portraits, executed with great virtuosity and an impeccable technique, reflected the taste of the time but did not find their place within the narrative of artistic modernity.

This exhibition offers a complete survey of the career of Raimundo de Madrazo, considered in his day an emblem of elegance, emulation of the past and respect for tradition, with the aim of contextualising and rescuing from oblivion the contributions and artistic values of a painter who was a key figure in the art world and in the most sophisticated and international society of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Raimundo de Madrazo's family, environment and artistic training

A descendant of one of the most renowned artistic families of Isabelline Madrid, Raimundo de Madrazo was born in 1841 in Rome where his father, the painter Federico de Madrazo, was completing his training. A year later the family moved to Madrid where from an early age Raimundo excelled in drawing, studying with both his father and grandfather, José de Madrazo, both of whom considered this discipline to be the foundation of all artistic creation. Aged just thirteen but by now the Madrazos' great hope for the continuation of the family tradition, the young Raimundo entered the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando.

Raimundo de Madrazo's adolescent creations reflect the school's academic teachings, both in his choice of subjects, with an emphasis on history and genre painting, and his pictorial approach, characterised by a predominance of line and balanced compositions. A significant work from this period is the large canvas *The Remains of the Apostle James removed to the See of Padrón*. Presented at a regional exhibition in Seville, it demonstrates the precociously advanced level of composition, colour and landscape achieved by the sixteen-year-old painter. A year later, in 1858, he was commissioned by his grandfather to execute the large canvas of *Athaulf, King of the Visigoths*, for the "Chronological Series of the Kings of Spain".

Despite achieving excellent grades, after completing his studies at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando Madrazo decided not to apply for a grant to study in Rome in order to avoid potential criticism of his father, who held prominent positions in the official art world as a professor at the Academia de San Fernando and director of the Museo del Prado. True to family tradition, he decided at this point to continue his training in Paris, as his father and grandfather had done, although unlike them he settled permanently in that city.

Early years in Paris

Raimundo de Madrazo arrived in Paris in 1862 with the aim of completing his artistic training. Following a brief stay in the studio of the academic painter Léon Cogniet he enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts* but decided to abandon his studies there soon after, dissatisfied with its teaching. At this period he was still attempting to comply with the wishes of his father, who had introduced him to his acquaintances in the capital and was urging him to devote himself to painting of historical subjects, which would allow him to participate in the major national and international exhibitions. Shortly after his arrival Madrazo thus sent his preliminary oil sketch for the painting *The Death of Don Lope de Haro in the Assembly at Alfaro* to Madrid for his father's approval, a work that depicted a bloody episode in medieval Spanish history. Again advised by his father, in 1864 he embarked on a new canvas with a historical subject, *The Opening of Parliament of 1834*, intended for the ceiling of the principal reception room in the Paris residence of the Duke and Duchess of Riánsares, while a year later he painted *The Daughters of El Cid*, one of his last attempts to comply with his father's wishes.

In 1866 Raimundo de Madrazo informed his father of his decision to abandon large-scale historical themes and focus on genre painting. This choice would allow him to move in the circles of a rising bourgeoisie that appreciated genre and domestic scenes. Generally small in format—the so-called *tableautins*—works of this type enjoyed enormous commercial success and were promoted by dealers such as Adolphe Goupil at a time when the art market was flourishing in the French capital. *Confidences* is one of the first examples of this new direction in the work of Raimundo de Madrazo, who succeeded in establishing himself as a successful painter on the cosmopolitan scene. Although his father Federico accepted this change of direction with some resignation, their mutual respect is reflected in the portraits they painted of each other years later.

Fortuny and Madrazo: friendship, *preciosismo* and the image of Spain

In 1867 Mariano Fortuny married Cecilia de Madrazo, Raimundo's sister. Strengthened by this family connection, the friendship that already existed between the two painters became even closer. For Madrazo, the travels and trips they shared gave rise to periods of enormous creative freedom, influenced by his brother-in-law's *preciosista* style.

In 1868 the two artists travelled together to Seville, where Madrazo focused his attention on the spaces of the Alcázar built during the Christian era, such as Isabella the Catholic's small oratory. In addition to views of the palace, both artists painted other locations in the city, works characterised by vibrant touches of colour and exquisite detail, evident for example in Fortuny's small panel *Raimundo de Madrazo painting in the Duke of Alba's Palace in Seville*.

Raimundo went to Andalusia again in 1872, first to Seville and then to Granada where the Fortunys had settled. This stay would be particularly fruitful in terms of the number of works produced. Responding to the significant commercial demand for images of Spanish exoticism, he painted a series of Andalusian female figures that enjoyed enormous success on the Paris art market.

Fortuny's influence is also evident in Madrazo's views of the interior of the church of Santa Maria della Pace in Rome, works of great detail and vibrant colours which he painted in 1868 during a visit to his sister and brother-in-law in that city. Fortuny's untimely death in 1874 brought to an end the years of collaboration and artistic exchange between the two painters and made Raimundo de Madrazo the leader of the Spanish artists based in Paris. The inventory of Fortuny's Roman studio was compiled by his brothers-in-law Raimundo and Ricardo de Madrazo, among others, on behalf of Cecilia. Over time the three siblings would become the finest custodians of the artist's work and memory.

Nonchalance

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of a bourgeois taste that appreciated paintings of small domestic scenes over depictions of heroic deeds of the past. The protagonists of large-scale history painting thus gave way to anonymous figures in domestic settings and inconsequential situations.

Raimundo de Madrazo knew how to interpret this new taste, undoubtedly influenced by the vision of Mariano Fortuny and the success of the latter's canvas *The Spanish Wedding*. Works of this type, executed on small panels and known as *tableautins*, were conceived as highly prized objects to be displayed in cabinets. Set in carefully staged interiors, the beautiful and exotic figures are depicted to take full advantage of their poses and clothing, surrounded by exquisite period furniture, tapestries, Hispano-Moresque ceramic plates and decorative objects from China and Japan. From 1870 onwards Madrazo focused on composition of this type, in which he gradually reduced the number of characters—*majas*, guitarists, priests and bullfighters of Goyesque derivation—until the focus was on a single female figure whose presence evoked Andalusian exoticism or French elegance, as seen in *Lady with a Parrot*. Conceived as small decorative paintings or bibelots, these figures move towards a type of “nonchalance”, a term of French origin that defines an attitude close to abandon or indolence.

The high demand from the art market obliged the artist to simplify his compositions; the interiors thus became simple neutral backgrounds against which the female figures display their beauty. Together with these works, which reveal a 19th-century interest in entering the private world of others, scenes of balls and *preciosista*-style depictions of fashionable life in fin-de-siècle Paris were also themes that Madrazo depicted with great success at this period, marking the high point of his genre painting.

The model Aline Masson

Throughout the 19th century the establishment of the bourgeoisie in cities and the rise of industrialisation, among other factors, led to a considerable increase in domestic service. As a result, upper-class women were liberated from their household chores and could enjoy free time, which they devoted to everyday pastimes such as reading, painting, embroidery, singing and playing the piano, entertaining, walking, attending balls and evening performances at the theatre. Nonetheless, the codes of appearance and morality that defined their role as “angels of the hearth” remained in force. Women were expected to safeguard the family structure while presenting themselves as elegant and modest.

In this context Madrazo was one of the most prolific painters in the representation of what could be termed “19th-century domestic leisure”. For the depiction of such works, in the 1870s and 1880s his protagonist was the model Aline Masson. This young woman of unknown origins (it is thought that she may have been the daughter of the caretaker of the Paris residence of the Marquis of Casa Riera, whose back garden overlooked the street where the artist had his first studio in Paris) appears in many of these scenes. In some she is shown reading a newspaper while drinking tea; in others she is seen reclining and self-absorbed, looking at a sealed envelope, as in *Birthday Greetings*.

Initially characterising her as the epitome of Spanish beauty, Raimundo de Madrazo subsequently transformed Aline’s appearance until she became the typical image of the Parisian woman: elegant, beautiful, flirtatious or overtly frivolous, posing in a wide range of costumes, engaged in her *toilette*, dressed as a courtesan or preparing to attend a masked ball. Between 1872 and 1899 Maison Goupil published seven prints based on these paintings, most of which were devoted to reproducing some of the popular female types—those worldly “Alines”—who would largely come to define the artist’s image and critical fortune.

Final years: Paris, New York and Versailles

In 1900 the work that Madrazo showed at the Paris Universal Exposition revealed him to be a painter of an earlier age; his pictorial language seemed outdated in early 20th-century France compared to the modernity of other artists. Aware of this, in 1901 he decided to visit Buenos Aires in order to portray prominent society and political figures. With regard to the United States, he succeeded for some time in maintaining the popularity he had enjoyed there and in 1905 he was made an honorary member of the Hispanic Society of America by its founder, Archer Milton Huntington, whom he had advised on artistic matters in relation to the acquisition of numerous Spanish works.

After spending the winter of 1910 in New York, as he had done every year since 1897, Madrazo discontinued his stays in the United States. In 1914 he settled in Versailles but the progressive deterioration of his health and the outbreak of World War I slowed the pace of his production. Since 1900 he had focused on nudes, portraits and genre paintings, executed from models posed outdoors and dressed in the fashion of the 18th century. Although his pictorial language was less *preciosista* than that employed in previous decades, it reflected the fin-de-siècle revival of the Versailles aesthetic which celebrated the lost eras of Louis XIV to Louis XVI. Albeit without any aspiration to profundity, Madrazo's imagery can be located within the aesthetic of a nostalgic evocation of the splendour of the past. As such, his female protagonists are once again arranged in gardens in the manner of small porcelain figures, blurring the boundaries between genre painting and portraiture.

At the age of seventy-nine and as a result of the illness which he had suffered for some time, Raimundo de Madrazo died on 15 September 1920 at his home in Versailles.

Americans in Paris and portrait tours of the United States

The reputation that Raimundo de Madrazo achieved as a painter of the high society of his day was especially significant among his Latin American clientele who came to his Paris studio to sit for their portraits, including the Candamos and Errazus.

Soon after arriving in the French capital Madrazo also succeeded in becoming part of the commercial network of some of the most prominent American art dealers of the time, including Samuel P. Avery, who sold a significant number of his genre scenes to American clients. Although showing evident signs of waning popularity on the European art market, painting of this type was still sought after for American collections. Again through Avery, Raimundo painted the wife and daughter of the magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt II in his Paris studio in 1880. Canvases of this type constituted the ideal letter of introduction when the artist made his first trip to New York in 1897. Between that year and 1910 he undertook various portrait painting tours of the United States at a time when his reputation in the French art world was declining.

The Madrazo family's close relationship with the Paris-based American patron and collector William Hood Stewart also facilitated the painter's introduction to the sophisticated New World clientele who, in search of their own cultural identity, imitated Parisian high society in customs such as being painted by the most renowned portraitists of the day. A notable example is the pair of portraits of the Tafts which Madrazo painted in Cincinnati.

Madrazo's successful integration into American society was helped by his second marriage to the Venezuelan María Hahn, sister of the famous composer Reynaldo Hahn. He exhibited his portrait of her in a sumptuous silk gown, resembling a *grande dame* of Versailles, in his New York studio on each of his trips, where it served as a model for a world to which his American clients still clung, despite its decline in Paris.

Portraitist par excellence

In the 1880s Raimundo de Madrazo started to move away from genre painting in order to devote himself almost exclusively to portraiture, a genre that was beginning to decline at this time. As well as the undeniable impact and technical merit of his images, in almost every case the identities of his sitters testifies to the select clientele which visited the studio of a painter whose reputation was associated with elegance, restraint and virtuosity.

The 1878 Universal Exposition marked a turning point in Madrazo's career, consolidating his fame with the award of a first-class medal and the Knight's Cross of the Legion of Honour. Of the fourteen paintings which he showed, five were portraits, including that of the actor *Benoît-Constant Coquelin* and *Portrait of a Girl in a pink Dress*, both recently rediscovered in the context of the present exhibition.

Over the following decade and by now established as one of the finest portraitists in Paris, alongside Carolus-Duran and Léon Bonnat, Raimundo produced some of the most important images of his entire career. Particularly notable is his depiction of *Rosario Falcó y Osorio, Duchess of Alba*, a work that achieved enormous popularity in the artist's lifetime, as well as various portraits of members of high society and royalty, such as *The 2nd Marquis of Casa Riera* and *Portrait of Queen Maria Christina*. Madrazo's extensive network of contacts also gave rise to commissions for portraits of prominent members of French society, including three of the Marchioness d'Hervey de Saint-Denys.

Raimundo's portraits of sitters from the diplomatic world are more restrained and many of them reveal the lessons he assimilated from Velázquez, with neutral backgrounds against which the figure stands out. Examples include the portrait of *Amelia da Silva Guimarães* and those of the children of Baron Von Stumm, the German ambassador in Spain.