

LEONORA CARRINGTON (1917 - 2011)

(Lancashire, England, 1917 - Mexico City, 2011) was one of the most prominent artists of the Surrealist movement. She produced painting, sculpture, engraving, textiles, jewelry; and wrote dramaturgy, novel, and short story. She associated with the most prominent surrealist artists of her time, including Max Ernst, Remedios Varo, André Breton, and Luis Buñuel.

Carrington produced works that mix autobiography and fiction, the everyday and the magical. Her works is populated by fantastic beings, often intermediary animals that refer us to Celtic mythology, Hermeticism, Kabbalah and fantastic literature.

Carrington grew up surrounded by Celtic myths. They were told to her by her mother Maureen Moorhead, her grandmother and her nanny, all Irish and prone to storytelling. Among other things, they told her of the ancient mythical races of Ireland, with whom the Moorheads said they had lived in the fields and byways.

Her father, Harold Wilde Carrington, was instead a successful businessman, who was fiercely opposed to her daughter's fantasy and artistic interests. What he hoped was that, after debuting with a dance at the luxurious Ritz hotel in London, and being presented at the Royal Court of George V, Leonora would find a husband and a comfortable future among the upper social classes.

Instead, after a dinner in London, Leonora fell in love with Max Ernst, one of the leading artists of the Surrealist movement. In the Paris of the 1930s, she joined the surrealist group of Andre Bretón, and lived with artists such as Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Man Ray, Pablo Picasso, Lee Miller and Luis Buñuel. The surrealists received her as one of their main muses and acclaimed her talent, thus promoting the development of her work.

It was an idyllic period for Leonora Carrington, who, after a year in Paris, escaped to the south of France with Ernst and settled in St Martin-d'Ardèche. The ramps and walls of the house they shared were covered with fantastic creatures, figures whose function was to protect them from the intrusions of Ernst's wife and other surrealists. Ernst teaches her techniques such as frottage, which consists of placing a piece of paper on an object, rubbing it with a pencil, and thus transferring the texture of the object onto the paper. This and other techniques served the surrealists as a starting point to carry out their works.

Carrington and Ernst's romance was interrupted by the advance of World War II. Ernst was arrested, and Leonora fled to Spain with some friends concerned about her deteriorating mental state.

She was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Santander and later her family wanted to transfer her to a second hospital in South Africa. On the way to Lisbon, Leonora managed to escape from her nurse and went to the Mexican embassy where Renato Leduc, a poet and diplomat, married her so that she could escape Europe, the war, and her father's influence.

The couple spent a year in New York, where Carrington met a number of Surrealists. Carrington arrived in Mexico in 1941, and shortly thereafter divorced Leduc amicably. At that time she wrote *Abajo*, a text that collects her experiences in the Santander psychiatric hospital. She lived with several European surrealists who took refuge in Mexico thanks to the generous immigration policies of President Lázaro Cárdenas. Among them were Wolfgang Paalen and Alice Rahon, José and Kati Horna, Benjamin Peret and Remedios Varo, who will be her close friend. She also became friends with patron Edward James, who was one of her biggest collectors. She then related to Mexican artists, including Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and writers such as Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz.

In Mexico, Carrington fully developed her artistic potential and raised a family with the Hungarian photographer Emir 'Chiki' Weisz, with whom she had two children, Pablo and Gabriel. Except for a few years in New York and Chicago, Carrington spent the rest of her life in Mexico. In the 1970s, Carrington joined the feminist movement in Mexico and produced the poster 'Mujeres Conciencia'. In her last years, she devoted herself mainly to sculpture. She passed at the age of 94 in 2011.

Council Leonora Carrington