Luis Gordillo

MEMORÁNDUM

3 February - 12 September, 2021

Museo Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona

Museo Universidad de Navarra

LUIS GORDILLO, MEMORÁNDUN



PAOLO UCCELLO FOUR. 2021

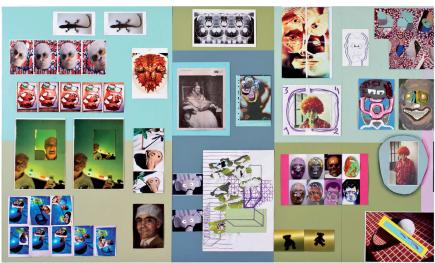
The project presented by Luis Gordillo (born in Seville in 1934) at the Museum University of Navarra constitutes one of his most ambitious exhibitions of the last decade. The show is conceived as a wide-ranging and active compendium that presents the artist's key works from the current century in dialogue with a number of iconic works and series from earlier in his career. At the same time, the exhibition which serves as a kind of memorandum - conducts an indepth exploration of the artist's foremost areas of research from this latter period and places particular emphasis on the constant process of feedback between painting and photography. For Gordillo, this is highly familiar territory, where the "image in process" defines an internal framework around which the work is constructed.

The overall approach of this project is dialectical rather than chronological. It aims to reveal syntactical and structural aspects that offer an insight into how the artist works and the way in which he tackles the unbiased act of creation with maximum freedom while always giving precedence to a form of experimental praxis that allows for a great deal of open-ended expression. It has been interesting over the years to observe how Gordillo has been able to stay outside of the trends and dictates of the moment. Although he has been an indisputable stalwart of contemporary Spanish art for the last 50 years, Gordillo has never been a conformist

and has always sought fresh challenges at each stage of his career, without ever looking back or falling into complacency. Indeed, this nonconformist and even sceptical stance is one of the keys to the artist's long-standing relevance. For this reason, and without intending to, he has always been in the vanguard, leading the way.

Memorándum is a living exhibition, conceived as a dynamic space that eschews the typical "white cube" in favour of an approach that has more in common with scenography. It aims to engage visitors and reveal the tensions and energies that emanate from within Gordillo's work by offering a dual perspective: on the one hand, a macroscopic overview of groups of paintings that are connected to one another in some way, as well as themes that recur throughout the artist's career; and on the other hand, a detailed observation of the explosive ideas, explorations and derivations that are sparked in his studio. This exhibition at the Museum University of Navarra is dedicated to the Luis Gordillo of the 21st century and pays particular attention to the large-format paintings he produced between 2015 and 2020. It also focuses on his work and experimentation with the multiplicity of possibilities offered by photography, to which several parts of this show are dedicated. A significant percentage of the works on display here are being shown in public for the first time.

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Broadly speaking, this exhibition can be divided into six sections, as follows: "Faces and Masks" (Room 1): "Expanded Painting" (Room 2 and corridor): "Living Energies" (Room 3): "Lockdown: Latest Works" (Room 4); "Horizontal Investigations" (Room 0); and "Fragment-Remix" (Tower Room).

Faces and masks

From the earliest days of his career, faces have been a graphic works. Originally, his focus was on heads: in fact, this was the title of his first major series of paintings, produced different types of image, which he would cut out from newspapers and magazines. These images consisted of the heads of celebrities, jokes and advertisements that had been physiognomy, with the features that identify us to ourselves from the glass, and so on," 2 explains Gordillo. and to others, has persisted over the decades and has been every stage of his career. There is something inside him, some element of his personality, that keeps coming back to this leitmotif. Evidently, the continued psychoanalysis that he has undergone since 1963 has something to do with it. Gordillo the atomization of personality: a representation, however symbolic, of his interest in psychological concerns.1

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Perhaps the most iconic example of the works he produced during the 1970s in this respect was the Luna series (1977). This series was the culmination of several investigations he conducted into the same recurring motif, which resulted in a number of dialogues between photography and painting over the course of the decade. "Both of the Lábil series (all photography), the New York series (also photography), the two Blandas series (which combined constant feature in Gordillo's paintings, photographs and photography and painting) and the Luna series (which began as photographs and ended up as paintings, which now form part of the collection of the Reina Sofía Museum) can all trace between 1963 and 1965. As a teenager, compulsively and their origins to the painting Baño Dúplex, which dates back without any apparent intention, Gordillo collected three to 1974. The painting depicts a strange-looking individual who is partly immersed in a swimming pool. It is a "duplex" painting that repeats the same image in two different monochromatic tones. "I carefully photographed the head sent to the offices of his father, who was a doctor. Many of of the strange-looking individual, placed the photograph on the photographs were of beautiful, smiling women. This initial the floor, laid a piece of glass on top, drew onto the glass, obsession with the most characteristic aspect of human photographed the resulting image, then removed the image

Over the last decade, Gordillo has had a persistent one of the most recognizable facets of Gordillo's work at and intriguing obsession with rubber masks 3; items that, when turned inside-out, generate an image that is both fascinating and repulsive. This sense of strangeness, the search for an image that is disconcerting yet at the same time recognizable, is deliberate. For Gordillo, faces should himself has stated that the heads served as an antidote to make us feel uncomfortable; they should arouse something within us and always avoid sensations of satisfaction or complacency.



Lockdown: latest works

extremely hard. He lives with his wife, Pilar Linares, in a ideal location for dedicating oneself to creative endeavours. peaceful suburb on the outskirts of Madrid. It is a quiet place Gordillo has spent all of his time in this sizeable house in the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama, Gordillo has a since the global coronavirus crisis began in March 2020. well-established daily routine: he wakes up (not too early), With his mind constantly focused on the exhibition in has breakfast and goes down to his studio, which is just a Pamplona, the artist has been highly productive and taken few metres away. The global coronavirus pandemic has not full advantage of the intervening months: he has produced changed his habits a great deal. In his studio each morning, not only all of the paintings you can see in Room 4, but also he observes and compares the canvases and drawings that an enormous amount of works on paper, such as those in are hanging on the walls; he listens to their heartbeats and the display cases. Without having to attend any events or checks their breathing. After lunch he returns to his work. travel anywhere, he has been able to focus all his energies although he is now a little more tired and spends fewer during this long period of confinement. On working days, hours on it. In recent decades he has rarely concentrated on Gordillo usually alternates between two working areas. His a single work at a time, instead preferring to keep a range old studio is smaller and squarer and virtually adjoins the of avenues open and a number of irons in the fire. Paying a house, while his new downstairs studio, located next door, lot of attention to just one painting is too absorbing: Gordillo is much larger and is rectangular in shape. Both locations prefers to conserve his energy and spread it out over the contain an endless accumulation of works in development course of the day. In a way, it is as though he is cultivating a that are placed on the walls, floor and tables. We can find vegetable garden, tending his plants one by one. He waters printed photographs, unfinished canvases, drawings, cutin one area, clears weeds in another, adds fertilizer here and out sheets of coloured card and books. In this jumble of prunes or grafts there. When the "plant" is sufficiently ripe and materials, any item might be pressed into service and used he feels the time is right, he harvests the fruit. This approach as a physiological supplement to a particular work. comprises a kind of regular maintenance that allows the work to pass through a natural cycle of birth, growth and Living energies reproductive cells that are eager to propagate.

countryside. It is a secluded spot that is sufficiently distant fresh and unclassifiable. One such example is Huida en espejo

from the capital without being too far from it. Without Gordillo is an octogenarian artist who continues to work a doubt, it is a fine place for a contemplative life and the

development. Life is always lying in wait somewhere. For At the turn of the 21st century, Gordillo began a series of Gordillo, the studio is maternal, womb-like; a place filled with works which, without expressly falling into the categories of photography, painting or drawing, use images freely and His home boasts an extensive garden and views of the without prejudice to generate results that are tremendously

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TRANSMIGRACIÓN DE ALMAS 2, 2020 (FRAGMENTO

(2020). These organic works are difficult to define, as they fluently mix a variety of fragments whose origins range from collage to appropriation from other projects. However, their chief virtue is their liveliness, as these ongoing experiments arouse a certain amount of interest in both formal and conceptual terms. Bold and impudent, they seem unlikely to have been conceived by an artist of Gordillo's age. For a veteran such as Gordillo, the worst error would be to repeat himself by following a recognizable formula to continue creating the same easily identifiable works. This is certainly not the case with Gordillo. In fact, the very opposite applies. He is always seeking out new avenues of investigation, as demonstrated by works of this kind. Due to his age, he finds it increasingly difficult to paint. Consequently, arranging elements with a certain aesthetic purpose (and without using brushes) offers an alternative means of producing a type of sui generis painting. The composition works by balancing its constituent elements and internal tensions, and by unobtrusively generating its own musicality. Although some of its sounds may be cacophonous and have unusual timbres, this tonal discordance is less important than the rhythmic vibration of the work as a whole. Its ingredients act as a polyphonic combination of different voices and instruments that come together to form a harmonious whole. Recently, and somewhat surprisingly, this process of hyper-germination (which Gordillo began by manually cutting up photographs and manipulating them) has turned into a mural of iconographic detritus. This highly original approach can be considered one of the artist's most characteristic creative expressions of this last period. The first of these murals is three-and-a-half metres wide and titled Huevos de dinosqurio. It was created in 2019 for the exhibition Vida (aún) viva, which took place at the Aural **Expanded painting: beyond the canvas** gallery in Madrid towards the end of that year shortly before the global coronavirus crisis emerged. At five metres wide, the second mural is larger still: titled Autobiografía gordilliensis (2020), it forms part of the retrospective exhibition of Gordillo's work at the Museum University of Navarra.

The origin of these works lies in the collections of photographs cut out from newspapers and magazines that coalesced into collages of the same size and format in the early 1980s. Within these vertically oriented rectangles, the images worked in a particular order to create a strangely attractive and poetic set of antipathies and unexpected dialogues. In these works, Gordillo maintains an emotional distance from the observer, who is responsible for finding meaning in the works. With his murals, the artist breaks boundaries and adds materials of varied origin; we can find photographs from newspapers, images of the artist in different sizes, reproductions of his works taken from catalogues and proofs, printed materials, pieces of coloured card that have been cut out or deliberately splashed with paint, objects, cardboard boxes, plastic masks, and remains of other works in progress or half-completed. In short, they are an evolutionary extension of his collages, with a more concentrated and intense vitality. They also possess a certain hybrid quality that borders on the pictorial. Autobiografía gordilliensis, the large-scale work presented in Pamplona, is an extended selfportrait that contains many faces, including a number of the artist himself. However, their arrangement is not as crowded or informal as Huevos de dinosaurio. The creative process is more precise: each element appears to be fixed more firmly in its place, the result of a more casual process of construction. In general, the work is more photographic. The structure that underpins it is a scaffold of coloured rectangles painted directly and sotto voce onto MDF: an approach the artist has never taken before. This coloured background also serves to draw the boundaries of the work.

Gordillo has always pushed the conceptual and physical boundaries of painting. As a result, we must assess his work and career in terms of progression and explosive ideas. We might even say that Gordillo has progressed through a series of cumulative structures that resemble the medinas of the

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Islamic world. The new is coupled to the old. It is supported by an existing structure and seeks its own place in relation to what came before. In this regard, we can identify two specific moments in Gordillo's break with the houndaries of the canvas: moments that have gradually expanded until they have taken over the surrounding space and imposed themselves on the context. The first moment occurred in the late 1980s, when the artist began to question the conventions of the framed rectangle that constitutes a painting. From that moment onwards, his paintings typically incorporated additional elements of varying sizes that seemed to protrude from the image like a visual oun that mixed content, form, composition and symbolism. In some cases, by turning the painting into an object. Gordillo transcends the two-dimensional limits and transforms the work into an installation that goes beyond the pictorial and enters the realm of the conceptual. We are referring in particular to the works Dios Hembra B and Dios Hembra C (2005), which are always accompanied by two lists of alternative titles whenever they are exhibited. The lists are written in barely legible Gothic script on a fuchsia background and can be made larger or smaller using a plotter. There can be no doubt that, in works such as these, Gordillo has progressed far beyond mere painting and has added new lavers that enrich the work as a whole. This also serves to throw the observer off balance, not only by what the work shows, but also by what it makes the observer think.

Gradually, Gordillo's work has overcome the limitations of the medium and taken on a much broader dimension, eventually turning into an enveloping space that colonizes the length and breadth of the wall like a creeper. In this respect, the second major chronological "moment" that acted as a catalyst for the most recent stage in Gordillo's career was the commission he received from the Government of Andalusia in 2005 to cover the scaffolding surrounding the Roman bridge in Cordoba while it was being restored from 2006 to 2008. On this occasion he drew inspiration from. among other things his painting Melchor Voyeur (1974). Before creating what would be the first open-air work of his career, Gordillo received a life-size proof from the printer. He positioned it on one side of his studio in order to examine it more closely. One day, by chance, a number of paintings fell onto it: an unplanned event that captured Gordillo's attention. The confluence of the two images created a certain tension that served to generate artistic energy. Since then, by taking advantage of improvements in the quality of enlargements made possible by digital technology, Gordillo has included banners as an additional resource in his creative arsenal. With this technique, the artist can use an enormous plotter to produce enlarged drawings and sections of paintings, as he did with Cirugía esquimal and Martirologio cromático (both from 2006). Once these artificial backgrounds have been attached to the wall, one or more paintings are then placed on top of them, which changes their physiognomy, given their installation in that unusual environment. Examples of this approach include Gentlemen's Stoicism, Gentlemen's Sensuality and Gentlemen's Ambiguity, all from 2007.

Horizontal investigations

Looking back at Gordillo's long career, we can see how, from the very beginning, his work branched out in two opposing directions, or adopted two complementary approaches. For the artist they are also two sides of the same coin; intense and long-suffering on one side, and expansive and overflowing on the other. The artist himself referred to this duality as "vertical" and "horizontal" painting, a division that is still a valid means of categorizing his body of work in 2021. At times Gordillo is drawn into a painting's interior; he seeks to dive deeper into it, like a mathematician working out a formula on a blackboard to find the equation that solves this particular composition. In this state, he can spend months analysing minute details of specific colour-related issues, based on the volume and depth of the pictorial space, a favourite theme in his work since the early 1970s. This can be called his vertical painting. On other occasions, the energy flows naturally and effortlessly in a horizontal direction, spreading outwards like floodwater. Initially, Gordillo would sketch shapes onto paper and they would flow from one sheet to another (or from one page to the next, if he was using a notebook). This approach enabled mental and emotional issues to make their way to the surface: a characteristic feature of the early series in Indian ink he produced in Paris (Abstracciones, 1959-60). Even though these works possessed a quality that was substantially different to the type of art that would follow, this evolutionary step of allowing creative deposits to rise to the surface in line with intuition is something that still survives in Gordillo's work today, although it has passed through a number of different stages. The motifs, resources, materials, techniques, technologies and even media may have changed. but this circulatory system has persisted and been adapted to each new era. Since then, whenever Gordillo happens upon a promising source of inspiration, the energy flows in abundance and expands like the ripples that spread out when a pebble is thrown into the water. However, these occurrences can rarely be predicted, and a certain degree of control is required to prevent ideas from drowning through over-saturation. Advancements in the use of computers have enabled Gordillo to explore this facet of his work almost limitlessly, as demonstrated by series such as Budismo tecnológico (2006). Globulitos (2008) and Oxigenando (2009-16)

While maintaining a high level of entropy which makes it impossible to anticinate the moment of combustion sparked off by this outflow, it is much easier for the artist to follow these overwhelming forces than to invent new ones. It is as if excess energy were organically transferred from one place to another, like a liquid that overflows and floods its surroundings and thus sets off expansion as uncontrolled as it is inevitable. As the artist himself stated, "I have always found horizontal works to be very tempting. You can work vertically towards the interior of the painting, or work horizontally by spreading out towards the sides through a kind of genetic procreation. Something I have often experienced is that when a painting appeared spontaneously, it turned into a kind of open wound or abscess that replicated itself through

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a process of suppuration. One became many"4. So when the sway. Modern images are dynamic entities that generate initial impetus generates a string of subunits that cannot be detached. As these elements originate from a common source that both sustains and justifies them, they have meaning only if they are treated as a unit. No other reading is possible: they are like the constituent syllables of a single word, the ordering of which creates a specific meaning that is greater than the sum of its parts. As such, these progressions, found in Gordillo's work at every stage of his career, should not be interpreted in isolation; the fragments he creates are transformed into signs that have weight, but lack reach. Recent examples of such works include Transmigración de almas, both A and B (2020) and Naufragio (2020).

Fragment-remix

The development and widespread use of digital cameras starting in 2000 marked the definitive point at which photography became a driving force in Gordillo's work. This unpredictable reality that surrounds us. new technology allowed the artist to take constant, casual snapshots of his studio and surroundings, review the images instantaneously, and then print them guickly and easily in a shop near his home. In the 1970s, an initial image would emerge from the hundreds of drawings from life that the artist produced impulsively, as a means of letting off steam. He would later transfer this initial motif onto the canvas. In the 21st century, these motifs are now sparked by ordinary photographs: initially in the form of standard 10x15" prints, and subsequently in the larger 13x18-cm format. Gordillo prints hundreds and hundreds of these images, which he then uses as models for experimentation. Although the world is marching inexorably towards the virtual and almost everything we see is now mediated by an interface Gordillo chooses to process the photographs in a laboratory and handle them directly with his hands, rather than on a computer screen. He likes to touch them, move them, change them, overlap them, interweave them, crop them, draw on them, paste them, mark them and scratch them. He refuses to abandon the material or forget the physical part. He knows in his bones that he is an artist with an analogue soul but he loves to mix the factile with the digital so that the resulting creation is neither one thing nor the other. In these creative experiments, Gordillo prefers to maintain the tactile sensations and direct pleasure of the process, to retain 2 Luis Gordillo, Mecánico-Visceral, Visceral-Mecánico, page 66. Puba sense of closeness with what he is doing and the ability to improvise without the mediation of a machine. As such, he is able to adulterate these printed images however he likes, without restraint or restriction. Once he has achieved a suitable arrangement of colour, shape and composition, Gordillo once again photographs the image, this time with a high enough resolution to print the photograph in a much larger format. This photographic dallying is a common feature of the mentality of many emerging artists today.

The documentary approach to photography predominated during the 20th century, but now the concept of fusion holds

impulse arises, it must be taken advantage of because the constant changes, feed back into themselves and jump from place to place. This is how Gordillo has treated them since he began using photography in his work processes. An image can be object, representation, medium and content all at the same time, regardless of whether the starting point is a comic book or a child's sketch pad. Everything is mixed together and broken into fragments. In much the same way, the pages of the artist's own catalogues provide a source of inspiration for other works. The physical images jump out of the books onto tables, out of the waste bin onto the wall, and out of hoxes into paintings. There is an enormous amount of cross-contamination between an image and any form of contemporary expression, and not only in a visual sense. This blurring of boundaries is evident in our daily lives in areas such as food, language and race. The globalized world of the 21st century is mixed, blended and integration-oriented; in this respect it is much like the art of Gordillo, whose creative approach reflects the multifaceted and

> For an artist of his age, creativity is easier and more convenient with the help of images, which germinate without effort, need little nurturing and can be found everywhere. Once he has collected them. Gordillo simply has to position these images the right way by arranging them in a particular order and manipulating them as he pleases. Put simply, he has to find the key to converting this loose agglomeration into a firm and binding mortar. And there is something playful, enjoyable and even relaxing in using photography or any other pre-existing form of representation in all its variations. The artist has fun with these pastimes: like a hobby with substance, they are virtually effortless and even provide relief during times of crisis. Painting is a way of conceiving images based on synthesis, while photography is based on selection. Paintings are created: they are constructed from a set of learned methods and ideas, to which ability and skill must be added. In contrast, photographs and found images are taken or discovered; they need only be positioned, experimented with and given a second life.

> > Sema D'Acosta

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^{1.} Luis Gordillo, Cabezas, page 18. Published by Real Alcázar de Sevilla.

lished by Ediciones Galería Calorina Rojo, Zaragoza, 2014

³ Although the mask used most frequently by the artist is that of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, he has also used a mask of José María Aznar and another of Barack Obama, always turned inside-out, As a result, it is difficult to identify who they are. The use of a particular mask does not have any political or personal connotations; it is purely coincidental and of little importance to the artist. The masks are caricatures of individuals who were well-known at that particular point in time, which made them easy to find in the shops near Gordillo's home or in Madrid.

⁴ Conversación con Luis Gordillo, Horacio Fernández/Oliva María Rubio. "Retrovisor", page 7. Published by La Fábrica - Círculo de BBAA, Madrid. 2004



Luis Gordillo (Sevilla, 1934) es una de las referencias indiscutibles de la pintura española. Su trabajo ha recorrido, década tras década desde los años sesenta del siglo pasado, todos los avatares que ha vivido la contemporaneidad en España. Es, sin duda, uno de los autores más admirados y respetados y posee algunos de los galardones más importantes que se le pueden conceder a un artista de nuestro país. Entre otros, el Premio Nacional de Artes Plásticas (1981), Premio Andalucía de Artes Plásticas (1991), Medalla de Oro al Mérito en las Bellas Artes (1996), Medalla de Oro del Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid y el Premio Velázquez de Artes Plásticas (2007), máximo galardón para un autor iberoamericano. Igualmente, fue investido Doctor Honoris Causa por la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha en 2008 y nombrado Hijo Predilecto de Andalucía en 2012.

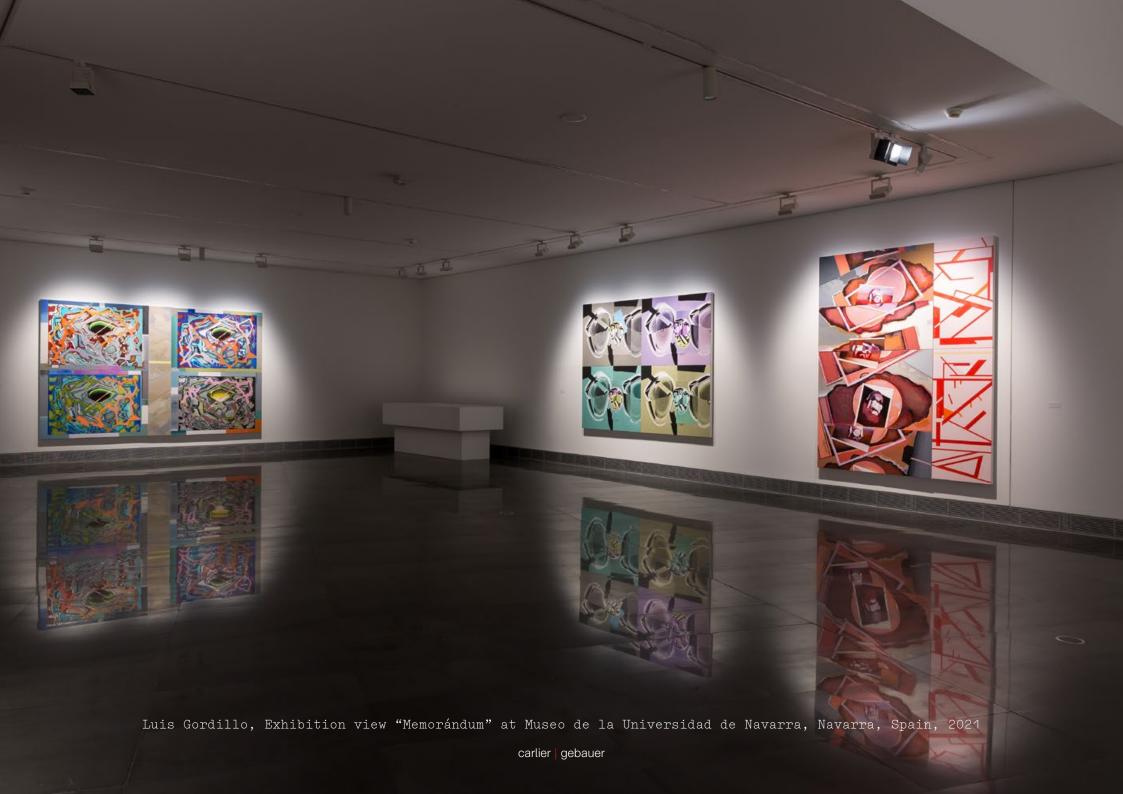
Su obra se ha presentado en infinidad de exposiciones, tanto en galerías privadas como museos o centros de arte, destacando las siguientes antológicas: IVAM (Valencia, 1993), Meadows Museum (Dallas, Estados Unidos, 1994), MACBA (Barcelona, 1999), Museum Folkwang (Essen, Alemania, 2000), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid, 2007), Kunst Museum (Bonn, Alemania, 2008), CAAC (Sevilla, 2016), CGAC (Santiago de Compostela, 2017), Centro José Guerrero y La Alhambra (Granada, 2017), MACA (Alicante, 2018), CCCC (Valencia, 2019) y Museo de la Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 2021).

Luis Gordillo, born in Seville in 1934, is indisputably one of the leading figures in Spanish painting. Decade after decade, ever since Gordillo emerged onto the art scene in the 1960s, his career has navigated through all of the vicissitudes of life in Spain. Without a doubt, he is one of the country's most admired and respected artists and has been the recipient of some of the most important accolades in Spanish art. His list of honours includes the National Award for the Plastic Arts (1981), the Andalusian Award for the Plastic Arts (1991), the Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts (1996), the Gold Medal of the Madrid Circle of Fine Arts (2004) and the Velázquez Award for the Plastic Arts (2007), the most prestigious accolade that can be given to an libero-American artist. He was also awarded an Honorary Doctoral Degree from the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha in 2008 and was given the title of "Distinguished Citizen of Andalusia" in 2012.

His work has been shown at a great many exhibitions in private galleries, public museums and art centres. His most noteworthy retrospectives include shows at the following institutions: IVAM (Valencia, 1993); Meadows Museum (Dallas, United States, 1994); MACBA (Barcelona, 1999); Folkwang Museum (Essen, Germany, 2000); Reina Sofía Museum (Madrid, 2007); Kunst Museum (Bonn, Germany, 2008); CAAC (Seville, 2016); CGAC (Santiago de Compostela, 2017); José Guerrero Centre and the Alhambra (Granada, 2017); MACA (Alicante, 2018); CCCC (Valencia, 2019); and the Museum University of Navarra (Pamplona, 2021).

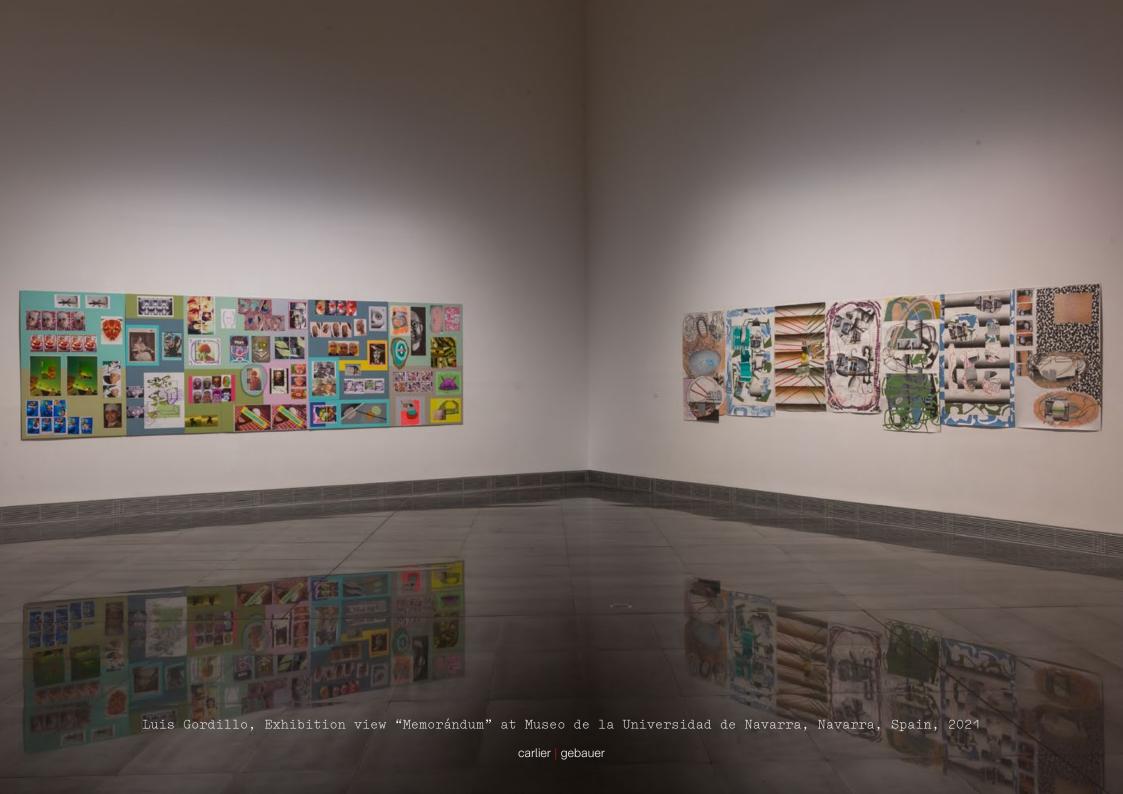
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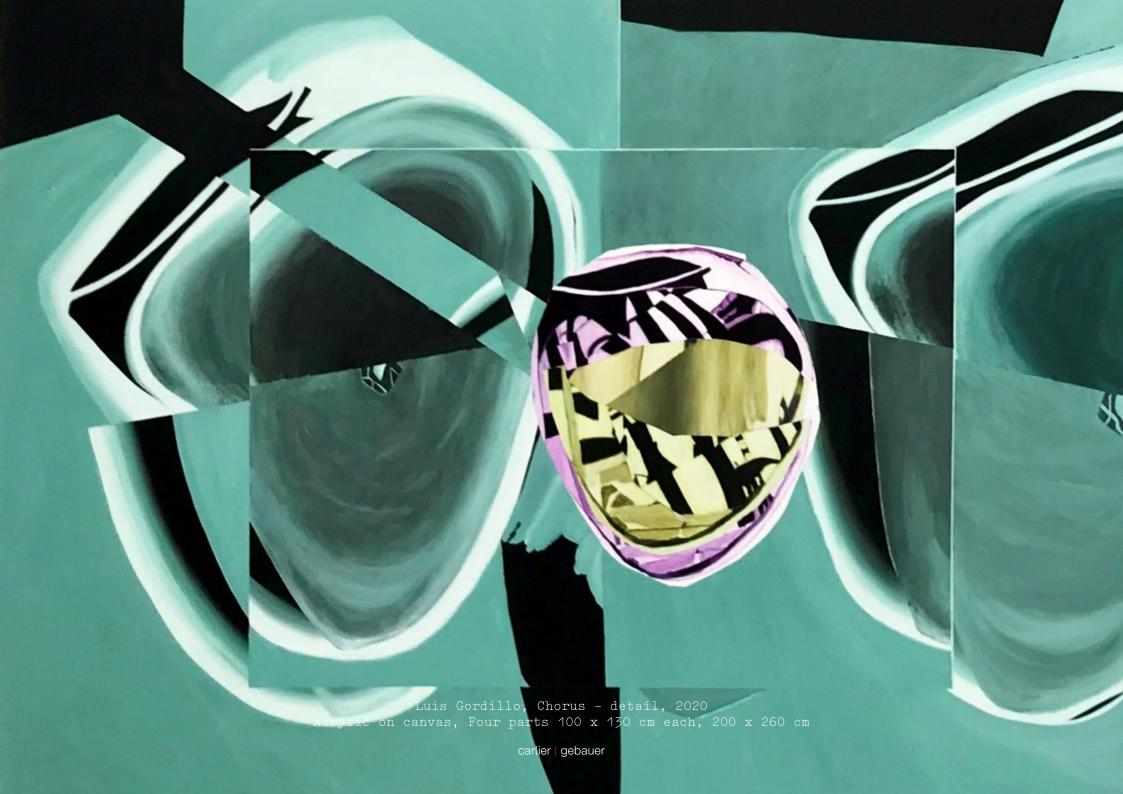






Luis Gordillo, Chorus, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, Four parts (100 x 130 cm each), 200 x 260 cm carlier gebauer







Luis Gordillo, Visión dispersión destrucción, 2019 acrylic on canvas, 134 x 190 cm

carlier | gebauer

