Leonora Carrington OBE (6 April 1917 – 25 May 2011) was a English-born Mexican artist, surrealist painter, and novelist. She lived most of her adult life in Mexico City, and was one of the last surviving participants in the Surrealist movement of the 1930s. Leonora Carrington was also a founding member of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Mexico during the 1970s.

EARLY LIFE

Carrington was born in Clayton Green, Chorley, Lancashire, England, UK. Her father was a wealthy textile manufacturer, and her mother, Maureen (née Moorhead), was Irish. She had three brothers: Patrick, Gerald, and Arthur. She returned to England and was presented at Court, but according to her, she brought a copy of Aldous Huxley’s *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) to read instead. In 1935, she attended the Chelsea School of Art in London for one year, at the age of ten, she saw her first Surrealist painting in a Left Bank gallery and later met many Surrealists, including Paul Éluard. Her father opposed her career as an artist, but her mother encouraged her. She spent time in Florence, where she attended Mrs Penrose’s Academy of Art. In 1927, at
ASSOCIATION WITH MAX ERNST

In 1936, Leonora saw the work of the German surrealist Max Ernst at the International Surrealist Exhibition in London and was attracted to the Surrealist artist before she even met him. In 1937, Carrington met Ernst at a party held in London. The artists bonded and returned together to Paris, where Ernst promptly separated from his wife. In 1938, leaving Paris, they settled in Saint Martin d’Ardèche in southern France. The new couple collaborated and supported each other’s artistic development. The two artists created sculptures of guardian animals (Ernst created his birds and Carrington created a plaster horse head) to decorate their home in Saint Martin d’Ardèche. In 1939, Carrington painted a portrait of Max Ernst, as a tribute to their relationship.\[7\]

With the outbreak of World War II, Ernst, who was German, was arrested by the French authorities for being a “hostile alien”. With the intercession of Paul Éluard, and other friends, including the American journalist Varian Fry, he was discharged a few weeks later.\[7\]

Soon after the Nazis invaded France, Ernst was arrested again, this time by the Gestapo, because his art was considered by the Nazis to be “degenerate”. He managed to escape and, leaving Carrington behind, fled to America with the help of Peggy Guggenheim, who was a sponsor of the arts.\[12\]

After Ernst’s arrest, Carrington was devastated and fled to Spain. Paralyzing anxiety and growing delusions culminated in a final breakdown at the British Embassy in Madrid. Her parents intervened and had her hospitalized. She was given “convulsive therapy” and was treated with the drugs cardiazol, a powerful anxiolytic drug (eventually banned by some authorities, including the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Luminal, a barbiturate.\[13\]

After being released into the care of a nurse who took her to Lisbon, Carrington ran away and sought refuge in the Mexican Embassy. Meanwhile, Ernst had married Peggy Guggenheim in New York in 1941. That marriage ended a few years later but Ernst and Carrington were unable to resume their relationship. Three years after being released from the asylum and with the encouragement of André Breton,\[14\] Carrington wrote about her psychotic experience in her novel Down Below.\[15\] She also created art to depict her experience, such as her Portrait of Dr. Morales and Map of Down Below.\[15\]

MEXICO

Following the escape to Lisbon, Carrington arranged passage out of Europe with Renato Leduc, a Mexican Ambassador. Leduc was a friend of Pablo Picasso, and agreed to marry Carrington just for the travel arrangements. Events from this period continued to inform her work. She lived and worked in Mexico after spending part of the 1960s in New York City.\[9\] While in Mexico, she was asked, in 1963, to create a mural which she named El Mundo Magico de los Mayas,\[16\] and which was influenced by folk stories from the region.\[17\] The mural is now located in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City.

Carrington designed Mujeres consciencia (1973), a poster, for the Women’s Liberation movement in Mexico, depicting a ‘new eve’.\[18\] Carrington, personally and primarily focused on psychic freedom, understood that such freedom could not be achieved until political freedom is also accomplished.\[3\] Through these beliefs Carrington understood that “greater cooperation and sharing of knowledge between politically active women in Mexico and North America” was important for emancipation.\[9\] Carrington’s political commitment led to her winning the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Women’s Caucus for Art convention in New York in 1986.\[9\]

“I didn’t have time to be anyone’s muse... I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist.”

— Leonora Carrington\[19\]

SECOND MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

She later married Imre Weisz (also known as Emerico, or by the nickname “Cziki”), a photographer and the darkroom manager for Robert Capa during the Spanish Civil War. They had two sons: Gabriel, an intellectual and a poet, and Pablo, a doctor and Surrealist artist.\[20\]

DEATH

Leonora Carrington died on 25 May 2011, aged 94, in a hospital in Mexico City, as a result of complications arising from pneumonia.\[21\]

THEMES AND MAJOR WORKS

“I painted for myself...I never believed anyone would exhibit or buy my work.”\[3\]
Leonora Carrington was not interested in the writings of Sigmund Freud, as were other Surrealists in the movement. She instead focused on magical realism and alchemy and used autobiographical detail and symbolism as the subjects of her paintings. Carrington was interested in presenting female sexuality as she experienced it rather than as that of male surrealists’ characterization of female sexuality.[22] Carrington’s work of the 1940s is focused on the underlying theme of women’s role in the creative process.[23]

In Self-Portrait (1938), Carrington offers her own interpretation of female sexuality by looking toward her own sexual reality rather than theorizing on the subject, as was custom by other Surrealists in the movement. Carrington’s move away from the characterization of female sexuality subverted the traditional male role of the Surrealist movement. Self-Portrait (1938) also offers insight into Carrington’s interest in the ‘alchemical transformation of matter and her response to the Surrealist cult of desire as a source of creative inspiration.’[22] The hyena depicted in Self-Portrait (1938) joins both male and female into a whole, metaphoric of the worlds of the night and the dream.[23]

The first important exhibition of her work appeared in 1947, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York City. Carrington was invited to show her work in an international exhibition of Surrealism, where she was the only female English professional painter. She became a celebrity almost overnight. In Mexico, she authored and successfully published several books.[24]

The first major exhibition of her work in UK for twenty years took place at Chichester's Pallant House Gallery, West Sussex, from 17 June to 12 September 2010, as part of a season of major international exhibitions called Surreal Friends that celebrated women’s role in the Surrealist movement. Her work was exhibited alongside pieces by her close friends, the Spanish painter Remedios Varo (1906–1963) and the Hungarian photographer Kati Horna (1912–2000).

In 2013 Carrington was the subject of a major retrospective at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Titled The Celtic Surrealist, it was curated by Sean Kissane and examined Carrington's Irish background to illuminate many cultural, political and mythological themes present in her work.[26]

Carrington’s art often depicts horses, as in her Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse) and the painting The Horses of Lord Candlestick.[7] Her fascination with drawing horses began in her childhood.[7] Horses appear in her writings as well. In her first published short story, “The House of Fear”, Carrington portrays a horse in the role of a psychic guide to a young heroine.[27] In 1935, Carrington's first essay, “Jezzamathematics or Introduction to the Wonderful Process of Painting”, was published before her story “The Seventh Horse”: “The Seventh Horse” Carrington often used codes of words to dictate interpretation in her artwork. “Candlestick” is a code that she commonly used to represent her family, and the word “lord” for her father.[7]

In 2005, Christie’s auctioned Carrington’s Juggler (El Juglar),[28] and the realised price was US$713,000, setting a new record for the highest price paid at auction for a living surrealist painter. Carrington painted portraits of the telenovela actor Enrique Álvarez Félix,[29][30] son of actress María Félix, a friend of Carrington's first husband.

In 2015, Leonara Carrington was honoured through a Google doodle commemorating her 98th birthday. The doodle was based on her painting, How Doth the Little Crocodile, drawn in surrealist style.[31] The painting was inspired by a poem in Lewis Carroll’s Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and this painting was eventually turned into Cocodrilo located on Paseo de la Reforma.[32]

**EXHIBITIONS**

2015: Leonora Carrington: Tate Liverpool, 6 March – 31 May 2015


2011: Leonora Carrington & Tilly Losch, Viktor Wynd Fine Art Inc[34]

2008: Talismanic Lens, Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco, CA (solo)[35]

2007: Surrealism: Dreams on Canvas, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY[36]

2003: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and 20th Century Mexican Art: The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL[37]

1999: Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA[38]

Surrealism: Two Private Eyes/The Nesuhi Ertegun and Daniel Filipacchi Collections, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY[33]

1993: Regards des Femmes, Musée d'Art Moderne, Lieja, France

Sujeto-Objeto, Museo Regional de Guanajuato, Guanajuato y Museo de Monterrey, Moneterrey, Mexico[33]

1991: Galería de Arte del Auropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de México, Mexico City, Mexico (solo)[38]

1989: Museo Nacional de la Estampa, INBA, Mexico (solo)[39]

1987: Brewster Gallery, New York, NY (solo)[33]

1986: Surrealism: A State of Mind, Universidad de California, Santa Barbara, CA[40]
Library resources about
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By Leonora Carrington
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BOOKS

BY CARRINGTON

La Maison de la Peur H. Parisot, 1938 – with illustrations by Max Ernst
Une chemise de nuit de flanelle Libr. Les Pas Perdus, 1951
El Mundo Mágico de Los Mayas Museo Nacional de Antropologia, 1964 – illustrated by Leonora Carrington
The Oval Lady: Surreal Stories (Capra Press, 1975)[35]
The Stone Door (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977)[37]
The Seventh Horse and Other Tales (Dutton, 1988)[38]
Down Below (Dutton, 1988)[39]

FEATURING CARRINGTON

Poniatowska, Elena. Lilus Kikus and Other Stories (1954)
Jodorowsky, Alejandro. The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky (2008)[40]
Poniatowska, Elena. Leonora (2011)[41]
Kissane Sean. Leonora Carrington The Celtic Surrealist (2013)[42]

ARTWORK BY CARRINGTON

Portrait of Max Ernst, 1939 (private collection)
The Horses of Lord Candlestick, 1938 (private collection)
The Meal of Lord Candlestick, 1938
The Inn of the Dawn Horse (Self-Portrait), 1939 (first major Surrealist work) Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1947, Museo del Prado, Madrid

SEE ALSO

Women Surrealists

NOTES

Chadwick, Whitney. Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement(Thames and Hudson, New York, 1985)
Moorhead, Joanna. Another world (article about Carrington), Daily Telegraph (24 April 2010)

### Past and present members of the Salón de la Plástica Mexicana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gilberto Aceves Navarro</td>
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<td>Luis Acosta</td>
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<td>Osvaldo Barra Cunningham</td>
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<td>Sofia Bassi</td>
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Artists

Jesús Gutiérrez Martínez
Olivia Guzmán
José Hernández Delgadillo
Desiderio Hernández Xochiltzotzin
Miguel Hernández Urbán
Cuauhtémoc Hernández Landa
Víctor Manuel Hernández Castillo
Manuel Herrera Cartalla
Elena Huerta Muzquiz
Rodolfo Hurtado
Francisco Icaza
Xavier Iñíguez
María Izquierdo
Tania Janco
Carlos Jaurena
Abel Jiménez
Sarah Jiménez
Alberto Jiménez Quinto
Heriberto Juárez
Juan Carlos Juárez Arreola
Carlos Jurado
Jazzamoart
Frida Kahlo
James Key
Macrina Krauss
Pablo Kubli
María Lagunes
Carlos Lamothe Silva
Carmen Lang Merino
Marisa Lara
Gerardo Lartigue
Paulina Lavista
Agustín Lazo
Rina Lazo
Paula Lazos
Fernando Leal
Miguel Ledezma Campos
Alfredo León Gil
Rosa Lie Johansson
Armando López Becerra
Julia López
Nacho López
Amador Lugo
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Leorón Maciel
Maridel Macluf
| Elsa Madrigal | Francisco Magallán |
| Maka | Tosia Malamud |
| Salvador Manzano | Maria Luisa Martín |
| Francisco Marín | Arturo Márquez |
| Ofelia Márquez Huitzil | Mary Martín |
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| Patricia Mejía Contreras | Deyanira África Melo |
| Eliana Menassé | Olga Méndez |
| Leopoldo Méndez | Antonio Mendoza |
| Carlos Mérida | Oscar Merino |
| Rafael Merino | Benito Messeguer |
| Adolfo Mexiac | Guillermo Meza |
| Alfonso Michel | Flor Minor |
| Raúl Monje Poo | José Monjaraz |
| Roberto Montenegro | Gustavo Montoya |
| Francisco Mora | Vicente Jesús Montes |
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Uriel Parker | Mariano Paredes |
Tomás Parra | Héctor Pérez Cruz |
Antonio Peláez | Aida Petit-Jean |
Feliciano Peña | Ángel Pichardo |
Luz María Pizá Núñez | Salvador Pizarro |
Enrique Pontones | Pedro Preux |
Antonio Pujol | Alejandro Quijano |
Yolanda Quijano | Francisco Quintanar |
Adolfo Quinteros | Fanny Rabel |
Leonora Carrington OBE (6 April 1917 – 25 May 2011) was an English-born Mexican artist, surrealist painter, and novelist. She lived most of her adult life in Mexico City, and was one of the last surviving participants in the Surrealist movement of the 1930s. Carrington was also a founding member of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Mexico during the 1970s. Carrington was born in Clayton Green, Chorley, Lancashire, England. Leonora Carrington was an English-born Mexican artist and painter. She was also a noted novelist. She emerged as a prominent figure during the Surrealist movement of the 1930s. Her painting ‘Juggler’ was auctioned for US$713,000 in 2005, which was a record for a living surrealist painter. Image Credit. http://www.lookwhosturning.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/leonora-carrington-ca00.jpg. Image Credit. http://www.erzebetbarthold.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/leonoracarington.jpg.