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**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, MOUNTS FIRST U.S. RETROSPECTIVE
OF CONTEMPORARY SPANISH ARTIST ANTONIO LÓPEZ GARCÍA**

BOSTON, MA (April 14, 2008)—The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), presents the first retrospective at an American museum of works by contemporary Spanish artist Antonio López García during an exhibition that runs through July 27, 2008. *Antonio López García* highlights 55 paintings, drawings, and sculpture by the celebrated artist of the realist school, and features loans from European and American museums and private collections, including 38 works from Spain, and nine works from the MFA’s collection. The exhibition, which opened yesterday, also marks the debut of *Day and Night* (completed in 2008, Courtesy of the Marlborough Gallery), two monumental bronze sculptures of a baby’s head. Measuring approximately 8 ft. tall x 7 ft. wide, and weighing 1.6 tons each, the heads flank the Museum’s Huntington Avenue entrance. *Antonio López García* is sponsored by United Technologies Corporation. The show complements the major Spanish exhibition, *El Greco to Velázquez: Art during the Reign of Philip III* (April 20 through July 27), for a celebration of “Spanish Spring” at the MFA.

Antonio López García highlights the artist’s career from 1955 to the present. The familiar and ordinary of López’s world—the classical themes of landscape, still life, and figure realized through the close examination of his immediate surroundings—comprise this renowned artist’s subject. With painstaking detail and profound adherence to observation, López creates a faithful representation of his simple motifs. His strict dependence upon the truth of his subjects has become legendary—

—more—

paintings and sculpture have sometimes taken him years to complete—which accounts for the often lengthy creative process for which he is known.

Antonio López García has traveled to Boston for the first time for his exhibition opening, also attended by Her Royal Highness Doña Cristina de Borbón, Infanta of Spain; His Excellency Don Iñaki Urdangarín, Duke of Palma; His Excellency, D. Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza, Ambassador of Spain to the United States; and Senator Edward M. Kennedy. (While in Boston, the artist will conduct a master class for art students from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.)

“Antonio López García is considered a national treasure in his native Spain. We are proud to bring the extraordinary works of this contemporary realist and visionary to American audiences,” said Malcolm Rogers, Ann and Graham Gund Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Born in 1936 in Tomelloso (part of the La Mancha area of central Spain), López displayed innate artistic talent as a youth and gained admittance to the San Fernando School of Fine Arts in Madrid at the age of 13. In the years after graduation in 1955, López was first associated with “magic realism” and juxtaposed peculiar combinations of images of people and places, resulting in mysterious and haunting compositions. Yet, by the early 1960s, the artist developed what would be his mature, realist period through which he observed his surroundings with increasing intensity and meticulously translated his view into poetic canvases, drawings, and sculpture. He has received international acclaim throughout the years, and in 2006 was awarded the *Premio Velázquez* (Velázquez Prize for Fine Arts), named after the 17th-century painter.

“The hallmark of López’s work is its timelessness; he is an old master in the contemporary world,” said exhibition curator Cheryl Brutvan (the MFA’s Robert L. Beal, Enid L., and Bruce A. Beal Curator of Contemporary Art and Head of the Department of Contemporary Art). “The artist is uncompromising in his truthfulness to his subjects and develops an intense relationship with each of them. His extraordinary patience allows him to create an authentic art, filled with reverence toward such humble themes.”

Works included in *Antonio López García* reflect the artist’s three major themes of landscape, still life, and figure:

Landscape

López moved to Madrid to attend school and since then has developed a close relationship with the city—one he encounters through intimate moments in solitude and over lengthy periods of observation from identifiable vantage points. His process demands preserving similar conditions each time, resulting in repeated visits over days, and sometimes years, to complete a work. In articulating his vision of Madrid, López has chosen throughout his career to paint and draw the city from a variety of distinct vistas. *View of North Madrid from “La Maliciosa”* (1962–64, JPMorgan Chase Art Collection) is a daunting, panoramic view observed from the distance of a notable spot in the Guadarrama Mountains near Madrid. In contrast is *South Madrid* (1965–85, Colección Masaveau Foundation), one of the artist’s first attempts at painting urban Madrid, which became one of his many long-term projects. Created during a 20-year period, the work evolved as the city changed. Through such intense observation, López engages Madrid, which can be seen in his more recent painting, *View of Madrid from the Vallecas Fire Tower* (1997–2006, Caja Madrid Art Collection), typically on display at the Madrid Assembly in the city’s Vallecas district. In contrast to his other landscapes, *Atocha* (1964, MFA, Boston), which depicts the area around the Atocha railway station in Madrid, is unusual for the artist because of the incorporation of a nude couple in mad embrace, unaware of their surroundings.

Still Life

López’s vision provokes the viewer to consider even the simplest subject matter with newfound significance. In *Sink and Mirror* (1967, MFA, Boston), the tangible display of personal effects draws in the observer, creating an intimate display and self portrait. While truthful to his subject, López has always challenged himself artistically. In his simple, traditional still life *Glass with Flowers and Wall* (1965, Collection of the Artist) his attention is not only directed to the delicate white flowers, but to creating a composition that questions and simplifies the illusion of depth through planes of color from a monochromatic and subdued palette, a precursor to minimalist aesthetics.

The race against time is at its most obvious when López draws upon subjects from nature such as those found in his garden. The artist has always considered the beauty of plants in proximity to his studio. One of his repeated motifs is the quince, the subject of *Quince Tree* (1990, Private Collection). López’s efforts to faithfully represent it are the focal point of the 1992 film by Victor Erice, *El Sol del Membrillo (The Quince-Tree Sun*, also referred to as “*Dream of Light*”), which

captures the loyal and intense relationship between the artist and his subject, and ultimately the passage of time. As he attempts to overcome nature when the tree branches become weighted down by the ripening quince, López struggles to continue, rigging the branches with string to preserve their original form. The film, which won the Film Critics Prize and the Grand Prize of the Jury at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival, as well as numerous international prizes, will be shown at the MFA on April 17 and 19.

Figure

Such attention to nuance also can be found in López's depiction of the human figure. His sculpture, *Man and Woman* (1968–1994, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), captures the humanity of his subjects in its extraordinary detail and sense of life. More closely aligned with the figurative work of centuries earlier (such as found in ancient Greek and Egyptian examples), *Man and Woman* also references pairings from his first figurative pieces created decades prior, such as the painting *Sinforoso and Josefa* (1955, Collection of Sr. D. Fernando Higuera).

Perhaps only the artist's face is missing in López's close study of his family throughout his career. *Portrait of María* (1972, Private Collection), astonishing in its realism, is a pencil drawing of the artist's oldest daughter at the age of 10. Yet it is sculpture which plays a prominent role in the artist's work, from his earliest reliefs in painted wood of mysterious narratives, to the essence of his young daughter, life size, in the polychrome wood sculpture *María Standing* (1964, Irene and Philip Clark). It also is evidenced in one of his compositions to be included in the exhibition, *Children* (1997–2007, Collection of the Artist), featuring a grouping of life-size heads modeled after his children and grandchildren. Drawing upon a similar theme is one of López's more recent projects—an adaptation of the sculptural studies of a baby's head, based upon one of his grandchildren, which he has cast in bronze. Titled *Day and Night*, with one sculpture featuring the baby's eyes open, and the other with the baby's eyes shut, the works are prominently featured on the MFA's Huntington Avenue lawn. Slightly larger versions of *Day and Night* will be placed at the Atocha railway station in Madrid. López continues to work in a variety of media, and currently is painting portraits of the royal family of Spain.

In an interview with author Michael Brenson, López said, "I don't consider myself a true painter. More than color, the shape of things, their volume, matter and the distance between their different

areas have always been the stimuli prompting my pictures, and all this is probably what has enabled me to work as a sculptor.”

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

Antonio López García, organized by MFA curator Cheryl Brutvan (Beal Curator of Contemporary Art and Head of the Department of Contemporary Art) features nine works by Antonio López García from the Museum’s own collection, which is the largest public holding in the United States of this revered artist’s work. It is second only to Madrid’s Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (where a retrospective on López was mounted in 1993). Eight works in the MFA’s collection were donated in 2003 as part of the Melvin Blake and Frank Purnell Collection, and one was purchased with donated funds in 1998.

PUBLICATION

A monograph, *Antonio López García*, accompanies this exhibition featuring an introductory essay by Cheryl Brutvan, with entries for each painting written by Miguel Fernández-Cid (from the translation of a previous work on López published by Ciro). Included in the MFA publication are approximately 60 illustrations of works in color and 10 documentary photos. It is available in soft cover for \$25 at the MFA Bookstore and Shop or at www.mfa.org.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Gallery Talks

Cheryl Brutvan

Thursday, May 15, 11 a.m.–noon

Wednesday, June 11, 6–7 p.m.

Meet at Sharf Information Desk

Gallery Talks are free with Museum admission

Curator Cheryl Brutvan will lead a tour through *Antonio López García* as she discusses the artist’s work as a contemporary realist, his ideas about the power of familiar images, and his passion for, and deep understanding of, the history of Spanish art.

Antonio López García: The Painter of Madrid

Sunday, May 18, 2–3 p.m.

Saturday, June 7, noon–1 p.m.

Meet at Sharf Information Desk

Gallery Talks are free with Museum admission

Steve Rivera, research assistant for *Antonio López García* in the Department of Contemporary Art, will discuss the paintings, drawings, and sculpture of renowned artist Antonio López García.

Topics considered include the artist's trajectory, process, and particular brand of realism, especially as it involves the idea of time. The discussion will also contemplate the place of realism in contemporary art today.

Films

Dream of Light

Thursday, April 17, 2:45 p.m.

Saturday, April 19, 10:30 a.m.

Remis Auditorium

Tickets: \$6 for MFA members, seniors, and students; \$7 for non members

Dream of Light (El Sol del Membrillo) by Victor Erice (Spain, 1991, 128 min.). A beautiful, studied film by the Spanish cinematic genius Victor Erice, it offers an intense, detailed look at the artistic process. ***Dream of Light*** follows the creation of a single painting, a still life of a quince tree by artist Antonio López García. The award-winning film, in Spanish with English subtitles, complements the exhibition ***Antonio López García*** (April 13-July 27). During the April 19 screening, Linda Ehrlich, editor of *The Cinema of Victor Erice: An Open Window*, and an associate professor at Case Western Reserve University, will introduce the film at 10:30 a.m., then will lead a discussion about it and Erice's recent work at 1:15 p.m. in the Riley Seminar Room. For ticket information, call 617.369.3687 or visit www.mfa.org/film. The MFA Film Program is co-sponsored by Goulston & Storrs. The media sponsor is *The Boston Phoenix*.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum's collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments.

Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.; Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 9:45 p.m. General admission (which includes two visits in a 10-day period) is \$17 for adults and \$15 for seniors and students age 18 and older. Admission for students who are University Members is free, as is admission for children 17 years of age and younger during non-school hours. No general admission fee is required during Citizens Bank Foundation Wednesday Nights (after 4 p.m.). Voluntary donations are welcome. Gund Gallery exhibitions, like El Greco to Velázquez, are ticketed events that require an additional fee. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For general information, visit the MFA website at www.mfa.org or call 617.267.9300.

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