



THE HAPPIEST STREET IN THE WORLD

Nana Cardona. June 2022.

NANA CARDONA '22

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“
How at ease I feel there
with that air and that
passion!

Federico García Lorca

”

In a speech addressed to the florists on the Ramblas in Barcelona, Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) described the Ramblas as “the happiest street in the world.”

The poet spoke these words prior to the performance of his work “Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores” (Doña Rosita the spinster or the language of the flowers) which he, and Margarita Xirgu, dedicated to the florists.

During those weeks when they performed the play at the Principal Palace theatre, both Lorca and Xirgu received a bunch of flowers each night from an anonymous sender. When they found out that they had been sent by the florists on the Ramblas, they were moved and, in gratitude, dedicated the last night of the play to the florists.

García Lorca was executed months later in Granada in August 1936, and “Doña Rosita la soltera” became his final theatrical play.

Inspired by these events, I create a metaphor between the flowers in García Lorca’s play, which end up withering, and how the passage of time and the consequences of such a globalized world impact on the local spirit, as occurs on the Ramblas in Barcelona.

The title, “La calle más alegre del mundo” (The happiest street in the world), is inspired by the impression the Ramblas made on García Lorca and I have chosen it in the hope of recovering some of the joy that the poet described, not only on the Ramblas but also in so many far-flung corners of the world that are losing their irreplaceable charm.



“
Nobody who visits Barcelona can
forget this street that the flowers
transform into an unexpected
greenhouse, nor fail to be surprised
by the Mozart-like chorus of the
birds which, though they take their
revenge on passers-by in a slightly
rude way, endow the Rambla with
silver-filled air and sprinkle on their
friends a soporific rain of invisible
sequins that fill our hearts.

”

Federico García Lorca and
Margarita Xirgu, 1935.

“Principal Palace” is a watercolour painting that represents the Ramblas and questions its current identity with fanciful themes that allude to the need to take care of our planet, beginning with what is closest to us, such as a neighbourhood or a particular street.

Sometimes, I include elements that draw inspiration from iconic artists. In this case, three tree trunks take the shape of arms crying out, evoking “Guernica” by Picasso and sculptures by Julio González. Likewise, the head of a red dog in the bottom right-hand corner is a reference to “Perro semihundido” (The half-submerged dog) by Goya.

Principal Palace, 2022.
Watercolour and mixed media on paper.

27 x 35 cm.



García Lorca's play "Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores" is set in Spanish society in the early twentieth century and reflects the sorrow felt by Doña Rosita's family because she can't get married to her fiancé. The real reason is not the difficulties he may face in getting back to Spain, but that he has already married another woman in Argentina.

This painting represents Rosita's integrity, as she does not succumb to the pressure from those around her when the news about her is made public.

This fish that kisses the moon, which features in other works, comes from the poem "Oda a Salvador Dalí" (Ode to Salvador Dalí) by García Lorca and for me it has become a symbol that expresses love and affection.

Rosita, 2022.
Oil and mixed media on canvas.

100 x 100 cm.



With this female figure, I allude to the florists on the Ramblas. The “women with candid laughter and wet hands”, as García Lorca called them, hold the power to gift the happiness that their flowers exude.

This picture is painted in mixed media and achieves an effect akin to the transparency of water, an element that is indispensable for flowers and nature to blossom in all their splendour.

The florists on the happiest street in the world, 2021.

Oil and mixed media on wood.

73 x 54,5 x 4 cm



The series “The language of flowers / Splendour” evokes García Lorca’s glory, as he experienced his most special time, personally and professionally, in 1935.

The language of flowers / Splendour I, 2022.
Mixed media on wood. Mirrored frame.

15,5 x 15,5 x 4 cm.



The language of flowers / Splendour II, 2022.
Oil and mixed media on canvas.

21,5 x 16 cm.



The exuberant spirit of the Ramblas that García Lorca enjoyed contrasts with the poet's dramatic end.

Once the run of the play “Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores” was over, he returned to Granada where he was arrested.

His support for the Republic and his free spirit led to his execution on 18th August 1936.

The language of flowers / 18th August 1936, 2022.

Oil and mixed media on canvas.

27 x 19 cm



“Barcelona Port Kaleidoscope” represents, in a naïve style, iconic places in Barcelona that convey its open and jovial character.

Nevertheless, it features some symbolic elements – the broken mirrors – as a warning signal so that it does not abandon its unique personality.

The painting is reflected on the mirrors inside, which evokes that playful spirit that awakens curiosity, like when we turn a kaleidoscope to see its many varied combinations.

Barcelona Port Kaleidoscope, 2021.
Oil and mixed media on canvas. Mirrored frame.

58 x 73 x 20 cm.



The work "I was born in the Mediterranean" recalls the song "Mediterráneo" (1971) by Joan Manel Serrat.

I have shown the double face of the Mediterranean: it is a paradise for some, yet represents longing for others, with different symbols such as the mirrors (broken), the guitar (in decay) and the shoes (undone).

I was born in the Mediterranean 2021.
Oil and mixed media on canvas.

81 x 100 cm.



“Alert, Barcelona!” is a complaint about the high levels of pollution in the city.

In this painting, I interpret the clamour based on the iconic building La Pedrera in Barcelona, with graphic elements inspired by other artists, such as Picasso, with the hands raised recalling “Guernica”; Goya, with the red dog inspired by “Perro semihundido”; and Julio González, with the blue fish that raises its arm in a gesture of despair drawing on “Montserrat cridant” (Montserrat screaming).

Alert, Barcelona!, 2022.
Oil and mixed media on canvas.

92 x 72 cm.



While “Alert, Barcelona!” is a call to take care of our surroundings, “Sweet Pedrera” evokes a scenario in which nature has reconquered its natural space. In this case, I drew inspiration from a comment by Salvador Dalí, who compared La Pedrera with the succulent appearance of a meringue.

This work features pieces of mirrors cut in different sizes. It is a nod to the trencadís technique used by Antoni Gaudí and, symbolically, refers to the fact that rebuilding is possible: we can achieve a more inhabitable planet with hope, will and kindness.

Sweet Pedrera, 2022.
Oil and mixed media on canvas.

92 x 72 cm.





The “Alert” series includes drawings in Indian ink on brightly coloured paper, evoking urban signs that warn of potential dangers.

Alert, I, 2022.
Indian ink on phosphorite paper.

21 x 30 cm.



Alert, II, 2022.
Indian ink on phosphorite paper.

21 x 30 cm.



The series “Frescos” draws inspiration from fresco painting and poses a double interpretation. Fresco as tenderness and, in contrast, as shamelessness.

Fresco, tenderness, I, 2022.
Mixed media on wood.

20 x 20 x 4 cm.



Thus, it shows two different approaches to the conservation of our ecosystem: those who protect and care for it, and those who degrade it, provoking cries from defenceless beings.

Fresco, tenderness, II, 2022.
Mixed media on wood.

20 x 20 x 4 cm.



Fresco, shamelessness, I, 2022.
Mixed media on wood.

20 x 20 x 4 cm.



Fresco, shamelessness, II, 2022.
Mixed media on wood.

20 x 20 x 4 cm.

The series “Baldosas” (Tiles) draws inspiration from the handcrafted ceramic tiles in the Mediterranean and seeks to highlight the importance of preserving local culture and traditions.

Tiles, I, 2022.
Mixed media on wood. Mirrored frame.

31 x 22,5 x 6 cm.



“All the essence of the great Barcelona, of the perennial, the incorruptible, is in the street... I also have to walk down this street every day to learn from it how the city’s spirit can persevere.”

Federico García Lorca



I was born in Barcelona in 1978. I have worked with contemporary art for over a decade.

I achieved a degree in Political Sciences from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) in Barcelona, and studied art for several years at Escola La Llotja, Núria Duran's engraving workshop and El Visor academy.

In 2008, I undertook research into artistic censorship in Vietnam and the Philippines which resulted in the first guide to contemporary art in each country. Thus, I combined my Asian origins with my artistic vocation and training in political science.

I have worked at the Chamber of Commerce and Casa Asia in Barcelona, the United Nations in New York, and later on at Fundació Vila Casas (2009–2019) in the Presidency department and as Director of the Museu Can Framis in Barcelona. I am currently working freelance and undertake creative and artistic projects, in conjunction with Fundació Vila Casas and other cultural bodies.

In 2012 and 2013, I curated exhibitions by Philippine artists at the Galeria Patrick Domken in Cadaqués.

Since 2006, I have exhibited my work in several solo and collective exhibitions, such as Espacio en Blanco (2013) and Sweet Ophelia (2019), among others.

In 2020, I held the exhibition "Achicando Delirios" at the Galeria Patrick Domken in Cadaqués, which calls for protection of the ecosystems in the Costa Brava.

I have also developed various projects, such as a platform for contemporary digital art and a collection of hand-painted fashion garments.

In 2020, I opened my own workshop-gallery, Nakkan Art, in Barcelona, where I am currently exhibiting "The happiest street in the world".

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