

Doctoral thesis

**“*Confinamiento* and the creative activities of the artist
experiencing it in Comunidad Valenciana, Spain”**

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Introduction

The aim of my dissertation was to I researched the work of selected artists of the younger generation who were directly affected by the *confinamiento*, and were significantly associated with the Comunidad Valenciana at the time. I will also present my artistic work, which is connected with this period of time, and pandemic as such. I consider the time of the pandemic and the restrictions of the *confinamiento*, introduced in Spain in March 2020, due to the epidemiological emergency, as potentially shaping changes in artists' approaches to art and the creation of their works, as well as their way of thinking and perceiving the world. In the study, I will focus on artists of the young generation as those whose reality, experienced before the moment of the pandemic outbreak, has changed the most. I chose six artists to show the varied ways in which they experienced the *confinamiento* and its impact on their art and artistic creation. Among the artists' attitudes, I distinguished: a thematic shift from describing their own experiences to referring to the situation of others; a shift away from the style developed in figurative creation to abstract exploration; a focus on the thematic area of recovery; a need for contact expressed by art installations left in spaces shared with neighbours; a shift away from a perfectionist approach and a rejection of frames in drawing; reaching a turning point and directing professional work into the area of art of animation, through the animated description of the current crisis situation. The artists I researched, used a variety of means of expression in their work, such as painting, animation, graphic arts, sculpture and installation. The subject matter of the artistic part of my dissertation touches on the dialogue and observation of the change in people's behavior during the *confinamiento*, the emotions of those experiencing the pandemic, as well as loneliness and death. I made the artworks in the graphic techniques, drawing and painting, and ceramics. The graphic techniques I used were: multi-matrix color linocut, reduced matrix colour linocut, dry point on packaging and acetate substrates, and photopolymer film on re-use matrixes in the spirit of closed circulation. In the research, I used a case study, source analysis, survey method and observation.

I

What is *confinamiento* and what research methods were used in the dissertation

1. Defining the framework and characteristics of *confinamiento*

Confinamiento means, in Spanish, “isolation”¹, “confinement in a limited or enclosed place”². In 2020 it took on a new meaning, becoming part of the life of the population living in Spain. With this word’s appearance in the reality, the rhythm of life of the coming months was defined for those in Spain. The word *confinamiento* henceforth began to describe the current situation of collective confinement in residential houses³. In my dissertation, I will use this word to describe a specific time frame within Spain. Later in this paragraph I will explain the dynamics of the *confinamiento* period. I will also indicate why I am focusing on the area of the Comunidad Valenciana and Spain in my dissertation.

The timeframe of the *confinamiento*

The period to which my dissertation relates covers, on Spanish territory, the days from 14.03.2020, to 21.06.2020, as these dates mark the time from the declaration to the end of the state of emergency in Spain⁴. In particular, I am interested in the part of this period contained between 14.03.2020 and 02.05.2020.

Characteristics of the *confinamiento*

¹ „*Confinar*, *confinar* [konfiˈnar] V. trans. *To isolate*”:

<https://es.pons.com/traducci%C3%B3n/esp%C3%A1nol-polaco/confinar>, access 10.10.2022, 00:05

² “m. Encierro de una persona o animal en un sitio limitado o cerrado”:

<https://www.wordreference.com/definicion/confinamiento>, access 10.10.2022, 00:06

³ *Confinamiento por la pandemia de COVID-19*, Wikipedia:

https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confinamiento_por_la_pandemia_de_COVID-19, access 20.07.2022, 00:25

⁴ *Real Decreto 463/2020*, Boletín Oficial del Estado nr 67:

<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2020/03/14/463/con>, access 11.10.2022, 15:20.

Spain was one of the countries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic⁵. On 14.03.2022, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared a state of alert in Spain⁶, which came into effect on 15.03.2022, initially for a period of fifteen days⁷. With it, the *confinamiento* began. Pursuant to the second article of Real Decreto 463/2020 of 14.03.2020, the validity of the state of alert was declared throughout Spain. In accordance with the first paragraph of the tenth article of Real Decreto 463/2020 of 14 March 2020, the public opening of premises and retail outlets was suspended. The only exceptions to the suspension were places retailing food and beverages, first necessity products, hygiene products, pet food, technological and telecommunications equipment, motor fuel, as well as health, pharmaceutical, veterinary, optical, orthopaedic establishments, laundries, dry cleaners, kiosks, and places engaged in online, telephone or correspondence commerce. In each of these cases, however, if an epidemic risk was created, the operation of these establishments was also suspended⁸. Indeed, while these restrictions were in force, the sanitary regime was observed. This is confirmed by research by The Institute for Human(ity)-Centric Artificial Intelligence ELLIS Unit Alicante Foundation⁹. This was also felt from the experience of being in Valencia during the *confinamiento* (insofar as it is possible to speak of being in Valencia, being realistically within several neighbouring streets leading from home to shop and pharmacy). Grocery shops set a maximum number of people allowed inside at any one time. As a result, there were queues of people in front of the shops, waiting for others to leave, so that they could enter. Those waiting were also lined up in a queue with a minimum safe distance of one metre between each person, and in order to respect this distance, tape was often spread on the pavements to indicate where to stand, or lines were painted with paint. Inside the supermarkets, care was taken to ensure that shoppers moved one at a time and did not meet for conversation. In Valencia, for a period of several weeks, cashiers stood in front of the entrances to supermarkets and had disinfectant liquid available for the hands of each person entering so that no one missed this step. It was also a condition of entering the shop to wear the transparent gloves

⁵ Oliver Nuria, PhD, ING; Barber Xavier, BSc, MSc, Prof Dr; Roomp Kirsten, BSc, PhD; Roomp Kristof, *Assessing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Spain: Large-Scale, Online, Self-Reported Population Survey*, JOURNAL OF MEDICAL INTERNET RESEARCH 2020 | vol. 22 | iss. 9 | e21319 | p. 1

⁶ *Real Decreto 463/2020*, Boletín Oficial del Estado nr 67.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Oliver Nuria, PhD, ING; Barber Xavier, BSc, MSc, Prof Dr; Roomp Kirsten, BSc, PhD; Roomp Kristof, *Assessing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Spain: Large-Scale, Online, Self-Reported Population Survey*, p. 1

⁹ *Real Decreto, 463/2020. Artículo 10.* , Boletín Oficial del Estado nr 67.

made of disposable film provided by the supermarket or, if they were not in stock, thin plastic bags. The second point of Article Ten clarified that the sale of groceries and necessities was allowed in the shops. At the same time, it banned the consumption of these on the premises. It also announced the control of the observance of a minimum distance of 1 metre between persons in the shop, including its employees. Further sections of the decree suspended the opening to the public of: museums, libraries, archives, monuments, premises with shows and sports activities, and cancelled parades and festivals. The operation of restaurants was restricted to home delivery, with no possibility for customers to collect their order in person¹⁰.

Leaving the house was therefore only possible to go to one of the aforementioned shops to purchase products to meet the basic needs of life, to go to a health or veterinary centre, or to walk the dog outside. Those working in the aforementioned centres, which provide the public with access to food, medical care, water, energy, etc., used a special authorisation to get to work.

Dynamics

The dynamics of the *confinamiento* followed a pattern of sustained extension over time. Initially, the period of *confinamiento* in the flats was to be two weeks and one day. It was quickly extended for another short period of time, and then again and again, for further two-week portions. In this way, in the apparent prospect of a rapid return to the reality known before, a total of about three months elapsed, three months and eight days to be precise¹¹, of which the episode from 14.03.2020 to 01.05.2020 inclusive, was the time of the strong restrictions described above. The last phases of the *desconfinamiento*, or “coming out of confinement”, were characterised by a gradual, slow, delineation of the areas of life where changes were taking place.

02.05.2020 is the day of the first legal walk in Valencia (within a limited distance of one kilometre from the house and a different time slot for different age groups, and with a maximum length of one hour once a day, but with the possibility of walking accompanied by another person), in order to take exercise and not for the basic needs of life. The weeks

¹⁰ *Real Decreto, 463/2020. Artículo 10.* , Boletín Oficial del Estado nr 67.

¹¹ Wikipedia, *Confinamiento por la pandemia de COVID-19 en España*: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confinamiento_por_la_pandemia_de_COVID-19_en_Espa%C3%B1a, access 12.10.2022, 15:00.

that followed were designated as fase 2, fase 1, fase 0, until 21.06.2020, and during these weeks the number of freedoms and hourly intervals allowing people to be outside the flats increased. Elements from the later point of view specific to the pandemic, such as wearing a mask outdoors, also in the heat of summer, evening to morning hours during which one must remain in the dwelling or use a special document to allow movement, hours during which one must leave the beach, the minimum spacing between beachgoers, will have continued to accompany those staying in the Comunidad Valenciana until the end of 2020 and for several months thereafter, with varying intensity and focus on some or all of the activities mentioned, as well as many others, depending on location and time.

After the *confinamiento*, there was a time still full of restrictions, but no longer so acutely concerning the mobility of the individual. There was a period when it was possible to observe, for example in the city of Benidorm, a queue of people lined up at the point of the volunteer who coordinated the rotation of beachgoers. The beach itself was divided by stakes and ropes into square areas and 'corridors' between them. Each square area could accommodate four people. For many months it was mandatory to wear a mask outside, even in temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius.

The phases of *desconfinamiento*, or “coming out of confinement”, varied somewhat in date range across the different autonomous communities of Spain.

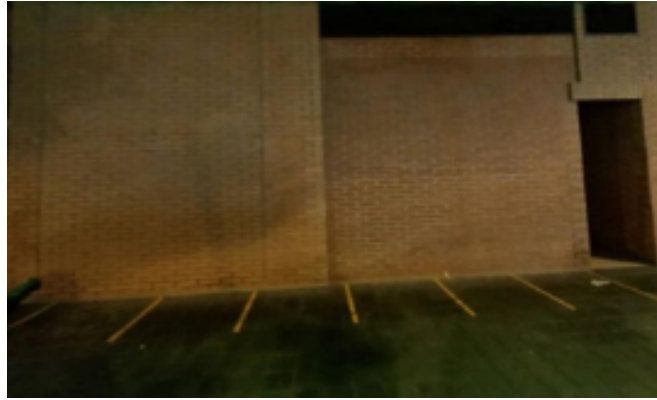


Fig.I.1, Lines painted on the pavement, in order for the people waiting in the queue to maintain the social distance while waiting for the entrance. Valencia, Spain. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska.



Fig.I.1, Messages on screens of Universitat Politecnica de Valencia campus, saying, in order above: "Covid-19: now depends on you", "Wash your hands frequently", "Always use a mask", "Maintain the distance of 1,5m", "UPV thanks you". Photographs by Barbara Leszczyńska.

The choice of the Comunidad Valenciana as the main geographical area of focus of my research

The Comunidad Valenciana is the area on which I mainly focus my research for three reasons.

Firstly, the degree of restriction of mobility and the use of cultural and arts facilities, was very high in that place, as in most of the Spanish territory. For many people there, it was the first time in their lives that they had experienced such an event, additionally lasting such a long period of time. The nature of the restrictions and the situation are difficult to compare to those in Poland, for example, because of the huge difference between the intensity of the restrictions in these countries.

Secondly, I aim to limit the artists whose changes and works I analyse to those living in the Comunidad Valenciana at the time and sometimes neighbouring areas such as Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia, as these places had similar dynamics of the *desconfinamiento* phases. I do not describe the experiences of those who were in Madrid or Barcelona because of the dramatically higher incidence of disease in these cities during the initial phase of the pandemic in Spain. I also do not examine the situation in the island territories that are part of Spain because their mobility situation is very different due to their location. Travelling to another area of Spain from an island territory involves a greater organisational commitment than travelling from a place connected to the destination by land. Also, the *desconfinamiento* phases of these areas do not coincide with the dates applicable in the Comunidad Valenciana.

Thirdly, I was in Valencia at the time of the *confinamiento* and its time was an experience I had never had before.

*At the same time, at this point, I must point out that I chose to include in the study a person who was not in the Comunidad Valenciana - Laura Palau. This is motivated by the reason why Laura Palau was not in the Comunidad Valenciana where she is from - despite trying, she could not return there due to restrictions. So while the Comunidad Valenciana closed in, she was closed out.

2. Research methodology and definitions

The purpose of my study is to describe changes in the work of selected artists who feel that the *confinamiento* period is relevant to their artistic creation. I have designated the Comunidad Valenciana in Spain as the study area. I made the choice based on the intensity of the restrictions imposed on society due to the pandemic, and because of my own experience of participating in the *confinamiento* in the Comunidad Valenciana in Spain. My total attention in the study is directed towards collecting qualitative data on the ways in which the selected artists experience the *confinamiento* and how this time affects their work and perception of the world.

Hence, in the research I have carried out, I have resorted to the research methods of case study, observation, source analysis, as well as the survey method used as a selection tool to allow me to find people who meet the criteria needed to conduct a study among them. I also carried out a questionnaire survey which formed the basis of some of the artwork I produced, and which forms part of my PhD. The case study allowed me to analyse the creative activities of people declaring themselves to be those for whom the period of *confinamiento* was a period of change in the creative methods used, the subject matter taken up or the focus of artistic activity. As part of this method, I met with the artists, listened to their description of the works they made and their description of their experiences, looked at examples of art created by them in different years, and photographed the materials presented to me. I documented the conversations with the artists in the research paper, and in selected cases I also recorded them on digital media. In the research, I also referred to sources - I analysed the artistic documentation and the description of the output presented on the artists' websites, I referred to articles about them and interviews with them. I also analysed art exhibitions and materials about them. I used the questionnaire method to pre-select the research. In the survey, I collected primary data. Based on the sources indicated to me in the questionnaire, I also verified artistic achievements and activities. The aim of the survey is to broaden the knowledge of those artists who perceive the *confinamiento* as a phenomenon that influences them, hence I have only selected artists who declare to belong to this group for the study. It is not my aim to show that the *confinamiento* has shaped new modes of creative action and changed the subject matter of the work of all artists who have experienced it.

For a large part of the population of the Comunidad Valenciana, Murcia and Castilla-La Mancha, especially the young and early-middle-aged, the *confinamiento* is the first event that restricts to such a large extent the freedom of movement, interaction and encounter that we experienced before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study I address the age group 20 - 43 years. I avoid conducting the study among artists younger than 20 years of age today (2021 - 2022), as it is sporadic to find an artistic style or work focus already developed at this age. I also avoid researching among those over 43 years of age, who mostly have a firmly established style and thematic area of creative creation. However, I do not exclude references to the work of people belonging to both age groups (from outside my main area of interest), because in my opinion, documenting the work of artists from the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the mark it made on them is a hugely important task facing scholars of the 21st and subsequent centuries. At the same time, this issue is currently not widely covered in scientific publications. This state of ignorance needs to be remedied immediately and research in this area needs to be continued in the future. The lack of systematised documentation on this topic is particularly surprising when it is compared with the abundance of research on the condition of cultural centres in various countries during the COVID-19 pandemic¹², i.e. during the time period I am writing about in my paper. What is studied, therefore, are the institutions that popularise art, not the artists who, in real time, create the art that might be shown to future generations. By collecting information about these artists and their work, I aim to prepare the ground for future research into art created under the influence of the *confinamiento*.

The area of my research is the Comunidad Valenciana, where I was personally located during the time period under study. I chose this area because of the intensity of the *confinamiento* experience: above all, its approximately three-month time span. I believe that the experience of artists deprived of the opportunity to leave home for any other purpose than to meet the basic necessities of life, which, according to the regulations introduced during the state of emergency, were to buy food, medicine, walk the dog or visit the doctor, stands out from the experience of artists residing in the territory of other

¹² Giannini, T.; Bowen, J.P. *Museums and Digital Culture: From Reality to Digitality in the Age of COVID-19*. *Heritage* 2022, 5, p. 192–214: <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage5010011>, access 15.05.2022, 14:00,

Verity Burke, Dolly Jørgensen, Finn Arne Jørgensen, *Museums at Home: Digital Initiatives in Response to COVID-19*, Årgang 6, nr. 2-2020, p. 117–123: <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2464-2525-2020-02-05>, access 15.05.2022, 12:45

countries, where they were restricted only to meetings or prohibiting to go to specific, single places. At the same time, I do not include the island territories belonging to the Kingdom of Spain in my study, due to the difference in the experience of being confined to an island, as well as Madrid and Barcelona and the surrounding areas of these cities, due to the much higher rate of illness. Different areas of Spain completed the *confinamiento* at different rates, and in my work I therefore use the timeframe established from the start of the state of alert in the Kingdom of Spain to the first day on which it was possible to leave one's home for a period of one hour to go for a walk of up to one kilometre. The following weeks, during which a wider margin of activity was introduced, i.e. changing the one-hour walk once a day to the possibility of any mobility within the city during the time limited by the “toque de queda” [curfew], allowing mobility within the entire province, allowing personal collection of ordered takeaway food (before the bars opened), opening the bar tables outside the bars to customers, and later also opening the bars during limited time slots (initially, e.g. until 3pm) with the continued existence of the curfew, and the subsequent lifting of the hourly restriction on being on the beach and other minor changes restored before the resumption of the possibility of moving throughout Spain, i.e. crossing provincial lines, I also consider important, but I will mainly focus on the first period.

II.

Artistic records of the *confinamiento* experience in the work of visual artists of the young generation residing in the Comunidad Valenciana

In this section of my dissertation, I focus on the work of selected visual artists of the younger generation and middle age residing during the *confinamiento* in the Comunidad Valenciana, Murcia and Aragón. In the following paragraphs, I present their creative journey before and after the *confinamiento*, and describe the process that was influenced by this event in them. Among the changes in their artistic attitudes, I highlight the change

in their approach to describing experiences, the move away from figurative art, the exploration of technology, and the need for contact with the viewer.

In this paragraph, I would also like to cite projects that are a direct result of the *confinamiento*, but do not represent a process in which the artist changes his or her creative process in a broader way.

*

One of these is a large-scale work by an artist who works under the pseudonym VINZ (born in Valencia, 1979, graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Polytechnic University of Valencia in 2003), entitled “Gràcies!” (Fig.IV.1), presented on the façade of the Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y de la Modernidad (MUViM) in Valencia in 2020¹³. It is a printed banner of seven hundred square metres¹⁴, placed across the width of two adjacent facades of the museum. The print depicts nude figures with animal heads, standing on balconies and clapping. This type of figure representation (a naked human figure with an animal head) is very characteristic of VINZ's work. The creation of the image in his designs is based on the making of a sketch, followed by a photographic session in which the nude models render the drawn anatomical system. The artist then paints animal heads with acrylic paint on prints of selected photographs. In the flagship project “Feel Free”, their specific species or families represent their affiliation to a social role¹⁵. The artist's work has been exhibited between 2011 and 2021 in solo exhibitions, including “Resistencia” at C.A.V.E. Gallery in Los Angeles 2014, “Tempus fugit” at RexRomae Gallery in London 2014, “Market” at S.C. Gallery in Bilbao, Spain 2013, numerous group exhibitions in Europe and the United States, as well as functioning in urban spaces in Amsterdam, London, Vienna and Valencia, among others, in the form of street art.

In the case of the “Gràcies!” project, the figures have the heads of very different animal species. They are distributed over sixty-four balconies. This number is symbolic - the author of the work depicts sixty-four days from the most restrictive time of the *confinamiento*, during which people came out onto the balconies to thank the medics in a gesture of applause for saving lives every day in the pandemic. These sixty-four days

¹³ Vinz Feel Free, *Vinz Feel Free, About*, <https://www.vinzfeelfree.com/about>, access 15.09.2022, 12:40.

¹⁴ Canales Juan, *La pell dels dies passats*, Universitat Politècnica de València, Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat, El Àrea de Cultura de la Diputació de València.

¹⁵ Vinz Feel Free, *Vinz Feel Free*, <https://www.vinzfeelfree.com/>, access 10.10.2021, 16:10.

were the period between 14 March and 17 May. VINZ writes that if there is anything that unites us during the *confinamiento*, it is the daily synchronised applause at 8pm¹⁶. There are one hundred and forty-six figures on the balconies, each representing one of Spain's endangered species. These include the wolf, the Iberian lynx and the golden eagle, among others. “Porque así nos hemos sentido, cómo especies protegidas.” – “Because that's how we felt - like protected species” - writes VINZ in the description of its project¹⁷. VINZ details in the description of the work that the one hundred and forty-six people depicted on the balconies are women, men and transgender people. The metaphor of people as an endangered species was used by the artist to show the danger that the pandemic posed to people. This metaphor also shows people “under protection” - exercised by medics and those continuing to work to give society continued access to meet the basic needs of life. Nudity in earlier works, from the VINZ project “Feel Free”, symbolises freedom, the absence of secrets, but also makes the characters more fragile than their clothed, oppressive opponents¹⁸. In the work “Gràcies!”, nudity also seems to symbolise vulnerability. VINZ also points out that the print of the balconies obscures a large part of the MUViM's façade, turning the museum into a symbol of the Valencian Community, portrayed as a great “Community of Neighbours”¹⁹, whose inhabitants unite in an effort to move forward together: “As it is happening now.” The artist's precise focus is on the theme of the pandemic and gratitude to those who put their lives at risk to ensure that the population has access to basic products and medical assistance.

In this way, the Muvim becomes the symbol of the Valencian Community, portrayed as a great Community of Neighbours, where its inhabitants join forces to move forward together. This is what is happening²⁰.

- VINZ

In my opinion, this work is a very important way of capturing the collective experience that was the *confinamiento* in Spain. The artist uses a very topical (due to the state of the

¹⁶ Vinz Feel Free about his exhibition „Gràcies”, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CI03tRBBZsN/>, access 12.10.2021, 14:00.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Vinz Feel Free, *Vinz Feel Free*, <https://www.vinzfeelfree.com/>, access 10.10.2021, 16:10.

¹⁹ *Vinz recuerda los aplausos en los balcones con un gran mural*, Culturplaza: <https://valenciaplaza.com/la-obra-de-vicente-macip-que-se-subastara-en-christies-uno-de-los-primeros-joan-de-joanes>, access 10.11.2022, 13:50.

²⁰ Vinz Feel Free about his exhibition „Gràcies”, https://www.instagram.com/p/CI03tRBBZsN/?img_index=1

environment) metaphor, as well as beauty of expression. Through the combination of these means and the direct reference to the actual situation, the work is extremely clear and moving.

*

References to the time of the pandemic also appeared in subsequent years in the details surrounding the city. In the northern part of the city, a relief depicting a surgical mask appeared two years after the alert, bearing the large inscription '2020'. It is an example of street art, following the formula of commemorative plaques. The author of the work is unknown.

*



Fig.II.1, “Gràcies!”, by VINZ, on the facade of MUViM. Photographed by Barbara Leszczyńska.



Fig.II.2. Relief on a building nearby Carrer de la Blanqueria, public space of Valencia, Spain. Author unknown. Street art. Photographed 09.04.2022 by Barbara Leszczyńska.

The theme of the State of Alert has also been covered extensively by a variety of artists in group exhibitions exhibited at La Nau in Valencia²¹ and in the virtual exhibition “Estado de Alarma”²².

*

The theme of experiencing the *confinamiento* has been the subject of many projects and artistic works of varying degrees of elaboration. For example, Stephanie Reguera, an art student permanently residing in Brazil, dedicated the artistic part of her Bachelor's degree to the experience of this period in Valencia²³. As part of her thesis, she made a series of intaglio prints from zinc matrixes. These include: “Visitando recuerdos” (“Visiting memories”), “Atrofia Social Pós Confinamiento” (“Post Confinamiento Social Atrophy”), “Con la cabeza en la luna” (“With head on the moon”), “+55 / +34”, “Desamor de cuarentena” (“Heart broken by quarantine”) and “Capybara Intercambista” (“Capybara - exchange participant”).

The work “Visiting Memories” depicts the view from the window that Stephanie Reguera viewed for days during the *confinamiento*. The view is depicted with the window frame, and instead of the sky, there is an eye at the top of the landscape. “Social atrophy post-*confinamiento*” depicts a nude female figure with five hands playing volleyball alone - the figure is under the net and the hands pass the ball to each other from either side of the net. The description of the work states that the graphic refers to a reflection on the difficulty of making new friends after experiencing a *confinamiento*. The work “With my head on the moon” refers to the longing for home and family far away, which was particularly intensified during the hard times of the pandemic. The graphic print “Desamor de cuarentena” refers to long-term confinement at home and heartbreak - among other things, due to resignation from work in the face of the threat of illness. The graphics are figurative, operating with a metaphorical narrative. In the composition “+55 / +34” and “Social atrophy post- *confinamiento*”, inspiration from Art Nouveau art can

²¹ https://www.uv.es/uvweb/uv-noticies/es/noticias/63-dias-confinamiento-traves-mirada-26-artistas-exposicion-nau-universitat-1285973304159/Novetat.html?id=1286147934833&plantilla=UV_Noticies/Page/TPGDetailNews, access 30.11.2022, 20:10.

²² <http://www.upv.es/entidades/CIAE/info/U0891470.pdf>, access 11.11.2022, 22:01.

²³ <https://stephbeal.wixsite.com/website/projects-3?lang=es>, access 11.11.2022, 21:52.

be seen. The intaglio “Visitando recuerdos” seems closer to the influence of 15th-century woodcuts than Art Nouveau in the way it is shaded. In her description of the project, Stephanie Reguera stated that art is a record of thoughts and feelings, and in a time of pandemic it could be nothing other than “a historical record of this time of sanitary, human, political and economic tragedy in the world”²⁴.

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In the third part, in section 5.2. of my dissertation, I also described the works of selected female students of the Polytechnic University of Valencia concerning the *confinamiento* and the time immediately after it, which were exhibited in Gdynia in July 2021, as part of the gARTen 2021 project curated by me. The project was realised by the Diffusion Scientific Circle, run by me under the supervision of Bogna Łakomska, Ph.D., professor of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. The space was made available by the City of Gdynia. In part three of my dissertation, I describe Alicia Landez's art book and Macarena Merchán Romero's game-object, relating to the time immediately after the *confinamiento*.

I devoted the following chapters of the second part of my dissertation to case studies. I have focused on four young/middle-aged artists who have received training in the arts and whose artistic work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. In the last two chapters, I have also looked at the figures of two female art students at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. The individuals whose work I focused on were chosen because of the holistic nature of the impact of the *confinamiento* on their artistic creation or way of thinking. I have complemented the analysis of the changes that occurred in them, with an analysis, carried out in the current chapter, of individual projects resulting directly from the experience of the *confinamiento* by different artists. In this way, I have aimed to show the multidimensionality of the *confinamiento*'s impact on artists and the diversity of their artistic responses. Just as a downpour affects the river, the sea and the traffic differently, *confinamiento* causes different reactions in artists - a momentary focus on the event, a complete following of the needs that the *confinamiento* experience has unlocked, or a complete abandonment of the subject matter as too overwhelming. I have aimed to pick out, from among those declaring a clear impact of the *confinamiento* on their creative

²⁴ Ibid.

attitudes and way of thinking, those phenomena that I consider relevant to the documentation of this historical event.

II.1.

LLuc Margrau. A shared feeling as a basis for describing shared experiences

Lluc Margrau is a visual artist born in Valencia in 1987. He uses sculpture and printmaking techniques. In his works he refers to places, cartography, memory and relationships with place. I came across his work while searching the internet for information on artists who were in Valencia during the *confinamiento*. My introduction to the artist's art practice was an interview with him conducted on 8 May 2020 by Jessica De La Torre²⁵. As part of the interview, Lluc Margrau talked not only about the inspirations in his work and the techniques he uses, but also about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on his work and the "Habitat" project he was working on at the time. It was the "Habitat" project that caught my attention. I found Lluc Margrau's creative method particularly interesting: the artist approached other people experiencing the *confinamiento*, asking them to send him plans of the dwellings in which they had spent their confinement. Based on the materials they sent, the artist decided to create his project.

Lluc Margrau received his artistic education at the Universidad de Castilla la Mancha in Cuenca, Spain, where he pursued a Bachelor's degree in sculpture, graduating in 2012. In the following years, he participated in group exhibitions and showed his works in solo exhibitions. His artistic work has been recognised in a number of competitions: between 2013 and 2020 he was a finalist in the Florence Shanghai Prize in Shanghai (2013), Art Emergent Sabadell in Sabadell, Spain (2017), VEGAP "Propuestas" fellowship (2016), winner of the Concurso Emergentes in Sevilla, Spain (2014), received an honorable mention in the Chelsea International Fine Art Competition in New York, United States (2015), and received a grant and an exhibition at the Museo Antón in Asturias, Spain in

²⁵ Jessica De La Torre, *Q&A with Valencian Artist amid COVID-19*, <https://medium.com/@jedelato2/q-a-with-valencian-artist-amid-covid-19-c547339ae80>, access 02.04.2022.

2015. In 2020, he won a prize at the Colección de Arte Contemporáneo de la Generalitat Valenciana, and in 2013, he won a special prize at the 6th INCUBARTE competition and festival in Valencia, Spain²⁶.

In his artistic work, he refers to places to which he feels connected in some way. One of his projects that particularly interested me in the context of my research is “Human Cartographies” (Fig. II.1.1.). In this project, the artist creates a kind of a map on the basis of the coordinates of the places where he used to live. However, it does not consist of lines and areas of colour. The traces of the places are reflected in relief on thick intaglio paper. The work is done in relief on paper technic – done without paint, so the image appears depending on the light, appearing and disappearing depending on the situation, “just like memories and experiences”, as the artist himself writes²⁷. The project was exhibited at Galeria Vangar²⁸. The work is made using the technique of fine art printmaking, which is one of the artist's natural modes of visual expression, alongside sculpture. It is inspired by the relationship we establish with space - both geographical, but also cultural and social.

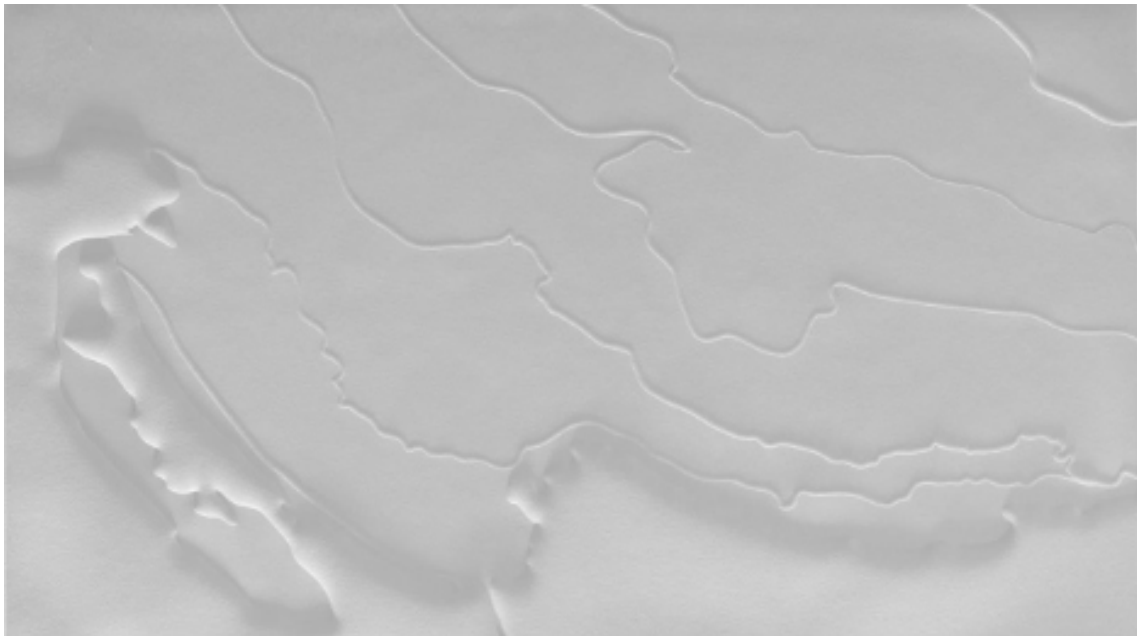


Fig. II.1.1. Lluç Margrau, „Human cartographies”. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

²⁶ <https://margrau.com/cv-1>, access 25.04.2022, 12:48

²⁷ LLUC, s. 8, w: <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/8bf863c0-fb75-434d-b7bd-d425ffe5fa02/DOSSIER%20INGLES%202021.pdf>, access 25.04.2022, 13:25

²⁸ *Galeria Vangar presenta 'Cartografias Humanas', una exposición de Lluç Margrau*, Culturplaza, <https://valenciaplaza.com/galeria-vangar-presenta-cartografias-humanas-una-exposicion-de-lluc-margrau>, access: 25.04.2022, 20:56

According to Lluç Margrau, each of us, by building our own personal reconstruction of places, marked by the time spent in them, their experiences and memories, will make a different image of the same space. In an interview on 18 April 2022, the artist referred to this concept and explained that, among other things, the idea for the “Habitat” project grew out of it. The project is still in the process of being made. However, the main impetus for starting it was the feeling that as a collective of humanity we were in the same situation. The artist decided that he can base his artwork on what a lot of people say about the situation they were in, and not only describe it from his perspective. It is a departure from the position of the artist as a person describing his inner experience to the viewer, as Lluç Margrau has done in his previous artworks. Habitat is about leaving the role of the storyteller and establishing a co-experiential contact with those experiencing the same change as the artist experiences. In this context, Lluç Margrau portrays the experience of the pandemic as formative - it has allowed the artist to take a new direction in the path he is following. Within the aesthetics and subject matter he has developed, he includes the strangers, collectively experiencing the same situation, as co-experiencers in his works. The part of the project that they provide are the simplified plans, drawn from memory, of the dwellings in which these people spent the period of the Spanish *confinamiento*²⁹. On the basis of these materials, Lluç Margrau intends to create an artistic work that refers, as his other works do, to places and relationships with them, but that tells the story of a collective experience. The form that the work will ultimately take is in preparation.

In opposition to this method of working are the methods used by the artist in previous works. These were rather retrospective. They referred to places, but were always filtered through the artist's personal maps. This is exemplified not only by the project “Human Cartographies” from 2017, but also by later works: for example, “Atlas”³⁰, a work made of stainless steel (Fig. II.1.2.). It is an object, modelled on the anatomy of a map, created from stainless steel sheets folded one over the other. In Atlas Lluç Margrau uses a metaphor. The shapes of the twelve dwellings in which the artist used to live in the past are cut into the sheets of steel. In visual representation, what he inhabited is now empty. The emptiness symbolises the fact that, in the present reality, the interiors of these dwellings are no longer accessible to Lluç Margrau: he cannot see them or stay in them,

²⁹ Research meeting with Margrau Lluç, 18.04.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

³⁰ Margrau Lluç, *LLUC*, p. 2: <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/8bf863c0-fb75-434d-b7bd-d425ffe5fa02/DOSSIER%20INGLES%202021.pdf>, access: 25.04.2022, 13:25.

just as we, observing the sculpture, cannot see what has been cut out of a sheet of steel. For us and for the artist, the surroundings remain, yet the interior is already inaccessible, abandoned by Lluç Margrau. We have no information about what is inside. In designing for the viewer's perception of the sculpture, the artist uses light, which, passing through the layers with traces of dwellings, creates patches and tones that describe what might have been inside. Similarly, in the project *Ecúmene* Lluç Margrau uses the drawing of light directed at the work, but in this case more straight-forward. This work is a drawing of an imaginary map, composed of fragments of memories of places where the artist lived³¹. Here the resemblance to a map is literal: the image is constructed of lines, marks, geometric figures similar to cartographic symbols.

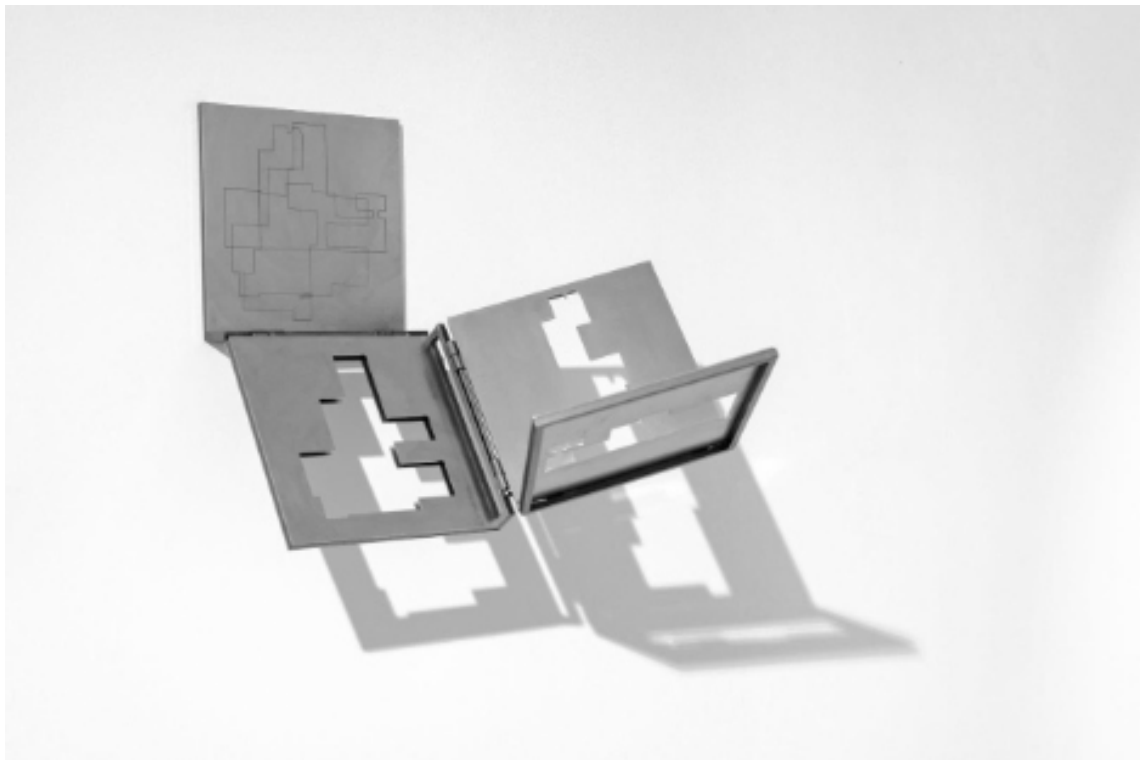


Fig. II.1.2. Lluç Margrau, „Atlas”. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

The artist indicates that the creative method he has chosen in the art project related to *confinamiento*, is the direction in which he wants to take in his further artistic activity. It is interesting to note the switch from the “storyteller-viewer” relationship and the transition to a 'co-storyteller-artist' relationship, occurring precisely during the *confinamiento* period. Interestingly, Lluç Margrau is not alone in his turn in creative

³¹ Ibid, p.4.

methodology. Nor is he the only artist who has concentrated on interaction that I describe in my study.

II.2.

Lolo Camino Sos. A turn towards abstraction

In a preliminary interview on 29 April 2022, Lolo Camino Sos told me that the time of the *confinamiento* was a time of turning towards abstraction for him. After learning about his extensive creative output, I became interested in this shift. Lolo Camino Sos's figurative work was based on a consistent visual language developed by the artist and continued throughout his series of works. The turn towards abstraction was something resulting from an artistic need. It was neither the result of commercial commissions, nor there were not any shortcomings in his extensive portfolio. Lolo Camino Sos was artistically active after graduating in 2010. He took part in more than thirty group exhibitions from 2011 to October 2022 and his works are in the collections of the Seville City Hall and La Victoria, among others³². For this reason, I decided to include him in my study.

“After a social change like this, we always tend to be listened to more; it's like an impulse. In fact, I think that the confinement had a lot to do with the creation of all artists. In my work, in my leap in painting, it has had a great influence on me.”³³

Lolo Camino Sos (Jose Manuel Camino Sos) was born in Seville in 1983 to a family who came from Valencia³⁴, and his current artistic life is very much linked to Valencia. He graduated in 2010 with a degree in art from the Polytechnic University of Valencia. His first solo exhibition took place in 2008, and by 2021 he had made four in Valencia, two in Seville and one each in Madrid and Brussels, as well as an exhibition in collaboration

³² Camino Sos Jose Manuel, *Lolo Camino Sos, CV*, <https://www.lolocaminosos.com/sobre-mi>, access 17.11.2022, 12:50.

³³ Violeta Anduig, *Lolo Camino Sos ens parla de la seua necessitat per «lo salvaje»*, Parnaso, 13.10.2021, by: <https://revistaparnaso.com/2021/10/13/lolo-camino-sos-ens-parla-de-la-seua-necessitat-per-lo-salvaje/> access 20.05.2022, 15:00

³⁴ Ibid.

with Sergio Gómez in Tokyo³⁵. His works were exhibited at 29 exhibitions in Spain and abroad³⁶. He is currently working on art projects in a studio in Valencia³⁷.

Before pandemic, the artist worked mainly in painting, sometimes combining it with drawing, especially the works executed on canvas. A large part of his work consisted of wall paintings. He sometimes created ceramics. In the figurative part of his artistic creation of the time, we are confronted with an explosion of imagination, captured in dynamic but closed forms. Examples include the works “Still Alive” (20x20 cm, acrylic and gouache on wood, 2019), “Still Alive, Father with Son” (50x65 cm, gouache on paper, 2019), and the series “Still Alive, All That Glitters is not Gold” (four canvases 55x46 cm, acrylic and gouache, 2019)³⁸, which was much more dramatic in its expression. In the paintings from the “Still Alive” series, we see figures with a different anatomy than we know. “Still Alive. Father with Son”, is a gouache on paper seemingly depicting two figures facing in one direction and anxiously observing something outside the frame. They are seen in profile, as evidenced by the evenly cut facial shapes. The human-faced figure's nose is seen from the side and the triangular maw of the figure above faces slightly into the canvas. Even at first glance, it is clear that the figure's anatomy is not from a known reality, but deciphering all the intricacy requires closer observation. The triangular mouth grows from the human's muscular arms, ending in large hands. A head with a human face rises from a very long, triangularly curved neck. Following it we come to the body. We do not know whether the neck connects to the massive legs positioned behind it in a crouch, we can only presume that it does and that father and son are one person. A figure with a crocodile-like head grows from an extension of the legs, formed to resemble a spine. Partly growing out of it and partly below it are oval-like structures resembling ribs or hoops. The body is terminated by a tail folded on the ground. The whole is covered with a homogeneous pattern resembling a geometrised representation of a fur or neural structure maintained in red and dark brown. The figures/characters are portrayed against a white background. We surmise space from the anatomy of the figure - presumably it is crouching, which we infer from the position of the tail and the arrangement of the hands

³⁵Anagra, *Anagra, Sergio Gómez & Lolofonico collaboration EXHIBITION*, <https://www.anagra-tokyo.com/blank>, access 15.10.2022, 15:30.

³⁶Camino Sos Jose Manuel, *Lolo Camino Sos, CV...*

³⁷Research meeting with Camino Sos Lolo, 10.11.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

³⁸Camino Sos Jose Manuel, *Lolo Camino Sos*: <https://www.lolocaminosos.com/>, access 07.06.2022, 12:44.

and feet. The unusual restriction of colour works well with the complex form of the figures and their non-obvious anatomy. Another painting from the series “Still Alive”: a set of four canvases “All That Glitters is not Gold” (Fig. II.2.1.) is maintained in a dramatic colour scheme consisting of dark purples, dirty orange shining against other colours, and tones of turquoise stamped with black. In the works, we observe scenes reminiscent of combat, although there are no direct clashes - they are suggested by the positions and muscular tensions of the fantastic figures.

The work “La Indiferencia de las Flores” [in English: “The Indifference of Flowers”] (200x200 cm, acrylic, gouache and spray on canvas, 2019) stands differently in terms of the composition of the painting and the handling of colour, although still in the spirit of the artist's creations of the time. The composition is open-ended, with both figures and other elements not fitting within the frame of the canvas. Although the anatomy of most of the figures is rather close to the real one, we also see a figure with an elongated neck, which is like a bridge between the works in the Still Alive series and the Indifference of Flowers and Indifference of Flowers II. In 2020, during the *confinamiento*, the artist began rehearsing the creation of abstract art. The boundary between narrative and abstract creation is not clear, as the change occurred in the creative process. Thus, we have works that are on the edge of both groups, such as “Roughness”. In this work, among abstract shapes reminiscent in form of Henry Matisse's cut-outs³⁹, we find the profile of a face made with great simplification, devoid of the artist's characteristic shading that emphasises the roundness of the forms. Perhaps it is because of this element, that gives some of the shapes in the background seem to have human characteristics as well, while some are clearly simplified outlines of the human figure or its elements, such as thighs and feet. The same year the painting of “Figura con siete cabezas” [English: “Figure with seven heads”] was created, in the style characteristic of the “Still Alive” series. There was also a series of crayon and spray drawings on sandpaper under the titles 'Llauro 1/3', “Llauro ½” and “Llauro 1/1”, as well as “Portrait of a Stranger”. In these works, the artist depicted a simplified profile of a human face, filled with abstract painting matter. Thus, it is as if abstraction is enclosed in a frame of figuration, the effect, however, is still figurative. We can see the rejection of figuration in works such as *The One Who Lost the Shadow in a Puddle* (29.7x42 cm, Acrylic on Paper, 2020), *Trumpet* (21x29.7 cm, Acrylic

³⁹ Matisse Henri. *The Swimming Pool (La Piscine)*, cutouts, guache on paper, 1952: https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1429?slideshow=29&slide_index=0, access 07.06.2022, 14:28

on Paper, 2020) and *Naturaleza Dobleada* [pol. 'Bent Nature'] (21x29.7 Cm, Acrylic on Paper, 2020). The artist continues his abstract works in the series “La necesidad de lo salvaje” [English: “The need for wildness”], 2021.

In the artist's words quoted at the beginning of the chapter, we read that in his opinion, after such a huge change during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is natural for artists to be heard more. He believes that “closure” has been important to the creative work of many artists, and that he himself has been greatly influenced by closure in his transition to abstraction⁴⁰.

In a research meeting interview I conducted with Lolo Camino Sos on 10.10.2022, Lolo Camino Sos described his artistic path. He said that his work as a whole was deeply imbued with his creation of street art. It was this that intensified the artist's strong need to elaborate a style that would set him apart from others. Lolo Camino Sos stressed that for those involved in street art, recognisability in the jumble of streets is important. After a while, people commissioning artworks from Lolo Camino Sos expected it to be done in a style that belonged to him, and in a limited colour palette. Then the painter came to the conclusion that he did not need to be locked inside a fixed visual canon and that he wanted his art to be open, changing⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Violeta Anduig, *Lolo Camino Sos ens parla de la seua necessitat per «lo salvaje»*

⁴¹ Research meeting with Camino Sos Lolo, 10.11.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.



Fig. II.2.1. Lolo Camino Sos, *Still Alive, All That Glitters is not Gold*, 55x46 cm, acrylic paint and guache on canvas, 2019. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.



Fig. II.2.2.2. Lolo Camino Sos, *Untitled*, 21x29,7 cm, acrylic paint on paper, 2020. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

Lolo Camino Sos works on his paintings in the space of the artist's studio. During the *confinamiento*, the artist's art materials were right there, and it was impossible to access or pick them up and use the room due to the restrictions of the state of emergency. It was also impossible to paint on the walls of the city streets. Lolo Camino Sos decided to start the deconstruction process. He drew on his ipad and devoted himself to reflecting on his

earlier work. He sought knowledge about other painters. He delved into the information about those who had also decided to reject the mode of expression they had previously adopted. He believes that this moment of not painting, a focus on reflection, helped him to create new works and to fundamentally change his painting process. The artist decided to return to exploring the ways in which paint, composition and form can be used. In the paintings created in 2022, he continues the work of deconstruction begun during the *confinamiento*. At the research meeting, he spoke about his need to paint the figures in the painting compositions and then destroy them so that they are invisible in the composition. So that they only stayed on the canvas for a certain number of days. Sometimes the artist would paint over them with a different colour, and in other cases he would scrape off the paint that formed them so that they lost their legibility. The last exhibition of his figurative paintings took place in 2019⁴².

Lolo Camino Sos made the decision to abandon his earlier painting style during the *confinamiento*. This was a critical moment for his work. It was then that he began to miss what he had been doing at the beginning of his discovery of the tools of painting, at the age of 18 or 19. Then, without the ability to handle the techniques of acrylic and oil painting, he found his path of expression: painting, and he made his first attempts on a canvas given to him by his uncle. At the time of the *confinamiento*, he thought a lot about these beginnings of his artistic path and recognised that he had moved on from his initial attitude to painting during his academic studies and the acquisition of commercial commissions. Lolo Camino Sos believed that the creative potential was there, at the beginnings. He came to the conclusion that he could only return to his original pursuits. He tried to rediscover, by studying his past, how he was influenced by his family. He said that painting had a therapeutic aspect for him. "You have to be yourself when painting. You can't fight with yourself. Painting has to be free, unrestricted, to be real." - he said in a research interview⁴³.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

II.3.

Laura Palau. Focusing on the field of empathy

Laura Palau is an artist from Spain, born in Benlloc in 1993⁴⁴. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions since 2018, and group exhibitions since 2016. In 2021 she participated in the exhibition “Art Contemporani de la Generalitat Valenciana IV” at the Centro del Carmen de Cultura Contemporánea (CCCC). In 2022, in the exhibition “Confluències. Artistic interventions in Alto Mijares”, organised by the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) in Valencia, one of the most important cultural and art centres in the Comunidad Valenciana. Laura Palau got her artistic education by obtaining a double Master's degree: in Artistic Production at the Universitat Politècnica de València in 2017 and Photography & Society at the Royal Academy of Art The Hague in 2022. Laura Palau's works are part of the collections of the Col·lecció d'Art Contemporani de la Generalitat de Valencia, CCCC and the Museu de la Ciutat de Castelló, MUCC, both in Spain. In 2018 and 2019, she participated in artist residencies in Spain and Germany. In her work before Pandemic, she used mainly intervention, happening and performance⁴⁵. One of her activities included 'redesigning' the prints of a limited number of blouses sold in the clothing chain Mango. The project consisted of buying blouses with a letterpress print and then manually changing the meaning of the print with thread, sequins or paint and returning the shirts to the shop. In this way, clothes with ironic comments of the original prints appeared in the chain shops⁴⁶. Other activities by the artist include a collection of olives from olive trees that were planted in cities for decorative purposes. In happenings in the city's public spaces, Laura Palau used tools used by farmers, the kind her parents used to harvest from their fields. These actions aimed to confront the inhabitants of urban centres with nature, by drawing their attention to their relationship with the yielding trees. As Laura Palau described in an interview with me on 17.06.2022, the main area that her pre-pandemic art touched upon was the tension between man and nature. In particular, the artist saw this phenomenon in the relationship between humans

⁴⁴ *Tres arbres i tretze fruites, Laura Palau (Vallat)*, <https://ivam.es/en/exposicio-confluencies/tres-arbres-i-tretze-fruites-laura-palau-vallat/>, access 04.11.2022, 12:48

⁴⁵ *Art Contemporani de la Generalitat Valenciana IV*, Centre del Carme Cultura Contemporània, Valencia, 2021-2022, p. 355.

⁴⁶ Álvaro G. Devís, *EDITANDO' ROPA O RETRATANDO BAÑISTAS. Laura Palau y el arte desde la experiencia*: <https://valenciaplaza.com/laura-palau-y-el-arte-desde-la-experiencia>, access 14.12.2022, 15:06

and trees planted in cities. By redefining their meaning - appearing beside them with the equipment of a farmer and doing the work of harvesting them - she introduced new meaning into urban space, questioned the established character of the streets or corners. Laura Palau has described the relationship between humans and nature in urban areas as unhealthy - people do not relate to trees growing in cities in the same way as they do to trees outside of them. Following the author's thinking, one can see the toxicity of a relationship in which humans disrespect, pollute the environment and the air around urban trees, and then refer with contempt to the urban tree as a plant that has grown in the dirt, failing to notice that it is the human species, not the trees, that are responsible for said pollution. For Laura Palau, the time of the *confinamiento* involved an unplanned, three-month forced stay abroad and a physical accident that resulted in the loss of a thumb. It was an experience of depression and the process of treating it. Unlike the other artists whose journey I discuss in detail, Laura Palau did not remain in the Comunidad Valenciana during the *confinamiento*. However, I have chosen to describe her case because the restrictions of the *confinamiento* reached her in a different way - she was confined not at home, but outside her home country. While a state of emergency was being imposed in Spain, Laura Palau was in France pursuing an artist residency. Despite contacting her country's embassy and requesting permission there, Laura Palau was unable to return home to the Comunidad Valenciana for a period of three months. I found this kind of intrusion into everyday life, which is a forced stay beyond the borders of one's home country, extremely distressing.

A week before her planned return from France, Laura Palau experienced an accident in which she lost the thumb on her left hand. Subsequently, as she told me in an interview on 17.06.2022, she underwent a severe process of hospitalisation. Afterwards, she had to re-learn everyday activities from scratch - from tying her shoes to becoming confident in handling a camera again. The accident caused depression, which the artist had been struggling with for a second year on the day of the interview. For Laura Palau, the thumb is something with which expression is shown through gestures. It is also a tool for the artist's work. In her healing process, she made a series of "prostheses", made from plaster and later plaster-bandage casts of sculptures and monuments standing in The Hague, where she lived at the time. This was her first art project, with which she returned to creating after the accident. In a conversation I had with Laura on 17.06.2022, the artist told me that, in her opinion, the time of the *confinamiento* and the pandemic as such, has

turned society's attention to areas such as empathy, therapy and mental health. In her opinion, society's focus on this area is hugely important. She points first and foremost to attitudes towards the mentally or physically ill and injured. Understanding and making space for the silence of those affected by depression. Not being judgmental about abstinence. Being open and inclusive towards sick people.

Along with re-taming artistic tools, Laura Palau turned to photography, creating a project that documents caring for others and recovery from illness. This area – “healing”, in the sense of referring to both mental and physical health, was the focus of her Master's degree project in The Hague. This took the form of a photographic book, incorporating mushroom spores - not with psychedelic effects. Her work is a vision of a post-capitalist society that focuses on mutual care, just as a network of mushrooms support each other (in her words, “in opposition to, for example, the exploitation of agricultural regions by large urban areas”). A direct illustration of this concept in her thesis is precisely the placement of fungal spores in the book - it is an anti-collector product, by its very nature. With the passage of time, it will become overgrown with fungi. “It's better to leave the book somewhere next to it, not to keep it among the collection on the bookshelf” - the artist said, describing the project to me – “It's also the idea of letting go - you have to read [the book] and keep the images in your mind, and they will stay in your memory, but not in your hands.”⁴⁷ This last sentence in particular seems to me to refer directly to the accident, loss, trauma and healing of the artist. The work was accompanied by a performance in which six people, including Laura Palau, in a 6 x 2 metre space, talk about how their personal traumas allowed them to heal from collective traumas. The activity also directed the audience's attention to working together and supporting each other, rather than competing.

Laura Palau's artistic path derives, in a way, from the inspiration of the agricultural life her family - parents, grandparents - has led for generations. From there, the artist drew not only the tools to change the context of the urban landscape, but also the language for her project realised in 2022 at the invitation of IVAM, which is most strongly linked to her experience of *confinamiento*. The project was made in an agricultural area, far from Valencia and the museum's headquarters itself. It makes a direct reference both to the artist's accident and to the agricultural practice of Laura Palau's family members. In an

⁴⁷ Research meeting with Palau Laura, 16.06.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

interview on 17.06.2022, Laura Palau told me about the process of restoring the skin of her hand. In the accident, she lost a large part of her hand - the thumb with the whole part between the index finger and the wrist. Closing the skin tissue required replacing the missing skin. Skin from Laura Palau's abdomen was used. The artist tells us that a process was used in which the hand had to be connected to the abdomen for a period of twenty-one days. For her, this had a symbolic dimension, because, she said, exactly the same number of days are needed in the grafting process, which has been used for years in the cultivation of fruit trees. By grafting a branch of a tree from the same genus, i.e. a citrus tree (which includes within its genus e.g. orange, grapefruit lemon, pomelo, mandarin; mixing between different genus, i.e. a lime tree with a plum branch, will not work), you get a tree bearing different fruit on different branches. Laura Palau did a project for IVAM in which she used this very technique. She chose it to tell the story of her accident. Her decision also stems from the diversity of the audience for whom she made the project. The artist described that the people living in the villages in the areas neighbouring her installation have very different levels of education. It often happens among the elderly that they are not fluent in the art of writing. Instead, transplanting is very understandable to them, as a biological process with which they are familiar.

The artist points out that the time of the *confinamiento* and the pandemic is when she stopped rushing. Not only because of the accident she experienced, but also because the whole world around her slowed down. In her view, it was the severity of the emergency that was the pandemic that caused many people to stop.

Laura Palau thus changed the thematic area of her work during the *confinamiento*.

From a dialogue with the space of the city, the artist shifted the focus to the process of therapy, of healing, supporting, of growing again. This was due to both the trauma of the accident and the piling up of difficult experiences, the starting point of which was not being able to return to the country for many weeks. The artist also draws attention to the problem of empathy in society and points out that this is an area that still needs work. In the interview, the artist also described her current creative process as more conceptual than before the time of the *confinamiento*.

II. 4.

Diana Acién. Orienting professional work towards artistic creation

Diana Acién is an artist born in 1990 in Cádiz. She received her education at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Seville, where she explored sculpture as part of her Bachelor's degree, and at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, where she completed her Master's degree, specialising in 3D Animation. The 2019 short film “Echoes”⁴⁸, which she directed, was awarded the Quartmetratges 2019 and has been shown in 40 national and international festivals⁴⁹ - in Argentina, Brazil, China, France, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Morocco, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania and Hungary⁵⁰. This was the first animation she directed, based on her script. The work was produced at the Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, as part of her master's degree. In 2021, as co-producer of a short film on the pandemic, Diana Acién applied for a grant from the Generalitat Valenciana and the Instituto Valenciano de Cultura. The application was successful and a grant to fund 60% of the production costs was awarded to the producer, Saltarinas. Subsequently, the rights to the short film were purchased by TV À Punt Media. At the present moment⁵¹, three festivals in Spain and Italy have expressed a desire to broadcast this short production in the summer of 2023⁵². Work on the production was still underway at the time of our research meeting on her experiencing the *confinamiento* and the impact of this time on her creative process.

Made in 2019, the short film “Echoes”, directed by Diana Acién⁵³, addresses the feeling of happiness. The main character is a middle-aged man working in a factory. The shots that present him take place at work and in front of a cupboard with a mirror mounted on

⁴⁸ *Echoes*, Películas y Series, La Vanguardia, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/peliculas-series/peliculas/echoes-724153>, access 18.11.2022, 20:00.

⁴⁹ Selected Films Distribution, *TODO BIEN*, *Dirigido por Diana Acién Manzorro*, <https://selectedfilms.com/todo-bien/>, access 14.05.2023, 21:19.

⁵⁰ Acién Diana, *Diana Acién*. *Contacto*: <https://dianaacien.com/sobre-mi/>, access 14.05.2023, 22:40.

⁵¹ Last update 16.05.2023, 18:20.

⁵² Gestión de Festivales,

https://gestiondefestivales.com/gescor/index2.php?option=com_prim&idcor=1501&tipopri=cortoinscri&infor=sele, access: 14.05.2023, 23:00.

⁵³ *Echoes*, Diana Acién, prod. Universitat Politècnica de València, 2019: <https://dianaacien.com/echoes/>, access 14.05.2023, 22:00.

the door, as well as on the sofa where he falls asleep in front of the television. In the cupboard, which he reaches in several scenes, there are only jars labelled “To be happy”, “To be awake”, “To sleep”, with pills he takes. The repetitive scenes of working and taking pills lead to the main character's apparent “happy encounter” with himself, which turns out to be a hallucination. The picture is maintained in a muted colour scheme, with grey and dark, dirty green dominating the first part, and maroon and shades of dirty pink dominating the second part. It is complemented by sound: snippets of television news are the only moment where words occur. The music is sombre, suggesting danger, anxiety. The animation was highly acclaimed by the community, as evidenced by its publication in so many animation events.

After gaining an education in the field of 3D modelling, Diana Ación attempted to find work in the profession. Despite her completed education and the success of the short animation she directed, her candidature was not accepted by employers. In an interview dated 18.11.2022, Diana Ación said that the reason they indicated was her lack of work experience. Due to this situation, she continued to work as a waitress in a restaurant while looking for job opportunities in the profession. When the state of emergency started, she lost the opportunity to work. This was a turning point for her, where she realised that she felt working in the restaurant was a waste of time. She decided, as she said, to "create a job for herself"⁵⁴, in line with her training. She began the work on directing a short film, currently titled “Todo bien”. The film's theme is devoted to the relationships and tensions between a polarised society caught in the crisis situation of a pandemic. The film's main characters are two people, Vicent and Ana, sharing a flat with each other. One of them is very cautious and afraid of being infected. He wants to be far away from the other person and demands to wear a mask inside the flat. These, in Diana Ación's animation, are not surgical masks, but exaggerated masks, covering the whole face and equipped only with eyeholes. In the pandemic animation, the artist touched the theme of responding to a crisis situation for which one is not prepared. One does not have the tools to cope with high stress levels and a constant sense of danger. One does not have the ability to change one's situation, for example by changing one's place of residence. The short film “Todo bien”, six minutes in length, was released in Spain in 2023, directed by Diana Ación⁵⁵, produced

⁵⁴ Research meeting with Ación Diana, 18.11.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

⁵⁵ Selected Films Distribution, *TODO BIEN*, *Dirigido por Diana Ación Manzorro*.

by Saltarinas⁵⁶. “I want to see the time of the pandemic as a period of adaptation to the unknown” - describes Diana Acién in the press materials for “Todo bien”⁵⁷.

The aesthetics of both short films, directed by Diana Acién, have elements in common. These are the characters - elongated, rounded. The ones in “Todo bien”, however, are made with more detail - the surface of the characters' skin has a given texture, reminiscent of figurines made from a little too wet clay or plasticine, covered with fingerprints. The lighting used in the “Todo bien” animation is also more subtle than in “Echoes”. Both the colour range of the characters and the overall scenery is incomparably more saturated than in “Echoes” - even though both productions deal with difficult emotional states.

“Todo bien” is a depiction of being surrounded by danger, shown in an extremely light-hearted way. It shows the everyday life of the *confinamiento* with its various aspects - the long time of confinement, the longing to be able to go outside the flat, the fear for health, the fear of the virus. The artist uses not only a direct message, shown through the actions of the characters, but also elements of scenography - the clock in the characters' room takes the form of a snail, whose round shell is the dial; the washing liquid appears in a painting painted by one of the characters. A particularly interesting visual treatment is the splitting of the screen, allowing Diana Acién to narrate a single moment from two different points of view, or activities happening at the same moment in different places.

In an interview on 18.11.2022, Diana Acién said that working in an acquired profession in the age of remote working, still so popular after the *confinamiento*, gave her opportunities she had not even thought of before. With the opportunity to work remotely, she has already worked for people from South Africa and other countries that are very far from where she lives.

For Diana Acién, *confinamiento* was a theme she addressed in the latest animation she directed. But above all, it was the turning point for her, where she decided to take up working in animation and 3D rendering full-time.

⁵⁶ *Presskit_TodoBien*:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Yym2mhjo6888JtNLUIQXpxm4D1PxpCzw>, access 14.05.2023, 21:40.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*



Fig.II.4.1, Scene from the „Todo bien” animation, 2023. Photography thanks to courtesy of Diana Acien.

II. 5.

Sara F. Cuesta. The importance of focus in the creative process



Fig.II.5.1, Sara F. Cuesta, „Felices Fallas Fallidas”. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

Sara F. Cuesta was born in 1999 in Valencia. At the time of our research meeting, she was a student at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universitat Politècnica de València. At the time of our second research meeting, the artist was studying printmaking as a master's student

at the Fundación CIEC in Galicia⁵⁸. She mainly uses intaglio printmaking. Since 2018, Sara F. Cuesta has participated in group exhibitions, mostly curated at the Universitat Politècnica de València and the Feria Valencia, among others, as well as in Galicia region: twice in A Coruña, at the Asociación Cultural Acéfala and in Bomoble, and twice in Betanzos: at Sala Jesus Nuñez and at Espacio Vaina⁵⁹. In 2021 she created a solo exhibition of her works at the Centre d'Informació Juvenil de l'Ajuntament de Torrent - CIJ Torrent, L'espai. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue published online⁶⁰.

I chose Sara F. Cuesta for my study because of her constant, creative methods of making contact with her immediate surroundings during the *confinamiento*. It could be said that Sara F. Cuesta undertook a degree of neighbourhood activism on the scale of her own and the opposite buildings, leaving messages to others, and turning a regular spot into space of exchange of thoughts, by drawing them briefly and inviting the neighbours to participate (without direct contact).

During an interview on 16.05.2022, the artist told me that she treated the *confinamiento* as a game. She used all the ways of communicating with her surroundings that the building in which she was confined offered. She painted messages addressed to her neighbours on the window. One of these was the greeting presented in the photograph (Fig. V.6.1.), saying “Felices Fallas Fallidas”, or in English, “Happy failed Fallas”. She also referred to the holiday of Fallas in messages left for her neighbours in the lift. I find this project particularly interesting as it engages with the people it encounters, to respond directly. Fallas is a very important Valencian holiday, with a history that goes back several centuries and is still vigorously cultivated today. Sara F. Cuesta is committed to working on its preparation, by occasionally painting on surface of big sculptures. The first celebration of Fallas dates back to the mid-18th century and, according to the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM), citing historian Lluís Tramoyeres, the first booklet documenting the sculptures created as part of Fallas dates from 1855⁶¹. Throughout

⁵⁸ Research meeting with Cuesta Sara F., 16.05.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Cuesta Sara F, *Esqueje*, catalogue of the exhibition 15.06.2021 – 30.06.2021, Curators: Natividad Navalón, Teresa Cháfer, w CIJ Torrent, l'espai, p. 8:
https://issuu.com/sarafcuesta/docs/cat_logo_esqueje_paginas, access 09.05.2022, 16:30.

⁶¹ Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, *El IVAM reivindica el rico patrimonio cultural de los 'llibrets' de falla*, nota de premsa, Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria de Educació, Cultura y Deporte:
https://www.ivam.es/wp-content/uploads/noticias/el-ivam-reivindica-el-rico-patrimonio-cultural-de-los-llibrets-de-falla/220315_IVAM_NP_Llibret-de-falla_cas.pdf, access 16.05.2022, 17:16.

Valencia, there are around three hundred separate Asociación Cultural Falla, or Falla Cultural Organisations, usually named after the streets in which they operate. Each year, participants in each organisation create large-scale constructions, reaching several metres in height, consisting of interconnected or grouped sculptures. Sara F. Cuesta sometimes helps her friends who prepare the sculptures, by painting on the surface of the sculptures. In modern times, sculptures can be found all over the city. The contemporary sculptures are multi-coloured and often have openwork structures, looking as if they are independent of the laws of gravity. For the most part, they are made in a common caricature-fairy aesthetic. The festival is celebrated over nineteen days. The gradual appearance of the figures is accompanied by a huge noise of celebrating families, teenagers, parents with young children. Parents often teach their charges to throw “devils”, teenagers throw small firecrackers. The festivities end with parades of Falleras and Falleros, marching in traditional costumes accompanied by orchestras, and the finale of the Fallas celebrations is the cremà de las Fallas, the burning of the statues set up in the city. During the initial period of *confinamiento*, in which the Fallas celebrations would take place, Sara F. Cuesta would leave drawings of fire in the lift of her building, as well as sign-drawn explosions of undersized firecrackers and “devils”, as if they had been thrown into the lift by a child or teenager. She also left a card with a sign asking lift users to draw something if they wanted to celebrate Fallas. The cards were filling up with drawings of firecrackers, churros and signs left by neighbours. On the day of cremà de las Fallas, the artist attached a drawing of fire made on transparent material to the cards in the lift, through which the 'ninots' left by neighbours shone through. The micro-installation then disappeared from the lift, just as ninots disappear from the streets, consumed by fire⁶².

Another of the artist's activities related to *confinamiento* was to play marionette performances for her neighbours in the window of her family's flat. Sara F. Cuesta's mother's job was creating marionettes for the theater spectacles. During the closure, the family improvised performances during the evening applause for the doctors. The applause took place every day at 8 p.m. (originally at 10 p.m.), with people coming out of the flats onto the balconies or standing in the windows. Sara talks about this activity as a new experience of time with her family.

⁶² Research meeting with Cuesta Sara F., 16.05.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

During the *confinamiento*, Sara F. Cuesta and several other studying artists would record videos of their way to the shop from home, or back home from the shop. Later, they would assemble them into a single film connecting all the roads. In this way, they created a virtual “shared walk”. They also recorded the sounds of the houses they were in, and then superimposed them one on top of the other to create a common sound simulating the sharing of space. This activity seems to reflect longing for shared places and the sounds that accompany them.

Particularly important for the artist's further development, however, seems to be the search for new materials and ways of creating dry point printmaking at home. Sara F. Cuesta works mainly in intaglio technique. As she says in an interview on 16.05.2022, she chose this technique because it is time-consuming, slow, physical, and the image made with it reflects the characteristics of the matrix. In the introduction to the catalogue of her 2021's exhibition, the artist described the process of preparing the intaglio print and the work on the matrix itself. She wrote that working in this technique “is not just an act, it's an attitude, it's a whole-body effort”⁶³. In the early days of not having access to studio and the infrastructure to create prints, making intaglio at home can seem impossible. However, Sara was motivated to create in this technique. She therefore focused on learning to create in the available matrixes, which did not require the use of acid. Amongst other things, she used “tetrapak” type materials or plastic folders as matrices, which allowed her to obtain moulds with characteristics similar to the classical dry point. She coloured the matrixes with grease rather than inks, and used a wooden spoon instead of a printing press to print her work. As a substrate for her prints, the artist chose “pop set” paper, which, thanks to its smooth surface, facilitates the reflection from the “tetrapak” type matrixes. Interestingly, she continued her search for “re-use”, materials during an Erasmus project student exchange in Turku, Finland, where she made mainly dry-needle works from matrixes engraved in the reverses of used aluminium sheets previously used for lithography. The works made in Finland differed in subject matter to some extent. What links them to the artist's previous creations is the theme of nature. The work of Sara F. Cuesta from the Finnish period focuses on the power of nature, especially the Finnish forests, in whose poignant surroundings one feels the smallness of one's existence, and on the motif of the sun, the absence of which was acutely felt by the

⁶³ Cuesta Sara F, *Esqueje*, p.8.

artist (Fig. V.6.1.). Some of the works made in Finland are also inspired by the work of Outi Heiskanen (1937 – 2022).

Sara F. Cuesta also describes *confinamiento* as a time when the limitation of available media proved to be a moment that allowed her to focus and choose what she really wanted to work on, the subjects she wanted to talk about, and to follow her own technique without constantly coming into contact with the creations of others. In an interview on 16.05.2022, she says that the availability of a wide range of artistic techniques meant that, as an artist, she wanted to create in all of them, struggling to find focus. It was only the restriction imposed from above that allowed her to choose the techniques in which she continued to work during the *confinamiento*. She also says that the previous daily exposure to others working in similar or different techniques was a kind of overload of stimulation for the artist. Deprived of the opportunity to see the so many prints and artworks every day, she allowed herself to concentrate on working on her way of constructing an image.

The time of the *confinamiento* was when Sara F. Cuesta chose the theme for her thesis. She decided to dedicate it to death. The main motif of her works is bones. In the graphic works they are combined with stones and plants. Through this set of graphic motifs the artist tells the story of the place we live in, becoming us. Just as the bent stems of the plants grown by Sara F. Cuesta's grandfather, which resemble his arthritis-affected bones.

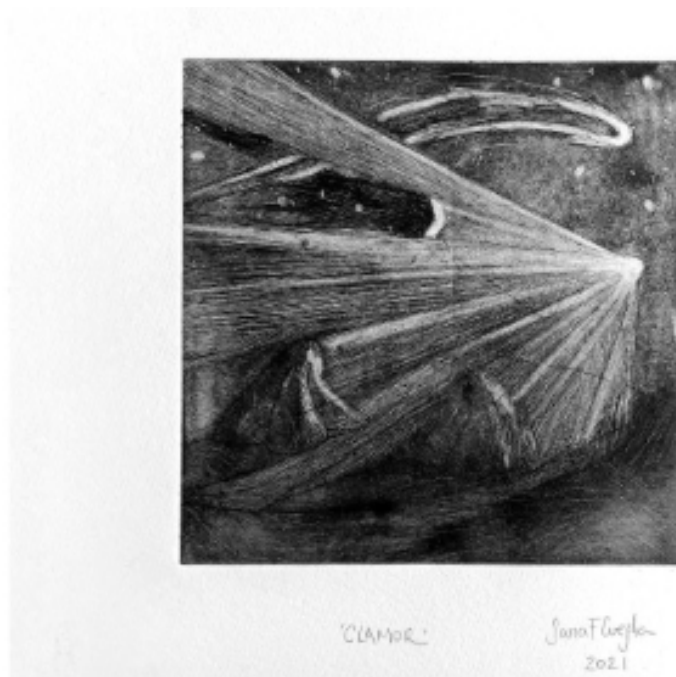


Fig. V.6.1. Sara F. Cuesta, „Clamor”, 2021. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

In summary, the artist refers to the *confinamiento* as a very revealing time in which, by reducing the number of artistic techniques available to her, she was able to broaden her practical knowledge of those she wanted to deal with, as well as to focus on her chosen subject matter and to explore ways of artistic expression that were authentic to herself. She also began to see art as a collective activity in which another human being, the viewer, who can resonate with the created work, relate to it, or simply observe it, is an extremely important part of the art. The artist continued her formal explorations during a foreign exchange in Finland, focusing on the dry point technique.

II. 6.

Arina Zamyslova. Processes of rejection of creative frameworks in traditional drawing

Arina Zamyslova, born 1999, uses figurative, narrative art in her artistic practice. At the moment (2021-2022), she is an emerging artist and her creative explorations are focused in the area of realistic drawing and illustration combining watercolour, drawing and transfer. She creates artist's books and works in small formats. She devotes a great deal of attention to portraiture. At the time of the research interview, Arina Zamyslova was a master's student of Producción Artística, at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Polytechnic University of Valencia⁶⁴. Her work has been exhibited since 2016 in group exhibitions, among others at Universitat Politècnica de València, Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Toledo, Matadero de Godella.

For Arina, the time of the *confinamiento* was a time of moving away from familiar structures and relationships and opening up artistically. Before the *confinamiento*, the artist was a follower of Hare-Krishna, and she was also in a relationship with a follower of this Hindu religious tradition. During the *confinamiento*, she began to perceive this religion as a system of precepts and commandments, directed at the follower. In the interview, she described her feelings as being surrounded by these injunctions, which left

⁶⁴ Zamyslova Arina, *Alas de plástica. Sobre nosotros*, <https://alas-de-plastica4.webnode.es/sobre-nosotros/>, access 30.10.2022, 20:50.

no room for equal validation for those not following the Hare-Krishna religious tradition. The system no longer suited her. Despite her earlier fervour, she began to question its meaning. She found no support from her partner, who dismissed her reasoning as “impure”.

She spent the *confinamiento* in Alicante. Initially, before the state of emergency was imposed, she went there to get away from the bustling Valencian festivities of Fallas. She went to visit her partner. The *confinamiento* was declared while she was there. The restrictions found her far from the house where she lived on a daily basis. She did not have her full artistic equipment with her in Alicante, such as paper in the amount she would normally use in a similar amount of time. Although she says she draws with whatever she has at hand, her leading medium seems to be crayons, pencils, watercolours and, occasionally, transferred elements merged into the drawing. Due to a lack of drawing materials, some of the artist's quarantine period works were made on the interiors of cardboard cereal boxes and other food packaging.

In the process of leaving her previous faith, Arina did not have support and understanding from her partner, nor the people she stayed with at home gave her a sense of community. She says that she experienced the *confinamiento* mainly on her own and alone, precisely because of her leaving the religion, and also because of her leaving the relationship with her unsupportive partner.

Opening up in art

Arina, in the meeting with me, said that before *confinamiento* she really wanted to create figurative religious art⁶⁵. Above all, it was important to her that her art should carry a message - a very important, religious message, one that glorifies God. As such, to capture the God's essence, the work would need to be ideal. This pursuit of the ideal blocked her creative efforts and prevented her from creating works full of message. After all, how would she undertake this task with the possibility of failure? How could she grasp religious themes without being sure that it would be possible to execute them as perfectly as intended? So she did not undertake them, feeling overwhelmed by the potential responsibility involved and believing that she did not have the right amount of time to

⁶⁵ Research meeting with Zamyslova Arina, 08.11.2021, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

complete them. This difficult state of simultaneously desiring great actions and being blocked by their magnitude, subsided with the advent of the *confinamiento*.

Suddenly, together with the start of *confinamiento*, Arina's predetermined calendar of tasks to complete, collapsed. Classes at the university turned into remote learning. The timetable, which was automatically supplemented with activities, turned into a blank slate waiting to be filled. That's when Arina began to question some of the assignments, taking a critical approach to what she wanted to fill her time with. Does she want to fill it with creating works of a religious nature? Do they certainly give her joy? Is it pleasant to paint them? If she can do whatever she wants, will she choose to do it? This sense of freedom has allowed her to focus on drawing and documenting everyday life without feeling burdened by the responsibility of the importance of the message. At the same time, her practical skills and sensitivity allowed her to capture some of the details of this reality. In the comic book created during and immediately after the *confinamiento* period, which describes this time, the artist visually describes situations from everyday life of *confinamiento* and the transitional time after it, in a light way⁶⁶. Here we see people wearing disposable masks felted from overuse, exchanging observations over a daily newspaper article treating about wearing the masks for longer than they are fit for. "I've had mine since May." - says one of the comic's characters. "I wash mine." - says the other. A solitary bike rally in a mask, with fogged-up glasses, is juxtaposed with a drawing of a bar, to which the cyclist arrives, and in which she immediately pulls off her mask because it is allowed. The cartoon also shows a run before curfew in order to be home in time before the danger of getting a fine for being outdoors. What we see in the work is not only a humorous story, but it also has a beautiful visual layer. The finely detailed drawings shimmer with a variety of textures: the predominant medium is pencil, combined with watercolour and graphic transfer. The richness of the structures tempts and invites you inside the world depicted in the comic, while being balanced in means and colours. The matter takes on an organic character⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Arina Zamyslova, *Medidas de seguridad*, Valencia 2021:

https://issuu.com/arinadmaiz/docs/comic_medidas_de_seguridad_arinadmaiz, access 17.11.2021, 12:43

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The comic was designed in the form of drawings created in a sketchbook with rough paper, approximately A4 format. The original drawings are a little larger than the physical, printed form of the comic⁶⁸. (fig.1.)

Formally my attention is drawn to pages 14 - 15⁶⁹. They use the technique of transfer, which means that the printing ink from a newspaper is transferred to the surface of paper using a solvent and then pressing the print firmly onto the surface of the paper. On the transfer from the print, the artist continues the drawing: she adds a layer of watercolour or delicate pencil drawing. This treatment was also used on the foldout of pages 18-19⁷⁰, where an excerpt from a daily newspaper article was transferred directly. For me, pages 12 - 13⁷¹ are examples of extraordinary attention to detail. This can be seen particularly in the sensitive drawing of the trees. In opposition to the simplified face of the driver in the reproduction above, the image of the palm trees shows their plumes in the soft light of the late day, giving depth to the drawing. An interesting metaphor is constructed by the artist on page 24. Here we see a landscape, repositioned in bird's-eye perspective, thick with fields. The fields are not filled with crops, but with reams of newspaper text. Is this overwhelming information about the COVID-19 pandemic? A hunched figure walks through the field. It seems to be alone. The drawing of the scene is complemented by a cypress tree, that could possibly be a reference to the cypresses in the painting "A field of wheat with cypresses" by Vincent Van Gogh⁷². This reference confirms, in my opinion, the loneliness of the protagonist, evoking an association with Vincent van Gogh - lost, alone, with no peace⁷³.

The combination of so many graphic solutions results in the visual richness of the comic. The artist balances them, not leading to an overload of various forms, but smoothly combining them into one coherent visual narrative, which is on the verge of realism and fairy tale, letting go of detail in appropriate places, using metaphors that give the reader freedom of perception and room for their own reflections along with reading the comic book.

⁶⁸ Sketchbook analysis during the research meeting with the artist, 08.11.2021.

⁶⁹ Arina Zamyslova, *Medidas de seguridad*, p. 14-15.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *A Wheatfield, with Cypresses*, Vincent van Gogh, 1889, Oil on canvas, 72.1 × 90.9 cm, w: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/vincent-van-gogh-a-wheatfield-with-cypresses>, dostęp: 17.11.2021, 16:00.

⁷³ Vincent van Gogh, *Listy do brata*, publ. Czytelnik, Warsaw 1970.

Compared to Arina's other work, where illustrative simplification seems to prevail, the comic is a very meticulous drawing study, speaking to the viewer with textures, wrinkles, irony, dirt and, ultimately, hope. It gives a reassuring ending. It also asks the reader for their thoughts. Arina seems to find herself in this open narrative.

An important commentary on the artist's work, in my opinion, are her words from her bachelor's thesis - an art book wrapped around the theme of the creative process. “Para dibujar ‘bien’ no puedes pasarlo mal” – “To draw ‘well’, you can't have a bad time doing it” (Fig. II.6.3.). This playfulness with visual forms can be seen in the work on the individual pages of the comic about *confinamiento*.



Fig. II.6.1. Printed author's copy of the comics „Medidas de Seguridad”, Arina Zamyslova; Original drawing in the sketchbook by Arina Zamyslova, property of the artist. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.



Fig. II.6.2. Original drawings for comics “Medidas de seguridad” in the sketchbook by Arina Zamyslova, property of the artist. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.



Fig. II. 6. 3. Page from the artist book by Arina Zamyslova, with words "To draw well, you can't have a bad time doing it". Property of the artist. Photography thanks to courtesy of the artist.

III.

Artistic recordings of the experience of *confinamiento* in my own art practice

The state of uncertainty evident among those in Spain in March 2020 was something I had never experienced before.

The time leading up to that moment for my generation – people born in the 1990s - was quiet. We were aware of opportunities that tens of generations before us - even our grandparents and parents - had not had. These included everyday freedoms as well as the conveniences of extremely rapid advances in technology. Even if, within our generation itself, these were more or less accessible, depending on financial possibilities and the amount of free time available, they somehow created the scenery in which the generation of people born in the 1990s lived. It revolved in a world in which low-cost airlines seemed to be replacing long-distance coaches. Within their financial means, people could travel within the borders of the European Union without worrying about visas. The ability to travel by train, which offered several journeys a day on most of the large routes connecting major cities within the country, and to use car roads was something obvious. In urban agglomerations, many people lived several tens of kilometres from where they worked, and so they used car roads or public transport on daily basis to access their workplaces. The cultural offerings of the larger urban centres were rich in theatrical events, art exhibitions and concerts. In summer, various cities hosted street theatres and festivals. People crowded to see the mimics of actors. Art could be encountered not only in large cultural centres, but also in smaller galleries and even in venues. Cities offered access to cinemas, swimming pools, parks with benches, children's playgrounds. At fairs and markets, it was possible to see various examples of craftsmanship, taste food from other parts of Poland. Shops were full of products from all over the world. More and more establishments offered dishes inspired by the cuisine of other countries. Cafés outdid themselves in creating an atmosphere that would lure the weary passer-by inside. The younger generation could be out at a time that suited them - they only heard about the curfew from their parents, or older siblings and cousins. It did not affect them personally. They could hug each other in greeting. Dance with each other. Hold on to the barriers on

the bus. Sit side by side on the same picnic blanket. Walk down the pavement together with someone. Standing in a park to watch the sky. Split a cake with someone.

That's a lot of freedom, liberty and privilege.

Of course, there were, and still are, important problems: dependent on health, financial situation, inequality, discrimination, level of education one got, family situation, access to culture, level of safety in the family, related to labour market conditions. Nonetheless, prior to the pandemic, we lived in a time when epidemics did not affect us on a national level, the strictures regulating the movement of the whole population did not appear, and opportunities gave the illusory impression of always being available.

III. 1.

Dynamic changes in the situation. Fear. Closure. Silence.

On the day the state of alert began, I was in Valencia, Spain. It was my third week in the city. I did not know the people living there. Also, the city itself was new to me. The purpose of my arrival in Valencia was to complete a semester of doctoral studies at the Universitat Politècnica de València. I came to this university to learn the secrets of photopolymer graphics under the supervision of Prof Ana Tomás Miralles. I gained an introduction to photopolymer matrix knowledge during my Master's studies, when I realised participation in a photopolymer printmaking workshop, organised as part of the Erasmus+ project by Prof. Sara Sanz-Nisa, from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Almeria in Spain, which took place at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce, Italy in 2015/2016. Printmaking itself from photopolymer matrixes was not unfamiliar to me, as it was an essential part of the non-compulsory internship at the Manera Negra fine art printmaking studio in Barcelona, which I completed as part of the Erasmus+ programme in 2015. However, I wanted to acquire knowledge, experience and skills in the area of preparing matrixes to work with this technique, described as non-toxic. The area of my work changed into photopolymer film matrix and became more specific when I started a semester of study under the supervision of dr Ana Tomas Miralles. It was her who told me about the technique of photopolymer film, which I became much curious about and decided to explore, and in the process of working on it, find a matrix material that can be reused (after the apparent end of the product's life cycle) to further reduce the toxicity of

the work - by reducing the amount of waste that would remain after the printmaking process.

After the introductory class, I started working with photopolymer film - a graphic technique that was new to me and which, like photopolymer printmaking, got me hugely interested in the possibilities inherent in its technology. I made a series of samples in order to understand the process of the technique and to see which drawing materials would give the desired effect in the matrix work. With the help of Prof Ana Tomas Miralles, I tested different types of photopolymer films to find the one that would suit me best. After working on the samples, I slowly got to know the city. Valencia is a particularly distinctive place in March because of the Fallas celebrations taking place there. These were to be held in 2020 and, as is the case every year, their date fell in the first half of March. These multi-day festivities usually begin on the first of March, when the *mascletàs* takes place, which can be described as the very loud firing of several firework sequences in daylight. This is repeated every day at fourteen o'clock in the square in front of Valencia City Hall until the festivities end. As the days go by, more and more colourful figures appear in the city, often several floors high. Some almost match the height of the surrounding buildings. The city becomes fairytale-like, full of colour and sculptures - sometimes mocking and critical, but usually very decorative. The closer it gets to the arrival of the culminating day of Fallas, the more the sculptures multiply and grow, brought to the city streets. Against this increasingly colourful backdrop, the frightening news of the arrival of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was being reported. At the same time, many of the planned elements of the Fallas celebrations were still being organised, with parades, and evening dance gatherings of those involved in the preparation of the festivities, arranged in the open air. Some of these events were attended by crowds of people, while others gave the impression of being slightly deserted - especially when compared to the lavish Fallas celebrations in subsequent years. At times, crowds with a density comparable to the proverbial tin of sardines included people insecurely covering their mouths and noses with a scarf held up with their hand. In short time, these images began to intermingle more and more with those of people wracked with helplessness, trying to buy a sense of security along with a jar of chickpeas, three kilos of pasta and a supply of toilet paper⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ Kozłowska Anna, Abramowska Joanna, Gołaszewski Mateusz, Solecka Karolina, „*I kup jeszcze papier toaletowy*”, czyli zachowania konsumentów w obliczu pandemii: <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/meritum/i-kup-jeszcze-papier-toaletowy-czyli-zachowania-konsumentow-w-obliczu-pandemii>, access 25.07.2020, 15:00.

The rule of social proof⁷⁵ told them to prepare their house to serve as a refuge away from others, while the city was still filled with foodtrucks selling sweets: *churros* and *boñuelos*, arriving as every year especially for the Fallas festival. This dissonance was complemented by the sight of pedestrians, increasingly showing visible signs of uncertainty as they made perfectly normal (pre-March 2020) manoeuvres to pass by other pedestrians. Many were embarrassed to momentarily hold their breath as they passed others, or to change sides of the street to limit contact with the air surrounding others.

"The virus has all the characteristics that make it frightening -
it's new, it's invisible, we have no control over it, we are
involuntarily exposed to the threat, which creates a sense of
insecurity."⁷⁶

Some of the elements of reality that we thought were fixed, have disintegrated. Full shelves in shops are an image to which the *millenials* generation and younger generations are accustomed. Sudden shortages of selected groceries and personal hygiene products, the cancellation of events, the closure of cultural centres and education centres, the cancellation of theatre performances, cinema screenings, lack of access to meeting venues followed by several months of confinement at home - these are completely unexpected events, something the average person was not prepared for. We were frightened by the danger surrounding us from all sides – the danger of being infected, or of bringing illness to loved ones, of being alone in hospital, and even the death or loss of family members or friends.

Even the weather of the first weeks of the *confinamiento* in Valencia seemed to share the sadness and grief of those days, covering up the sunshine and weeping rain.

The statues prepared for Fallas were not burned in March 2020 - except for one, set up in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento. This was done symbolically, without an audience. Video documentation was posted on the Internet.

After tumultuous moments of panic, in which suddenly, unexpectedly, almost everything began to close down, government decisions followed at a dizzying pace. Passenger planes stopped flying over Europe and ferries stopped sailing in the Mediterranean. Pedestrians

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

disappeared from the streets of cities, screaming motorbikes, shouts coming from cafés and bars, cars and the sound of their engines stopped. We sat at home. In silence.

III.1.1.

Linocuts from reduced matrixes - pandemic as destruction

The danger that COVID-19 carried was that of a previously unknown, for many people fatal infectious disease, transmitted by the droplets. Those infected with the disease had to be isolated, for the safety of the others.

In practice, this meant not being able to meet a person with COVID-19, including those in a critical condition. Resulting from safety concerns, there was no possibility to grab their hand, hug them and say goodbye.

This also often meant not being able to meet people in hospital, including if they were not ill with COVID-19. In many places, it was also not possible to visit people who were dying, even if their condition was critical. The pandemic threw people into a terrifying loneliness in their last moments of existence. It hung over the world with successive waves of illness and death, not at all disappearing between the ominous humps of charts updated daily by the health services.

The first weeks of the state of alert in Spain were characterised by a dynamic increase in illnesses and deaths. The report of 13.03.2020, dated 15.00, gave a figure of 4209 sick people. This was a frightening number - the disease was new and very dangerous in Europe. The data were updated daily. Checking them could be a new ritual at a fixed time. The pandemic was selecting people in its own familiar way. Its great unhealthy grip was pulling people out of the earthly crowd, deciding which of them would die.

During the first days of the *confinamiento*, I began to a scene that metaphorically depicted what was happening and the impression of danger that one had. I used ink on etching paper. The largest element of the composition was a figure, which in relation to the others was huge. It was an allegory of the pandemic itself. Its emaciated body was not clothed, but had no erotic qualities. On the contrary, it was characterised rather by the sharpness and tension of the pose; there was nothing casual about it, rather a calm calculation. Long fin-like feet rested on the edge of the lake. A skinny hand was stretched almost to its full length, in a narrow palm holding a small figure picked out from the restless crowd below.

Pandemic was examining the figure, turning towards it with its head ending in a long, sharp beak. In the background was a second Pandemic figure, in a crouch, impassively holding one of the crowd of small creatures. The entire lower half of the composition was a crowd of small fleeing creatures, and a lake, through which some small creatures were escaping as well. They, too, had beaks, but forming a coherent whole with their roundish bodies with flightless wings. Several of them swam swiftly across the lake. Their large round eyes expressed terror, the positions were dynamic, the creatures were on the run, usually in groups, sometimes holding hands, sometimes marking the direction of escape with their hands, only some were alone.

Based on this drawing, I cut my large-format linocut presented as part of my dissertation. I made it in a reduced matrix technique, in a closed number of two layers and with a limited number of colours and colour transitions. It is kept in dark tones, as are the two linocuts of smaller formats that accompany it. The reduced matrix technique has been used in colour linocuts since the 20th century, in opposition to the previously used method of cutting separate matrixes for each colour layer. Historians point to Pablo Picasso's print entitled "Still Life under the Lamp" from 1962⁷⁷, as it is a reference point in the knowledge of this technology. The prints of each colour layer are preserved in this work of Picasso, and it is therefore of a documentary nature. The reduced matrix allows a print with several colours, each of them cut from a single same matrix, as opposed to the previously used method of cutting a separate matrix for each colour layer. This innovation was introduced by Pablo Picasso, and for that reason can also be called "the Picasso method". The colours are added in stages - first the colour of the paper is cut in the matrix, if it is to be used. Ink is applied to the linoleum using a rubber roller, a sheet of paper is applied, and then the paper is pressed down, usually using a printing press, although it is also possible to do this by hand, using a tool of one's choice, which one use to press the paper down. At this stage, the entire planned print run is made and then the prints are dried. When printing subsequent layers, it is no longer possible to extend the print run, as the first colour is already cut from the matrix. In order to add another colour, the linoleum has to be cleaned of ink and another colour has to be cut out with a chisel, and then the process of printing and drying has to be repeated in successive layers. When the last of the colours is reflected, the matrix is "reduced" - hence the name "reduced matrix" - its

⁷⁷ British Museum: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7075-9, access 28.05.2023, 10:00.

printing surface already contains only the planes that carry the last colour, while the rest is cut out. My experience with the reduced matrix technique began in the Fundamentals of Printmaking class taught by Prof. Czesław Tumielewicz and Magdalena Hanysz-Stefańska, PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, where I received an introduction to this method of working with matrix. I then explored this technology in the Linocut Studio, where, under the direction of Prof. Janusz Akermann, I completed an annex to my Bachelor's degree, and then, after further years of experience in colour linocut, my Master's degree. In the Linocut Studio I have made prints in which I have faced working with different formats, compositions and amounts of colour. I explored both working with multiple layers of colour and a painterly application of paint, as well as composing an image from a limited number of three or four colours. I applied this colour limitation, for example, in my thesis summarising my MA studies, entitled "Merry-go-round", which was shown as an installation consisting of three sheets of linocut, presented in cylindrical form, and it was only possible to see the whole work after walking around it. The work received the recognition of the Polish graphic arts community, manifested by its presentation at the XII Quadriennale of Polish Woodcut and Linocut at the Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions in Olsztyn, where it was nominated for an award, and at the X Biennale of Student Graphics at the Arsenal Gallery in Poznań. The installation panel titled "Gambling" was exhibited at the 10th Polish Graphics Triennial at the Rondo Sztuki Gallery in Katowice. Exploring the area of a narrowed number of colour layers is not only a major design challenge, as it requires a different way of constructing colour and value areas than is the case with works on which paint is laid down in a painterly manner. It is also a means of expression that can be a tool for building contrast and tension between graphic elements. In the case of my thesis, I used this method of image construction in a series dealing with aspects of pandemonium related to loneliness and death. Both the colours used and the contrasts between the cut and the colour planes convey the emotions I depict in these prints. Also my prints with multiple colour layers, made under the direction of Prof. Janusz Akermann, have taken part in many exhibitions in Poland and abroad, including in Hong Kong as part of the Hong Kong Graphic Art Fiesta in 2014/15. I have used my experience of working with multiple layers of colour in a series of prints included in my PhD thesis, showing reflections of the extra-pandemic world, described in chapter III.6.

In the three prints that make up the series presented as part of my dissertation, I have limited the number of colours and selected them mutually in such a way as to emphasise the nature of their subject matter. The composition is dominated by a very dark colour on the border between dark blue and black, contrasting with the light linocut “drawing”.

The two smaller works depict isolation, loneliness and an inability to help. I have visualised these elements through figures surrounded by a series of translucent panels of glass, threatening and isolating them. In the first linocut, we see three figures and, above the composition, a bust with a long, triangular beak that is huge in relation to them - motionless, ominous, looking into the eyes of those viewing the print. The two figures below it are trying to contact the third of the composition's protagonists, isolated from them by a semi-transparent sheet. In the second graphic, I have depicted two figures, one of whom is cowering before the panels of transparent glass falling on her. She drapes her head in a defensive gesture. The other figure tries to run to rescue her, extending its hands in a caring gesture. However, it is separated by the glass from the person in danger. These two linocuts are done using the reduced matrix method, with three layers of colour. They are maintained in a limited colour palette. The darkness surrounding the scenes is dominant in the compositions.



Fig. III.1.1.1. Barbara Leszczyńska inks the matrix of the big-size linocut, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023.



Fig. III.1.1.2. Barbara Leszczyńska hangs the linocut print to dry, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023.



Fig. III.1.1.3. Barbara Leszczyńska checks the linocut print after making it, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023.



Fig. III.1.1.4. Barbara Leszczyńska Rolls the ink over the matrix of big size linocut, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023.

III. 2.

The need for a visual record of the time of the *confinamiento* and of my feelings connected with it

The surrounding silence, the depopulation of the streets, the phenomena of collective fear that I had not experienced before, the dynamic changes in the situation, the invisible danger hanging in the air and the fear for myself and loved ones, made me feel the need to record this period visually.

The confinement itself, carried out on such a massive scale, struck me as deeply interesting phenomena. One of the forces that kept the population in their homes, apart from the top-down order, was the fear associated with leaving, the need to change one's actions as a result of sudden and immediate danger, in order to protect oneself⁷⁸. A study carried out online by researchers from the University of Valencia, among people residing in Spain at the time, describes the situation in an interesting way⁷⁹. The researchers collected data describing the living conditions, habits and feelings experienced during the ninety-nine days of the *confinamiento*. Residents of the Valencian Community made up the largest part of the research group (6014 out of 8387 people surveyed). The data was collected over a period of seventeen days, 28.04.2020 - 14.05.2020. Only 12.43% of the respondents declared that they did not feel fearful about leaving their home during the *confinamiento*. Only 16.5% of respondents indicated that they leave the house for work. Respondents indicated an increase in the frequency of certain household chores during the *confinamiento*, particularly dinner preparation, cleaning surfaces and mopping floors, among others⁸⁰. Another study, conducted online by a research group consisting of: Miguel Ángel Navas-Martín, José Antonio López-Bueno, Ignacio Oteiza, Teresa Cuervo-Vilches Routines, among the population living in Spain between 30.04.2020 and 22.06.2020, shows an increase in stress, feelings of insecurity and cases of depression.

⁷⁸ Miguel Ángel Navas-Martín, José Antonio López-Bueno, Ignacio Oteiza, Teresa Cuervo-Vilches Routines, *Time Dedication and Habit Changes in Spanish Homes during the COVID-19 Lockdown. A Large Cross-Sectional Survey*, w: *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, 18, 12176, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Virgilio Pérez (a), Cristina Aybar (a), Jose M. Pavia (b), *Dataset of the COVID-19 lockdown survey conducted by GIPEyOP in Spain*, (“a”= GIPEyOP, Department of Applied Economics, University of Valencia, Walencja, Hiszpania “b”= GIPEyOP, UMMICS, Department of Applied Economics, University of Valencia, Walencja, Hiszpania), publ. Elsevier Inc, 2021. W: Data in Brief 40 (2022) 107700, access: <https://roderic.uv.es/bitstream/handle/10550/86130/157464.pdf?sequence=1>, 18.05.2023, 11:50.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

According to the survey, only 22.7% of respondents lived alone during this period, while among those sharing a flat, 14.6% shared it with someone over 65 and 36% with a child under 18. This is significant because it was the co-housing group that developed new habits and a new agenda, according to the study. It was also noted that building new habits during closure was more common among women than men. Building new habits was also more frequent in groups that had a child among the residents⁸¹. Those sharing a flat with people over 65 were the least likely to leave the house⁸². The researchers also looked at the activities that respondents left the home to perform. Among these activities, taking out the rubbish received a lot of attention in the study. This in itself seems to illustrate the nature of confinement - for taking out the rubbish is such a short activity that we do not normally record it as “going outside” or “leaving the house”.

What was particularly noticeable to the naked eye, were the deserted streets and queues at shop entrances. At 10 p.m., and later at 8 p.m., there were collective exits to balconies and standing in windows where the society applauded for the doctors and paramedics. Many other behaviours were also seen, which I will describe later in the dissertation.

The time that occurred in Spain in mid-March 2020 stirred up many emotions in me. From the level of the person experiencing it. But also from the perspective of a researcher. I recognised that something was happening that had not affected my generation so far. And that it was bound to have effects not only demographically and those studied by psychologists, but also visible on a cultural and artistic level. I decided to investigate the latter area.

What pushed me to think that the closure situation of the time of *confinamiento* would have a significant impact on the work of certain artists?

Collectivities of people have experienced many dramatic moments in their history: wars, persecutions, epidemics. Some affected the inhabitants of a country, others of a continent. These events have echoed in art and culture. Sometimes entire generations of people involved in them were later referred to by a common name by historians. An extreme example of trauma that affected a whole group of artists known in Poland was the generation of writers born around 1920, known as the “Columbus’ generation”⁸³. They

⁸¹ Miguel Ángel Navas-Martín... p.7.

⁸² Ibid, p.8.

⁸³ Beata Michalec, Tadeusz Skoczek (ed.), *Pokolenie Kolumbów. Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński znany i nieznan oraz pozostali poeci Powstania Warszawskiego*, Warsaw 2021, p.7.

were referred to as a group in this way because of a common generational experience. They experienced the Second World War at a young age, which largely shaped their literary work. The phenomenon of shared generational experience is one of the sources of generational differences - the different experiences of a collective can shape their different attitudes⁸⁴. Examples of the repercussions of historical events in culture and art that particularly inspired me were Boccaccio's "Decameron" and - despite the different nature of the threat of war and the violence associated with it - Andrzej Wróblewski's "Shooting" painting series. One of the artists that particularly inspire me is Sebastião Salgado, a Brazilian-born photographer who documents various aspects of human activity across the globe, creating albums and exhibitions dedicated to workers, famine, war. The artist worked on each of these over a period of several years or more, and in order to show the diversity of experiences, he took his photographs in many countries, sometimes travelling across several continents for a single project⁸⁵.

The first example, "The Decameron", is a novel by Boccaccio, which action is set during the plague pandemic. The work begins with a description of the symptoms of the disease, the powerlessness of medicine, the odor of the heavy plague air, the city on which streets the corpses of the dead were dumped. It describes the change in customs that took place during the plague. In the introduction, we read mainly about people's behaviour, their instincts, their dilemmas. Boccaccio distinguished four groups of people: those who decided to flee the city, sometimes leaving old people or children behind, others who, having stayed in the city, indulged in drunkenness and debauchery without thinking of the plague. There were others who walked around the city neither restraining themselves nor living debaucherously, and their means of "protection" were fragrant flowers and roots, with which they "blinded" their sense of smell of the unpleasant odours of bodies decomposing in the streets, believing that warding off the smell warded off the danger of contracting the disease. There was also a part who, having "gathered in their homes"⁸⁶, cut themselves off from contact with the outside world. Most of the book's content, however, is made up of stories completely detached from the description of the course of

⁸⁴ Encyclopedia PWN, "pokolenie" ["generation"]: <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/pokolenie;3959194>, access 24.11.2022, 21:25.

⁸⁵ *Wystawa: Genesis. Fotografie Sebastião Salgado*: <https://lublin.eu/kultura/wydarzenia/wystawa-genesis-fotografie-sebastiao-salgado,39417,w.html>, access 25.11.2022, 13:27.

⁸⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Dekameron*, publ. Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, project Wolne Lektury, p.4-5. Text based on: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Dekameron*, tr. Edward Boyé, publ. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1975.

the pandemic as such. The main characters are seven women and three men, who act as narrators - telling each other stories in order to survive the time of the plague in isolation from the dramatic reality. Much more extensive than the description of the plague pandemic itself are the chapters describing stories unrelated to it, told by the characters in the novel. "The Decameron" is, as I see it, a documentation of a strong need to detach oneself from overwhelming reality, to construct for oneself a world in which the spun tale, narrative, joke or moral is important, and to replace real tribulations with being in this spun world. Perhaps the expedition of the work's protagonists to a mansion outside the city to tell each other stories can be likened to the modern-day confinement to a house facing a screen broadcasting Netflix productions. According to the study cited earlier, those under 35 experiencing *confinamiento* in 2020 were more likely to lean towards relaxing, watching TV and reading⁸⁷. Replaying the stories of fictional characters, living only within the narrative, subtracts the submerged viewer from the weight of the real day.

„My drawings, therefore - they are just such a humble viewing of life.”⁸⁸

- Andrzej Wróblewski

The second example cited is a series of paintings entitled "Shootings", by the Polish painter Andrzej Wróblewski (1927 - 1957), relating to his experiences during the Second World War. The series of paintings depicting shootings is a visual record of horror, of the powerlessness of the individual in the face of the destructive machinery of war - and in the face of death. In the series of paintings, the artist depicted figures awaiting death and their bodies undergoing destruction. On the one hand, these works operate with realism, legible to the general viewer, but on the other, they are constructed through the use of metaphor. The bodies are deformed and defragmented into geometrised parts, defying the rules of physics. They seem to derive from Cubism, while at the same time not fully surrendering to it - which was in line with Andrzej Wróblewski's intention to rid his work

⁸⁷ Miguel Ángel Navas-Martín, José Antonio López-Bueno, Ignacio Oteiza, Teresa Cuerdo-Vilches *Routines, Time Dedication and Habit Changes in Spanish Homes during the COVID-19 Lockdown...*, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Andrzej Wróblewski, *Ze wstępu do wystawy rysunków*, 1956, w: Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, Centralne Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych, *Andrzej Wróblewski. Wystawa pośmiertna*, Pałac Sztuki, Cracow, 1958, p. 4.

of artistic conventions⁸⁹. The strong colour may be a result of the influence of Cezanne's painting on Andrzej Wróblewski's artistic sensibility, and the metaphorical nature may bring to mind the figure's unreal relationship with gravity from Marc Chagall's work. The figures being shot fall apart - they seem to burst into pieces under the impact of the calamity of mankind falling on them. They do not succumb to the bullet in a realistic way - there is no blood in the paintings. There is heartbreaking death and the stigma left on society and the artist by the war. A record of the senseless psychological violence brought on by the control of one over the other, the horror of those in the prison of constant danger. The disintegration under the weight of oppression. Wróblewski's paintings from the 'Dissection' series have a profound effect on the sensitivity of those who come into contact with them. Andrzej Wróblewski's works resonate not only with Polish audiences, but go beyond our native cultural and historical context. Among others, from November 2015 to the end of February 2016, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid hosted an exhibition showcasing the artist's works. They have been described as representing the most difficult realities, exploring the deepest and most hidden feelings, depicting the traumas of the Second World War⁹⁰. This need for Wróblewski's paintings to be known also by other nationalities seems to confirm that the documentation of experiences related to a tragedy is extremely important for the human collective - also the artistic, painterly interpretation, using metaphor and referring both to events and to feelings, emotions, fear, horror, and therefore to phenomena as sources of universal feelings and emotions. At this point of consideration I would also like to refer to the painting „Shooting” by Wojciech Fangor⁹¹. This painting was presented from October 2022 to March 2023 at the National Museum in Gdansk, in the Abbots' Palace⁹², as part of the exhibition “Fangor. Beyond the Painting” curated by Wojciech Zmorzyński⁹³, where I had the opportunity to see it. This small canvas, vibrating with intense colours, condenses the most traumatic memories for the author. From the film presented at the exhibition, in which Wojciech Fangor talks about his work, one can learn that the painting “Shooting” was, in a way, therapeutic for the author - it allowed him to visualise the

⁸⁹ Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, Centralne Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych, *Andrzej Wróblewski. Wystawa pośmiertna*, Pałac Sztuki, Cracow, 1958, p. 6.

⁹⁰ © 2015 Andrzej Wróblewski Foundation, *Folleto de „Andrzej Wróblewski. Verso / reverso”*, Exhibition 17.11.2015 – 28.02.2016, Parque del Retiro. Palacio de Velázquez, organised by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía i Museo de Arte Moderno de Varsovia, curators: Eric de Chasse, Marta Dziewańska

⁹¹ Wojciech Fangor, *Rozstrzelanie*, 1946, oil on canvas, 75 × 89 cm, private collection:
<https://www.mng.gda.pl/wystawy/fangor-poza-obraz/>, access 04.02.2023, 14:50.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

terrifying moment of being against a wall and seeing only the barrels of German rifles pointed at himself. Speaking about his recollection of that moment, the artist emphasised that what he remembered most from it were the small black circles of the barrels⁹⁴. Not the faces of the people who held them, but the circles that were to decide the immediate end of his life. The rest of the image was jarring, irrelevant. All that mattered was the point carrying the threat. I think this description is very important in the perception of the work. The painting itself is painted with a love of colour. If one were to take away the subject matter and reduce it to a form, it would be a composition of beautiful, rippling colours, painted with strong, short brushstrokes. The abstract space behind the soldiers, painted in bright blues, greens, broken with white and mottled with warm pink, could depict a beautiful spring orchard. This painting appeals to the viewer all the more strongly because the dramatic scene is set in an unrealistic space in which the play of colours and patches seems to contrast with the terrifying image of a traumatic moment in the artist's life. Fangor himself admitted that he suffered from post-traumatic syndrome after surviving the abrasion of death at the hands of soldiers. There were times when he felt surges of fear so great that, despite being aware of safety, he felt an immediate need to hide. After visually recounting the sight that terrified him, he was able to calm down.

The pandemic was a different kind of danger. It was not aimed at nationality or based on hatred. Fortunately, no one was shooting at us. We were, however, surrounded by the invisible spectre of lonely death hunting us or members of our families. Simple, everyday activities could prove to be a threat. We longed for a world full of encounters, while at the same time dreading it. Isolation was prolonged as the weeks went by. People, sick or not, were dying alone. The hospital gates were impassable for family members wishing to visit their loved ones one last time. The nature of possible responses to the situation was also different - one was incarcerated in a specific place, with no possibility of changing location. Movement was not only forbidden, other than to meet the basic needs of life, but also constituted a risk to health and life.

Aside from the need to document the period that followed and the feelings that came with it, I was interested to see how the artists undertake the documentation of the most difficult to 2020 moments of the times they lived in.

⁹⁴ *Przestrzenie Fangora*, dir. Piotr Weychert, colour video, Poland 2005.

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I began to record insights from the time of the pandemic in the form of drawings and illustrations. Initially, I searched for a suitable form for the series. The first of the works “In the air. Covid-19 I”, which I drew before the state of alert was imposed, is drawn in ink and watercolour, combined with pencil. The character on the work is a fantastic creature, different from the creatures depicted in the following works. It has seven hands. He covers his face, uncertainly shades one eye, protecting himself from the frightening sights, but spreads his fingers tightly to nevertheless see the situation around him. He covers his long nose with his hands, in a gesture of protection from danger. Two of his hands are transparent, one is gloved. The figure is somewhat hunched over, feet and knees positioned as if struggling against air resistance or shifting uncertainly from foot to foot. Pencil-drawn crowns approach her face. Their sharp tips point in different directions, as if levitating around their own axis carried by the air. In this work I have portrayed the first days of the pandemic, during which we did not know how to behave. Should we walk past the person walking in front of us, or should we change our route to the pavement on the other side of the street? Should we hold our breath and is this sure to prevent the virus from settling inside our nostrils? Where is it? Is it floating in the air, creating a tunnel behind each of us, of potentially dangerous elements mixed in with the exhaled air? On the streets of Valencia, one could see people holding their breath while passing other pedestrians on the pavement, switching sides of the street. Dog owners were also less likely to allow their pets to greet each other at close range.



Fig. III.2.1 „In the air. Covid-19 I”, Barbara Leszczyńska, 2020

Other works are done in watercolour with ink drawing, and two are left in the drawing itself. From the first weeks of the *confinamiento* come the drawings: “In the air. Covid-19. I” (described earlier. Fig. III.2.1.), “Iberian Balconies”, “Italian Family”, “Night Heroes. Consolation” and the linear, black and white “Shopping”. In them I explored various moments of the situation we were in. “Iberian Balconies” is a work that shows the life that, in Spain, in part moved to the balconies. There one could go to look at the sky. This place replaced the park bench, the bar or café table, sometimes being a place for neighbours to chat from the distance separating one balcony from another. For some, it has become a place to read a book, for others to drink their morning coffee. Others, lacking this convenience, could only see the people staying there, absent from the streets. “The Italian Family” is a portrait of five people sharing the space of a flat. They perform various activities: they casually eat pasta, talk to a group of people on a laptop screen, cut carrots, play a game using PlayStation, and the last character plays a string instrument on a blanket on the floor. Have they realised so far how much space is taken up by their workspace, how much space is taken up by their children's or housemates' developing interests? Do they know how to reconcile these spaces? The flat is full of the sounds of musical instruments, the smells of dinner just being cooked. Will they find a way to

separate work from leisure? Will their time together be a mutual discovery of each other? “Night Heroes. Consolation” is a work in which I confronted the fear caused by a pandemic and paid tribute to the support that family members bring each other, keeping vigil by each other's side even at night and helping each other get through a difficult time. “Shopping” is a linear drawing with no colour fill. It depicts a figure resembling an anthropomorphised fox, pulling a folding shopping trolley behind him. The trolley is filled to the brim with foodstuffs in very large quantities: we find a five-kilo bag of flour, tinned products, leeks, bottles resembling those containing wine and oil, apples, onions, citrus fruit, cardboard grocery packaging and the outlines of other products. Over its shoulder, the creature has a ten-kilogram net of potatoes slung over its shoulder. These are sights that were encountered in Spain at Easter. Every year, Easter and Christmas shoppers tend to be more consumerist. During the pandemic period, this behaviour has taken on a particular strength, compounded by the characteristic buying of large quantities of dry products to eat later, in case of quarantine or to satisfy nerves. The figure moves proudly, in an upright position with his chin raised. Like a superhero whose cape has been turned into a big, full shopping bag.

Other works created during the closure included “Meeting at the Pond”, “Refreshment”, “Queue to the Dumpster”, “Learning Music” (the only one of the works where the figure drawn appears to be human but is shown from behind, accompanied by a dog, and the whole is more realistic than in the other drawings), “Observations” and “We are at home”.

It was particularly surprising for me to see the queue to the rubbish bin. Several people were standing in the queue for the glass waste bin, with a proper “safe distance” between them, similarly as in the lines to the supermarket. In front of the shops though, the distance was marked out by lines painted on the pavement, while in the queue for the glass bin, it was mapped out involuntarily by the people standing there. Each person had their mouth covered with a mask. Some had also put on sunglasses to shield their eyes from the droplets of air exhaled by others, just to be safe. Some wore disposable gloves, others did not. Those standing in the queue did not speak to each other - they only exchanged greetings. The queue may have been due to the increased consumption of glass-packed foods, such as chickpeas, which were in short supply in the shops at the start of the *confinamiento*. However, one had the impression that this queue was not due to logical reasons, but rather to the need to be among other people. After the *confinamiento* period, I did not see such a popularity of this waste bin again. It is as if the neighbours, longing

to see another human being, have specifically chosen this moment to throw away their bottles and jars - to have an excuse to stay outside longer. "Treat" is a semi-fantastic illustration, inspired by the story of neighbours treating each other to food, transported between balconies in a box on a string, as in fairy tales. "Meeting at the Pond" presents people who went out to see each other, over the distance of the pond separating them, even though where they were, they could have visited each other with less distance at the time. This great distance, however, was due to care, an expression of mutual concern for each other's health so as not to jeopardise it by satisfying longing. "Observations" is a portrait of a person and a dog, leaning with its front paws against the window, through which they observe the street. They spend *confinamiento* time together. They are in a flat, facing a view of the world - a window. The dog, curious, looks outside. The view is the windows of the opposite building, covered by blinds. In the lower right corner of the composition, the hands of a person eating pasta can be seen. „We are at home" is a dreamlike scene with a dog on a sofa. Above him, a person can be seen leaning against a soft piece of furniture. Various fabrics, objects and food are accumulated around the figure. A guitar hangs on the wall. Little imaginary characters are bathing in a bowl, watched by a contented dog. They have climbed into the bowl using a ladder attached to it.

All of these works are on watercolour paper, approximately A4 in size. The skeleton of the works is a permanent illustration drawing and the colour is done in watercolour. The situations depicted are my own observations and two stories told to me.

The main characters of most of the works in this series are fantastic creatures or anthropomorphised animal-like figures. This is a procedure I use in my work. It allows me to condense a record of emotions and situations into a visual form. At the same time, the representation is not narrowed down to specific people with their personal physical characteristics. The emotions I depict are universal. By using an animal form, they offer the possibility for more people to identify with the characters of the works. They also do not indicate a specific person being portrayed. The watercolour paintings are therefore portraits of individuals, groups, societies that find themselves in the situation depicted. The light, colourful form allowed me to describe both the uncertainty and tension of the first days and the astonishing behaviour of people in the later *confinamiento*. By dressing the events in a soft, fantastic visual language, it allows us to tame them. In this first series, I focused on depicting the surprising sights I noticed on my way to the shop, situations

told to me, and interpretations of being at home. In the subsequent cycles, which I will describe in the following chapters of the dissertation, I also illustrated the difficult emotions associated with the *confinamiento*. They include fear, separation from loved ones, and death.

II. 3.

“Diaries from the quarantine” - the need for contact with loved ones and for a visual record of the lockdown experienced by many people in different countries and situations

Being in the *confinamiento* was associated with a variety of emotions. One of my reactions to the state of being cut off from direct interpersonal interaction was the desire for contact. Initially, this was directed towards people close to me. I made online connections with my relatives to find out how they were coping with the pandemic, and to talk about how the world around them had changed. I have also been reading press releases about restrictions issued by governments in different countries and describing individual behaviours. I had already collected my own observations, which I described in the previous paragraph. I also needed to collect the stories that had been told to me – into the form of visual diaries.

In order to carry out this endeavour in a comprehensive way, I started my original project, titled “Quarantine diaries”. I carried out the project from the beginning of July until the end of September 2020, within the framework of the grant programme of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage – “Culture in the Web”. The aim of the project was to talk about the then-current situation of social distance, lockdown and the epidemiological situation, from an international perspective. The series of illustrations was also intended to draw the viewer's attention to the diversity of experiences that people had in relation to the situation in which we found ourselves. Noticing diversity broadens horizons and builds empathy. The project resulted in a series of illustrations whose main characters came from different countries, cultural backgrounds and had a variety of family situations. Some of the illustrations were accompanied by descriptions of the stories of the people portrayed. In “Quarantine diaries”, I showed the multidimensionality of the

pandemic situation and the lockdown, which were the denominators that connected the stories. I used a case study method to create a visual description of this time. The series consisted of twenty artworks. They were titled: “Sprint”, “China”, “Blanket”, “Immensity”, “Birthday”, “Confrontation”, “Trumpet”, “Park”, “Fence”, “Departure”, “Teddy bear”, “Change”, “Balcony”, “Sounds of Nature”, “Door”, “Passage”, “Telephone”, “*”, “Relief”, and “Tomato”. The stories came from China - from the time of the first wave of the epidemic; Poland, Spain - from the *confinamiento* and various phases of the *desconfinamiento*; Germany, Lombardy in Italy - from the period of the highest morbidity in the first wave, and from the time when the number of people dying started to decrease. The people portrayed were the elderly, families, young married couples, single people, people in residential care and their friends, couples, people in a domestic violence crisis, a young woman who stayed in China in quarantine because of her dog, which she would not be able to take away, young parents, cut off from family support in the first months of parenthood. Many of the stories were universal. The illustrations show difficult choices, but also mutual support. They speak about death, separation. They refer to the passage of time, the need for a sense of community, the attempt to combine a difficult situation with the desire to give children beautiful childhood memories. The work on the individual illustrations began with the stories that took part in the “Quarantine diaries” series. I deliberately use the term lockdown here because of the international nature of the stories. The restrictions had a different degree of strictness in different countries. The “Quarantine diaries” project refers to the global situation. The characters in the illustrations resemble anthropomorphised foxes. They are typical of my visual language and in this project they simply represent people who have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. Unifying everyone who shared stories resulted in a series that shows people's stories, their universal emotions, their decisions.

The illustration “Sprint”, which begins the series, shows figures in a shopping centre. The disturbed perspective emphasises the state of uncertainty, the disruption of the existing reality. In the supermarket, we see five people. One of them, in the upper part of the composition, runs across the illustration, pushing a trolley full of shopping in front of him. In it we can see a lot of packages - these are mainly products with long expiry dates. Two figures in the depth of the composition are discussing over the last product on the shelf in front of them. Their facial expressions and gestures express disappointment. In the foreground, we see a male figure standing in the shop as if aimlessly or in reflection.

In his hand he holds a liquid soap with a pump and an oblong box of biscuits. To the right of him, a little behind the shelf, stands a female figure, dressed in wide purple trousers. With her hands she embraces her purchases: a similar liquid soap, a jar of chickpeas and a bottle of olive oil. On the floor beneath her feet lie the remains of chickpeas. The shop shelves have a few products of each category, but emptiness dominates most of them. Some of the products are overturned or lie in disarray.

“China” shows a female figure stroking a small playful dog on the carpet of a flat. The interior is in shades of blue, grey and navy. Outside the windows, skyscrapers can be seen. The flat is decorated in a neutral style. It is an illustration of the story of a young woman from Poland who was in China during the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic. She wanted to return to her home country, but having no travel documents for her dog, she would have had to leave it in China. Not wanting to do so, she stayed with him. They spent the quarantine together. All her friends left China.

“Blanket” is a story from Germany, where, at the time, it was allowed, among other things, to meet with one person or with a couple, keeping social distance. In the illustration, I have depicted a person who organised a meeting in their garden - they invited a friend to join them, asking him to bring his own blanket and cup, so that a distance could be maintained between him and the couple inviting.

“Immensity” is a story from Lombardy, from the moments of highest mortality in the first wave of COVID-19 in Italy. It was told to me by a girl who had started an apprenticeship in a hospital pharmacy in this region of Italy before the pandemic. As the epidemiological situation worsened, her tasks and working hours changed, and she had to search for where to buy masks for example, which were really challenging to find back then. Doctors working in the hospital would come to the pharmacy, and the girl reported to me that her strongest memory of that time was the fear she saw in their eyes. One day one of the doctors looked her in the eye and told her that she had to wear a mask (they were not yet compulsory at that time), and she, seeing the terror in his eyes, wore a mask every day from then on. The illustration is kept in shades of blue and mint, characteristic of the interiors of healthcare premises. In addition to the two figures, the outline of a doctor in a protective suit can be seen behind the glass.

“Birthday” illustrates the compromise between the desire to provide children with beautiful memories of a celebration of their birthdays, and the inability to invite guests

and organise gatherings during the *confinamiento* in Spain. The decorations were hung across an empty street, devoid not only of revelers but even passers-by. They were the only present element of the cancelled celebration. The sound of balloons clattering against each other and paper aeroplanes moved by the wind replaced the birthday music.

“Confrontation” is a common image during the pandemic. Two people encountered each other, walking their dogs. Should they keep caution, or is the distance safe? Do they let the dogs get close to each other, standing at a leash's distance? Although one of the people portrayed is more protected than the other, the impression is that both are sceptical about any contact. The majority of the composition is a playground, access to which is defended by foil police tape. The tape is also mounted around the slide. This is how access to the playgrounds in Spain was fenced off.

During the *confinamiento* in Spain, people expressed their gratitude to doctors and the health service by clapping in the evenings in the windows or on the balconies of their flats. This happened every day at the same hour, initially at 10 p.m., later at 8 p.m. Sometimes they lasted several minutes, and sometimes they were prolonged - people thirsty for contact had the opportunity to see the inhabitants of other floors of the tenements, greet them or share their emotions. The daily meetings made it possible to see a large number of people at one time and to make sure that the city, deserted during the day, was not in fact deserted. Among the people in the windows was a man who played the trumpet after the applause. The first time briefly - but his performance was met with enthusiasm. On subsequent days, he played for longer and longer, and the satisfied neighbours sang a song to his tune. Singing together after the applause became a several-week habit. One evening, after the boy had played the tune, a request was made for one more song - a birthday song for the youngest household member. The residents of the street happily sang birthday wishes to the child. These were moments when people in the same situation expressed solidarity, gave each other a sense of togetherness. In the illustration I made entitled “The trumpet”, the curved perspective and the view of clapping hands in the lower left corner of the composition suggest that we are viewing the scene from the window of a building. After being indoors for many weeks, this view had the dimension of briefly establishing a connection with the old world. It allowed to see that people still exist.

“Park” is a portrait of a couple on a park bench, at a time when going for a walk was already possible in Spain. The couple is sitting under a ficus tree, with shrubs behind, a low palm tree and more trees in the background, a city water tap next to the bench and a palm leaf at the front of the composition. They are alone in the composition, sitting embraced, looking into each other's eyes. On their chins they have their masks slipped off. Do they live in the same house?

“The Fence” is a story from Poland, which I was told back when most people were free to move outside. However, there was no such freedom in the social welfare home, which housed people at risk. Among them was a lady who usually spent part of the summer with a friendly family in Gdańsk. At that time, she could not repeat this tradition, as the people in the social welfare home were not allowed to leave its garden, receive visitors or go to the shop on their own. Visits could only take place outside if each person stayed on their side of the fence.

“Departure” is an illustration of the dynamics of a pandemic outbreak, and about being surrounded by constantly new decisions - the departure of people who had previously planned to be in the same place as the rest, the closing of borders, the removal of international transport connections. About the incredible speed of these decisions and the need to determine your own immediately. The pandemic met people in all sorts of places, including far from home. „Departure” is about the rupture of a world to which one was accustomed. The composition is punctuated by a dynamic diagonal line on which the figure balances, in a gesture of trying to maintain balance. The space behind her is strongly contrasting in intensity with patches of elongated shapes, like light and shadow observed in rapid motion. Below the figure through a sky tinged with red, orange and pink, a plane flies.

“Teddy Bear” is about relationships between people and mutual support. It shows a couple fresh into parenthood. *Confinamiento* meant that they were alone in this situation, without the possibility of help from parents and relatives. A neighbour, the father of several children, helped them to get used to the situation. When the parents were on the balcony, he too would go out onto his neighbouring balcony, holding a large teddy bear in his hands. He would move the mascot around pretending it was the toy introducing himself to a young child. He spoke to the young parents, giving them encouragement during this difficult time.

“Change” illustrates a family whose work situation deteriorated during the pandemic. They had to give up a much-anticipated renovation and holiday, unable to afford to spend their savings on these.

“Balcony” tells the story of an elderly person during the pandemic.

“Sounds of Nature” is an expression of the longing to be in nature that could be felt while being confined to a flat for weeks at a time. The illustration shows two people, observed from above. One is sitting with eyes closed, hands on knees, bent over, at a table on which a laptop and a plate of leftover rice lie. The other figure is in a reclining position on a pouffe. Underneath it lies a carpet with a pattern of sea waves, seeming to flow in the figure’s direction with the sounds of nature playing from the speakers. One has the impression that the pouffe is a mattress for the figure, on which it floats through imagined landscapes. The figure's face expresses weariness. A plate with a portion of lunch lies on a wooden table.

“The Door” is an illustration dealing with the theme of quarantine from the perspective of a household in crisis of domestic violence. The figure of a teenager is portrayed in a crouched position, leaning against the door to prevent it from opening. The figure's eyes are swollen; he covers his face with his hands. The room is in disarray. The scene is viewed from a frog's perspective, from under the table top.

“Transition” is a situation from the time of the *confinamiento*. It is a celebration of the red light at the pedestrian crossing. It makes it possible to stay outside a few moments longer. The illustration shows the empty streets of a Spanish city. Shop and restaurant windows show interiors where the lights are off, and where there are no customers and no vendors inside. Deserted pavements stretch to the horizon in the clear light of day. The figure in the picture smiles.

“Telephone” is an illustration about separation and quarantine between loved ones, in a crisis situation where one person is in hospital, with other patients fighting for life and health. Even though the hospitalised person is not sick with COVID-19, you cannot visit them, take their hand, look at them through the glass. One can look at the phone screen, in anticipation of information from the hospital. The foreground of the illustration is a person, alone at home, looking at a phone screen. She is sitting on the edge of a sofa, an empty armchair stands in front of her, a table in the depths of the flat. The interior is

dominated by the dark blue and olive green tones. In places the colours approach black. The figure is in tension.

“*” is an illustration showing a family affected by the death of a loved one, who died on COVID-19. The largest of the figures is cuddling her children, sitting on her lap. Streams of grey mascara run down from her daughter's eyes. The figures are hunched over. The scene takes place at a table, surrounded by blanket-covered couches. There are dried flowers on the wall and in a vase.

“Relief” is the second part of the story from Lombardy, from the time when the first wave of COVID-19 cases and high mortality rates, began to fall. The girl working in a hospital pharmacy saw the smile in the eyes of the doctors working in the hospital again. That's when she knew she would still be okay. Relief poured into her heart from the eyes of the doctors. The illustration shows this moment of feeling relief, visible in the eyes. The figure portrayed is in the hospital, behind a door. Through an interior window, a corridor can be seen, with another medical worker in overalls.

The series ends with “Tomato”, which is the story of a lady working in a school. The tomato began to sprout at a time when the school was closed and teaching was done remotely, due to the pandemic. It sprouted by accident. A piece of the vegetable fell on the floor. To avoid throwing it away, the school worker put it in a pot. For her, it was a gauge of the passing of time, a new inhabitant of a now empty space, that was usually filled with the bustle of pupils.

The illustrations are made, like the works I drew during the *confinamiento* described earlier, on watercolour paper of approximately A4 size. The colour is applied with watercolour and the skeleton of the works is a permanent drawing. The way in which watercolour paint is used in the series combines the experience gained in drawing, watercolour painting and printmaking, the images are built up using larger patches of colour and small marks, enriched by linear drawing.

III. 4.

Tile series. Visual works inspired by 17th century Portuguese macacaria compositions

The *azulejos* tiles characteristic of the Iberian Peninsula, particularly the Portuguese ones, have inspired me for many years. Among other things, their history is one of seeking innovation and simplifying the process. It is also closely intertwined with natural disaster⁹⁵. Their presence in public spaces defines, in a way, the character of places. Over the centuries they have been used because of the ease of keeping the surfaces covered with them clean and as protection against fire⁹⁶. They have been used as a medium for art, to record religious and secular scenes⁹⁷. Street names were inscribed on them, surrounded by ornamental motifs. They were particularly popular in Portugal, especially after the earthquake of 01.11.1755, which had enormous and tragic consequences. It was after this that the Marquis de Pombal ordered buildings in Lisbon to be tiled to protect them from fires⁹⁸ - although these tiles were no longer as decorative as, for example, the *azulejos relevados* found in the north of the country⁹⁹. In the context of the pandemic, however, I was particularly interested in the *macacaria* tiles. They were made in four colours. They are compositions depicting animals behaving in a way characteristic of humans. They were made from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century and were a criticism of the unreflective copying of distant customs. An example is the frieze from the Palácio dos Marqueses de Fronteira, from the 17th century, which depicts, among other things, cats receiving music lessons and new hairstyles from monkeys¹⁰⁰, and monkeys driving chariots¹⁰¹. The tiles I have created are not a critique, but a juxtaposition between the way aspects of the *confinamiento* are named and their real appearance. Working from home is called a “home office”, but it does not turn the flat into an office - there are still things going on in the home that are related to life, multiplied by the number

⁹⁵ Leszczyńska Barbara, *Portugalskie azulejos – dekoracja czy edukacja?*, Master Diploma Dissertation, under the supervision of dr Roman Nieczyporowski, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk Archive, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk 2017, p. 4-7.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 6, 13.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 10 – 14.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 13.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Mucznik Sonia, *The Azulejos of Lisbon: Art and Decoration, a Short Survey*. „Assaph”, No. 6, p. 243-260, Department of Art History, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 2001. p. 253.

¹⁰¹ Palácio dos Marqueses de Fronteira, private correspondence, 23.05.2023.

of people staying in the house. The smells of food and the sounds of play mingle with the clatter of the computer keyboard, not always located at the desk as would be the case in an office. “Basic needs” are reduced for the safety of the general public, who, in order not to put themselves and others in potentially lethal danger, have to give up many previously obvious activities. This inspiration has intersected with that of the tiles sometimes found in Valencia and the Comunidad Valenciana. Particularly those on which street names are indicated. They feature typography, as they have an informative function, but they are also not lacking in decorative ornamentation. The Comunidad Valenciana, especially Manises, has a rich and centuries-old tradition and history of making *azulejos*. One can take a look at the old working methods and a cross-section through the history of local ceramics at the Ceramics Museum in Manises, where there is also a reconstruction of a kitchen interior, completely covered with tiles. Particularly inspiring to me from the collection on display in Manises is the Arrimador from the first half of the 18th century¹⁰² - its colours and decorative twists. Also visually appealing is the Agua de Solares vertical panel presented there, coming from around 1930, advertising water - on the panel held triumphantly by a frog in yellow pantaloons and a hat with a feather¹⁰³. Manises is also the place where local ceramicists prepared glazes fired in reduction so as to obtain the characteristic copper colour. According to the museum, specialisation was so advanced that the particular workshop from which an object came could be identified by the shade of the copper-imitation glaze¹⁰⁴. Examples of ceramics from the area also include bowls decorated with this glaze, one of which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, described as 'Spain, Valencia, probably Manises. 1450-1500"¹⁰⁵. Tile panels representing the associations of those preparing sculptures for the festival of Fallas are also sometimes found in Valencia. These compositions can be found on the facades of some of the associations' headquarters. They vary in size and extension. In the aesthetics of the tiles I have made, I also refer to the rectangular, multi-tiled compositions of a painterly nature found in Spain, installed on the walls of buildings and also in staircases. These are closed compositions, sometimes surrounded by a frame of graphic ornaments. Found on service buildings, they are associated with the work done on the other side of the façade - in eating places they will illustrate the food, baked goods, or agricultural landscapes from

¹⁰² Collection of the Ceramics Museum in Manises, Valencia, nr. 02-1, last update 2021

¹⁰³ Collection of the Ceramics Museum in Manises, Manises, Last update 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Information obtained at the visit in museum, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum, Londyn, nr 168-1893. Last update 10.06.2022.

which the food comes. Sometimes the graphic motifs are far from realistic interiors and are based on garlands, and decorative motifs, with a recurring element referring to the articles sold inside the building - as is the case, for example, in the garlands on the tiled façade of 'Bodeguero Navarro' at 98 Avinguda del Cardenal Benlloch in Valencia. The decorative elements on this façade are mainly garlands with characteristically curled ends. Grapes have been added to them, referring to the wine and the vineyards from which it comes.

The tiles I made are three multi-element panels: two vertical panels of twelve tiles each, entitled "Basic Needs" and "Home Office", as well as the horizontal panel of six tiles, entitled "*Confinamiento*". The work titled. "*Confinamiento*" refers in its form to panels with the names of places - streets or squares. This is because *Confinamiento* became for us, its participants, a time of being in one place. Our activity was reduced to physically being in the area of the few rooms we occupied (and, for those who had one, the balcony). Even if we were mentally "hanging out" somewhere else - at work or on a virtual walk, dinner or meeting friends - apart from the computer screen or the sound coming out of the phone, we were still at home. The "*Confinamiento*" panel thus announces the location, and is also the title of the scenes taking place around the inscription, surrounded by characters enclosed in the house. The lettering is on an oval field in light ochre. The figures resemble foxes. I used this figure, characteristic of my expression, to illustrate a universal situation. It applied to each of us, residing on Spanish territory, so I showed the characters in a universal way, as antropomorphised foxes, instead of individual portraits. The foxes here simply symbolise people. The images on the tile panels are drawn with colouring oxides and ceramic crayons. Oxides from a powdered form are mixed with water to be applied painterly with a brush. For the tile panels, I used oxides designed for work in the style of 18th-century decoration, as well as materials with contemporary character and colours. From the colours of the palette typical of macacaria, I abandoned the brown tones, narrowing the colours down to ochres, oranges, cobalts and greens. I have treated the surface in a painterly way, building up the image with both oxide-saturated areas and patches more akin to water painting. Linear drawings are made by adding oxides with thin brushstrokes, and in some places I also scratched off thin lines of oxides to achieve a different type of texture. The painting is combined with a ceramic crayon drawing. I made the tiles by hand under the tutelage of Professor Daniel Tomás Marquin, and when painting on them I also used the play of oxide deposition on surfaces

with different degrees and types of roughness. The top of each tile is additionally covered with a colourless glossy glaze. The oxides change colours during firing. When painting, the oxides and therefore tiles had different colours - the colour planning is based on previously prepared and fired samples. I was inspired by the characteristic ornamental frames decorating azulejos panel compositions found on the Iberian Peninsula, but translated them into my own graphic language. My compositions are full, painted to the edge.

The 'Home Office' panel illustrates the interior of a house. It is occupied by a family, spending *confinamiento* time together. The “home office”, a place to work remotely, is far from office silence. The trajectory of a ball kicked by a kid, runs through the middle of the living room - the house is not only an office, but also a stadium. In the upper panel we see a figure working on a laptop, at a desk. In the lower panel, a second figure sits on a couch, also with a laptop. In the vertical panels, the captions are at the bottom, as they do not tell us the location, but rather provide a title, a commentary on the situations depicted. „Home office”, contrasts with the interior of the living room. The work space is disrupted by a ball game. We also do not know if the person on the sofa is working.

The character depicted on the “Basic needs” panel is a creature. He holds nets of shopping in his hands. It has a round belly. The bags contain a bag of flour, a bottle of wine, a few potatoes and one leek. The figure stands against a background of buildings depicted in convergent perspective. A mask is pulled over his face. The dark hues of the green in the background and the figure's posture give a rather sombre impression, expressing a decline in enthusiasm. The creature is outdoors, but there is no joy in this “time out” - it can only go out to meet basic needs.

The panels are accompanied by single tiles: a multicoloured one showing a conversation across the balconies, and two tiles of few colours, relating to distance - one depicts figures surrounded by circular lines marking a “safe distance”, the other is of figures separated by a tile break.



Fig. III.4.1. Barbara Leszczyńska while drawing on tiles with ceramic crayon, at the Ceramics Studio of the Universitat Politècnica de València. Photo by Barbara Leszczyńska, 2021.

III.5.

Referring to the experiences of others based on the survey method

The pandemic was an experience of the whole world. The stories associated with it varied, but had a common denominator - the threat of a virus that travelled across national and continental borders.

Based on a survey of 210 people about the emotions felt during the *confinamiento*, I made four colour prints in photopolymer film and one large-format colour linocut. I conducted the entire survey in two language groups. In the survey conducted in Polish, I received responses from 87 respondents, while the respondents using English numbered 123. Respondents in the second group resided in different countries, with the highest percentage of respondents (17.1%) in Spain, followed by 16.3% in Italy and 14.6% in France, and with varying percentages between 7.9% and 0.8% in other countries, such as: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Kenya, Macedonia, Malaysia, Norway,

Panama, Poland, Portugal, North Macedonia, Serbia, the United States, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and the United Kingdom. Among the Polish-speaking group, 84.7% were in Poland, with the remainder in parts of 1.2% - 3.6% in: Denmark, Spain, India, Panama, Germany, the United States, Italy, 98.8% of people in this group were of Polish origin. In both sets, the largest age group was between 26 and 38 years of age (34.1% of the Polish-speaking group and 42.3% of the English-speaking group). In the Polish-speaking group, 32.9% were aged between 39 and 55, 27.1% between 17 and 25, and 5.9% between 56 and 67, closing the total of respondents in the 17-67 age range. In the English group, 35.8% were 17 - 25 years old at the time, 17.1% were 39 - 55 years old, 4.1% were 56 - 67 years old and 0.8% were under 16 years old. Only 7.1% of people in the Polish-speaking group lived alone at the time, while in the other group it was as many as 28.9% of people.

III. 5. 1.

Artworks from a photopolymer film matrix

The question on emotions was a multiple-choice question and allowed respondents to select any number of emotions accompanying the lockdown, and to add their own answers. In both groups, the feeling of “feeling detached from reality” was the most frequently admitted, with a score of 53.8% in the English-speaking group and 51.8% in the Polish-speaking group. The second most frequent answer in the Polish-speaking group was “longing to meet strangers, travel”, which was felt by 50.6% of respondents, and which was the third most frequent answer in the English-speaking group with a score of 43.7%. Those in the English-speaking group indicated “sadness” as the second most popular emotion (44.5%), which came fifth in the Polish-speaking group, with 31.8% of respondents admitting to feeling it. The third most frequently indicated emotion in the Polish-speaking group was “fear for loved ones” (45.9%), with the fourth most frequent result in the English-speaking group (40.3%). The fourth most common emotion in the Polish-speaking group was “worry” (42.4%). I conducted the survey in the last days of May 2020. The percentage difference in the two groups may be due to the variation in restrictions experienced by people in the different countries. A large percentage of people in the English-speaking group were in Spain, Italy and France, which experienced high intensity of restrictions during the first, most dramatic months of the pandemic. Also, in countries such as Panama and Greece, among others, the restrictions experienced by those

there were much more restrictive than those in Poland. In my series of four colour graphics dedicated to this theme, I have depicted four from the most frequently indicated emotions in the form of fantastic creatures representing them. In my prints, I depicted “a sense of detachment from reality”, “longing to meet strangers, travel”, “sadness” and “fear for loved ones”. The graphic works are made in colour, using the 'a la poupee' technique. In the series, I used a composition on a vertical format, with a bust shot and, in the case of “sadness”, a slightly larger view of the figure. “Fear for loved ones” is represented by the figure of a creature embracing an empty space in a hugging gesture. In this graphic, it is the gesture of a person who would like to hug his or her loved ones, but cannot do so physically due to the pandemic, so he or she embraces the empty space. A hug is a gesture with which we show our love and support to our loved ones and wish them to be safe. It can also express comfort or bring reassurance. This gesture made without the person being hugged seems to send a request for their safety, encapsulating hope and care. The warm colours of the graphic print emphasise love and closeness. “Sadness” is a figure with dangling shoulders, hunched over, with downcast eyes. With her posture she shows a lack of joy, fatigue. The tonality is cool, there is much more background space in the graphic, the figure does not fill the entire width of the frame. “Longing to meet strangers, to travel” is a figure seen almost symmetrically looking out for something through binoculars. It holds it in two hands and the positioning of the hands suggests a keen interest in the view it is searching for. The figure is covered almost entirely in the visible area, up to the line of the hands, with feathers. These symbolise a readiness to travel far, alluding to birds and their migration. The huge number of feathers suggests their accumulation during the closure. Binoculars are used to view distant places and, although of a different type, have also been used to view plays. I have illustrated “A sense of detachment from reality” with the creature touching the space in front of it, which ripples like a sheet of water when touched. This distortion symbolises a sense of disconnection from the rest of the space - precisely by means of an unreal rippling sheet that is to some extent transparent, but at the same time all-encompassing - the background behind the figure consists solely of its swirling. The colours are vivid, bright, the figure's eyes shape is moved as if in intense motion. The fingertip being towards the distorted layer is similar to fingers pointing at something. The gesture resembles a compromise between willingness and fear of the consequences of touching the sheetrock.

Photopolymer film is a matrix material. It can be used in the process of preparing a gravure or relief matrix¹⁰⁶. It is a very thin layer of photosensitive material in the form of a film. It is stucked between two sheets of protective film. It is usually sold in a tightly rolled form. The material is acid-resistant and can be applied to a variety of substrates after appropriate preparation. A layer of film is applied to a degreased, moistened surface, usually a metal plate, pressed under a printing press (protected from light) and then exposed using UV light, which polymerises the film. Areas that are obscured from UV light are not polymerised and are destroyed by etching in a solution of water and caustic soda. In order for the matrix to be fully prepared for printing, the matrix must be rinsed after development in caustic soda water, then sprayed with wine vinegar, rinsed again, dried and cured all over with UV light. A matrix prepared in this way can be used for intaglio or relief printing. For relief printing, it is easier to use a photopolymer matrix rather than one made from photopolymer film, due to the greater differences in surface thickness.

¹⁰⁶ Westley Ann, *Relief Printmaking*, Watson-Guption Publications, New York 2002, p. 114.

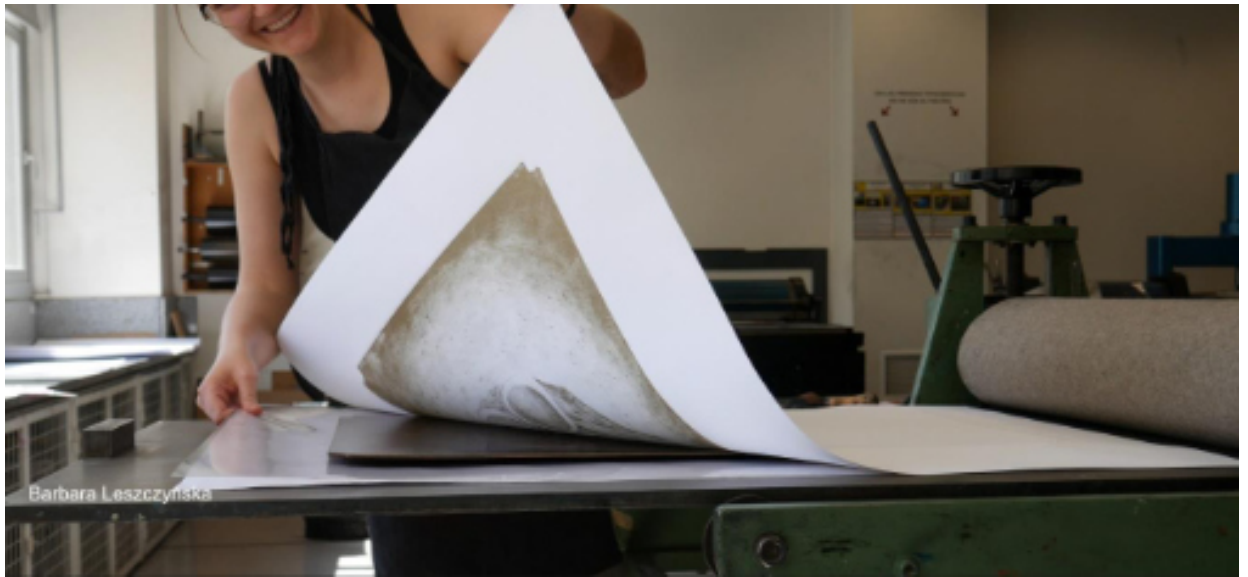


Fig. III.5.1.1. Barbara Leszczyńska while printing a graphic print on photopolymer film matrix, Intaglio Studio at Universitat Politècnica de València. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska, 2023



Fig. III.5.1.2. Barbara Leszczyńska draws the dry point on acetate matrix. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023



Fig. III.5.1.2. Barbara Leszczyńska applies the photopolymer film onto plywood surface, at Printmaking Studio at Universitat Politècnica de València. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska, 2023



Fig. III.5.1.3. Barbara Leszczyńska inks the dry point on acetate matrix, at Intaglio Studio at Universitat Politècnica de València. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska, 2023

III.5.2.

Working in the photopolymer film process in accordance with the idea of closed circulation

I focused my efforts in reducing the toxicity of my PhD work on the material used to make the matrices for the photopolymer film graphics. I looked for the answer to the problem of seeking a reduction in the toxicity of the process in the idea of closed circulation and “reuse” - the reuse of an already produced material, instead of producing a new object. Complying with the objectives of closed circulation implies extending the life cycle of products and reducing waste to a minimum, by moving away from a linear approach to a product, with successive steps: production, distribution, use, discard - and turning it into a circulation in which raw materials are not the whole of the source, but are supported by objects already produced, which are given a new purpose. Use is followed by repair, reuse or, if this is not possible, recycling. Residual waste is a small part of the cycle and consists only of the parts that cannot be reused¹⁰⁷. My aim was to reduce the residual waste from the process of making prints from photopolymer film. A key feature of fine art printmaking is the process of transferring the image from the matrix to the sheet of paper. In the case of photopolymer film, we struggle with the following issue: the material that transfers the image to the paper is a delicate sheet of film. It is very thin - between 10 and 50 microns thick¹⁰⁸. In practice, this means that the depressions created by etching are more difficult to feel in the finished matrix than in etching matrix. The surface of the film, which has acquired a rough structure under exposure and polymerisation, does not match the roughness of the surface of the etched matrix in the aquatint technique. The film is 'dependent' - it needs a rigid substrate in order to be used as a matrix. This substrate should be of sufficient smoothness to render the tonal differences recorded on fifty microns of film thickness. It should also be stiff to protect the film. It must also exhibit waterproof properties, due to the etching process in water

¹⁰⁷ *Gospodarka o obiegu zamkniętym: definicja, znaczenie i korzyści (wideo)*: Aktualności. Parlament Europejski:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/pl/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/gospodarka-o-obiegu-zamknietym-definicja-znaczenie-i-korzysci-wideo>, last update 22.02.2023, 12:53, access 16.05.2023, 12:40

¹⁰⁸ Salomón Isaac Chaves Badilla, Universidad de Costa Rica, in: *Hole etching less toxic by photopolymer film: El Artista*, Numero 5/nov.2008, ISSN: 1794-8614, p. 126., comp.

<https://www.grafiskeksperimentarium.dk/butik/photopolymer-film-solar-platesaquatintscreens/dk3-fotopolymer-film/?lang=en>, access 15.05.2023, 21:50.

with addition of caustic soda. With this information, I began the search for a suitable material, already in circulation, that could serve as a matrix backing. In the classic way of dealing with the photopolymer film technique, a new metal sheet, preferably steel, would be used as a substrate, the surface of which would then be smoothed and the edges polished so that the cut angles of 90 degrees on the edges of the sheet would be turned into - respectively - an obtuse angle on the printed image side and an acute angle on the reverse side. During this preparation, microscopic metal particles are produced, which are impossible to recycle due to their size. The use of a metal plate also involves working on a heavy substrate with sharpened edges and the danger of injury. I decided to replace this brand new material with the plywood used in the furniture industry of the second half of the 20th century as the back of cabinets. This is a material that can be sourced reused - quite often nowadays, as the life cycle of many furniture products from this period is coming to an end, according to their users. Such boards are discarded. As a substrate for matrixes, they have great advantages: they are light to handle; their edges do not cut; there is no need to sand or even use an obtuse and acute angle on their edges; and they can be cut into smaller formats by hand, without the use of a metal guillotine. They have different material characteristics to metal, which in my case were advantages, but this depends on the artist's intended effects. Firstly, their surface is not perfectly smooth. This means that it is easier to maintain the tint of the colour one is using to show the drawing, including on the background. In the case of metal or Plexiglas matrixes, the smooth areas become very bright on the print quite quickly when cleaned. The use of a plywood matrix has made it possible to preserve the colour halftones in the smooth areas. At the same time, the possibility of pure white is preserved with the appropriate techniques for cleaning the matrix before printing. In my opinion, this is the great added value associated with the plywood matrix. Secondly, areas that will be etched completely, until the film fades, are also easier to maintain as areas of high colour intensity - this is also due to the non-ideally smooth surface. In a matrix that varies in thickness by fifty microns, in which both layers are smooth - unlike etching and aquatint, in which the lower layer is rough - it is very difficult to print a wide colour spot. Using a dict matrix makes this process easier and gives the saturated colour areas a beautiful texture. When preparing this matrix, it is important to remember to protect it from water before applying the film. To do this, a varnish can be used to protect the surface of the plywood. Due to the short contact time with water and wet paper, the use of a single layer of varnish with the appropriate parameters is sufficient. For the production of graphics of a certain area, for example one

square metre, the equivalent surface area of new material which would serve as a matrix, does not need to be produced. Thus, this is one square metre less waste. For every 1 square metre of closed-cycle matrix, 1 square metre of an apparently end-of-life item finds a new use.

Photopolymer graphics technology is categorised as a non-toxic technique, due to the removal of the need to etch the matrix in acid. It is the lower toxicity of the printing techniques that places them in the group known as 'non-toxic'¹⁰⁹. The photopolymer film etching process uses a caustic soda solution with an approximate ratio of one tablespoon of caustic soda, or sodium hydroxide, to about six to eight litres of water. Due to the caustic properties of sodium hydroxide in high concentrations and in granular form, it is necessary to follow the safety data sheet included on the packaging. The process of making the photopolymer film matrix at the stage of working with caustic soda requires special care and following the caustic soda's safety data sheet and the use of the protective measures described therein. Health and safety must be kept in mind, as well as environmental responsibility and ethics, particularly when using the technology on a larger scale. Caustic soda is not classified as an environmentally harmful product, but it is not biodegradable and large quantities of it can cause harm if released into the environment¹¹⁰. The photopolymer film technique appears to be a stepping stone on the path of graphics towards ever greater toxicity reduction. The use of matrices compatible with the idea of a closed loop pushes it one turn towards these goals, crucial to our well-being as humanity and the planet.

III.5.3.

Large-format linocut from a reduced matrix

The large-format linocut presented in the group of works related to the survey is a dialogue, and a portrait of people who experienced the pandemic. I have used a figure in a mask as the focal point of the composition. The figure is presented in a large, larger-

¹⁰⁹ Salomón Isaac Chaves Badilla, p. 123.

¹¹⁰ Karta charakterystyki, sporządzona zgodnie z Rozporządzeniem Komisji (UE) nr 830/2015 z dnia 28 maja 2015 roku zmieniającym, Rozporządzeniem (WE) nr 1907/2006 Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady z dnia 18 grudnia 2006 roku w sprawie rejestracji, oceny, udzielania zezwoleń i stosowanych ograniczeń w zakresie chemikaliów (REACH) (DU Unii Europejskiej seria L nr 132/8 z 29 maja 2015 roku), p.9: https://anser.pl/pub/Aktualne_Karty_Charakterystyk_1/Soda%20Kaustyczna_SDS_PL.pdf, access 16.05.2023, 11:20.

than-life scale. The mask is elongated, similar to the masks from the time of the plague. It is an intense red colour, heavily saturated. This colour is used to emphasise both strength and danger. Its warm, bright and vivid hue contrasts with the colours used in the rest of the composition - friendly yellows and blues, impenetrable dark browns, dark green reminiscent of a thicket. The figure is solitary, surrounded by animals. Her head is directed outside the composition area. The formula of the group portrait, which we would easily apply to show a group of school children or people on a trip, is not applicable in portraying a group of people in a pandemic. In it we are alone, although we are all experiencing it. We cannot get close to each other, visit and meet in groups. However, we can dialogue remotely and exchange experiences. The figure symbolises the person experiencing this time, and the animals in the background are selected responses from a survey in which I asked what kind of animal the pandemic would be as perceived by the respondents. A very wide range of animal species or groups emerged among the responses. Some of the most frequently indicated among the total respondents were, in order: cat, bear, dog, sloth, squirrel. The most common response in the English-speaking group was the cat, followed by the bear. The next animal indicated was a dog. In the Polish-speaking group, the cat, turtle, bear and sloth were particularly popular. A dog, a snake and a chameleon also appeared several times. In both groups, some people indicated caged animals. The choices were motivated variously. In the English-speaking group indicating a bear, 40% of the people included the elaboration that they chose this animal because it hibernates, while 20% described that the bear, like the lockdown, combines in their perception the qualities of threat and danger with those of comfort, softness and something tame. In my graphic, the bear took centre stage, but is hidden as if in a cave, under the whale's fin. The people pointing to the dog referred, among other things, to its contentment in the fact that the householders do not leave their flats. This is also how I depicted that animal in the linocut. As social animals, I engraved the dogs in pair. They occupy the bottom right of the composition. To the left of the figure, below its red mask, is the fur. I decided to include it in the composition because of the tigers that appear in the responses, as well as cats, pumas and lions. I alluded to the tiger through the subtle stripes of brick red on the orange and green fur. One interviewee described how the pandemic reminded her of a hairy cat that scattered its fur along with allergens all over the city, making it impossible for her to leave the house. The largest of the animals is the whale. In the survey responses, it was described as huge, just like the situation we are

experiencing and its consequences that will come with our perception of the world and ourselves in the world¹¹¹. Its figure obscures the background above the other animals.



Fig. III.5.2.1. Barbara Leszczyńska while printmaking the big-size linocut, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023.



Fig. III.5.2.2. Barbara Leszczyńska hangs the linocut print to dry, at the Linocut Studio, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska 2023

¹¹¹ Research conducted by me online. Results in private collection.

III.6.

Reflections on the world before pandemic. Reduced linocut, dry point and photopolymer film matrix techniques

During the pandemic, many people felt a peculiar mixture of moods. This is exemplified by the declaration of feeling 'detached from reality', which was expressed by a large number of respondents in the survey I conducted, described earlier. Surprisingly, as many as 23.5% of people in the English-speaking group declared feeling joy - 6.7 percentage points more than those who felt anger and those feeling surprised (equal results 16.8%). 31.9% were accompanied by a sense of loss. During this time of closure, various cultural organisations prepared online meetings, some invited people to visit the facilities on screen. During the weeks of confinement dictated by the *confinamiento*, things such as travelling, going out on the bike, to the park, having dinner together, time with family not living with us - were something extremely distant. They might have evoked longing, disbelief, they might have been seen as a potential danger, but they were certainly not within reach. Nor was there any information about when it would be possible to return to them. To these pleasures - seemingly simple, obvious and reachable, but nevertheless not given to us forever - I have devoted some of the prints that form part of my dissertation. These are colour prints made in the following techniques: linocut from a reduced matrix and from multiple matrixes, drypoint on Tetra Pak® type packaging, drypoint from several matrixes on acetate sheets, photopolymer film from two matrixes on a plywood base, and colour linocut from a reduced matrix combined with water ink painting. The colour linocuts “Toledo”, “Paellers”, “Three stages of a relationship, eating *tapas*” and “Bicycle ride” are inspired by Spain, mostly (except for 'Toledo') the Comunidad Valenciana. “Paellers” is a linocut from several matrixes. It shows a couple eating paella, one of the dishes of Spanish cuisine. The couple, through gestures of natural mutual touch, suggest a close relationship. “Toledo” is a print inspired by the narrow streets of Toledo and the surrounding hills. It is also a warm image of a family walk enjoying a meal of roasted chestnuts. Eating together is a recurring theme in three of the colour linocuts in this group. It is a symbol of closeness, freedom and good relationships. “At the common table” - this is the term used to describe gatherings in which the participants engage in dialogue. “At the round table” they are equals. Food is a basic element of life - it sustains the life functions. Eating together can be an expression of friendship, a celebration. In

Spain, dining with friends and acquaintances, in bars at tables set up on pavements, often of ordinary streets, is an easy sight to encounter. I have illustrated this kind of communal eating in a graphic from two matrixes of photopolymer film on a dict, titled “Tapas in town”. The graphic print is in an elongated vertical format, emphasising the height of the building and the number of revelers. I used similar proportions of format in larger dimensions in “Toledo”. In the drawing used in the photopolymer film work, I used a variety of tools, leaving soft, broad marks, contrasting with thin, fine lines. I applied colour using the “a la poupee” method, giving different colours to the different areas of matrix, and allowing the layers of colour to intermingle and create new values. “Three stages of a relationship, eating *tapas*” is a linocut, depicting the three stages of a relationship - a couple getting to know each other, a couple brimming with mutual interest and a couple embracing each other, calmly looking towards the same destination. Also, the creatures on which the figures sit are smiling to each other. Above the revelers, there is a loquat tree with juicy fruit, and a palm tree. The colours are warm and saturated. The graphic is a celebration of love and spending time together. The richness of colours is reminiscent of sunny days by the sea, among the lush foliage of trees or in city streets. “Bike Ride” is a work about going out of town and movement. In the background, behind the figure of the cyclist, one can see the mountains, characteristic of the Comunidad Valenciana, as well as a palm tree. It grows out of the foreground, its trunk covered in a simplified pattern. From behind the leaves that form the background above the head of the figure on the bicycle, the eyes and large scale figure of a fox can be seen. It is looking straight through the composition from behind the palm tree. The largest of the linocuts is an expression of the many possibilities surrounding young people in a pre-pandemic world. Variety, a multitude of events. Energy, generated into action at an incredible pace. The last linocut, “Gdańsk” made in reduce matrix, mixes its city architecture with unreal elements. “A fox in the jungle”, a print in square format, made using the drypoint technique on an acetate sheet backing, is a static composition in homage to closeness with nature. A fox-inspired figure stands among huge tropical leaves. Its expression is contented. The print is made from several matrixes. “Celebration” is a dry point in colour, made on a single protective package material. The matrix is developed by adding drawings, and printing multiple times over the same sheet of paper. Three of the four smaller works made in dry needle technique on “tetrapak” type packaging are inspired by Valencia. “Torres de Serrano” is a view of Valencia deserted, standing on the shores of the Mediterranean. The city is depicted only as a gateway, one of the important sights of the

place. Is it still the entrance to the city when no people are seen on the streets? Or is it rather the entrance to the world of marine animals? Below the surface of the water one sees oversized, giant squid and seaweed. As one lowers one's gaze across the composition, one learns that all these elements are on a huge fish whose back turns into the shoreline. The second graphic depicts a figure riding a bicycle through the city with evident contentment. "Coffee at the Crossroads" is a celebration of small habits, of pleasant moments such as drinking coffee together. "Skipping" is an image of returning to movement from a world plunged into emptiness. The prints are made in a variety of techniques, as each has its own range of expressive possibilities. The visual effects achievable in linocut, where the paint can create fleshy, saturated surfaces, are different from those obtained in dry needlework on an acetate substrate - here the light and colour saturation are achieved in a different way. For this reason, too, and to emphasise the dynamism of the pre-pandemic world, I added water-based inks that are vibrant in colour to the large-format linocuts. Their interference with the sharp cuts of the linocut gives a new quality that I have not used before in printmaking. The works made from Tetra Pak® type packaging matrixes also have their own distinctive character - the relationship between the drawing and the background was treated differently by me here than in dry-etching on acetate ground. I will talk more about these matrixes in the next chapter.

III.6.1.

Dry point on a matrix made of packaging in the spirit of closed circulation

In its early days, the drypoint was an auxiliary method used to correct acid-etched matrices. Some sources cite the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet, working in the second half of the 15th century, as the first artist to use drypoint. One of the first printmakers to use drypoint as a technique rather than an auxiliary method was Andrea Meldolla (1522-1563)¹¹². It is estimated that a drypoint needle from a copper matrix produces about 30 satisfactory prints on paper, from a zinc matrix about 10, and from a celluloid matrix only

¹¹² Werner Jerzy, *Technika i technologia sztuk graficznych*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1972, p. 90-92.

a few. Zinc and copper plates electroplated with steel allow a larger print amount¹¹³. Dry point can also be done on acetate substrates, from which up to a few or a dozen prints can be obtained. A re-use alternative, in the spirit of closed circulation, is the use of “tetrapak”¹¹⁴ type packaging, which allows, in my experience, up to a few or a dozen prints, depending on the exact type of packaging. This is the softest of the matrix types mentioned and is also limited by the packaging format. It wears out the fastest and is the most susceptible to damage - as well as being scratched, it is also subject to tearing and crushing. It can also be damaged during ink application. As with photopolymer film on plywood, the use of “tetrapak” type material for drypoint eases it to keep semi-transparent colour tones in non-scratched areas. It is not difficult to get a tint of the colour used to print the drawing on these areas. The matrix can be cleaned up to the colour of the paper with special tools. It is also possible to work “À la poupée” in this technique. Working with matrixes made of packages allowed me to use material I already had at home, to extend the life cycle of the packaging and to reduce the amount of social contact during the pandemic (by using what I already had, I was able to skip the being on public transport and visiting the shop). I used matrixes made from this material in my dissertation to actively reduce the amount of toxic waste left over from the printmaking process. As such, drypoint does not use etching, thus makes it possible to avoid the use of acids or bases as well as protective varnishes, degreasing chemicals, water and plastic tape. The “tetrapak” type material also does not produce micro-waste in the form of metal filings, as the edges are not sawn and the sawing process itself does not tear the particles away from the surface. In 2023, a mini-print made by me using the dry needle technique on “tetrapak” type packaging, titled “Dreams of the Dragon” became part of the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Rio Cuarto, Argentina, confirming the quality possible when working with closed-circuit matrices.

III.7 Dialogue on a pandemic - curating the author's exhibition project gARTen.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ „Tetrapak” is a colloquial term derived from the name of the packaging (including, e.g. Tetra Pak, Tetra Brik, Tetra Classic) produced by Tetra Pak®. The colloquial name covers a group of packaging, made of materials with similar properties, in any shape. In this dissertation I use the common name to refer to any packaging made of cardboard and protective layer, with a soft surface protected against water penetration.

III.7.1 The gARTen project: the need for collaborative work.

Since 19 June 2019, I have been serving as the president of the Diffusion Scientific Circle operating under the supervision of Bogna Łakomska, PhD, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. In 2020, when the pandemic began, a state of emergency was declared in Spain and *confinamiento* was introduced, I was in contact with the other members of the Circle's board - Weronika Grześ and Olga Wardęga. Each of us was in a different country. We exchanged experiences and observations. This dialogue was important to me. This is when I developed the concept for the gARTen exhibition project. I named it after the English word 'garden', in which I included the word "art". Also in German, this name had a double meaning, because it introduced the English "art", into the German "Garten", meaning garden. The starting point for me, however, was the English etymology, as it is this language that is used in international communication. "gARTen" was a garden of art. The premise of the project was to create an exhibition that would collect our observations and feelings about the pandemic and show it in three countries. The exhibition was designed entirely for the specifics of time when it was not yet recommended to gather inside. The artworks were shown outdoors so that visitors did not have to crowd indoors. The art boards contained a QR code that, when scanned, opened a short video, different for each work. In the videos, each author talked about her work in English. I designed to include this element, as relating to meeting the author of the works at the opening. The exhibitions took place in Porto, Portugal; Bern, Switzerland; and Valencia, Spain. Each exhibition presented the same set of works in a different arrangement. The manner of the exhibition in Porto, Portugal was arranged by Olga Wardęga under the wings of OKNA - Espaço Cultural in the space Rua Igreja de Cedofeita, in Bern by Weronika Grześ in Forum A at Schwabstrasse 10, and in Valencia, Spain by me in the open patio of ArtySana at Calle Denia.

III.7.2. gARTen 2021 - international dialogue. The need for dialogue about the pandemic experience

The gARTen project, which we carried out in 2020 and 2021, met with appreciation. For me, it became a driving force to work more deeply with the idea behind it, that was bringing a statement about lockdown time and carrying it to a geographically distant place in order to engage in discussion and exchange experiences. It was important to me to

expand the dialogue in 2021. I wanted to show its effects in Poland. This way gARTen would not only popularise our native art abroad, but also bring the observations and feelings of others into the public space of the Tricity, Poland. Getting to know how people from other cultures feel broadens horizons and allows one to get to know the world better. I decided to organise a second edition - gARTen 2021 - as part of the activities of the Diffusion Scientific Club under the supervision of Bogna Łakomska, PhD, Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, and to invite artists from other countries. My idea was accepted by the Club's supervisor. I asked Weronika Grześ and Olga Wardęga to join me in inviting several artists whose statements we considered important, and I initiated the exhibition in Poland, in Gdynia. I then coordinated the project. I planned the gARTen 2021 exhibition in line with the first edition - in an open urban space, with QR codes referring the viewer to videos recorded by the authors of the works on display. The exhibition featured artists from Spain, Cuba, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Venezuela and Italy - students, graduates and a special guest: Dr Ana Tomás Miralles, who runs the Grabado Calcografico studio at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. I managed to make contact with the City of Gdynia's Department of Culture. The city made available for the exhibition a frequently visited space at Zawiszy Czarnego Square, located in the centre, by the sea, in the immediate vicinity of the Gdynia City Museum and Musical Theatre. The exhibition ran from 01.07.2021 - 14.07.2021¹¹⁵.

Making the second edition of the project was important to me because I felt that the *gARTen* project was a lively and powerful way of getting the message out to the audience. It was exhibited in a public space, outside the gallery walls. It also included a form of meeting the artist - the opportunity to see or hear the artist talking about their experiences determining the artwork on display. In its first edition, *gARTen* was a story about the reflections of four female artists from Poland, each of whom spent their lockdown time in a different country: Spain, Poland, Portugal and Italy. This story was shown in Spain, Portugal and Switzerland. However, the pandemic was a worldwide phenomenon. So I was interested in curating a project that would show multiple perspectives of confinement, quarantine and lockdown, quite different from the Polish one.

While working on the second edition, I also worked on the catalogue of the *gARTen* and *gARTen 2021* projects, which documented the idea of the exhibitions, the expositions in

¹¹⁵ Leszczyńska Barbara, *gARTen. Garden of art. Shows in Bern, Gdynia, Porto and Valencia*, wyd. Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku, Gdynia, XII 2021, p.32.

different countries, as well as the descriptions and works of the artists involved. The catalogue also includes QR codes leading to videos made by each of the artists presenting their experiences. I prepared the graphic design of the catalogue and took care of its editing. The catalogue “gARTen. Garden of art. Shows in Bern, Gdynia, Porto and Valencia” was published by the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdansk after both editions of the gARTen project. It was given the ISBN 978-83-66271-76-0 and is available online at the Pomeranian Digital Library and in hard copy at the Library of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdansk, the Library of the Jagiellonian University and the National Library in Warsaw.

The artists participating in the exhibition were: Rosangela Aguilar, Melissa González-López, Alicia Landez, Macarena Merchán Romero and special guest Professor Ana Tomás Miralles from Universitat Politècnica de València; invited by Weronika Grześ: Aglaia Brändli, Katrin Jason Erthel, Marthe Howitz, Tobias Konig; and invited by Olga Wardęga: Tim Leimbach, Erica Monzali and João Melo¹¹⁶. I was the author of the project concept and chief curator of gARTen and gARTen 2021, while Weronika Grześ and Olga Wardęga took on the role of co-curators.

The exhibition featured stories touching on diverse aspects of lockdown time. Katrin Jason Erthel's photographic collage “The masks speak”¹¹⁷ spoke about ways to help those affected by domestic violence. Tobias Konig focused on looking more closely at his immediate surroundings during the pandemic. He found new micro-worlds in it, such as the mosses growing out of the flowing tar, visible in the juxtaposed photographs, entitled “Magic sculpture forest”¹¹⁸.

Here, I would like to look at the works of the artists remaining in the *confinamiento* in Spain, presented as part of the gARTen exhibition. The following paragraphs complement part two of my dissertation by presenting examples of works resulting directly from the impact that this time had on the artists.

Macarena Merchán Romero, Spanish artist residing at the time of the *confinamiento* in Valencia, referred to the time after the period of immediate closure. She presented “A spinning top game” - a toy: a cube, ending in a pyramid at the base and, on the opposite

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.24.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.26.

side, a handle that can be grabbed and spun with a spinning top. The toy falls one of the four walls upwards. The walls are marked with symbols that indicate whether the player should continue on the way forward, submit to what the place proposes or stop. In this way, the artist was looking for new ways to explore a seemingly familiar city. She seeks out previously unfamiliar nooks and crannies, offering a swap between tourism and rediscovery of a daily traversed space. I am convinced that this small-scale object encapsulates a great curiosity about the world and stems from a deep need to discover it, even in times when one has to surrender to limitations¹¹⁹.

Alicia Landez, who spent the *confinamiento* in Castilla-La Mancha, presented an art book entitled “Cuarentena 2020” as part of gARTen 2021¹²⁰. “Cuarentena 2020” was made using embroidery on paper and fabric, and elements of drawing and painting. It is interesting above all because of the choice of this artistic medium and the strong need to tell the story of the situation faced by those experiencing *confinamiento*.

Embroidery is not Alicia Landez's typical medium of expression. She chose it because in Castilla-La Mancha, where she returned a while before the *confinamiento*, she did not have the artistic materials she used every day. At the time of the pandemic, she was a student at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. She returned to her family home, where she had paper, watercolours and pencils at her disposal. In a video about her art book, she says she was inspired by the work of her mother and grandmother, with whom she lived during the *confinamiento*. Both women are involved in sewing and embroidery. Alicia Landez decided to look at the family tradition and incorporate it into her artistic practice. Her work was born out of a need to inform others about the situation of confinement and danger that prevailed during the *confinamiento* in Spain. It was started, however, as the artist says, by a desire to think about something other than the pandemic. Alicia Landez felt overwhelmed by the situation society found itself in, and embroidering thoughts filled with uncertainty and fear was her way of calming herself in a difficult situation¹²¹. Alicia Landez also talks about how an important part of her art book is to introduce audiences to the process of embroidery and to recognise it as an artistic practice. I find Alicia Landez's work interesting on several levels: firstly, it stems from a direct need to describe a difficult situation. On the individual pages of the book, we see embroidered thoughts:

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.30.

¹²⁰ Ibid,p.27. Video: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CQgvxK3gXiw/>, access 20.07.2021, 15:30.

¹²¹ Ibid.

sentences or words linked to an image. Among these, we find one that tells the viewer that the solution to the situation is in his hands (this is a play on words in Spanish too, as the inscription is placed in the contour of a bottle of hand sanitizer). Another talks about complaining at the moment of closure about not being able to leave the house, and when you can, you may be too lazy. Another of the pages depicts a carousel with the letters of the word “emociones” [Spanish for 'emotions']¹²² spinning instead of horses. Secondly, Alicia Landez turns to her family traditions and, using craft techniques practised by older generations, produces a new artistic object. She seeks solace, needed in an overwhelming situation, through contact with and learning from older generations. Echoes of embroidery also appear in her later works, such as the small formats presented as part of the group exhibition “Espejo de cristal”¹²³ at the social and cultural centre La Nave Málaga in November 2021.

The imprint of *confinamiento* time is evident in the work of these artists.

¹²² Landez Alicia, artworks: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCLq5aYgLCd/>, access 11.11.2022, 14:50.

¹²³ Landez Alicia, artworks: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CWwCSj2g6Mt/>, access 11.11.2022, 15:45.
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<https://www.facebook.com/lanavemalaga/photos/pcb.874447363272307/874447219938988/>, access 11.11.2022, 16:16.



Fig. III.7.2.1. Opening of the *gARTen 2021* exhibition in Gdynia. Barbara Leszczyńska opens the exhibition. Photography by Anna Leszczyńska, 2021



Fig. III.7.2.2. Opening of the *gARTen 2021* exhibition in Gdynia. Photography by Barbara Leszczyńska, 2021

Summary

My activities related to experiencing *confinamiento* in Spain were elaborate, thematically and formally diverse, yet coherent and comprehensive. The method I used in my dialogue-based activities was the questionnaire method. I also used case analysis and the observational method. My artworks describing and relating to this time included a series of colour linocuts from a reduced matrix, dealing with the horrific aspect of the pandemic, which is death, loneliness and powerlessness in the face of the disease; a multi-part series of permanent drawings with watercolours, describing the experiences of people from different cultures, countries and homes, and my observations from the time of the *confinamiento* and the weeks following it; a series of handmade ceramic tiles, painted with colour oxides, which referred to surprising yet common situations from the time of the *confinamiento*; a collection of graphic works made in linocut, dry point on packaging and photopolymer film, relating to what was not possible during the *confinamiento*; and a series of prints in photopolymer film and a large-format linocut from a reduced matrix, relating to the emotions of others, based on an online survey I conducted of 210 respondents, speaking and coming from different countries and continents. I also carried out dialogical activities where I collected stories of others experiencing the pandemic in order to show it as it was, i.e. in global terms, without losing the personal aspect. I was also active in popularisation through the gARTen project and gARTen 2021. My artwork and dissertation aims to gather information on the experience of this period, lived by artists located during the *confinamiento* in the Comunidad Valenciana. The immediate value of my study is that it provides a rich source of knowledge for future researchers of this period in art history. In addition, the work can be used by sociologists and psychologists, as it deals with a group that is part of society and describes the reactions of this group to a crisis situation. The study shows that the time of the *confinamiento* was experienced in a variety of ways and, as such, gave diverse directions to the art and modes of artistic expression of the artists I have selected. The artworks I present address a wide range of issues. In my work, I have not only described the emotions and experiences of the *confinamiento* and the COVID-19 pandemic based on observations and international dialogue, but I have also worked to reduce the toxicity of some of the prints by using a photopolymer film technique, unknown in Poland and classified as non-toxic, and selecting material from the closed circuit to realise these matrices without increasing waste, and I have made some prints on packaging, leading my artistic practice towards

sustainable work. The value of the work is therefore also in the technological aspect and my explorations within it.

Also for the Polish reader, the work is a valuable source of knowledge about the world, as it shows a completely different experience of the time of the pandemic. In Poland, the restriction of mobility itself, compared to countries such as Spain, did not last long and was not as acute. Many people complained of not being able to go to the woods, whereas in Spain and Italy it was not possible to go out for a walk even within the neighbourhood for many weeks, not to mention the park, the forest, the beach and nature, which was out of any reach, and in Greece one had to ask for an sms message with permission to leave the house for a long period of time. It is a completely different scale of experience. I wanted to bring this diversity to the audience as well.

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the ways in which artists of the young generation lived through the *confinamiento* (a period of several weeks of restrictions due to the epidemiological situation in Spain, closed in the timeframe 14.03.2020 - 21.06.2020). In particular, the focus was held on the period 14.03.2020 - 02.05.2020, which in the Comunidad Valenciana was characterised by the heaviest restrictions and during which it was only possible to leave the dwelling in order to carry out strictly defined activities, the main ones being meeting basic living needs, throwing out the rubbish and walking the dog. The study analysed the artistic works of selected visual artists who identified the *confinamiento* period as shaping their attitudes and creative actions. It proved that the aforementioned time was a turning point that pushed a certain part of the visual artists experiencing it, to change their interest towards the viewer, and to use art as a tool that could tame heavy emotions and experiences. The first attitude highlighted was a re-evaluation of the relationship with the art viewer. The selected artists noted the importance of contact with the viewer, and carried out dialogical art projects, conveying not only the emotions of the artist, but also those felt collectively. Embracing dialogue allowed projects to be created based on it, or by involving the viewer in direct artistic interaction. Also, the focus and themes of the work were in many cases directed towards taming a dramatic situation and working to develop empathy in the community.

The work was conducted using case study analysis, observation, source analysis and a survey method. The selection of methods was directly caused by the nature of the study.

The visual statement, which is the artistic part of the dissertation, is divided into thematic sections. It consists of: a series of three colour linocuts in dark colours, dealing with the death and loneliness brought by the pandemic; a series of tiles, referring to the Portuguese azulejos 'macacaria' compositions of the 17th century, commenting on the *confinamiento*; a series of colour graphic prints based on an online survey in which respondents referred, among other things, to the main emotions they felt during the lockdown (survey conducted with respondents from and residing in different countries); a series of graphic prints relating to life beyond the pandemic; a series of watercolour illustrations with drawings that depict the experiences of lockdown survivors in different countries. An additional layer and value of this part of the dissertation are the technological issues aspects, describing the printmaking techniques classified as non-toxic, i.e. from

photopolymer film matrix, dry needle on packaging, and the use of already existing materials to create matrixes in the accordance with closed circulation.

The dissertation as a whole provides material in which selected artistic phenomena related to the *confinamiento* and the COVID-19 pandemic are described, and it is shown that this was a period that shaped certain artistic attitudes. The nature of these attitudes is described, with particular reference to the attention that artists paid to their relationship with the environment and to the creation of art in relation to the social situation.

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Exhibitions:

1. “Emergency on Planet Earth”, collective show of the artists: Barbiturikills; Biancoshock; Lidia Cao; Marina Capdevila; Deih; Doa Oa; Li-Hill; Nayra López; Onur; Reskate; Spencer Tunick; Vinz Feel Free; Will Coles i Xelon; 04.03.2022 –

- 04.09.2022, CCCC Centre del Carme, Valencia, Spain, Sala Ferreres, Sala Goerlich II, Curatorship: Vinz Feel Free, José Luis Pérez Pont, organisation: Consorci de Museus de la Comunitat Valenciana
2. “Fangor. Poza obraz”, Curatorship: Wojciech Zmorzyński, Associate curators: Małgorzata Ludwisiak, Piotr Patkowski, Edyta Pawlik, 07.10.2022 – 12.02.2023, National Museum in Gdańsk, Poland
 3. „Gràcies!”, Vinz Feel Free, exhibition on the facade of Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat- MuVIM, Valencia, Spain
 4. Collection of the ceramics Museum in Manises. Manises, Spain. 2021
 5. “PAM122 – X Muestra de Producciones Artísticas y Multimedia”, Universitat Politècnica de València, V 2022, Valencia, Spain
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Research meetings:

1. Research meeting with Acién Diana, 18.11.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.
2. Research meeting with Zamyslova Arina, 08.11.2021, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.
3. Research meeting with Palau Laura, 16.06.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.
4. Research meeting with Margrau Lluc, 18.04.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.
5. Research meeting with Camino Sos Lolo, 10.11.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.
6. Research meeting with Cuesta Sara F., 16.05.2022, mostly recorded on digital device. Recording in private collection.

Doctoral thesis

"*Confinamiento* and the creative activities
of the artist experiencing it in Comunidad
Valenciana, Spain"

Barbara Leszczyńska

Promoter

Prof. Janusz Akermann

Associate Promoter

Dr. Ana Tomás Miralles

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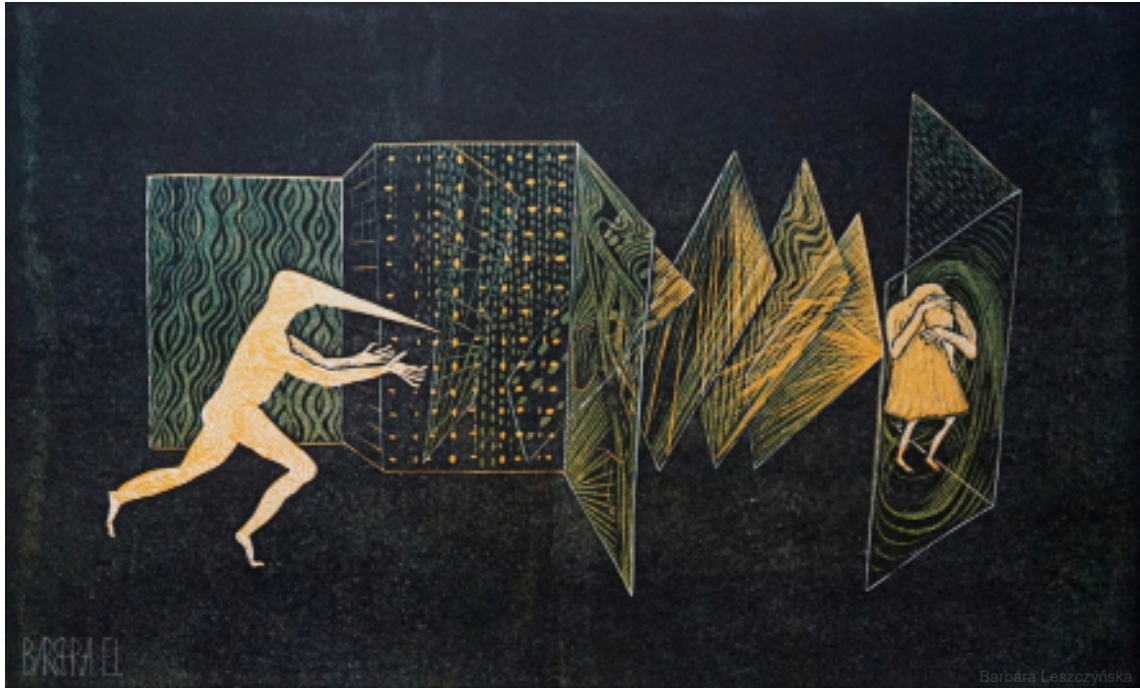
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Linocuts on reduced matrix. Pandemic as destruction



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Pandemic”, 100 x 150 cm

Linocut, reduced matrix, 2023



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Collapse”, 59 x 37 cm

Linocut, reduced matrix, 2022



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Through”, 77 x 44 cm

Linocut, reduced matrix, 2021

Dialogical graphic prints.
Reduced linocut and photopolymer
film with dry point prints



Barbara Leszczyńska, „All of us inside”, 100 x 200 cm

Linocut, 2023



Barbara
Leszczyńska



Barbara
Leszczyńska

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Disconnected”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Disconnected”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate



Barbara
Leszczyńska



Barbara
Leszczyńska

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Missing meetings and travelling”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Missing meetings and travelling”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Loved ones”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Loved ones”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Sadness”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate

Barbara Leszczyńska, „Sadness”, 74 x 47,5 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood, dry point on acetate

Ceramic tiles inspired by *azulejos*



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Basic Needs”, 51 x 68 cm
Ceramic tiles, pannel of 12, 2021



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Confinamiento”, 51 x 34 cm, ceramic tiles, pannel of 6, 2021



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Home Office”, 51 x 68 cm Ceramic tiles, pannel of 12, 2021



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Distance”, 17 x 17 cm, Ceramic tile,2021



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Neighbour's chat chat”, 17 x 17 cm, ceramic tile, 2021

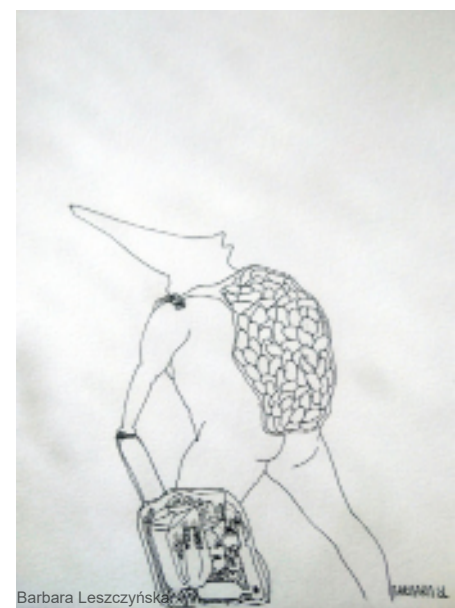


Barbara Leszczyńska, „Safe distance”, 17 x 17 cm ceramic tile, 2021

Visual records of *confinamiento*



[1.] "Iberian Balconies",
[2.] "Italian Family",
[3.] "Night Heroes. Consolation",
[4.] "Meeting at the Pond",
[5.] "Observations",
[6.] "Queue to the Dumpster",
[7.] "We are at home",
[8.] "Refreshment",
[9.] "Shopping"
Barbara Leszczyńska,
watercolours with ink drawings,
21 x 28,5 cm, 2020



„Quarantine Diaries”



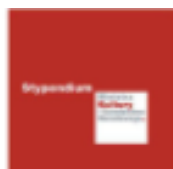
1. Barbara Leszczyńska



2. Barbara Leszczyńska

[1.] “Sprint”, [2.] “China”, [3.] “Blanket”, [4.] “Immensity”, [5.] “Birthday”,
[6.] “Confrontation”, [7.] “Trumpet”, [8.] “Park”, [9.] “Fence”,
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[14.] “Sounds of Nature”, [15.] “Door”, [16.] “Passage”, [17.] “Telephone”,
[18.] “*”, [19.] “Relief”, [20.] “Tomato”

Barbara Leszczyńska, Watercolours with ink drawings, 21 x 28,5 cm, 2020



Done as a scholarship programme founded by Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland – „Kultura w sieci”



3.

Barbara Leszczyńska



4.

Barbara Leszczyńska



5.

Barbara Leszczyńska



6.

Barbara Leszczyńska



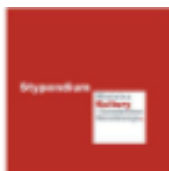
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Barbara Leszczyńska



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9. Barbara Leszczyńska



10. Barbara Leszczyńska



11. Barbara Leszczyńska



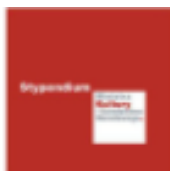
12. Barbara Leszczyńska



13. Barbara Leszczyńska



14. Barbara Leszczyńska





15. Barbara Leszczyńska



16. Barbara Leszczyńska



17. Barbara Leszczyńska



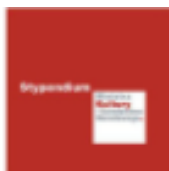
18. Barbara Leszczyńska



19. Barbara Leszczyńska



20. Barbara Leszczyńska



Reflections on the world before pandemic.
Reduced linocut, photopolymer film,
dry point prints on packages and acetate



Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Bike ride”,
36 x 26 cm, 2022
Linocut, reduced matrix



Barbara Leszczyńska,
 „Three stages of a relationship,
 eating tapas”,
 38 x 48,5 cm, 2022
 Reduced linocut



Barbara Leszczyńska,
 „Paelleros”,
 35 x 50 cm, 2022
 Multimatrix linocut



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Celebration”, 42 x 30 cm,
Dry point on package protective layer, 2020



Barbara Leszczyńska, „The Jungle”, 50x 50 cm,
Dry point on acetate, multiple matrixes, 2020



Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Multiplicity”

100 x 120 cm, 2019
Linocut, reduced matrix,
waterbased ink painting

Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Multiplicity”

100 x 120 cm, 2019
Linocut, reduced matrix,
waterbased ink painting





Barbara Leszczyńska, „Gdańsk”, 40 x 32,5 cm

Linocut, reduced matrix, 2023



Barbara Leszczyńska, „Biking in Russafa”, 26 x 16,5 cm

Dry point on Tetra Pak type package, 2022



Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Coffee in town”,
25 x 17 cm, 2022
Dry point on Tetra Pak type package

Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Torres de Serrano”,
25 x 15 cm, 2022
Dry point on Tetra Pak type package

Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Jump rope”,
26,5 x 17 cm, 2022
Dry point on Tetra Pak type package





Barbara
Leszczyńska



Barbara
Leszczyńska

Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Tapas in the town”, 47 x 10 cm, 2023
Photopolymer film on plywood matrix

Barbara Leszczyńska,
„Toledo”, 90 x 30 cm, 2022
Linocut, reduced matrix