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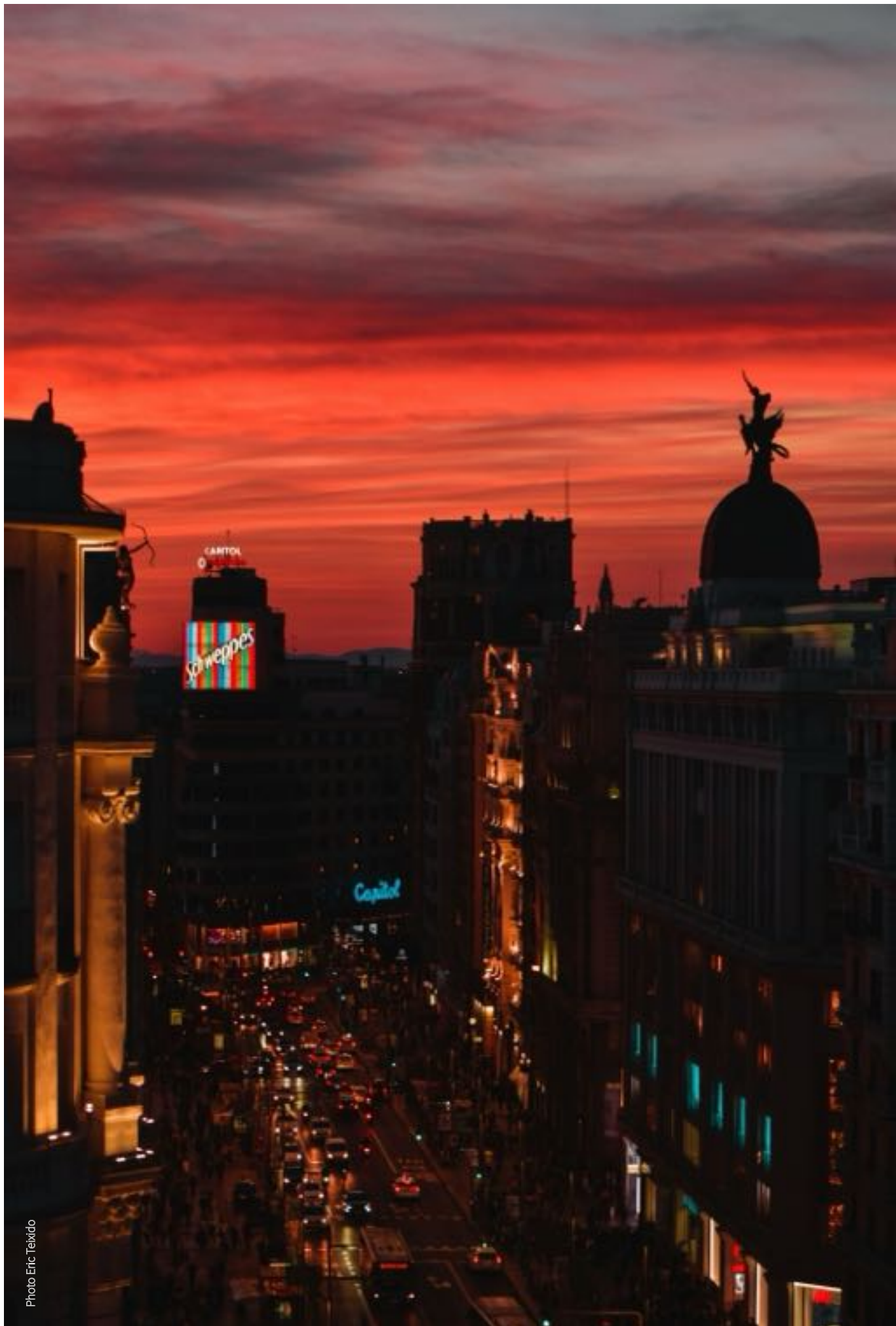


Photo Eric Teixeira

# AMA

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# STREET CITY





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# WORLD CITY





An aerial photograph of Madrid, Spain, showing a dense urban landscape with traditional European architecture, including buildings with balconies and tiled roofs. The city extends to the horizon under a clear sky.

## THE NEW *MOVIDA MADRILEÑA*

In a city where the local and global meet and where the natural and urban coexist, a fresh wave of change is sweeping through the Spanish capital.

In the 1980s, Madrid pulsed with the energy of *La Movida Madrileña*, a bold, countercultural movement that reshaped Spain's artistic landscape in the wake of Franco's dictatorship. Fueled by punk rock, synth-pop and an insatiable hunger for freedom, this movement tore down taboos, embraced sexual expression and turned the city into a playground of creativity and excess. Now, decades later, a wave of creative energy is sweeping through the Spanish capital. Could we be witnessing the rise of a new *Movida Madrileña*?

### **Art boom**

The Spanish economic landscape has experienced a remarkable turnaround. In 2024, the country outperformed many major economies, with a GDP growth rate exceeding 3%, the lowest unemployment levels in years and an unprecedented tourism surge. This economic resurgence has had a direct impact on the art scene, fostering the expansion of galleries and art fairs, the creation of creative hubs and the arrival of international collectors. Madrid, in particular, has capitalised on this momentum, solidifying its position as a cultural powerhouse.

Although the capital enjoys a well-established museum landscape with iconic institutions such as the Prado, Reina Sofía and Thyssen-Bornemisza, its gallery scene is relatively young compared to European art centres like Paris or London [see p.20]. That said, since the emergence of contemporary galleries in the 1980s and 1990s, the city has experienced a significant transformation that continues today. It is true

that the recent global downturn in the art market has raised some concerns. The closure of major institutions like Marlborough Gallery or Juana de Aizpuru in autumn 2023 has broken several hearts, but this has not condemned Madrid's momentum. On the contrary, new galleries continue to emerge, museums are setting visitor records and art institutions are more active than ever. The 2024 edition of ARCO also demonstrated resilience, with the Helga de Alvear Foundation acquiring works by Marcel Duchamp, Waldo Balart and Rafael Grassi. The ARCO Foundation also expanded its collection with eight additional acquisitions, further reinforcing institutional support for contemporary art.

But who is behind this transformation? One of the driving forces behind Madrid's artistic resurgence has been the proliferation of art fairs. Although each fair has carved out a distinctive identity, they have become the main platforms for showcasing emerging talent, supporting





ARCOmadrid 2024

Courtesy IFEMA







contemporary galleries and setting new artistic trends. For instance, in this edition, ARCOmadrid [see box] explores Latin American art and the Amazons, reinforcing Spain's cultural ties with Latin America. The program "Wametise: Ideas for an Amazofuturism", is curated by Denilson Baniwa and María Wills in collaboration with the Institute for postnatural studies. Meanwhile, Art Madrid is brimming with innovation. This edition presents "One-shot collectors", an initiative to promote art collecting for young people, at a national and international level. The fair also introduces "Territorio ciudad", a parallel program that takes art outside the fairgrounds, integrating it into everyday life. According to the organisers, "It is not just about taking art to the streets, but about connecting with people, breaking down barriers and creating spaces where creativity is accessible to everyone." UVNT

introduces FOCO LATAM, an initiative that brings together eight galleries from Latin America, including Cerquone Gallery (Caracas/Madrid) and Enlace Art (Lima), among others. The initiative is curated by Christian Viveros-Fauné and supported by The Social Hub Iberia. With its urban style, UVNT continues its public art programme, bringing sculptures, interventions and murals to public spaces in Madrid. The contemporary fair is also known for its Young Galleries Program, which supports emerging galleries with less than three years of experience by providing them with a platform within the fair. Moreover, JUSTMAD brings together forty galleries from eleven different countries, further establishing itself as the fair of discovery and a space for learning, while MIAD focuses on design and acknowledges the intersection between functional aesthetics

and contemporary art. Away from the busy month of March, Estampa, organised by IFEMA in October, continues to give priority to Spanish and Portuguese collectors and galleries.

Besides the presence of global leaders in the auction scene like Christie's [see box p.15] and Sotheby's, the rise of innovative auction houses has also played a crucial role in shaping Madrid's new art market. For instance, Maza Art, with its pop-up events, underground DJ sets and a youthful approach to collecting, has made contemporary art accessible to a broader audience. Ansorena [see box p.27], with its focus on Spanish art and antiquities, holds a significant place in Madrid's art market, catering to traditional collectors and maintaining the city's rich cultural heritage. Meanwhile, Magna, which debuted in late 2024, caters to an elite clientele, inviting Spanish nobility and high-ranking collectors into an exclusive auctioning sphere. These contrasting models highlight the diversity of Madrid's growing market, appealing to both *avant-garde* collectors and traditional buyers.

The city's cultural calendar [see p.38] also accompanies this wave of creativity. Filled with strong and innovative curatorial proposals, Madrid offers a diverse array of exhibitions and art events, balancing contemporary art with reverence for its old masters.

#### Latin American magnet

But Madrid is not just Madrid. The city is deeply intertwined with its international relationships, particularly with Latin America [see p.30]. Today, one in every seven residents of Madrid is Latin American, many of whom have arrived not only in search of economic stability but also to participate in the city's cultural

### ARCOmadrid 2025

Since its founding in 1982, ARCOmadrid has grown into one of the most influential contemporary art fairs. The Amazon, Latin American art and the discovery of new galleries are the main projects of this 44<sup>th</sup> edition, which takes place at IFEMA from 5 to 9 March. Maribel López Zambrana, director of ARCOmadrid, along with a team of art experts, has curated a General Program, which includes 179 galleries. The strength of the Spanish art scene is reflected in the participation of local players such as Elba Benítez and Sabrina Amrani while the international participation includes worldwide names like Ropac, Perrotin or Esther Schipper. In addition to these, several curated sections also take part. "Wametisé: Ideas for an Amazofuturism" is the main focus. Curated by Cristina Anglada and Anissa Touati, "Opening: New galleries" brings us closer to galleries less than seven years old, while initiatives like "Perfiles | Arte Latinoamericano", curated by José Esparza Chong Cuy, continue to strengthen the historical connection between the global south and Spain.

With its innovative proposals and worldwide connections, ARCOmadrid is expected to attract no less than 95,000 visitors, drawing collectors, curators, critics and art enthusiasts, reaffirming its status as a premier international contemporary art fair.

#### ARCOmadrid

From 5 to 9 March

IFEMA

5 avenida del Partenón. Barajas. Madrid

[www.ifema.es](http://www.ifema.es)



Opera Gallery Madrid  
© Opera Gallery





ARCOMadrid 2024

Courtesy IFEMA



A man wearing a grey hat and a black leather jacket is seen from the side, looking at a large, vibrant, abstract painting. The painting features swirling colors of blue, green, yellow, and red, characteristic of Salvador Dalí's style. The man's profile is in the foreground, and the painting fills the background.

## Christie's Spain

Christie's Spain has entered its 53<sup>rd</sup> year. "When the house was established in 1972, Christie's had not yet even expanded to the US, Asia or the Middle East," says María García Yelo, Managing Director Spain and Director Impressionist and Modern Art at Christie's Spain. "Christie's Spain has played an important role for over 50 years in developing the art market in our country and the market of Spanish artists internationally, such as Antoni Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida, Joan Miró and Juan Gris."

In March of 2024, coinciding with the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of another Spanish landmark, The Dalí Theatre-Museum, Christie's Spain placed Dalí's *The birth of liquid anguish* (1932) with The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation for £1,976,000.

"The Christie's Madrid office has a dual functionality, Yelo says. On the one hand it helps clients to transact with Christie's globally and, on the other hand, to source consignments from Spain for the firm's international auctions. We are predominately sourcing works of art, objects, jewellery, watches, handbags and wines."

Spanish collectors, Yelo says, are always "strongly interested" in Spanish art from all different time periods. That said, "important 20<sup>th</sup> century collections in the country are juxtaposing international and Spanish currents to create interesting dialogues." As established Spanish collectors broaden their horizons, the Spanish market is also seeing a surge in interest from new collectors. "Of all new clients 41% are Millennials or younger." According to Yelo, some of the highest growth in new buyers in 2024 came in the departments of Japanese Art (+83%), Photographs (+49%), Wine (+18%), Impressionist & Modern (+12%) and Watches (+11%).

Overall, Yelo says that the auction scene in Madrid is thriving, with a mixture of legacy auction houses with more than a century of history in the city, global powerhouses like Christie's and Sotheby's and several new houses that have been established. It makes for a healthy and diverse ecosystem, offering an array of options to collectors who are more eclectic in their habits than ever. "The Madrid cultural and auction scene is very vibrant and it is good to see new auction houses blooming alongside the traditional, established houses to offer a 360° view of art and collecting."



View of the "Surrealism, art and cinema" exhibition  
Courtesy Círculo de Bellas Artes





scene. Contrary to common narratives, a significant portion of these migrants are affluent professionals who have settled in high-end neighbourhoods like Salamanca, now informally dubbed Little Caracas, where 17% of residents are Latin American. This connection is also reflected in collaborations and institutional efforts to bridge the two continents. Casa Mexico [see p.46], a cultural centre located in one of Madrid's most established neighbourhoods, has become a focal point for Latin American art and culture. Exhibitions featuring iconic artists such as Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, alongside public events like Altar de Muertos, have successfully engaged Madrid's younger generations, developing an appreciation for Latin American artistic heritage.

Another defining moment in this relationship came in 1997 when ARCO Madrid showcased 34 galleries from across Latin America, including countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela and Peru. This significant participation marked a turning point for the Spanish fair, helping it recover from an economic downturn and reasserting its international relevance. The inclusion of Latin American galleries set a lasting precedent for cultural exchange between Spain and the Global South, establishing a relationship that deepened in the following years. In 2009, Art Madrid, in collaboration with Casa América, introduced "Regreso: Latin American art and memory", solidifying the city's role as a player in the transatlantic artistic dialogue. This initiative highlighted the richness and diversity of Latin American artistic expressions while underscoring the importance of memory and identity in the region's contemporary art scene.

### Creative districts

Parallel to the institutional and gallery art scene, Madrid's underground creative movement is also thriving. Malasaña was the birthplace of La Movida and since the last decade has been home to an alternative art scene. But it is not the only one. The ISO Industrial Park has emerged as a hub for young artists, offering workshop spaces and experimental venues that encourage artistic innovation. Meanwhile, Carabanchel, a historically working-class neighbourhood, has been rebranded as District 11, now a hotspot for creatives and galleries alike. With over 130 artists occupying 40 studios and workshops, the area has attracted talents across disciplines, from illustration and sculpture to photography and video art. Established names such as José Luis Serzo, Miki Leal, Patricia Mateo and Laura Lío, many of whom are featured in ARCO Madrid, have contributed to the district's rise as a major artistic enclave.

### Public art

In Madrid, art is not confined. At the heart of this transformation, contemporary art also finds its place in the public space. While the city honours its historical-artistic legacy, landmark installations, such as the elongated white-female face of Julia by Jaume Plensa [see p.54], have become icons of today's Madrid.

Then, of course, there are "Las Meninas". "Las Meninas Madrid Gallery" is an annual outdoor exhibition that transforms the streets into an open-air museum with reinterpretations of Velázquez's iconic figures. Created by artists, designers and public figures, each sculpture offers a fresh take on Madrid's cultural identity.

More than a tribute to Spain's artistic legacy, the project encourages public interaction, bridging tradition and modernity. In 2024, the initiative expanded beyond Spain, making its way to Caracas. But this is not the only outdoor exhibition in the city. The Open Air Sculpture Museum in Castellana showcases abstract works by renowned 20<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish artists such as Eduardo Chillida and Joan Miró.

More recently, contemporary urban interventions have gained momentum. The vibrant murals of Tabacalera, a former tobacco factory turned into a cultural centre, feature rotating exhibitions of street art. Likewise, the Matadero Madrid, a former slaughterhouse converted into a cultural hub, is now a cornerstone of the city's art scene. Over the years, Matadero has become renowned for its experimental approach, hosting interactive installations and large-scale sculptures that challenge conventional perceptions of art in public spaces. Its industrial architecture has caught the attention of many and for the first time this year, Matadero will serve as the venue for the UVNT Art Fair.

With buzzy terraces, bags of history, world-class museums, or emergent initiatives, Madrid has something for every taste. The city's commitment to promoting new talent, its openness to Latin American influences and its ability to balance economic realities with artistic ambition all suggest that we may indeed be witnessing the new *Movida Madrileña*. Whether this movement will achieve the mythic status of its predecessor remains to be seen — but one thing is certain: Madrid is once again a city in a creative revolution. And no matter how much it changes, it will always remain Madrid.







Photo Robert Tjalondo

# FROCCUS



View from the "Animal Omen" exhibition

© Miguel Sainz Ojeda. Courtesy Opera Gallery Madrid



## FROM TRADITION TO TRANSFORMATION

One of the best places in Madrid to explore art is its galleries. Home to nearly 50% of all galleries in the country, this hub *madrialeño* caters to every artistic taste.

It all began in the heart of the Salamanca neighbourhood, where some private collections from the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie opened up to the public between the post-war period and the Spanish transition. The first galleries included Galería Biosca, founded in 1940, and Juana Mordó, in 1964. Soon, democracy and mind-openness expanded the presence of art spaces in Chamberí, Malasaña, or El Barrio de las Letras. Then it was Juana de Aizpuru, the woman who transformed Madrid's art scene. In 1982 she founded ARCO and opened her gallery in the city centre a year later. Since then, a list of art enthusiasts have dedicated themselves to this growth purely for art's sake.

"The Madrid cultural scene has always been vibrant, full of bubbling creative minds," says Sabrina Amrani, a gallerist who runs two venues in the city — one in Malasaña and another in the emerging Carabanchel. "When I arrived in 2008, it was a difficult time, just before the financial crash. But over the years, I have seen the scene grow and professionalise. We are seeing increasing internationalisation, which brings fresh perspectives and dialogues to the city."

### Fresh twists

In recent years, one of the most fascinating shifts has been the rise of Doctor Fourquet, a small street in Lavapiés now revived and dedicated to galleries. At the heart was the visionary Helga de Alvear, a gallerist and collector whose influence on Spanish art cannot be overstated. De Alvear, who passed away just weeks ago, was among the first to settle in the area, helping to turn Doctor Fourquet into

what people now call "Madrid's mini Chelsea". Today, the street is home to cutting-edge galleries, including Galería Marta Cervera, The Goma or Espacio Mínimo.

Carabanchel also stands out, becoming the focal point of a creative and bohemian movement in the city. For years, the Manzanares river created a dividing line between Madrid and Carabanchel, an alternative, working-class neighbourhood full of garages and warehouses. In the last few years, the rise of exhibition spaces and art studios is blurring this separation. Passionate about places that tell stories, Sabrina Amrani was one of the pioneers in the district. "When I opened my second space in Carabanchel in 2018, people thought I was crazy. It was seen as too far, too disconnected. But for me, it was about finding the right spot. The fact that it happened to be in Carabanchel was secondary," Amrani recalls. Attracted by the industrial architecture and lower rents, several galleries have made their home too. Among them is



Photo David Monje





**Metro**

**Plaza de España**

Galería Belmonte, founded by Sol Abaurrea and Ana Coronel de Palma, who moved into the neighbourhood in the summer of 2022. Beyond having a space that allows for traditional exhibitions and outdoor installations, Carabanchel's creative ecosystem played a role in their decision. "Many of the artists we work with have their studios very close by," they explain. Their upcoming exhibition on 22 March, featuring local artist Andrés Izquierdo, reflects their ongoing commitment to build relationships with local artists. Their experience mirrors that of many other galleries in Carabanchel, with newcomers like Wadström Tönneheim, La Oficina or Memoria, a gallery focused on Latin American art. "We are witnessing an increasing number of experimental spaces, where a new generation of gallerists is willing to take risks and present challenging artistic discourses," notes Amrani.

On the other hand, artists such as Carlos Garaicoa [see box] — who opened his creative space in 2022 — and Raúl Bravo — who has had his studio there for a decade — are embracing the possibilities these locations offer. Allowing for a different scale of operation, artist Carlos Aires started a collective studio called Mala Fama, while CasaBanchel and Nave Oporto are also production areas for artists. This influx of galleries and creative locations has transformed the public's perception of the district. "At first, there was a mental barrier, explains Belmonte's founders. People thought Carabanchel was too far, too isolated. But once they visit, they realise it is just 15 minutes from the centre and the art scene here is thriving."

### Thinking global

The emergence of international players such as the Opera Gallery in Madrid, also reflects the city's growing appetite for contemporary art. Since opening the doors in the spring of 2023, Opera has integrated into the city's artistic ecosystem guided by its philosophy: "Thinking global, acting local." Belén Herrera Ottino, Director of Opera Gallery Madrid, explains the motivation behind this: "Our decision to open in Madrid was driven by the strong relationships we had already built with renowned Spanish artists such as Manolo Valdés and Lita Cabellut." Initially conceived as a modest venue, the project quickly gained momentum, leading to the opening of a larger gallery on Serrano Street.

Just months before its inauguration, the international group further solidified its commitment to Spanish art by announcing the addition of Juan Genovés to its roster.

Madrid's international art scene keeps growing. With a pioneering spirit, Sabrina Amrani — born in France to Algerian heritage — launched her gallery in 2011, showcasing artists from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. "There were already fantastic Spanish gallerists and I did not see a need to replicate what they do. Instead, I wanted to bring something different, something that reflected my background and interests," she explains. This same

### 3 questions to... Carlos Garaicoa

Carlos Garaicoa is a Cuban artist. He currently lives and work in Madrid.

#### How does your studio influence the development of your work?

The space in Carabanchel is essential for working on different scales of work and developing multiple series simultaneously. For 17 years, in my studio in Malasaña, I ran Carlos Garaicoa Open Estudio, an exhibition project where I invited artists from different generations. With my move to Carabanchel, I launched a new initiative, Charlas con Paellas, a series of talks and gatherings where I bring together figures from the art world and beyond — architects, philosophers, art theorists and writers such as Juan Herreros, Fernando Castro, Leonardo Padura and Gerardo Mosquera. This new space is the perfect setting for these projects.

#### What is the spirit in the neighbourhood?

There is a strong sense of collaboration and support, particularly among gallerists and artists working in their studios. I also maintain an ongoing dialogue with local galleries like Sabrina Amrani and Veta, building connections that enrich the creative community.

#### How do you see the neighborhood evolving in the coming years?

The development will be dynamic, with a significant cultural and real estate growth. Some changes will be positive, others less so, but one thing is certain — five years from now, Carabanchel will look very different. That said, it is a neighbourhood with a strong identity, deeply rooted in its history and community. No matter how much it evolves, I hope it will always keep its essence and authenticity.





Carlos Garaicoa

ARR



Ana Coronel de Palma and Sol Abaurrea

Photo Angela Suárez. Courtesy Belmonte Gallery



*3 questions to... Marta Berrera Cuadra*

Marta Berrera Cuadra is Art cataloguer at Ansorena Antiques Auctions.

**How does Ansorena distinguish itself from its competitors?**

Ansorena is a prestigious reference in the art auction world with a deep understanding of the Spanish market. Our specialisation in Spanish art and antiques allows us to offer a service tailored to the interests of our clients, both national and international. We combine our expertise and knowledge of the Spanish collector with a digitalisation strategy that allows us to expand our reach to a global market through international platforms like Invaluable and Drouot, without losing our identity and exclusivity. Ansorena remains strong in a challenging market due to its focus on the quality of its pieces. Our strategy is based on customer loyalty, adapting to new trends and combining tradition and innovation. Since 1845, we have known how to evolve, offering exclusive services that guarantees the trust of collectors and art lovers. Furthermore, our flexibility and adaptability allow us to navigate the sector's challenges by diversifying our sales through digital channels and expanding our international reach.

**How does Ansorena's art gallery relate to the auction side of the business?**

Ansorena's art gallery acts as a bridge between the primary and secondary markets. Through the gallery, we promote and showcase contemporary artists, thus expanding our offering and fostering interaction between collectors, institutions and creators. This synergy between the gallery and the auction house allows emerging and established artists to gain visibility in the market, while complementing our work in the contemporary art sector. Ansorena supports both classic collecting and new artistic currents.

**How does Madrid as an auction scene differ from that in other world capitals?**

The auction market in Madrid stands out for its specialised focus on Spanish art and antiques, as well as for the close relationship between auction houses, collectors and institutions. Unlike cities like London or New York, where the market is broader and more globalised, Madrid maintains a more exclusive and less saturated structure, which allows for greater personalisation in dealings and a closer connection to Spanish artistic and cultural heritage. This uniqueness offers advantages to both sellers and buyers, as access to unique pieces of great historical value is complemented by a highly specialised service and more personalised attention.

desire has also attracted other international galleries to Madrid. Berlin's carlier | gebauer set up a space in Madrid five years ago, while Lisbon's Pedro Cera has also contributed to its growing network of international locations. The Spanish capital has become a magnet for Latin America [see p.30], strengthening cultural symbiosis between

both regions. Mexican gallerist Hilario Galguera opened his Madrid space in 2022, followed by Travesía Cuatro (México), El Apartamento from Havana or Galería La Cometa, originally from Bogotá. The presence of these players also brings a flux of international artists like Teresa Margolles (Mexico) or Carlos Garaicoa (Cuba).

**Hometown galleries**

Alongside international names, Madrid's home galleries continue to thrive. After 15 years at its original location in Lavapiés, Maisterravalbuena expanded to a new, larger venue. Since its founding, the gallery has reinforced its commitment to local talent, championing local artists such as Soledad Sevilla, Antonio Ballester Moreno, Regina de Miguel and, more recently, Jacobo Castellano. Similarly, Elvira González, with 30 years of expertise in European and American art, has long been a defining figure in the city's artistic expansion.

A recent initiative, 1 Mira Madrid, was founded in 2019 by artist and gallery owner Mira Bernabeu, while younger galleries like Zona Incontrolable, founded by Natalia de Pedroso in 2021, are also making their mark. De Pedroso notes that things are going so well that she is opening a second venue near Nuevos Ministerios. "Many artists were asking me to exhibit at Zona Incontrolable, so I came up with the idea of opening La Zona Gallery, an exhibition space to give them visibility." Currently, the gallery showcases "Refugios", a solo exhibition by Iñigo Flores. Young but deeply committed, she is making her presence felt at JUSTMAD 2025 with a double stand for both galleries. "I think there is growing support for contemporary art in Spain in the last decade, though we are also considering expanding into Central Europe." When it comes to Carabanchel, however, she is more skeptical: "I see it as a great hub for artists, with this industrial touch, large studios and a bohemian atmosphere. But for me, a smaller space closer to the city centre works better."

**New galleries, new collectors**

Beyond the growth in gallery spaces, Madrid is also witnessing a shift in its collector base. "We see

## FOCUS

younger collectors — people in their 20s and 30s — who are starting small but are deeply invested in the artists they follow,” say the founders of Galería Belmonte. Amrani echoes this sentiment: “During the pandemic, we saw a new generation emerging, hungry for cultural experiences beyond just looking at art on their phones.” This shift has not only impacted attendance but also the way galleries operate. Hyper House — an experimental space exploring the intersection of physical and digital art — for example is focusing on creating immersive, engaging experiences rather than presenting traditional exhibitions.

Despite its growth, challenges remain. High taxation on art sales in Spain makes it difficult for local galleries to compete with their European counterparts. “In France, VAT on art is 5.5%, while in Spain it is 21%,” Abaurrea and Coronel de Palma observe. “Collectors sometimes prefer to buy from foreign galleries rather than support local ones.” The financial sustainability for galleries and artists continues to be a concern: “It is important to remember that galleries are businesses, not just passion projects. The reality of the market is that only a small percentage of artists can make a living from their work. Supporting the ecosystem means understanding the role of galleries, collector and institutions in keeping all of it alive,” says Amrani.

Despite the challenges, Madrid’s art world remains a place to watch. Whether it is in the heart of the city or in emerging neighbourhoods like Carabanchel, the appetite for contemporary art continues to grow. With museums, collectors, curators and institutions engaging with the city throughout the year, Madrid stands at the forefront of a transformative era for contemporary art.







*Their love is like all loves, Their death is like all deaths* (2023), Manal Al Dawayan

© Manal Al Dawayan. Courtesy Sabrina Amrani Gallery

# 2021

*Counterweight (Plumb line city, 2022)*, Carlos Garaicoa

Courtesy Elba Benítez Gallery, Filomena Soares Gallery, Continua



## THE EVOLVING LATIN AMERICAN ART SCENE IN MADRID

**Ibero-America has fostered some of the most compelling Modern and Contemporary aesthetic positions. The region's artists enjoy an enduring base of support in Madrid.**

There is a growing sentiment in the art market today that we spend too much time talking about identity, especially the topic of where artists happen to be from. Do such designations burden artists or do they give them fertile ground in which to base their practices? It is a complicated question. Luis Valverde Espejo, one of the directors of Espacio Minimo gallery in Madrid, says he does not like to put national labels on artists and their work. "We wish people (would) understand art has no borders and limits," Espejo says. That sentiment is shared to some degree by Elba Benítez, who founded her eponymous gallery in Madrid in 1990. Known and praised for her longstanding support of Latin American art, Benítez has said, "I never wanted to categorise it as a group of 'Latin American' artists. They are artists whose work is positioned on an international level and that dialogues with other artworks made in other parts of the world." Nonetheless, Benítez adds, "it is clear that the locality, that is to say, the place from which the artist draws his or her inspiration, is a primordial factor in understanding his or her artwork."

Therein lies the difficulty with the phrase "art has no borders." It is a lovely, perhaps even progressive idea, but it ignores certain realities. Political, social, geographical and cultural factors help define a place and leave indelible imprints on the minds of the people who live there. How can we even talk about Latin-American-, also known as Ibero-American- art, for example, without acknowledging the effect colonialism has had on visual cultures in that part of the world?

The word Latin refers to the so-called Romance Languages spoken by the Europeans who tyrannised what we now call Latin America. "Ibero" meanwhile, is a reference to the Iberian Peninsula, the site of continental Portugal and most of Spain. (Named after the Ebro River Basin at the southern foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains.) Ibero America describes the 21 States that were once territories of Spain and Portugal, where the Spanish and Portuguese languages are still predominantly spoken. Their history stretches back more than 10,000 years. Europeans have only been part of that timeline for around 500 years. During that relatively short period, European colonisers, most of whom originated from the Iberian Peninsula, attempted (unsuccessfully) to annihilate the ancient history of the people they subjugated. What they could not erase is now typically lumped under the descriptor "pre-Columbian." All of these terms are privileged in favour of the oppressors, not the oppressed.





*Descanso (2024), Iván Argote*  
Courtesy Albarrán Bourdais







It would be toxic optimism to suggest any culture could benefit from being colonised by another. Yet, it would also be dishonest not to acknowledge, and even admire, the artistic innovations and unique cultural legacies that have evolved throughout what we are calling Latin or Ibero America in the wake of colonialism's sins. Ibero America has fostered innumerable unique contemporary visual cultures that are continuing to evolve. Many contemporary Ibero American artists make it clear that ancient aesthetic traditions are still strong, and even prevalent. By blending local indigenous positions with Ibero American Modernism and various current strains of artistic thought, their work expresses a real potential to create new narratives for a postcolonial world.

It is fitting that Madrid has become a locus for arts institutions interested in spotlighting this evolution. It was a starting point, and can now be a transition point, for historic divisions. Acquiescing to the need for labels, Espejo de Espacio Minimo says this discourse is exemplified by how frequently Spanish artists are working in Latin America, and Latin American artists are being embraced in Spain. He mentions a recent confluence of two artists on the gallery's roster: Barcelona-born artist Martí Cormand, who has begun a relationship with Galería Gustavo Arróniz in Ciudad de México, and Argentinian artist Liliana Porter, whose work is currently featured in a retrospective at Museo Casa de la Moneda in Madrid.

Porter's work, in particular, demonstrates the rich contemporary legacy of the Ibero-American / European connection. She blends visual geometries with references to social interactions in ways that reference both Gego and Jesus Rafael Soto. At the same time, Porter embraces myth, figuration,

and dream life, evoking both Frida Kahlo and Fernando Botero. Straddling both abstraction and representation, her work expresses something distinctly contemporary about the historic exchange that occurred between Latin American and Europe in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. As the writer Álvaro de Benito says, it shows "the importance of the geometric and the sensation of volume," as well as the "dichotomy between order and disorder or the sociological trace of collapse."

Madrid is the perfect locale for work such as this to be spotlighted, says Carolina Balcázar, a representative of Albarrán Bourdais gallery in Madrid. "Over the past few years, we have seen a growing interest in Latin American art in Madrid, both from institutions and collectors, she says. The city has historically been an important cultural hub for Latin American artists, but in recent years, there has been a more conscious effort to integrate their work into the broader contemporary art discourse. Museums, collectors and galleries are paying more attention, which has led to greater visibility and recognition for Latin American artists in Spain."

Albarrán Bourdais has been working with Latin American artists for over 20 years, both through the gallery in Madrid and through their Paris-based art production agency, Eva Albarrán & Co. The agency has produced major public art projects across Europe with Colombian artist and filmmaker Iván Argote, Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez (who died in 2019), Chilean artist Iván Navarro, Brazilian artist Henrique Oliveira and Mexican artist Héctor Zamora. Currently, both Argote and Zamora are represented by the gallery.

Born in Bogotá, Colombia in 1983, Argote makes work that is informed by history, politics and the ways

people construct their own subjectivity. He created an outdoor installation for the 2024 Venice Biennale that depicted a fallen statue of Christopher Columbus surrounded by new natural growth. This clear de-colonial statement to contemporary citizens of both Latin American and Europe simultaneously expressed decay and rebirth — an acknowledgement that something novel and fresh is emerging from the wreckage of history.

Zamora was born in Mexico City, Mexico in 1974. His work examines the social and political tensions that arise from how public and private spaces are utilised. In 2024, he staged an elaborate performance at Albarrán Bourdais gallery in Madrid that involved a group of people throwing clay vases throughout the building. They tossed the vases out one window, back in another window, and up to a higher floor. Some vases were destroyed, others remained intact. All were of course relocated. It was a noisy, whimsical commentary on the role art and architecture play in social interactions, and about how cultural heritage is shared, altered, and sometimes destroyed during migration.

The politics underlying those artists' positions are essential to the support they are receiving from Spanish collectors and curators, Balcázar says. "Art is often a reflection of the context of its creation and collectors embrace the depth and meaning behind the works. The relationship between European and Latin American art is rooted in centuries of exchange. While European influences have been dominant for centuries, today Latin American artists are reshaping the conversation."

Further elucidating that point, Elba Benítez offers a comparison of the works of two artists her gallery





*Emergencia* (2024), Héctor Zamora  
Courtoisie Albarrán Bourdais

# ZOOM

represents: Cuban artist Carlos Garaicoa [\[see box p.24\]](#) and Spanish artist Cristina Iglesias. Both create works inspired by architecture. The way they approach this topic, however, is influenced by the particularities of their individual cultures. Garaicoa uses Cuban architectural references to critique failed utopian ideals, and to express frustrations with contemporary urbanity's inability to adequately nurture human society. Iglesias uses European architectural references to examine the relationship between the built and natural worlds. Despite those divergences, both artists are attempting to expose the exaggerated fictionality of contemporary society. Both of their visual worlds seem caught within postcolonial narratives that simultaneously separate cultures from each other, and tie them together.

These artists and their representatives demonstrate that indeed, identities related to place are an inescapable and even integral factor in the work of an artist. Madrid is proving that there are places that are ready and willing to foster this complicated discourse. "Madrid has always been a key point of connection with Latin America, and this cultural bond continues to strengthen," says Balcázar. "There is a continuous exchange of ideas between Latin America and Europe, shaped by history, migration and shared artistic influences. Broadly speaking, there is an interest to reinterpret pre-established narratives through contemporary perspectives: while many Latin American artists engage with themes related to colonial history, identity, migration and the legacy of European influence, many European artists are also increasingly interested in deconstructing Eurocentric views, which creates a rich dialogue."







*Man with axe* (2017), Liliana Porter

Courtesy Espacio Mínimo, Venice Biennale

# NO. 1 FEBRUARY



View of the "Surrealism, art and cinema" exhibition

Courtesy Círculo de Bellas Artes



## TEN ART JOURNEYS IN MADRID

Madrid's art scene goes beyond the masters of the past. As the Art Week is here, the city offers strong curatorial proposals, becoming a lively hub for artists, collectors and art lovers.

### “Tierna es la noche”, Sakiko Nomura. **Japanese delicacy**

Born in Japan in 1967, Sakiko Nomura has become a prominent Japanese photographer of her generation. As she gains international recognition, “Tierna es la noche” marks her first retrospective in Spain. The exhibition presents her most recognised work — black-and-white male nudes, softly illuminated, shadowy settings. It features 142 photographs, including a selection taken in Granada during the summer of 2024. Also on display is a series of catalogues featuring reproductions of all exhibited works. Alongside are essays by the curator of the show, Enrique Juncosa, that offer a deeper insight into Nomura's vision. The exhibition also includes a film directed by the artist, composed of three short films titled *Evocation of the sea / Evocation of the flowers*. Through her intimate and poetic imagery, Nomura explores themes of solitude, sensuality and the fleeting nature of human connection.

#### “Tierna es la noche”

Until 19 May

Mapfre Foundation. 23 plaza de Recoletos  
Centro. Madrid. [www.fundacionmapfre.org](http://www.fundacionmapfre.org)

### “Flamboyant”, Joana Vasconcelos. **Classic + contemporary**

What happens when an 18<sup>th</sup>-century palace meets a wildly contemporary artist? The result is Flamboyant, an immersive encounter where history and modernity collide in an explosion

of colour, extravagance and contradictions. Joana Vasconcelos, one of Portugal's most celebrated contemporary artists, transforms the gardens and grand salons of the Palacio de Liria [see box p.43] into an artscape, introducing a dialogue between aristocracy and artistic expression. The exhibition showcases 100 pieces, from recent works such as *Valkyrie Thyra*, a monumental textile sculpture, to some of her most iconic creations, including *Marilyn* and *Carmen*. For the first time, visitors will have unrestricted access to the palace, making this exhibition an opportunity to experience Vasconcelos' creations within a setting of unparalleled historical significance. “Flamboyant” celebrates art's power to transcend time, transforming this palace into a stage that reshapes the relationship between classical art and architecture and contemporary artistic expression.

#### “Flamboyant”

Until 30 June

Palacio de Liria  
20 calle de la Princesa. Centro  
Madrid. [www.palaciodeliria.com](http://www.palaciodeliria.com)

**Ellas Crean 2025. Tribute to women**

To commemorate International Women's Day on March 8, Madrid hosts a new edition of Ellas Crean, a festival dedicated to female creativity. Organised by the Instituto de la Mujer and the Ministry of Equality, the event celebrates its 21<sup>st</sup> edition this March with a program that brings together established and emerging female voices across cinema, literature, music, theatre, and more. As part of the festival's commitment to increasing the visibility of women in the arts, Prado Museum participates with an original creation by Muriel Romero. Designed to merge sound and movement into a unified artistic experience, her piece *Decimos verdades que parecen mentiras* will be performed by 24 dancers from the Compañía Nacional de Danza in the museum's Sala de las Musas. The work explores the original symbolism of goddesses and the feminine nature of artistic creation, shedding light on the ongoing need to support female artists in a cultural sphere.

**Ellas Crean 2025**

On 3 March  
Prado Museum. Retiro. Madrid  
[www.museodelprado.es](http://www.museodelprado.es)

**“Hundred years of modernity”,  
Joaquín Sorolla. Mediterranean lights**

The exhibition honours Joaquín Sorolla, bringing together 77 paintings that represent different phases of his artistic career and the key themes that defined his work. Many of these pieces rank among his most important and highest-quality creations, with some rarely or never seen before in Spain. The selection includes works from prestigious institutions that hold the finest collections of the artist, such as the

Sorolla Museum and the Sorolla Foundation, the Hispanic Society of America, the Prado Museum, or the Musée d'Orsay, as well as private collections from Spain, the United States and Mexico. Curated by Blanca Pons-Sorolla, Consuelo Luca de Tena and Enrique Varela Agüi, the exhibition highlights the relevance and the modernity of Sorolla's work, reaffirming its enduring significance a century after his passing.

**“Hundred years of modernity”**

Until 20 April  
Royal Collections Gallery  
Calle de Bailén. Centro. Madrid  
[www.galeriadelascoleccionesreales.es](http://www.galeriadelascoleccionesreales.es)

**“Surrealism, art and cinema”,****Max Ernst. A movie to watch**

“A magician of infinite possibilities”, Max Ernst's work is defined by its versatility and ability to transcend the limits of traditional media. This exhibition presents more than 300 pieces, including oil paintings, sculptures, collages, illustrated books, films, and photographs, bringing Ernst's surreal visions to life. Iconic works like *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and *The daughters of Lot*, along with sculptures such as *The man* are on display, showcasing his varied legacy and strong connection with cinema, which also influenced surrealist film in his time and today. Immersive projections and film fragments interact with the artworks, allowing visitors to step into Ernst's revolutionary world and revealing how cinema was a constant and parallel presence throughout his life and career.

**“Surrealism, art and cinema”**

Until 20 June  
Círculo de Bellas Artes  
42 calle de Alcalá. Centro. Madrid  
[www.circulobellasartes.com](http://www.circulobellasartes.com)

**“20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish art: from Picasso to Barceló”. This is Spain!**

For those who appreciate the masters of Spanish art, this exhibition is a must-see! María Cristina Masaveu Peterson Foundation presents a curated selection from its collection, one of Spain's most significant private one, covering over 1,500 artworks. Curated by María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, this free exhibition features works by forty-seven Spanish masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of following a conventional timeline, the show is divided into three thematic sections: the most challenging works to recover, Spain during the *avant-garde* period in Europe and the great masters of Spanish art. The selection includes iconic artists such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí or Miquel Barceló, showcasing the styles and movements that have defined the Spanish artistic legacy.

**“20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish art: from Picasso to Barceló”**

Until 15 July  
Cristina Masaveu Foundation  
6 calle de Alcalá Galiano  
Chamberí. Madrid  
[www.fundacioncristinamasaveu.com](http://www.fundacioncristinamasaveu.com)

**“At-Tāriq”, Tarek Atoui.****Africa sings a song**

Thyssen-Bornemisza museum presents “At-Tāriq”, an immersive exploration into the rural music traditions of North Africa and the Arab world, created by Lebanese artist and composer Tarek Atoui (born in Beirut in 1980). Known for his innovative sound installations, Atoui explores the sensory experiences of sound, often collaborating with diverse communities from North Africa to create craft auditory landscapes. Curated by Daniela Zyman, this exhibition invites





*Painting n°27 (1959), Rafael Canogar*

© Rafael Canogar. Courtesy CentroCentro





The Liria Palace

Courtesy Palacio de Lira



visitors to engage with sound in innovative ways, challenging the conventional perception of listening and hearing. Through intertwined textures and materials, these sound installations become an auditory adventure in which music becomes an act of hospitality itself.

#### “At-Tāriq”

Until 18 May

Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum  
8 plaza del Prado. Centro. Madrid  
[www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

#### “En el aire conmovido...” /Others

Curated by French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, “En el aire conmovido...” at the Reina Sofía explores the political anthropology of emotion. The exhibition’s title, inspired by Federico García Lorca’s poem *Romancero gitano*, evokes collective emotion, showing how emotions transcend the individual, affecting a group, an environment, or a relationship. The exhibition is divided into different sections: *Thoughts* classifies emotions; *Faces and Gestures* focuses on psychoanalysis with works by Rodin, Giacometti, Dalí and Zürn; *Places* explores emotion in physical spaces with works by Ensor, Trouvée, Miró, or Fontana; *Politics* examines how emotion transforms into social power and violence, featuring works by Pasolini, Kollwitz, Brecht, and Goya; and *Childhood* highlights the poetic innocence of childhood. The exhibition is an invitation to contemplate how emotions shape both the personal and collective human experience.

#### “En el aire conmovido...”

Until 17 March

Reina Sofía Museum  
52 calle de Santa Isabel. Centro  
Madrid. [www.museoreinasofia.es](http://www.museoreinasofia.es)

#### “[I]Realities”. Rafael Canogar. Spanish abstraction

As a founding member of the El Paso group, Rafael Canogar has played a crucial role in shaping Spanish abstract art. His exhibition at CentroCentro offers a retrospective of his work, tracing his artistic evolution from abstract expressionism to figurative art and back. The exhibition links nearly sixty works, including paintings, collages, and sculptural reliefs, created between 1949 and 2024. Many of these works come from Canogar’s collection, alongside pieces from private and public collections. Curated by Alfonso de la Torre, the exhibition is divided into five sections, each exploring the artist’s journey between representation and abstraction. The exhibition not only highlights his significant contributions to Spanish art but also underscores his ongoing experimentation and commitment to pushing artistic expression.

#### “[I]Realities [Works 1949-2024]”

Until 15 June

CentroCentro  
1 plaza Cibeles. Retiro. Madrid  
[www.centrocentro.org](http://www.centrocentro.org)

#### “A botanical walk through the Prado”. Prado’s garden

This new exhibition offers a fresh approach to the Prado’s permanent collection through a botanical journey designed by Eduardo Barba Gómez, a gardener and botanical researcher in art. The exhibition highlights how plants play a significant role in the narrative of art history. Thanks to the diversity of Prado’s collections, this approach invites visitors to discover more than 40 botanical species in a selection of 26 works by renowned artists. The itinerary spans a broad temporal range, from Roman sculpture to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting how different eras depict plants, varying in detail and botanical accuracy. It also explores the symbolic meanings of flowers and plants in painting, showing how these elements convey deeper messages and reveal the essence of the represented scenes.

#### “A botanical walk through the Prado”

Until 30 March

Prado Museum. Retiro. Madrid  
[www.museodelprado.es](http://www.museodelprado.es)

### Palacio de Lira

The Liria Palace is one of the most singular private residences in Madrid. Built between 1767 and 1785 by the renowned architect Ventura Rodríguez, the building features a neoclassical style and a rectangular layout.

Unlike other palaces of its time, the Liria Palace was constructed on Madrid’s outskirts, surrounded by gardens. During the Spanish Civil War, it was confiscated, bombed and looted in 1936. Many artworks were destroyed, though the most significant pieces were saved thanks to the efforts of the Republican Board for the Protection of Artistic Heritage. Most of the palace’s painting collection was evacuated alongside works from the Prado Museum and sent to the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva. Other pieces were safeguarded in various locations across Madrid, including the Bank of Spain, the British Embassy and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando.

From the portrait of the 13<sup>th</sup> Duchess of Alba by Goya to masterpieces by Titian and Rubens, the palace is home to Spain’s most extensive private art collection. It also preserves historical documents, such as letters from Christopher Columbus and the will of King Fernando II of Aragon — a unique collection of masterpieces assembled over five centuries by the Dukes of Berwick and Alba.







*Decimos verdades que parecen mentiras (2025)*

Photo Laura San Segundo. Courtesy Prado Museum

# DISCUSSION



Casa de México  
Courtesy Fundación Casa de México



## ALWAYS FLOURISHING

**Housed in the same historic building that holds the Mexican Embassy, the Casa de México promotes Mexican culture in Madrid. Its Director calls it a “dynamic meeting point, where culture, art, gastronomy and business converge and flourish.”**

Located in the Chamberí neighbourhood in the city’s central core, the Fundación Casa de México (FCME) in Spain hosts art exhibitions, educational activities, and musical, cinematic and theatrical shows for the public. It even hosts a gastronomical department that advances appreciation of Mexican cuisine in Spain through public workshops and a restaurant. The story of Casa de México’s founding goes back to 1990, when The General Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship between Mexico and Spain was signed. This treaty was part of an attempt to formalise normal relations between the two countries after centuries of complications following the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire in 1519; subsequent Spanish colonialism; the Mexican War of Independence in 1821; the Spanish Civil War in 1939 and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in 1977. The goal of the foundation is to strengthen connections between Mexico and Spain. For though they share a common linguistic tie and half a millennium of modern history, the ancient roots of the two cultures could not be more distinct.

Ximena Caraza Campos has been the Director General of Fundación Casa de México in Spain since it opened in 2018. She holds a degree in international relations from the Universidad de las Américas (Mexico) and a Master’s degree in Business Administration from the Instituto de Empresa (Spain). She also holds three diplomas in international politics from Matías Romero’s Institute of Diplomatic studies, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mexico). During her tenure as Counselor for Economic Affairs at the Embassy of Mexico in Spain, she was decorated by King Juan Carlos I with the Grand Cross of the

Order of Isabella the Catholic, awarded for outstanding civilian merits in pursuit of closer relations of friendship and cooperation between Spain and the international community. During her tenures as director of the Mexican Tourism Promotion Council for Spain and Portugal and regional director for Europe of the same Council, Spanish tourism to Mexico increased by 40% and the frequency of regular flights between the two countries increased by 43%... merits that earned her the 2005 Innova Award, presented by the President of Mexico.

### **What is the mission of the Casa de México?**

Since its inception six years ago, this foundation was established as a space for the promotion of Mexico’s excellence in Spain through the linkage of civil society, government and the private sector. It is very important to emphasise that, thanks to the generosity of our president and sole patron, Valentín Díez Morodo, it has been possible to create this institution that has the strong purpose of contributing to

the strengthening of the bilateral relationship by promoting greater knowledge of our country in cultural, business, entrepreneurship, tourism, gastronomy and community development issues.

### **How does the foundation fit with the history of cultural exchange between Spain and Latin America?**

One of the most significant achievements of the Casa de México in Spain is to be a reference for the promotion of culture and business between both countries. In the cultural field we connect and build bridges through the artistic expressions of Mexico by offering a rich programme. For us it is very important that all our activities have the best Mexican artists and expressions. For this reason and regarding the exhibitions and interventions that we carry out year after year, we have shown excellence and at the same time we have taken care of the balance between popular, contemporary, modern, novo-Hispanic and pre-Hispanic art in the cultural offer that we provide to the public in Madrid. We have had great exhibitions such as “Diego Rivera, artista universal”, dedicated to the figure of the famous Mexican muralist, “Frida Kahlo, alas para volar”, with a unique sample of the work of the most recognised Mexican artist worldwide, “Toledo ve”, a retrospective on the invaluable figure of Francisco Toledo and “Luchadoras, mujeres en la colección del MUAC”, a powerful exhibition of outstanding works by Mexican women artists from one of the most important contemporary art collections in Latin America, the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

### **What types of programming do you offer?**

Throughout the year we have an extensive program of activities. As far as exhibitions are concerned, there are three main milestones of FCME: the ephemeral installation of flowers on our main facade that welcomes Spring (on 21 March), our already famous “Altar of the Dead” where we receive more than 100,000 people during the 6 weeks (October-November) and the Mexican Nativity scenes (December) that shows our visitors handmade nativity scenes, a must-see during the Christmas season. Closer to now, from 4 March to 8 June, we will present “Éramos felices y no lo sabíamos”, curated by Ixel Rion Lora. The exhibition brings an outstanding selection of works by 28 Mexican and international artists, belonging to the Jumex Collection, one of the most important contemporary art collections in Latin America. In May we will inaugurate a new edition of the “Hecho a Mano México” store, a special sale in which hundreds of pieces of popular art made by Mexican master craftsmen and women are offered to the public; a fair and ethical trade project. Around PhotoEspaña 2025 we will present “Cuando habla la luz. Graciela Iturbide” (from 19 June to 14 September). This exhibition is dedicated to the work of one of the most globally recognised Mexican photographers. It captures the soul of Mexican traditions and landscapes. We will also commemorate the seventh anniversary of FCME and the History of Mesoamerican Women with an exhibition that will show the greatness of native cultures in the artistic field, in collaboration with the Mexican government.

### **Do you work with local institutions, galleries and auction houses?**

We have an excellent relationship with the institutions and cultural centres of Madrid. Starting with a close relationship with the Community and the City Council of Madrid that has opened its doors to us and has given us all the support to make the Chamberí neighbourhood our home. With all this support and our hard work we have achieved the recognition of the cultural industry in Spain. Also, in only 6 years since our opening more than one million visitors have experienced the best of Mexico through some of our activities on visual arts, film, theatre, dance, music, literature, literature, gastronomy, folk art, family, human and business development. This process has allowed us to consolidate our position as a cultural reference. With this support we have launched the very valuable Becas Fundación Casa de México Scholarship Program in alliance with prestigious museums such as the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza or the Reina Sofía; recognised cultural centres and projects such as Centro de Cultura Contemporánea Condeduque, Fundación Contemporánea, La Fábrica and PHotoEspaña; and various educational institutions such as IE Business School, Universidad de Nebrija, Universidad de Diseño y Tecnología, ECAM, Madrid Audiovisual Drama School, among others. This program is designed to create ties of participation with outstanding Mexican professionals specialised in contemporary culture, education and business. Through the consolidation of bilateral professional relationships, it is possible to impact the sustainable growth of organisations in these





Ximena Caraza Campos

ARR







Casa de México

Courtesy Fundación Casa de México

## DISCUSSION

sectors and at the same time provide the opportunity for valuable professional experience to Mexican talent in the most recognised Spanish institutions.

### **What are Casa de México's future ambitions?**

Definitely the main objective is to maintain the position of Casa de México in Spain as that vibrant and dynamic meeting point, where culture, art, gastronomy and business converge and flourish continuously and naturally. My goal as general director is that this institution remains an important reference for cultural and business innovation between Mexico and Spain.

For this reason, Casa de México has always been committed to the great masters of popular art. In this sense, we are working on a program of "Preservation of Craft Techniques," a project that promotes the recognition, appreciation and transmission of craft knowledge to prevent its loss and that, evidently, impacts the welfare of our communities economically and culturally.

In addition to this continuous support to Mexican folk art, we have the objective and the illusion of creating the largest collection in Europe of pieces that represent the main craft techniques from all over Mexico. This collection could travel internationally and thus undoubtedly contribute to the promotion of our culture and the strengthening of Mexico's ties with other countries through culture.

And of course, we intend to be the greatest promoter of international training for Mexican talent. The Fundación Casa de México Scholarship Program could be the greatest generator of training opportunities, since I am convinced that the impact produced in different cultural and business sectors will have an immediate effect on the competitiveness of our country.







Casa de México

Photo Fachada Betsabe. Courtesy Fundación Casa de México

# DATA



*Tatoo IV* (2004), Jaime Plensa  
Sold for €99,400 by Christie's Paris on 10 December 2008

© Christie's Images



## JAUME PLENSA

Known for his monumental public artworks surrounded by water, Jaume Plensa is one of the most recognised contemporary sculptors, with a career that continues to grow.

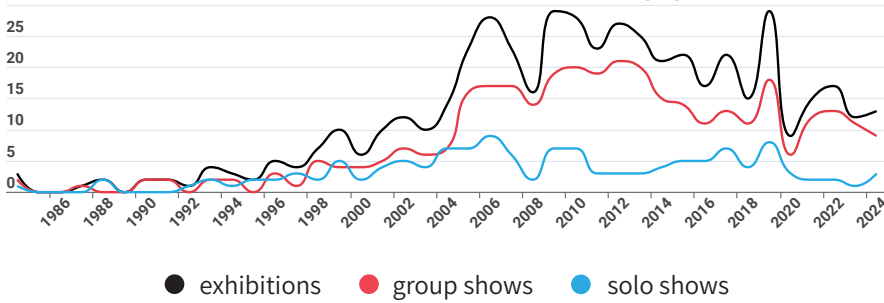
Jaume Plensa has illuminated cities across the globe, with installations in fourteen countries such as Spain, France, Japan, England, Korea, Germany, Canada, the United States and beyond. Increasingly known for his monumental sculptures of serene female figures with delicate features, the Spanish sculptor invites viewers to find stillness in the middle of the chaos of urban life. His sculptures transform public spaces into places for reflection, serving as silent yet powerful reminders of the universal human experience. “From the beginning, I have tried to be in spaces that do not belong to anyone; the street belongs to everyone and no one at the same time,” he shares. His artworks are often composed of letters, symbols and human figures, particularly choosing the head as a summarising element of the body, which he considers “the palace of knowledge”. His practice often revolves around water — an element he uses as a narrative vehicle to explore themes of identity —, language and spirituality. Since his first exhibition in 1980, Plensa has participated in over 500 presentations worldwide, earning recognition in galleries and auctions alike. Today, he has firmly solidified his position in the international art market, with total revenue reaching €14.6 million.

Born on 23 August 1955 in Barcelona, Spain, Jaume Plensa studied at the Llotja School of Art and Design and the Sant Jordi School of Fine Arts in Barcelona. He debuted in the art world in 1980, with his first monographic exhibition at the Joan Miró Foundation in his hometown. He quickly gained international recognition. His first exhibition abroad, “Siméon et les Flamands Roses”, took place in Albi, France, in 1983. This was the

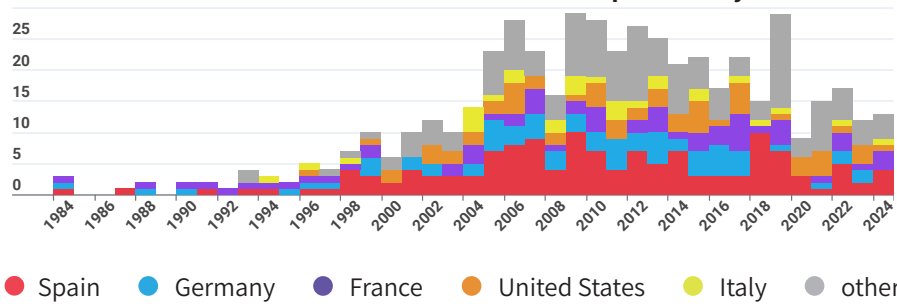
beginning of a worldwide career; since then, he has lived and worked in various cities in Europe, England and the United States, ultimately returning to Barcelona where he is currently based.

As a versatile artist, he has also experimented with etchings, drawing, sound, video and even stage design. Yet, he is most renowned for being a great interpreter of the human figure through his iconic sculptures made of alabaster, bronze, paper, Murano glass or iron. Over the years, his work has been hosted by institutional exhibitions, including the Reina Sofia Museum (Spain, 1987 and 2000), the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon (France, 1988), Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona, 1996) and the Hermitage Museum (Russia, 2019). In 2018, the Reina Sofia and the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) presented a joint retrospective, presenting for the first time works from the 1980s onward. The exhibition, designed as a visit to the artist’s studio, offered insight into the lesser-known side of his practice. It was the first time

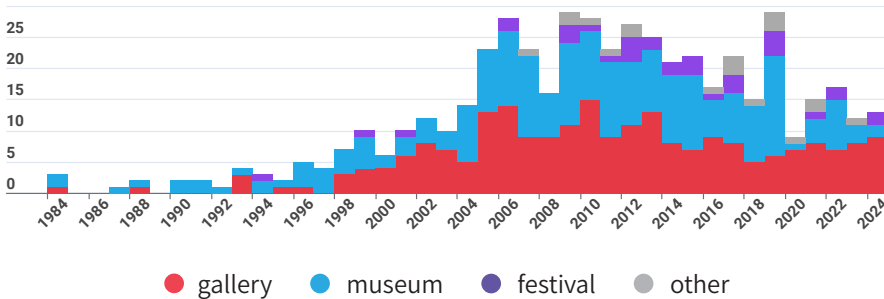
Evolution of the number of exhibitions by type



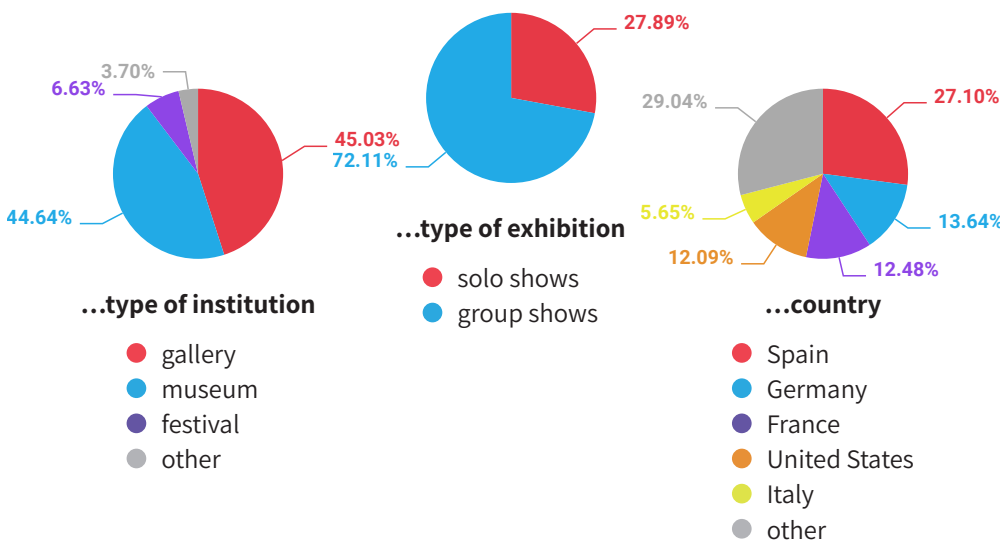
Evolution of the number of exhibitions per country



Evolution of the number of exhibitions by institution type



Distribution of the number of exhibitions by...



an exhibition extended beyond the MACBA's walls, guiding visitors into an open-air space where large-scale sculptures, such as *The heart of trees* and *The heart of rivers*, were displayed. According to Plensa, "It was an exhibition that called for silence, which is more important than shouting in a society full of media noise, messages and information, and allowed us to listen to ourselves again."

Moreover, Plensa combines his creative activity with teaching. He has taught at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris and has been a guest professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has received national and international awards, including the Médaille de chevalier des Arts et des lettres in 1993 and the Government of Catalonia's National Prize for Fine Art in 1997. In 2005, he was invested *Doctor Honoris Causa* by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In Spain, he received the National Prize for Fine Art in 2012 and the Velázquez Prize for the Arts in 2013; he was awarded Honorary Doctorate twice: by Universitat Autònoma, Barcelona (2018) and University Notre Dame (2024).

Rise in exhibitions

Since he started sharing his work in the 1980s, exhibitions dedicated to Jaume Plensa have increased steadily. The artist has participated in over 500 exhibitions in total, with more than 135 solo shows (26.3%). As his homeland, Spain leads in exhibition counting with 140 (27.1%), followed by the United States (30, 22.2%), Germany (70, 13.6%), France (65, 12.5%); Italy and Austria come next with around thirty exhibitions (5.5%) each. His work has been shown in 34 countries, half of which have hosted solo exhibitions. His work's presence is evenly divided between galleries (45%) and institutions (46.4%), but galleries dominate solo presentations at 60%.



*Spillover II* (2009), Jaume Plensa  
Sold for \$587,500 by Christie's New York on 14 May 2021  
© Christie's Images



*Finir en Beauté* (2024), Sophie Calle

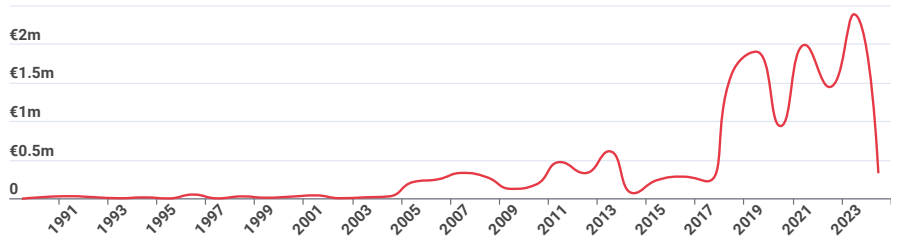
© Sophie Calle. Courtesy Anne Fourès. Rencontres d'Arles

In terms of duration, institutional exhibitions tend to last longer (120 days on average) than gallery shows (55 days). His exhibition activity surged in the 2000s, peaking in 2009 with 29 presentations, including 7 solo shows. Despite the impact and restrictions of COVID-19, his presence in the art world remained strong, with 12 solo shows out of 29 in 2019, though declining to 5 out of 13 in 2023. In 2024, he wrapped up the year with seven international solo exhibitions. After over two decades since his last monographic show in the capital, Jaume Plensa returned to Madrid in October 2024 to inaugurate “Materia Interior” [see box p.59], a retrospective profound exploration of the human condition.

Jaume Plensa enjoys strong support from numerous galleries, mostly located in Europe and the USA, that regularly showcase his work. In 1994, he joined Galerie Lelong, in Paris. Known for helping artists to develop large-scale public art commissions, the gallery has featured him in 29 exhibitions (5.7%), including 21 solo shows (15.6%). He is also represented by German galerie Scheffel since it included him in the exhibition “Blickachsen 2 – Skulpturen im Kurpark” in 1999, with 27 exhibitions (8.2%), including four solo shows. Following closely is Mario Mauroner (Austria) with 19 exhibitions (3.7%), four of which were solo shows; Richard Gray (USA), which, despite hosting 18 exhibitions (3.5%), has presented an impressive 12 solo shows (8.9%); and Swiss Alice Pauli, with 15 exhibitions (2.92%), including two solo shows. In Spain, Galeria Senda in Barcelona stands out, having worked with the artist since the beginning of his career. They are presently hosting a Plensa exhibition, “Murmuri”, where the artist invites the viewer “to listen to what is not said.”

On the institutional front, Spain has played a significant role in showcasing Plensa’s work.

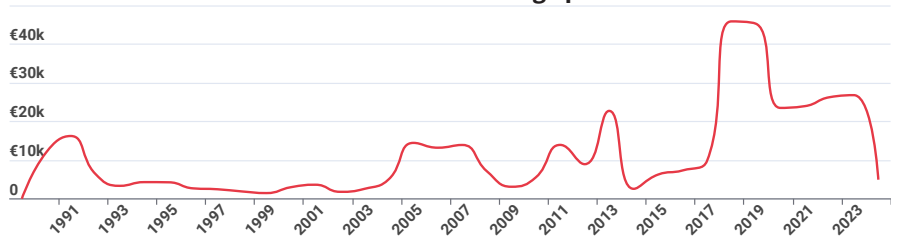
Evolution of the annual turnover



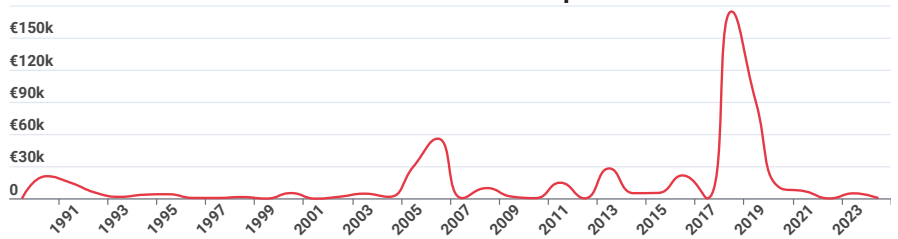
Evolution of the number of lots offered for sale



Evolution of the average price



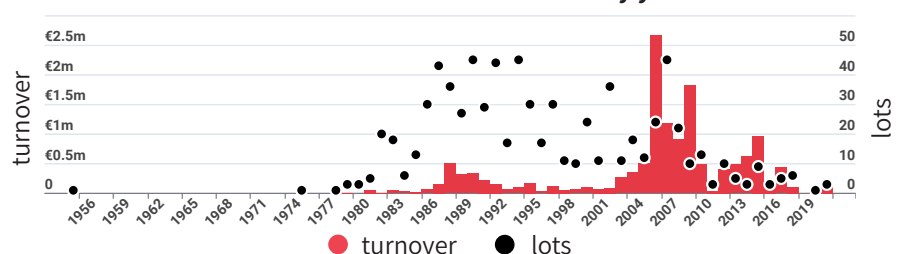
Evolution of the median price



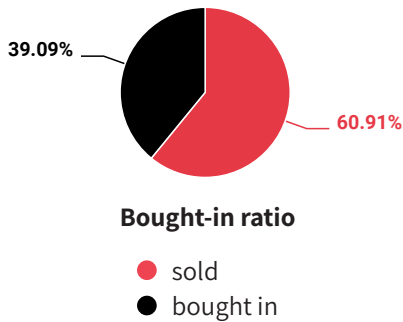
Evolution of the bought-in ratio



Evolution of the number of lots and turnover by year of creation







The Reina Sofía in Madrid and Es Baluard Museum in Palma have each featured him in six exhibitions. However, the Reina Sofía has dedicated two monographic exhibitions to his work — matching the recognition he has received from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Kunsthalle Mannheim and Kunsthalle Göppingen.

### “Materia Interior”

After two decades since the last solo show dedicated to Jaume Plensa in the Spanish capital, Espacio Fundación Telefónica presents “Materia Interior”, featuring fifteen of his most iconic sculptures. The show takes visitors on a journey through over 30 years of artistic evolution, from his conceptual pieces of the 1990s to the more figurative works of his recent years. For the occasion, representative pieces from his career have been selected, including *Glückauf?*, *Red snow* and *Invisibles*, as well as female portraits like *Rui Rui’s words* or *María*. Throughout the exhibition, Plensa explores themes that remain central to his practice: the importance of inner life, cultural diversity, and femininity. “My work is meant to reflect each individual, inviting them to look inward,” he explains. Beyond the exhibition, Plensa’s presence extends into the urban landscape of Madrid. In 2018, *Julia* arrived at Plaza de Colón, located at the heart of the city. Since April 2024, *Iris*, a unique 6-meter-high sculpture created for Distrito Telefónica as part of the company’s centennial celebrations, stands as a symbol of communication and human connection — an enduring testament to the artist’s vision.

#### “Materia Interior”

Until 27 July

Espacio Fundación Telefónica

3 calle de Fuencarral. Centro. Madrid

[espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com](http://espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com)

“To me, art has never been a direction, but a consequence: the will to create silence, to turn each work into an attitude, to give dreams their fundamental role in the growth of minds.”

— *Jaume Plensa*

Biennials took notice of him too. In 2001, he participated in the Bienal de Valencia with “The body of art”, and in 2006 at the Singapore Biennale. He regularly participated in various editions of Glasstress in Venice, held alongside the Biennale, with no fewer than six appearances.

#### Auction market performance

Jaume Plensa’s journey in the auction market began in 1989 when his first work appeared at Drouot, though it was later withdrawn. The first recorded official sale took place in Paris the following year, where *Personnage* (1984), a charcoal drawing, was sold on 9 July for the equivalent of €3,050. By the end of 1990, *Lau III* was sold in Versailles for just over €21,000. His entry into the Spanish auction market came

in 1991 when the British Edmund Peel, founder of Sotheby’s Spain, presented and sold his first painting for nearly €15,000 on 27 November. The same house later facilitated the sale of his first sculpture, *Cabeza de pájaro*, which was sold for €9,055 on 27 April 1992. In London, he debuted at Christie’s in 1994 with *Landscape III*, which fetched £3,000 (€3,835) on 26 October. Across the Atlantic, his first U.S. presentation occurred in 2003 at Phillips with *Nocturn IV* (1990), though it failed to sell. However, three years later, *Week* (1993) was successfully auctioned for \$5,500 (€4,330) at Christie’s on 12 September 2006. By then, Plensa had begun reaching new price milestones. *Base* (1992) and *Lau II* (1990) were the first of his works to pass €50,000, selling

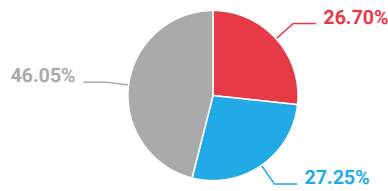
at Artcurial Paris and Cornette de Saint-Cyr, respectively. His market continued to gain momentum, breaking the €100,000 barrier in 2011 when *Tel Aviv Man XVIII* (2007) sold for £100,500 (€112,440) at Phillips London on 27 June.

The artist is very well represented at auction, especially in the United States (€6.6 million of the total turnover), followed by the UK (€3.3 million), France (€2.8 million) and Spain (€1.2 million). In total, out of 875 lots that were offered in fifteen countries, 533 were successfully sold, achieving a 60.9% sell-through ratio. When excluding editions, 595 lots got offered with 375 of them finding buyers, resulting in a slightly higher sell-through ratio of 63.4%.

**Bestsellers**

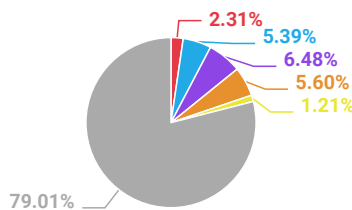
Considered a global star in public sculpture, this medium dominates Jaume Plensa's auction market in revenue and volume. They account for 86.1% of total earnings, generating €12.6 million of total revenue. With 240 works offered in auction houses, 165 have found buyers, achieving an average price of €76,050. But his most sought-after and highest-priced works come from his mid-2000s creations. While the average is €27,330, the works created between 2005 and 2010 tripled that amount, reaching €92,045 of the average price. To date, his highest recorded sale is *Twins I and II* (2009), which sold for \$925,000 (\$1,130,000 with fees) at Phillips New York on 12 November 2019. Another standout sale includes *The Conversation I, II and III* (2006), which fetched \$800,000 (\$998,000 with fees) at Phillips New York on 18 May 2022. As for other mediums, drawings follow in the auction market at 9.1% (€1.3 million), while paintings contribute 3.3% (€477,360). Good news with bidders with lower budget: multiples remain accessible (1.4%) with an average price of €1,325.

His market is shaped by the three major Western auction houses: Christie's, Sotheby's, and Phillips.



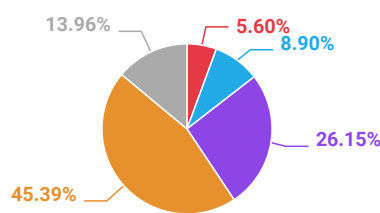
**Number of lots by medium**

● sculpture ● drawing ● other



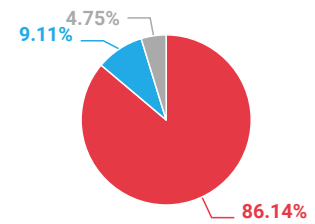
**Number of lots by auction house**

● Phillips ● Sotheby's ● Christie's  
● Artcurial ● Bonhams ● other



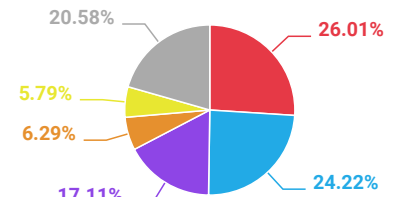
**Number of lots by country**

● United States ● United Kingdom  
● France ● Spain ● other



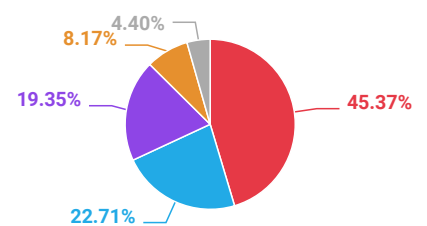
**Turnover by medium**

● sculpture ● drawing ● other



**Turnover by auction house**

● Phillips ● Sotheby's ● Christie's  
● Artcurial ● Bonhams ● other



**Turnover by country**

● United States ● United Kingdom  
● France ● Spain ● other

Art must act as a catalyst, helping us find confidence in ourselves, allowing us to engage with ideas and emotions. Art should offer a message of hope and positivity, reminding us that humanity is more than the violence that surrounds us. — *Jaume Plensa*

Together, they account for 70.5% of the total turnover (€10.3 million). Phillips leads the way with the highest number, achieving €4.3 million (29.2%) from 35 lots (3.9%), with an average price of €132,870. Sotheby's follows closely with €3.5 million (27.6%) from 49 lots (5.4%) and an average price of €88,215 while Christie's, offering 59 lots (6.5%), generates €2.5 million (17.1%) with a slightly lower average

price of €59,335. In total, more than a hundred auction houses (110) have featured works by Jaume Plensa.

More than thirty years of artistic career have led to a rise in his auction turnover, with a significant surge from 2018 (€1.6 million, up from €225,560 the previous year), peaking at €2.4 million in 2023. The number of lots has increased steadily, reaching a high that year with

51 pieces for sale. As the art market recognises him as one of the most prominent figures of contemporary art, Jaume Plensa stays true to his unique vision: a groundbreaking sculptor who carefully sheds light on the beauty and the inner world, inviting the viewers for contemplation and introspection. A respected name in the art world, celebrated by the public, museums, media and collectors alike.





Exhibition view of "Materia Interior"

Courtesy Espacio Fundación Telefónica







Exhibition view of "Materia Interior"

Courtesy Espacio Fundación Telefónica



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

# COLLEGE







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## THE MET PARTNERS WITH GREENART

The departments of Textile Conservation and Scientific Research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art have been testing GREENART's sustainable cleaning products on selected pieces from the museum's textile collection.

“Textiles offer one of the most challenging substrates to work with for an art conservator,” says Dr. Janina Poskrobko, Conservator in Charge of the Department of textile conservation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (The Met). One of the world's premier art museums, The Met manages a permanent collection of around 1.5 million objects. Its Textile conservation department, which Dr. Poskrobko oversees, cares for around 36,000 objects. Most of the challenges involved in preserving and conserving that collection relate to the inherently complex nature of the textile medium, Dr. Poskrobko says.

Textiles exhibit a richness and complexity of weave structures, fibres, textures and surface finishes, and are often diversely decorated with addition of other materials, such as metal thread, glass beads, leather or layers of *appliqué*. Textiles are often delicate and typically unsupported, so they can be a fickle substrate to work on and thus need extra attention during handling. Special care must be taken if there is a patina (or multiple patinas) which needs to be preserved. The textiles' fragility and sensitivity to light and humidity require highly sophisticated and scientifically complex protocols for storage, exhibition as well as conservation treatment. A particular cleaning method, such as gel or solvent might be effective in treating those different surfaces. One of the challenging factors in treating these complex pieces involve opening historic stitches, which makes it difficult to perform treatments from the underside. Maintaining historic integrity

is a critical choice and a tough call for conservators and curators alike that involves many discussions and analyses before a final determination is made.

“What makes a textile conservator's work even more challenging is the fact that textiles are water sensitive materials,” add Giulia Chiostrini, Met's point conservator for the GREENART International coordinating committee. “Each textile conservator must identify the nature of the material to remove before selecting the most suitable cleaning treatment. This identification is based on analysis done at the Met by research scientist Adriana Rizzo, who is collaborating with the team of conservators in the project. The analytical results inform about possible cleaning solutions and their efficacy beyond visual methods.

In the effort to promote sustainability in the field the museum's mission is to improve and use the best green conservation methodologies possible.

European Union's GREENART project was initiated precisely to address this ubiquitous problem. The project's goal is simply stated: to develop and bring to market sustainable products for the conservation of cultural heritage. But to achieve such a simple goal is, like the textile medium, unimaginably complex. Among the biggest complications GREENART faces is the reality that art makers follow no rules. Every item in a particular museum's collection could be unique in its material makeup. So to be successful, GREENART must first consider the wide range of art making materials and processes, and then what products conservators are currently using to clean them. Then they must formulate replacement products that can work in a multitude of circumstances and be easily and quickly modified to adapt to variations encountered in the field. The products GREENART creates must be as good or better than whatever conservators are currently using, or the historically cautious field will be reluctant to adapt. Finally, they must qualify as being "green", a designation for which no universally agreed upon definition exists.

The Met is one of several important international museums that agreed to test GREENART's formulations on the irreplaceable objects in their collections. GREENART's methodology, meanwhile, is not to simply ask these institutions to test whatever formulations the project's scientists are already developing. Rather, they ask the museums to bring them their most complicated conservation problems. GREENART's scientists then send specific formulations engineered for those scenarios for the conservators to test.

As Giulia Chiostri has explained, The Met's conservation team

decided to focus their testing on textiles because even within the already complex realm of art making, the textile medium is one of the most diverse. In addition, there is a philosophical debate that frequently arises in the textile conservation field that renders conservation even more nuanced. The issue is whether conservation or repair of a particular textile might jeopardise the historical or aesthetic value of the work. "We must collaborate with curators and exchange information about the technical aspects of the textile under discussion as well as its cultural context. For example, following our discussion we agree that a wax deposit on an ecclesiastic vestment is representative of the original artwork's function. As a result, the deposit on the vestment will not be removed exemplifying our understanding that the identity of the artefact is of primary importance. So again, the secret is to find solutions that address the complex world of textiles. The nanotechnology approach seems to be promising in achieving both: new and green methodologies."

The Met has been working with GREENART's Work Package #2, the one presenting cleaning nano gels products. Among those, the Met team has tested GREENART's microemulsions, hydrogels as well as organogels. "First of all, just the fact that they can provide new, more sustainable solutions that we can experiment with in different ways was important." "We can add water or different solvents. It is a new paradigm that we are interested in investing our time in, to find more consistent and effective local cleaning solutions that are different from the traditional gel applications." The goal is to find what is going to be the most versatile. "We also want to know what we can treat *in situ*, right in the gallery," she says.

"Conservators are all about making the treatment faster and smoother. So the practicality of using one single gel on a three dimensional object without moving it would be a significant improvement."

Like the project's other museum partners, the Met's conservation team is meanwhile engaged in a back and forth with GREENART's scientists, with conservators providing specific feedback about how well the formulations are performing; and GREENART modifying their formulations so they can be tested again and further improved. "Last December we had the first meeting," Chiostri says. "We discussed our case studies and they gave us some suggestions. We shared our opinions and offered honest assessments about what does and does not work. Our approach is always collaborative with the goal of improving and refining our current practices. Importantly, our feedback is valued — it is a true partnership in the development and testing of new formulations."

"Eventually, says D' Poskrobko. There is still much more testing to be done before these products are available on the market. We are satisfied with the results we have attained to date. The Met, the institution we represent, is committed to the development of the best sustainability solutions and practices and supports this joint endeavour. We are proud to contribute to GREENART's goals and Met's Strategic Plan goals of improving environmental sustainability, in collaboration with a team of renowned scientists and conservators. We have learned a great deal and will continue to expand our knowledge in our association with this exciting research".





D<sup>r</sup> Janina Poskrobko testing Hydrogels on a velvet panel

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art



D' Janina Poskrobko, Giulia Chiostrini and Adriana Rizzo

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art







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