



EXHIBITION AT THE CCCB

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YOUNG WOMEN AUTHORS  
OF AVANT-GARDE  
COMICS

2.12.2022 – 14.5.2023

A production of

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## 01.- INTRODUCTION



The exhibition *Graphic Constellation. Young Women Authors of Avant-garde Comics* showcases the creative universes of Bàrbara Alca, Marta Cartu, Genie Espinosa, Ana Galvañ, Nadia Hafid, Conxita Herrero, María Medem, Miriampersand and Roberta Vázquez. In their work, the nine artists cast a critical and humorous eye over themes within the millennial experience, such as economic and job insecurity, the disappearance of stability, our relationship with technology, sisterhood and relationships on the Internet.

Curated by the editor Montserrat Terrones, the exhibition aims to offer an innovative perspective of comics, letting the strips and their characters take over the exhibition space in nine installations created by the artists expressly for the occasion.

*Graphic Constellation*, open from 2 December 2022 to 14 May 2023 in the CCCB's Exhibition Room 3, presents the comics and the diversity of languages, aesthetic registers and cultural references of these creators who, through the use of colour, graphics, and stylistic and narrative experimentation, have questioned the canonical forms of the comic.

The exhibition plunges us into their imaginary universes through the installations that they themselves have created for the CCCB's rooms: you can "get a match" with the monsters of Bàrbara Alca's *Cringer* dating app, play with Roberta Vázquez's comic characters or step through a dimensional door devised by Miriampersand.

The exhibition also invites us to discover how a network of self-publishing fairs, small publishing houses and printing houses have managed to consolidate an alternative scene in which these nine artists move and grow. And it shows how comics can jump off the paper and come to life in other artistic mediums such as ceramics, tapestries and animation.

## **02.- EXHIBITION TEXTS**

### **GRAPHIC CONSTELLATION**

#### **Young Women Authors of Avant-garde Comics**

A constellation is a group of stars that shine in the sky at night and suggest a certain harmony, a beguiling pattern, when viewed from Earth. In imitation of an ancient civilisation looking at the firmament in search of answers about the future, we might perhaps wonder what we are foretold by the forms and singularity of the stars that make up the constellation that is the focus of this exhibition. Their names are Bàrbara Alca, Marta Cartu, Genie Espinosa, Ana Galvañ, Nadia Hafid, Conxita Herrero, María Medem, Miriampersand and Roberta Vázquez. They are not heavenly bodies, but comic writers who, through their conceptual and aesthetic concerns, have strengthened a creative fellowship in which it is possible to read the radiant present of the experimental comic in our country and intuit some of its possible futures.

It would perhaps be presumptuous to speak of them as a generation, yet they all share the same critical view of the instabilities, uncertainties and perplexities of millennials. Nor can we regard them as an artistic movement, as their individual singularities are so powerful that they prevail over their common traits, their shared interests and aesthetic similarities. What is clear is that the fact that their radical proposals have coincided in time and place points to the wealth and diversity of a creative moment in a medium that still seems to be struggling for cultural validation in certain spaces.

A clear vocation to transform established languages into radical avant-garde proposals and a disenchanting vision of reality and of the dysfunctions in contemporary society reveal the unity between a diversity of registers that extends from the most motley variations of genre art to proposals that include poetic abstraction. This exhibition has invited these nine women authors to think outside the page, to invade the exhibition space using various resources, but without losing sight of the essence of their medium, sequential narration in (drawn) images. They have answered the invitation to intoxicate others with comics – and not just to display comics – in the rooms of this exhibition by creating nine new installations.

### **SECTION 1. THE COMIC AS SYSTEM**

Much has changed in the Spanish cultural and professional landscape of comics since the boom of the 1980s that filled newsstands with new publications, led to the professionalisation of a whole generation of authors forged in the underground, fostered the proliferation of specialist shops, seduced new readers and media and made the creation of institutional comic fairs a meaningful proposition. The nine artists who feature in this exhibition emerged in the midst of a new ecosystem that encouraged aesthetic dissidence and the questioning of commonplaces and established forms of expression, although professional stability remains a distant professional horizon.

The numerous self-publishing fairs such as GRAF, Gutter Fest, Tenderete, KBOOM! and Libros Mutantes offer an alternative to more generalist events and present the ideal context for building supportive networks, establishing a direct dialogue with the public and arranging signings and professional agreements. Printers specialising in self-publishing and bookshops particularly open to proposals that defy convention make it possible for the energy of these individual landmarks to establish a fully normalised continuity. Lastly, the appearance of new

publishing houses and imprints with an affinity for more audacious proposals creates a permeability between the artisanal scene and the professional space – with all that this entails in terms of popularity and circulation – that alters the old protocols on gaining admission to the industry.

The local reverberations of some of the transformations that have taken place in the medium at an international level have also contributed to a paradigm shift that has shaped new ways of reading and creating comics. In the United States, a second generation of indie comics resulted in almost every writer becoming responsible for their own comic book mastheads, which graced the covers of some of the seminal works of the turn of the century. When manga arrived en masse, with its wide-ranging registers and tones and its particular visual codes, it captivated a large female readership, seduced by a medium in which the male gaze had predominated. In addition, the millennial sensibility has found in authors such as Dash Shaw, Marjane Satrapi, Lisa Hanawalt and Simon Hanselmann voices that appealed more directly to it.

### **Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi**

The increasing retrenchment of civil liberties and the fading of any utopian prospects after the Islamic Revolution in Iran provide the backdrop to the autobiographical story of initiation that Marjane Satrapi constructs in *Persepolis*. A work that became a global sociological phenomenon, supported by the French independent comics publisher L'Association, it was made into a brilliant film adaptation by Satrapi in collaboration with Vincent Paronnaud, also a comics artist. The first great classic of contemporary times marked by militant female creativity.

### **New independent comic**

In Canada and the United States, a new generation of independent writers grew up in a climate very different to the countercultural blossoming of the late 1960s. Art Spiegelman's magazine *RAW* served as a bridge between that underground past and emerging forms of graphic radicalism, becoming a source of inspiration for future projects such as the Canadian Drawn & Quarterly, a publishing house with its own periodical. In Seattle, the Fantagraphics publishing house championed the flourishing alternative comic scene. Many authors had their own comic book masthead that were a creative lab in which they concocted some of the works that would go on to form a new canon. In this way, a stimulating line of continuity was established between the stapled comic and the book, between the popular origin and the end point of cultural respectability.

### **Julie Doucet**

A candid and visceral practitioner of autofiction with punk echoes, Julie Doucet, from Canada, is an unusual figure within the post-underground scene. She took her first steps in her career in the field of self-publishing before Robert Crumb published her work in the pages of *Weirdo* magazine, bringing her to the attention of critics and professional publishers. A pioneer in a sector dominated by the male gaze and sensibility, Doucet gradually gave up writing comics, but she has remained a key influence for subsequent generations. Max, a historian of the Spanish underground, played a crucial role in raising local awareness of her work.

## **Manga**

One of the most significant developments in the sector at the turn of the century was the opening of Western markets to the vast and varied array of manga. A number of anime television series served as ambassadors for the forms and sensibilities of a truly boundless universe, with expressive codes of its own and a tremendous capacity to reach all kinds of audiences due to the diversity of its offerings. The phenomenon of *Akira* by Katsuhiro Otomo – both manga and an accomplished anime – opened the floodgates to a cultural wave that was initially viewed with some suspicion. Following the boom in the 1980s in comics for adults, which seemed to appeal more to male readers, manga was fundamental in attracting numerous women readers thanks to its ability to reflect female subjectivities and to explore the complex poetics of everyday life.

## **Millennial mythology**

In the realm of comics, the millennial generation has produced its own referents capable of influencing a wide range of authors willing to add their own nuances to models forged at the intersection of worlds and languages. Writers such as Simon Hanselmann, Lisa Hanawalt and Dash Shaw all have the ability to imbue with delirium an everyday life marked by failure and disappointment, as well as a taste for contrasting seemingly ingenuous forms with singularly uncompromising discourses. The influence of the new alternative animation is also palpable and, indeed, both Hanawalt and Shaw have had exciting careers in this field: Hanawalt was responsible for designing the characters in the *Bojack Horseman* series and was also the creator of *Tuca & Bertie*, while Shaw has already shown his second feature-length film *Cryptozoo*.

## **Fatbottom**

Founded in 2010, the Fatbottom bookshop, situated in the Raval district of Barcelona, is the city's flagship in the fields of self-publishing and alternative comics and graphic novels. The fact that it shares the same premises as the Máquina Total print studio reinforces its status as a meeting place and as a generator of mutual support, as well as a helpful sense of community outside the annual round of fanzine fairs.

## **Máquina total**

Pablo Taladro, Irkus M. Zeberio, Naida Mazzenga and Danke Panke, all of whom are well-versed in self-publishing, make up the team at Máquina Total, the print studio partnered with the Fatbottom bookshop in a transparent symbiotic relationship. Risograph, silk screen and digital printing are the three mainstays of a business with an activist, countercultural spirit, out of which grew the Gutter Fest festival, and which sees the festive side as a logical consequence of its militant taste for vital and aesthetic dissidence.

## **Independent publishing houses**

The world of self-publishing has a natural ally in the rich landscape of independent publishing houses with an interest in the most radical graphic proposals. When artists move to professional publishing, they tend not to turn their backs on their origins, but instead go to and fro constantly between the two ambits. Publishing houses do not impose standardising criteria and catalogues are full of solutions inspired by the utterly free codes of the fanzine or artist's book. The impressive fabric of publishing houses such as Apa Apa Còmics, Fosfatina, Fulgencio Pimentel, Belleza Infinita and Ediciones Valientes is joined by imprints of an alternative nature set up within publishing groups of a generalist nature, as exemplified by Sapristi, part of Roca Libros.

## **SECTION 2. MILLENNIALS: A GENERATION IN DISPUTE**

In recent years, the concept of the 'millennial generation' has become a political battleground. At issue is a series of clichés and stereotypes (the snowflake, cry-baby, narcissistic generation addicted to social media), as well as a political and economic interpretation of the precarity and structural insecurity in which people born between the early 1980s and mid-90s find themselves. If they cannot buy property, is it because they don't make the necessary effort or because they have been through a never-ending economic crisis? If they do not have children, is it because they are into polyamory on Tinder or because they do not have either the means or the stability to even think about it? The outcome has been that many of the cultural products created by millennials take sides in the dispute by defining themselves generationally. Tiredness, malaise and insecurity are no longer seen as a personal and individual problem but are instead addressed as a situation arising from structural injustice. The digital world understood as an intangible space of freedom and creativity is also becoming a thing of the past: technology embodies the neoliberal imperative of hyperproductivity and has erased the distinction between public and private life, turning life into one long working day.

### **Daughters of neoliberalism**

Millennials' circumstances cannot be explained solely on the grounds of the year they were born. We must also bear in mind that they grew up in a neoliberal market society in which the privatization of common goods and assets, the offshoring of industry, financial globalization and growing social inequality predominate. The 2008 crisis, the implosion of the property market, the privatization of healthcare and education, and employment reform are not isolated events but different aspects of the neoliberal mission to subjugate the working classes that goes beyond simply reconfiguring the economy and labour relations. As Margaret Thatcher said, 'economics are the method: the object is to change the heart and soul' of citizens in order to turn them into the sole owners of companies working 24/7 to make a living.

### **The best trained generation ever**

We have read it a thousand times: 'the best trained generation ever'. They have been to university, they have studied abroad, they can speak several languages and they have mastered digital technologies. The Google algorithm does not disappoint when you type the word 'millennial' into the search engine: it brings up hyper-connected, entrepreneurial, optimistic and informal young urbanites who work in a bright office or in a bar in a gentrified neighbourhood. This is the prevalent image that exemplifies the meritocratic promise held out by their education: those who invest in themselves, make an effort, study and look after themselves will be the winners in the social race. However, this promise was already broken by the time of the 2008 crisis, when many millennials were not even of legal adult age: the outlook for them was rampant unemployment, pitiful wages, temporary jobs and exorbitant rentals.

### **The slow cancellation of the future**

The lack of promising prospects for millennials has resulted in a mental health crisis. Following a pandemic and in the midst of an energy and climate crisis, the neoliberal ideal of the entrepreneur continues to hold sway. Millennials are held responsible for the precarity they find themselves in and are pushed to continue improving their capacities through mindfulness



courses so they can cope better with stress and frustration, apps to improve concentration and productivity, and biohacking strategies so they can reduce the hours they spend sleeping. As a consequence, depressive fatigue has become the quintessential millennial condition, and the struggle to politicize their disquiet, from mental health to the cost of rented accommodation, is triggering a new cycle of social mobilizations.

### **The personal is more political than ever**

One of the social movements that has best succeeded in understanding and responding to this state of ubiquitous uncertainty is feminism. Upholding the view that ‘the personal is political’ at a time when neoliberalism has explicitly turned the personal into a form of human capital means adopting a materialist stance in response to the new forms of sheer injustice, in which gender inequality, gender violence and LGBTI phobia play a fundamental role. For millennials, feminism has been a formative movement and they went through its transformation into a predominant movement: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s slogan ‘we should all be feminists’ became a pop maxim; the word ‘feminism’ was printed on fast fashion t-shirts; and the #MeToo movement turned the media spotlight onto rape culture.

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## **SECTION 3. EVERYDAY MILLENNIAL LIFE**

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The millennial generation soon discovered that awaiting them behind the mirages of the welfare society lay a systemic state of malaise that would gradually devour any future prospects and condition their room for movement, rebellion and emancipation. However, the extreme individualism favoured by a neoliberalism willing to disempower collective actions has not resulted in a depoliticizing of gazes, discourses and sensibilities.

Whereas some comic artists prided themselves on being survivors during the years when counterculture was at its fiercest and most raging in the 1960s, their millennial descendants could boast of having a good handful of master’s degrees in survival. The distillation of disenchantment and the vital and ideological stance in the language of the comic take various forms that caustically reflect the injustices and contradictions in the society in which this generation group lives.

The interpretation of daily life in the most diverse depictions is one of the options chosen by the writers in this section to express their disquiet, be it with the socio-economic situation (Roberta Vázquez and Bàrbara Alca), the new protocols governing relationships (Bàrbara Alca) or with the failure of communication and the factors that make it difficult to connect with others (Conxita Herrero). For all these reasons, anxiety and insecurity – symptoms of a paradoxical isolation in a hyperconnected society in which the individual finds themselves subjected to constant over-exposure – are a major feature in their work.

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### **ROBERTA VÁZQUEZ**

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Using a style that draws on the sources of the underground tradition, but which cannibalizes pop icons from her generational era in the manner of fan art, Roberta Vázquez has turned biting humour into a hallmark of her work and a tool with which she formulates a scathing reading of the fluid society and financial uncertainty that condition millennials’ lives.

A militant supporter of self-publishing due to her combative convictions concerning the artisanal spirit of the craft, Vázquez has produced the bulk of her work in this format, which allows her to explore different registers and more freely express a political discourse. Her



Instagram account has also provided her with stimuli for experimentation and has become a testing ground in which the limits of the platform – a maximum of ten panels in a square format – have spurred her into upholding scrolling as a useful new tool for reading a comic strip.

Vázquez, the author of the regular series *Mugre debajo del sofá* (Filth under the Sofa), permeated by cannabinoid humour, has also worked with recurring characters such as the anthropomorphic foodstuffs Pepperony Boy, Pement and Dunkilda, unstable individuals she created inspired by old objects and toys. In *¡Socorro!* (Help!), her first work not self-published, the forceful humorous register allows her to present extremely stark realities: the loss of stability, constant exposure and the contamination of personal life by corporate productivity criteria are the origin of the rise in anxiety and depression among a young population also vulnerable to the dangers of the egotistical and narcissistic culture of social media.

### **Fan art**

Fan art is the term given to amateur visual creations based on universes and characters from mass culture. Normally, fan art is driven by admiration, but in some cases the strategy also serves as a way to introduce codes of representation passed over by the original. Roberta Vázquez appropriates these mechanisms of resignification in order to pay tribute to the pop idols she adores, but also to introduce irony into highly coded universes such as that of Harry Potter, an important character for her generation.

### **Origins**

Roberta Vázquez cannot have been more than seven or eight years old when she produced this publication at home, which, as she recalls, was not even her first, though it was the first that she stapled together. Perhaps there is no better way to illustrate the fact that the author of *¡Socorro!* (Help!) has self-publishing in her blood.

### **Poseurs**

Posing for effect and sadfishing are phenomena that have grown out of the ubiquity of social media and the culture of self-exposure that they have given rise to. With these variants in digital behaviour, the aim is to gain approval, either by displaying generally accepted attitudes or, in contrast, by stirring pity in others. However, the same channels that prompted these particular behavioural mutations can also inspire new ways of creating and reading comics, as exemplified by Roberta Vázquez's Instagram account, which has become a showcase for graphic microstories that satirise the wildest practices on the Web.

### **BÀRBARA ALCA**

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Pizza Chica, a girl with a slice of the famous food from Naples for a face, operates as Bàrbara Alca's alter ego in a work that had been brewing in the realm of self-publishing before it reached the professional market. Werewolves, vampires, elves and anthropomorphic animals complete a cast of characters who address, through the prism of trash irony, the shortfalls and disappointments faced by a generation suffering from a precarity that has become an existential condition and in which uncertainties over employment and relationships fill the entire horizon.

With its autobiographical backdrop, Alca's work focuses on everyday, minor situations that reveal her to be extremely knowledgeable of the mechanics of the new television comedy. The

clear line that defines her characters and the aesthetic keys that retain the pleasant hues of books for children are in explosive contrast with her merciless and acerbic gaze at the situations she addresses. Auteur animation of the 1990s is another obvious source of inspiration for an artist who has also tried her hand at moving drawings.

*Pizza Chica y las lloronas* (Pizza Girl and the Cry-Babies), Bàrbara Alca's impressive debut piece in the professional market, stems from her growing interest in the new relational dynamics mediated by technology, which she turns her attention to again in *Rate Date*, one of her latest fanzines. Interpersonal relationships turned into transactions and the experience of feeling like a commodity in the marketplace of romance make the intimate sphere an ideological battleground.

### **Trash irony**

One of the main characteristics of the work of Bàrbara Alca is the contrast between its naïf aesthetic and her sardonic and at times even punk discourse. Her oeuvre demonstrates the frustration and bitterness of a generation that has seen the promises made to it go unkept and its expectations left unfulfilled. The motivational gifs typical of a new tackiness that has emerged on the internet make a good target for her extremely pointed ironic transgressions.

### **Animations**

In the denouement of *Pizza Chica y las lloronas* (Pizza Girl and the Cry-Babies), the main character receives an unexpected offer of work that will take her to Los Angeles to work on an animated series for the Adult Swim animation channel. An elegant way to reflect that the new wave of animated cartoons has been not only a fundamental influence for this generation of authors, but also a longed-for aspirational goal. Bàrbara Alca has written advertising animations, but also brief personal pieces that demonstrate her creative universe's potential for development and growth in this field.

### **Acrylics**

Acrylics came before comics in Bàrbara Alca's work, though the permeability between the two codes goes much further than the sharing of the same imaginary universe. *Pizza Chica* in fact came into being in an acrylic piece, albeit as a male character. The speech bubbles typical of comics are also often to be found in some of these pieces. Images of imaginary cities, graphic syntheses of a particular emotional state, free floutings of the pin-up tradition and scenes constructed using random elements found on the internet exemplify the range of interests in this area of her output.

## **CONXITA HERRERO**

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Conxita Herrero, who only became interested in comics when she was eighteen, is self-taught, as a result of which her work deals with the traditional codes of the medium in a groundbreaking, almost subversive way. Her avant-garde attitude stems from the freedom of action enjoyed by someone who approaches a language from the outside and who sees no need to respect any kind of tradition. Stories with digressions that drift so far from the main plot that it disappears from view and thought bubbles with content exiled beyond the margins of the panel are clear evidence of a creative self-determination that seems constantly to come up with unexpected stylistic solutions.

Herrero has produced a vast body of work in the field of self-publishing, though the comic strip represents just a small part of her extensive oeuvre, in which poetry, collage, graphics, songs and a varied array of registers sustain a discourse of the self that also runs through the pages of her seminal *Gran bola de helado* (Big Scoop of Ice Cream). A character – one we recognise as the artist herself in essence – that is the protagonist of this collection of microstories that reflect states of mind and private thoughts. The discourse suggests rather than makes explicit and the influence of the language of poetry is plain to see.

Intimacy and subjectivity are the twin cores of a discourse that often emphasises failings in communication and which succeeds in extracting gold from the painstaking description of insignificant everyday actions. A watercolour artist with a delicate line, Herrero, together with her brother, has also created the cult indie duo Tronco.

### **Conxita Herrero /Gabrielle Bell**

When Conxita Herrero was invited to contribute to the first issue of *Now!* magazine, published by the prestigious American publishing house Fantagraphics, she decided to pay tribute to the British-American alternative cartoonist Gabrielle Bell in her comic strip *Here I Am*, the starting point for which was Bell's *Cecil and Jordan in New York*, in which a young artist struggling to make ends meet turns herself into a chair to escape the misery of her life.

Despite the differences in the two authors' styles, they share a similar concern with the impossibility of satisfactorily communicating emotions. Moreover, Bell's chair connects with the importance accorded to objects, constantly imbued with an emotional charge, in Herrero's universe. Bell's *Cecil and Jordan in New York* was adapted for film by Michel Gondry in his anthology film *Tokyo!* (2008).

### **Poetry**

Conxita Herrero's work spreads like an overflowing river across an extremely diverse range of supports and expressive terrains. Every personal experience is liable to be embraced, integrated and transformed in her creative discourse, in which the self is the constant mainstay. Poetry plays an important part in her oeuvre and, due to its intimate character, connects with many of her comics, taking the most naked and direct form possible within her multifaceted body of work.

### **Fanzines**

Conxita Herrero's worked extensively in the realm of the fanzine before she began to explore the language of comic strips. Much of her output in this field has centred on works that experiment with textual codes, but she has also tried her hand at collage and the creative treatment of veritable slices of life. On occasion, she has turned a satirical eye at the sequential codes of the comic and its relationship with cultural validation.

### **KUŠ!**

The *kuš!* anthology, created in 2007 in Latvia by David Schilter and Sanita Muižniece, is one of the few avant-garde comic magazines to have achieved a certain longevity in the current unfavourable climate for periodicals issued on paper. An international flagship, it has received major accolades such as the Prize for the Alternative Comic Strip at the Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2012. In its pages, Conxita Herrero published her comic strip *Search*, a delicate example of her mastery of minimalist poetics.

## Tronco

The Autoplacer demo competition proved crucial in prompting Conxita Herrero to decide to give a big push to Tronco, the musical duo she formed with her brother Fermí. Since 2016, they have gradually established themselves as a cult band on the indie scene and have been signed up by Elefant Records. During lockdown, the duo broadcast on the Tronco YouTube channel their weekly video-podcast the #LateShowDominicalDelTronco, for each of which Conxita produced a watercolour that reflected the everyday domestic reality of that period when social life was put on hold.

## SECTION 4. THE FRACTAL NARRATIVE AND HYPERCONNECTIVITY

One of the characteristic traits of the works of Nadia Hafid and Marta Cartu is formal experimentation through the page layout. This type of exploration can follow hot and overflowing or cold and geometric dérives. The path followed by these two artists is oriented towards this latter option, with extremely cerebral and synthetic works in which none of the elements is there by chance.

A fruitful back-and-forth between repetitions and subtle variations distances Nadia Hafid's pages from the prevailing codes of realism and makes them more akin to the aesthetics of a postmodernity seduced by the expressive potential of fractal geometries and infinite fragmentations.

Existential perplexities and alienation in a reality hyperconnected by communication technologies are given a privileged place for distilling reflection in a pure form in *Hola Siri* (Hello Siri), by Marta Cartu. Our present, with its interfaces and intrusive pop-ups, resembles a page in a comic that overstimulates our sense of perception.

### NADIA HAFID

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Family relationships, life on the outskirts, immigration, the handling of frustration and rage, working-class consciousness and the buried inequalities and violence of neoliberal society are some of the everyday themes subjected in Nadia Hafid's work to the shock treatment of a formalism that swings between a distancing effect and increasing subtlety.

Even though the minimalism is intended to erase signs of authorship in the works, this is precisely one of the hallmarks of Hafid's oeuvre. The pages are constructed using basic geometrical structures and shapes that appear repeatedly, often in monochrome, and become the mainstay of the composition. The colours are very flat and the line is highly visible in an extremely subtractive approach that, nevertheless, reinforces the author's humanist and political gaze.

The sense of tragedy that runs through stories such as *El buen padre* (The Good Father) and *Chacales* (Jackals), which could easily fall into melodramatic excess, is heightened by the indirect narration of the tensest moments and by the emotional restraint imposed in the narrative tone. The skilful treatment of narrative time is another fundamental trait of Hafid's work.

## Fractal narrative

In 1999, the artist Kerry Mitchell published *The Fractal Art Manifesto*, in which he advocated an aesthetic strongly inspired by maths and geometry, made up of images characterised by infinite self-similarity, in which the part is the same as the whole. The geometric forms, proportions, scales, repetitions and serialisations of Nadia Hafid's narrative composition link it to fractalism, as is that of other authors, among them the influential Nick Drnaso, who has written seminal works such as *Sabrina*, *Beverly* and his recent *Acting Class*.

In addition, the narrative and formal links between Hafid and Drnaso include their effort to transpose the temporal continuity of a film clip of a sequence of shots to the pages of the comic.

## The Return

*The Return* (2003) by the Russian film director Andrey Zvyagintsev proved a fundamental influence for Nadia Hafid in articulating the tone and elusive narrative strategies of *El buen padre* (The Good Father). Eloquent ellipses pre-empt the risk of excessive sentiment in two works that succeed in containing considerable depth in their silences.

## Illustration and the press

Illustrating for the media usually provides experimental comic authors with a more stable and sustainable professional context that tends to go far beyond simply working to make a living. The need to adapt to subjects that may, in principle, be foreign to them is allied to the desire to evaluate new registers. In the case of Nadia Hafid, these commissions have given her the opportunity to explore areas bordering on science fiction, while reflecting a present pervaded by technology in which the prospect of transhumanism can be glimpsed.

## MARTA CARTU

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Close in her early work to the graphic style of Jeffrey Brown, Marta Cartu has increasingly approached the challenges of a conceptual comic with her eyes fixed on the codes and forms of contemporary art. The result is a highly individual and extremely thoughtful oeuvre in which formal research is inseparable from meditation on notions and problems that are central to the present-day, such as identity, competitiveness and the demands we make of ourselves, the arbitrary nature of gender roles, utopian aspects and the dystopian potential of the new technologies and the slavery that comes with holding down more than one job.

Parallel to her self-published works – each of which is a singular object in which background, form and material engage in a dialogue – the author has grown increasingly keen to expand the expressive keys of the comic by making forays into the most unexpected ambits: performance, installation art and even pottery, which in her hands has become a support for concise sequential narratives.

The ambivalent relationship with technology – a communication tool and at the same time a potential instrument of exploitation – is the inspiration for a radical challenge to the conventional forms of the comic strip in *Hola Siri*, which plays with the concepts of hypertext and hyperconnectivity, inviting the reader to take an active role in generating the story.

## **Generation Austerity**

*Generation Austerity* is the title of the report published in 2022 by the European Youth Forum, a platform encompassing more than a hundred European organisations that work to give young people a voice and political agency. Divided into themed sections on issues such as housing, employment, mental health, care, migration and debt, the report details the impact of the implementation of austerity policies on young people. The sole illustrator in this crucial study, Marta Cartu succeeded in arriving at a thought-provoking fusion of graphic succinctness and ideological complexity.

## **Paradoxes**

Defined as an independent magazine for lovers of nature and adventure, the French publication *Les Others* devoted its fourteenth issue, published in December 2021, to the subject of paradoxes, offering Marta Cartu the opportunity to apply sequentiality to illustration as a means to translate her particular vision of a number of classic examples of paradoxical situations. This was a commission in keeping with her interest in the uncertainties and complexities of contemporary times.

## **Safe spaces**

Two expressive devices typical of the language of the cartoon strip – kinetic lines and explosive clouds – inspired the art installation *Espais de Seguretat* (Safe Spaces), awarded the 2019 Young Art Prize by the Government of Catalonia. The result of the artist's wish to go beyond the language of the comic and to allow it to invade other realms of artistic validation, *Espais de Seguretat* was her first ambitious exploration of the codes of the interactive installation, offering a thought-provoking reflection on violence and its social masks.

## ***¡Pum!***

The arbitrary nature of the roles pre-assigned to women in the public space was the target of Marta Cartu's critique in her performance at *Visibles*, an event held in Madrid in 2018. The experience gave rise to the fanzine *¡Pum!*, in which the artist contrasts the freedom afforded by a skateboard with the alienation associated with an ironing board.

## **Ceramics**

One of the most unexpected areas in which Marta Cartu has attempted to introduce some of the signs of identity of the comic is glazed ceramic. Whether giving physical substance to representatives of marginal womanhood in her project *Habitar los espacios* (Dwelling in Spaces), centred on the otherness of peripheral urban spaces, or playing with the sequentiality of images and iconographic devices on the surface of vessels and ashtrays, Cartu defends the infiltration of the codes of the comic onto supports that had not previously been seen as welcoming territory for them.

## SECTION 5. VOYAGES TO THE OTHER SIDE

The idea of travelling to parallel dimensions of a dreamlike and lysergic texture is the link that connects *Internet sublime* and *Hoops*, Miriampersand and Genie Espinosa's most recent works. Whether the journey is regarded as a nightmare or as a transformative life experience, it becomes a narrative device that allows the leading characters to respond to the questions asked about a present marked by change and uncertainty. The exploration of these alternative realities inspires an ongoing formal inquiry that is not contradicted by an overpowering sense of play.

Miriampersand focuses her gaze on a dystopian world which, despite drawing on references from science fiction and conspiracy culture, becomes less and less fantasy and instead disturbingly akin in many respects to reality. Genie Espinosa, who sets her story in a future without men, combines motifs from classical mythology and Lewis Carroll's writings with urban aesthetics and a stimulating embracing of the graphic and narrative devices of manga.

These two writers have built solid careers in advertising, this being the reason why colour is so prominent in their works. The constant dialogue with referents from pop culture – not always evident at first sight – is another common feature of their oeuvres, both imbued with a sense of fantasy that never loses sight of its roots in tangible reality.

### MIRIAMPERSAND

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In Miriampersand's imaginary, philosophy, architecture, esotericism, psychedelia and even car design make up her particular mythology that stems from personal experiences such as rootlessness and anxiety and ends up delving into the seductiveness of the extremely enigmatic power of images. The author, with a long career as an illustrator behind her, has arrived at a stylistic identity characterised by her palette of bright colours combined in a garish manner that creates an effect of visual dislocation, heightened by the recurring presence of anthropomorphic animals such as mutant crocodiles and rodents.

Her long-form comics – *Animal Party*, published under the name Míriam Muñoz, and *Internet sublime* – reveal the sweeping transformations that have taken place in her use of narrative and her formal approaches. Whereas *Animal Party* opted for explicitly autobiographical keys and a shaky, deliberately naïve line, *Internet sublime* explores the dystopian tale, combining referents from Foucault to Buckminster Fuller and using a polymorphic iconography that blends assorted elements and plays with the unstable nature of the fabric of reality.

In series of illustrations such as *Rites of Passage* and *Adoration*, Miriampersand presents a subtly cryptic approach to imaginary lands that seem to be waiting for our gaze to unleash their narrative potential.

#### **Animal Party / Internet Sublime**

Even though *Animal Party*, Miriampersand's first album, is in keeping with the tenets of realism associated with the autobiographical narrative, there are quite a few moments in which the sense of the everyday is unsettled and anticipates some of the hallucinatory aspects of the future *Internet sublime*. The two stories feature crises and transformations experienced by their main characters, revealing an underlying continuity buried beneath the marked differences in tone and style.



## Architecture

The Googie style, emerged in the 1940s, and iconic buildings such as the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, the Muralla Roja by Ricardo Bofill in Calpe and Habitat 67 by Moshe Safdie are just some of the architectural referents cannibalised in a highly individual way by Miriam Persand in her work. The dialogue that her illustrations establish with postcards that immortalise these edifices adopts the interesting echoes of a dialectic between the utopian spirit of those projects and their capacity to seduce and magnetise a dystopian imagination like that of the artist.

## GENIE ESPINOSA

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Genie Espinosa's characters, with their rounded, rotund figures, which can be interpreted as an expression of resolute support for non-normative bodies, have introduced explosive urban energy with touches of girl power into the comic. This self-same spirit is to be found in her poster works, her street art murals and her imaginative, colourful clothing designs that convey echoes of the street and neighbourhoods on the urban fringes in the sophistication of a new form of glamour.

It is in Genie Espinosa's work, in the compositional solutions, the contortions of the volumes, the kinetic figures and the characters' expressions, that the influence of manga is most evident, though her style has evolved to increasingly extreme forms that contain echoes of the new television animation and the abstract comic.

*Hoops*, the author's longest and most ambitious work, is set in a future in which men have disappeared and are no longer necessary for the survival of the species. However, this is not the central plot line of a story in which bullying, the empowering portrayal of characters with functional diversity and the sisterhood consisting of a group of teenage girls anchor the outpouring of eccentricities and the explosions of vivid colours in a moving emotional truth and a palpable tenderness.

## Manga

When she was taking her early steps as a teenage comic artist, Genie Espinosa clearly adhered to the established criteria of manga thanks to the influence of the works of the CLAMP collective and of authors such as Rumiko Takahashi. Her style eventually underwent a radical evolution, but something survived in the process, like the everyday situation reflected in these pages – a girl waiting for a friend who is late – which reappears in new forms in *Hoops*.

## The two *Hoops*

The creation of *Hoops* took almost three years, a lengthy process during which an interesting change in style occurred. Genie Espinosa began her first version using a more angular aesthetic and with a limited palette of colours akin to the codes of manga. She redrew it later, arriving at the style for which she is noted, with round shapes that evoke the flexibility of an animated cartoon. Thus, just as the protagonists of *Hoops* live between two dimensions of reality, the work itself seems to have left the trace of a parallel existence, of another possible life.

## Fashion

The visual power of Genie Espinosa's style has also been deployed in the world of fashion thanks to the Chinese firm INXX Street Wear, which has commissioned her for two consecutive years to design its spring-autumn collections. The fact that this collaborative venture began in the Chinese Year of the Tiger, associated with change and beneficial transformation, provided the inspiration to make this big cat a repeated motif in works that draw on urban aesthetics to create a new form of glamour.

## Empowerment

Joan of Arc, She-Hulk, Wonder Woman, other imaginary superheroines and Greek Amazons are some of the various mythical forms of female empowerment that runs explicitly through Genie Espinosa's entire imaginary, connecting with her championing of sturdy, non-normative physiques. The forceful nature of the artist's output in this field even enticed the pop star Nathy Peluso, who personally commissioned Genie Espinosa to design the image she went on to use to promote her hit *Mafiosa*.

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## SECTION 6. STRANGE WORLDS

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The connection between the differing poetics of Ana Galvañ and María Medem is immersion in worlds characterised by their strangeness based on graphic experimentation that shatters every received idea regarding the medium. Galvañ prioritises futuristic settings as a means to question the dehumanising dynamics of the present, whereas Medem chooses to create a pervasive sense of dreamlike unease in her poetic fictions, marked by the absolute protagonism of the atmosphere.

The non-referential employment of colour, and the intensive use of hatching and textures, as well as hieratic characters with no facial features, are combined in works with a tendency towards the open story and a daring interest in the seductiveness of mystery and opacity. The balance between the hypnotic beauty of the forms and the apparent cryptic quality of the story makes reading their works an experience as demanding as it is rewarding.

The obvious points that these two writers have in common does not, however, preclude them from being potentially seen as counterpoints to each other. Ana Galvañ is the great chronicler of artificial universes affected by technological sophistication and the chief concepts of science fiction, while María Medem's main source of inspiration lies in the natural universe, elemental forces and popular traditions which, in her vision, seem to be embodied in echoes of a lost or distant civilisation.

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## ANA GALVAÑ

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The veteran of the group, Ana Galvañ is a leading figure in the Spanish avant-garde comic scene due in equal measure to the influence of her body of creative work and to her role as the driving force behind networks that raise awareness of avant-garde artists. Her Tik Tok Comics platform, founded in 2013, was a crucial virtual hub for a new generation of creators who were shunning established codes. The name of the initiative was not an anticipation of the now famous social network, but a tribute to the sci-fi novel *Tik-Tok* by John Sladek, published in 1983. Tris Tras has taken over today from Tik Tok Comics on Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr.

A keen reader of speculative fiction, Galvañ has built a personal universe in which the compositional and chromatic influence of Russian Constructivism and a cold and disaffected narrative foster a dystopian reading of reality. Her works reverse some of the archetypes and narrative constants in the genre, from robotic figures to corporate dehumanisation and including interstellar camps and the hazards of virtual worlds.

Following her collection of short stories *Pulse Enter para continuar* (Press Enter to Continue), *Tarde en McBurger's* (Afternoon at McBurger's) presents a fascinating narrative puzzle around a story of female friendship set in a future in which fast-food restaurants are able to give time travel trips to customers as prizes. The well-known maxim that science fiction is not a toolkit for preparing the future but for diagnosing the neuroses of the present is exemplified to perfection by Galvañ, but without any hint of inertia.

### **Tik Tok Comics**

The leading character in a cult novel by the master of satirical science fiction John Sladek was the source of the name of Ana Galvañ's trailblazing initiative to raise awareness in the digital sphere of emerging authors in the fields of self-publishing and the most experimental alternative comics. That was in 2013 and, of course, the audiovisual interaction platform of the same name so popular today had not yet been set up.

Ana Galvañ's Tik Tok Comics provided an outlet for disseminating radical works, fostered the in-house production of series online and, lastly, left printed testimony in the form of the collective volume *Teen Wolf* (2016), which, with its change in gender, disturbed the nostalgic memory of Rod Daniel's film *Teen Wolf* (1985).

### **Constructivism**

At the level of form, Ana Galvañ's work is indebted to Russian Constructivism. An influential movement in graphic design thanks to the pro-Revolution propaganda posters, Constructivism is highly recognisable due, among other characteristics, to its use of pure geometrical shapes, linearity, symmetry and repetition, which are echoed in Galvañ's *Pulse Enter para continuar* (Press Enter to Continue).

### **Experimental**

Ana Galvañ's radars are well calibrated to detect the most revolutionary bursts of originality and heterodoxy in the realm of alternative comics. The Belgian Olivier Schrauwen has become the archetype of the author who stretches all the limits of expression in the contemporary comic, whereas far more marginal terrains provide the backdrop for the works of artists such as Christopher Forgues (C.F.) and Carlos González, both of whom have one foot in the experimental music scene and are contrasting examples of how an exuberant visual baroque style and a radical naïf aesthetic can be equally valid weapons for subverting established codes.

### **Passion for futurism**

Between the cyberpop forms of the *Robotech* (1985) franchise and the alien gaze of the cult classic *Under the Skin* (2013), directed by Jonathan Glazer, the futuristic imaginary universe of Ana Galvañ continues to distil diverse referents, all enriched by her comprehensive knowledge of sci-fi literature. A trait she shares with her cousin Antonio Galvañ (*Parade*), for

whom she designed the covers of the album *Amor y Ruido* and of the single *Tierra postapocalíptica*. Even though the vision of the future in Galvañ's work is cold, high-tech and unsettling, there is no moralising intention behind it.

## **Female Dystopias**

Dystopias created by women are not an isolated phenomenon in the field of comics. From the old *Shelter* (1980) by Chantal Montellier, a writer of the Métal hurlant generation, to the more recent and award-winning *Le grand vide* (2021) by Léa Murawiec, there has been a concern to reflect the increasing dehumanisation of our civilisation, while at the same time applying a gender sensibility to the darker potentialities of the future.

## **MARÍA MEDEM**

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María Medem's work tends towards abstraction and is based on elements that are more poetic than narrative, as she delves into what she calls 'concise aesthetics', a formal approach that requires a very specific and essentialist treatment of line, colour and text. Some of her pieces contain no verbal expression, relying instead on the eloquence of images that weave an unreal, almost dreamlike atmosphere and endow it with a powerful symbolic charge. The artist seeks ambiguity and to portray loneliness, reflecting the sense of estrangement that the reader perceives in some of the characters adrift in the middle of landscapes in which the force of the natural elements is heightened. Small panels highlight micro-actions in the page layout, expressing a language of her own that is the outcome of an intense process of paring down to the bone and of tremendous creative control.

The work of photographers such as Atín Aya, Cristina García Rodero and Ramón Masats, the rhythms of flamenco, the evocative power of popular folk songs, the ritualised narrative time of Japanese filmmakers like Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa and the landscapes of Andalusia are just some of the varied influences that have inspired the line of an author who has seen some of her works published directly in international collections and by foreign press and print studios such as the Dutch Terry Bleu and the French Studio Fidèle.

In *Cenit* (Zenith), her first long-form work, Medem talks about dreaming, oblivion and sleepwalking through two characters who go over the uncertainties of the nights under a burning sun that contemplates them like a mute deity. *Por culpa de una flor* (A Flower Is to Blame), soon to be published, is a veritable tour de force that features all the author's stylistic constants, now developed into new extremes of stylisation.

## **Atmospheres**

The refined ritualism of Japanese cinema has influenced the creation of the dreamlike and strange atmospheres in which the reader of María Medem's works finds themselves immersed. The hieratic quality of the faces, inspired by traditional Japanese masks, natural elements that seem to channel echoes of Shintoism and the expanding of time in the transition spaces between one sequence and another contribute to the construction of the sense of unreality.

## **Flamenco**

The landscapes and sounds of her native Andalusia are constant references in María Medem's imaginary. The rhythm of a Flamenco song, with its introspective force and its ability to evoke powerful images, can inspire the composition of a page and set the tempo of its narrative

breakdown into panels, as in these pages from *Por culpa de una flor* (A Flower Is to Blame), which are accompanied by their percussive counterpart. When she was drawing *Tregua* (Truce), she used the lyrics of Sevillian boleros by La Niña de los Peines to imprint on the narrative a frenetic pace akin to that of a galloping horse.

## **Symbols**

In these two pages from *Satori*, María Medem seems to sum up an entire personal poetics to do with the use and functions of symbols that make up a universal language but which also have the potential to be resignified by the artist's subjective gaze. Natural elements, ubiquitous in Medem's work, thus form a possible symbolic vocabulary that gives rise to constant variations far removed from any inertia or commonplace.

## **FINAL SECTION. A UNIVERSE OF CONSTELLATIONS**

Roberta Vázquez, Bàrbara Alca, Conxita Herrero, Nadia Hafid, Marta Cartu, Miriampersand, Genie Espinosa, Ana Galvañ and María Medem are the stars in the constellation we have just been viewing, but the universe is complex, almost beyond our understanding, and it contains many possible constellations. In this vault of heaven that brings our tour of the exhibition to a close, we detail the coordinates of some other potential journeys...

## 03.- INSTALLATIONS

**Roberta Vázquez**

***ILLA RISC***

**2022**

'Dodgy Bean, Boots and Dog wake up in different places on Risk Island with no idea how they got there. They have to find a way to escape from the various threats pursuing them before it is too late. Will they manage it? You can witness their adventures by following the instructions given on the board.'

**Bàrbara Alca**

***CRINGER***

**2022**

'*Cringer* takes the form of a simulation of a dating app. In it, you can "match" with several of the characters and interact with them. For the illustrations (photos) and the descriptions, I based myself on real profiles found on various apps that have been assigned to the different monsters and fantasy characters in accordance with their particular characteristics. In the case of the name of the app, I play with the word 'cringe', that sense of disgust or that embarrassment you feel on others' behalf that make you recoil, emotions that illustrate very well the experiences in these apps. As interactions generally occur at night, I have chosen to use the texture of a quilt on the walls, which also suggests a seclusion room in a psychiatric hospital, sharing space with those characters and also being one of them.'

**Conxita Herrero**

***TEMPESTA D'ESTIU***

**2022**

'*Tempesta d'estiu* (Summer Storm) is a short story that graphically recounts what happened during the summer before the opening of *EXPOWAPAS*\*. The narrative is screened on the wall of the room with a sloping ceiling where the story was drawn. All the elements in the installation are crucial to understanding the veracity of the events.'

\*Name of the WhatsApp group shared by the nine authors in the exhibition.

**Nadia Hafid**

***HABITACIÓ***

**2022**

'When I was invited to take part in this exhibition, I was told that one of the important aspects of the thinking behind it was not only to present our careers as members of this new generation of comic book artists and our works to date, but that part of the exhibition space would be set aside for a new production that was expected to go a bit beyond the idea of work on paper and the normal dimensions at which we work. My proposal for this new production was to be able to connect one of the recurring themes in my comics, loneliness – the loneliness of a society broken into many parts, loneliness and its link with mental health, etc. – with my own solitude as a comic book artist, but seen from an upbeat point of view. Solitude helps reflection, discovery, the reading of other viewpoints and, above all, the creation that is later shared with the reader or with the visitor to the exhibition in this case. This solitude framed in a particular space as well, the room (the studio, office, etc.) and everything that this represents too, the way other writers and other artists have referred to the space, and the way it has been depicted specifically by comic writers such as Gabrielle Bell and Julie Doucet, among others.'

**Marta Cartu**  
**HIFA**  
**2022**

'The new technologies have transformed our lives today and they have dramatically altered the way we understand the world and how we live in it and relate to it. Information is situated in a hyperspace of possibilities where everything overlaps and intersects, where images are fragmented but joined in a network, just like cartoon panels that gradually come together as the user looks at them in search of a guiding thread every time they surf using different apps and devices.

'In this work, the comic is placed in the framework of these cultural transformations and its traditional sequentiality is broken by a visual narrative revolutionised by hypertext and hyperconnection. The panels are dispersed and it is the visitor who traces the narrative as they read, puts the frames in order and endows them with meaning. The comic is not, therefore, situated on a page but in a space that functions like a page in which the narrative traced by the visitor becomes literally a route.

'This installation invites us to make our way into a large ethereal-looking hypha. Hyphae are the most basic structural unit that makes up the body of fungi and they function like a network of filaments that grow in an interconnected manner. Within this forest, we find three stories that reflect on the network: hyperconnection as a space of symbiosis and union; the hypertext as a space of fragmentation; and hyperculture as a space of uprooted and individualising narratives.'

**Miriampersand**  
**RITU DE PAS LLEU**  
**2022**

'This installation invites us to perform a small rite of passage, to cross a threshold.

'It's an invented threshold that has no business being in the middle of a room. But there it is and we can give it whatever meaning we want, it's a personal matter.

'Who you are before you cross and who you will be afterwards depends on you and you alone. Each side of the door tells a story, suggests a way of thinking about it to you.

'Reptilian brain, rational brain... Sometimes they leave little room for magic and adventure. *Sapere aude*, dare to think. *Memento mori*, a reminder of our mortality. These are the only two phrases that can be read on the door. They are just suggestions, the adventure is yours.'

**Genie Espinosa**  
**EL PONT D'EINSTEIN-ROSEN O EL FORAT DE CUC**  
**2022**

'The transformative process feels different but the same for everyone, it's as if a blender was churning up your insides, sometimes losing control, sometimes spinning uncontrollably, very often without seeing the hole with the light indicating the way out. It begins in the same way, with an impulse and a leap of faith.

'Explaining the transformation using panels, frames or the rings of a worm, distorting space-time, becoming an all-powerful being that plays with their creations as they see fit.

'Leaping into a long process that ends up altering not just the person entering but also the one who reads, between dialogues and silences. Finding the way out. Creator and reader, both transformed into a new giant, rubbery form in a made-to-measure suit that can, on occasion, be heroic.



'My intention is to experiment with narrative and form, to say without saying, to suggest that jumping into a wormhole is just science fiction, but to reveal that it may in fact exist and be part of everyone's everyday life and that it may simply be the act of making a decision. To my mind, talking about science fiction is talking about a process of healing, of healing trauma, of creating a fictitious and safe space where expression is the cure.'

**Ana Galvañ**  
***DIA PERFECTE***  
**2022**

'Two female humans and a small being inhabit this fantasy minicomic tinged with reality. It is floating and linear – albeit with a circular route – like their bodies in the water. And like this installation which, with much affection, seeks to recreate the lake with its mutant plants and an absentminded scientist. This place should be unpleasant, right? And yet it conveys beauty, quietude and the calm of things that have no purpose but which – in this story – simply are.'

**María Medem**  
***REFLEXOS***  
**2022**

'This installation is intended to be the recreation of the atmosphere of one of my stories, *Por culpa de una flor* (A Flower Is to Blame), but even so, even though it has grown out of the story, it is in a certain way independent.

'One of the things that most interest me when I'm working on my comics, along with telling a story, is the parallel creation of plausible atmospheres: I want the reader to notice, to some degree, the air temperature, the warmth of the sun or the whispering of leaves.

'This installation is another step in my quest – with fiction and artifices – to transport the spectator somewhere other than this room, to a place a bit like the ruins of a village. This is why I have chosen music by Ylia, who for this occasion has produced a piece that serves as a soundtrack both for the installation and the comic and which gradually narrates and accompanies the moments of the day that follow one after the other thanks to the change in lights.'

## 04.- AUTHORS

### BÀRBARA ALCA



Illustrator, art director and graphic designer based in Barcelona. The subject matter of her illustrations and comics draws on pop culture, the internet and the everyday life of her generation.

She worked on various fanzines in 2014 and 2017, as well as contributing to the press. In 2019 she published her graphic novel *Pizzachica i las Lloronas*, and, among other feminist projects in the form of children's stories or youth guides (such as the *Petita i Gran* collection), with Zenith (Planeta), she published the comic book *Llámame Feminazi*. She continues to work on publishing projects for children and young people in the form of comics and illustrated albums, and gives illustration and comic workshops aimed at this audience.

Since 2020 she has devoted herself to illustrating and making small animations for international advertising, though she continues to generate content in the form of comics on her social networks and to produce zines and self-published projects.

<https://www.barbaraalca.com/>

### MARTA CARTU



Marta Cartu's artistic practice questions the relationship we build with visual narratives, and her work is based around comic books and their channels of circulation, such as self-publishing and digital spaces. She is the author of the comic book *Hola Siri* and various fanzines such as *Triatlón*, *Even in deserts there is water* and *Un tumor muy guai*.

She has also produced expanded comic projects such as the installation *Espacios de Seguridad* at Sala d'Art

Jove and taken part in group exhibitions including *Comic, somnis i història* at CaixaForum. She has a degree in Fine Arts, specialising in drawing and education.

<https://www.martacartu.com/>

### GENIE ESPINOSA



Illustrator, comic book author and muralist from Barcelona. Alternating between the purely digital and the paintbrush, she works both for editorial publications (*Das Magazine*, *Die Zeit*, *Time Out*, *Diari Ara*, *Vice*, *Wired*, *Refinery29*...) and a variety of clients such as Apple, Sony, Nike, Spotify, WeTransfer and Klarna. Her work is characterized by a range of strong colours, exaggerated perspectives and excessively large, non-normative characters who are unapologetic for the space they take

up in her work. Her illustrations are pleasant and gentle in appearance, but sometimes have a dark background and, almost always, a double meaning. Her latest work includes the cover of "MAFIOSA", a single by singer Nathy Peluso, and the launch of her first graphic novel *HOOPS* (Sapristi, March 2021), where, in a dis/u-topian future, three friends from the suburbs

accidentally fall into an interdimensional hole from which they cannot escape without first discovering the secrets of this new place and battling with their own monsters. This graphic novel won her the Miguel Gallardo Award for the Best New Writer at the 40<sup>th</sup> COMICBCN SALON and the RNE ÓJO CRÍTICO Comic Prize 2021. She coordinates the fanzine *RARAS* (2019) and *MUY RARAS* (2020), in which she self-publishes a selection of artists, illustrators and writers to promote multidisciplinary female talent (one of the Best Comics of 2020 according to *The Comics Journal*).  
<http://geniespinosa.com/>

## ANA GALVAÑ



Comic book author and illustrator from Murcia. She has contributed to publications such as *El País*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Socialter* and *Berliner*. In the field of comics, her stories have appeared in *Fantagraphics*, *Nobrow*, *Kus!*, *Vertigo DC*, *Apa-Apa* and *Fosfatina*. She recently published *Tarde en McBurger's*, a pre-adolescent fantasy story edited by Apa Apa cómics.

[anagalvan.com](http://anagalvan.com)

## NADIA HAFID



Nadia Hafid has a degree in Fine Arts (University of Barcelona) and studied Applied Wall Arts at the Llotja School. She combines illustration and comic projects, and her drawings have graced the covers of the “Babelia” supplement of *El País* and articles in international publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post*.

*El buen padre* (2020), her debut with Saprستي, won the Best Emerging Author Award from the Comic Book Critics Association, and was included in the list of the 100 Best National Comics by *Rockdelux*. It has been translated into French by Casterman and into Turkish by Beta Basim Yayin Dagitim. *Chacales* is her second comic book (2022) published by Saprستي.

<http://nadiyahafid.com/>

## CONXITA HERRERO



Conxita Herrero draws, creates fanzines, and writes poems and songs. She likes cooking, reading, riding her bike, watching films, cats and talking on the telephone. She always has lots of ideas going around in her head and is interested in anything related to art, education or feminism.

She is a freelance illustration for national and international media such as *El País*, *Diari Ara*, *Revista Granta* and *Guernica Magazine*, for publishers such as Blackie Books, Fosfatina, Kus and Fantagraphics, and for institutions such as Barcelona Provincial Council, Gipuzkoa Provincial Council and El Prat de Llobregat Council.

In 2016, Barcelona publisher Apa-Apa cómics published her first book, *Gran bola de helado* (Big Scoop of Ice Cream), published in France by Rackham in spring 2017, and in Italy by Hoppípolla in autumn 2018. In 2017 she was nominated Best Newcomer at the comic fairs of

Madrid and Barcelona. In 2016 she was selected by Madrid's Sala de Arte Joven for the CITI project. In 2017 she took part in the City in Vignettes cycle (Centro Centro Cibeles, Madrid) curated by Ana Galvañ, and in 2018 in the group exhibition *Global Alt Comics* (New Jersey) alongside authors such as Powerpaola and Gabrielle Bell.

She has participated as a creator in official drawing and comic book events such as *Revolta en el còmic* (2018, MACBA), *Big Draw* (2018, Barcelona City Council) and *Telaraña* (2022, Centro Cibeles), and as a speaker at various round tables on self-publishing and feminism on the alternative Spanish circuit, where she has also taken part as a seller: *Gutterfest* (Barcelona), *PUMPK* (Pamplona), *Tenderete* (Valencia), *Graf* (Madrid), *BALA* (Bilbao), *Guillotina* (San Sebastian) and *Gropo-Gropo* (Pontevedra).

In 2017, the Madrid label Elefant Records released *Abducida por formar una pareja*, the first disc by Tronco, the music group she set up with her brother Fermí. In 2018 *Tralará*, their second disc, was released, followed in 2021 by the third, *Nainonai*.

She currently lives in El Prat de Llobregat with her family and combines her work as an illustrator with developing her upcoming publishing and recording projects.

<https://www.instagram.com/conxitaherrero/>

## MARÍA MEDEM



Illustrator and comic book author. María Medem (Seville, 1994) started self-publishing her comics after studying Fine Arts. Her first long comic was published by Terry Bleu, a small Dutch editorial. She has been included in anthologies such as *NOW* (Fantagraphics), *Cold Cube* (Cold Cube Press) and *Clubhouse* (Colorama), and has collaborated and continues to collaborate with various fanzines. In 2018, *Cenit* was published by Apa Apa, winning her the Best Newcomer Award at the

37<sup>th</sup> Barcelona Comic Fair and the ACDCómic Critics Prize to the Best Emerging Author.

She published *Echos* with French publisher Fidèle Editions. She has produced illustrations for publications such as *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, and producers such as A24. She has also made animations for musicians such as Rival Consoles and Hermanos Gutiérrez. She has just completed her latest comic, *Por culpa de una Flor*, which will be published in February 2023 by Apa Apa Cómics and Blackie Books.

[@mariamemedem](https://www.instagram.com/mariamemedem)

## MIRIAMPERSAND



Graphic designer, illustrator and comic book author. She has contributed to publications such as *The New York Times*, *El País Semanal*, *Babelia*, *GQ*, *Condé Nast Traveller* and *Yorokobu*.

In 2021 she published *Internet Sublime* (Editorial Saprستی), her second long comic after *Animal Party* in 2012 (Ediciones de Ponent). She has contributed to anthologies such as *Enjambre* (Norma Editorial, 2014) and *Teen Wolf* (Tik Tok comics–Fosfatina, 2016). She

enjoys creating anthropomorphic animals to express human emotions.

<https://www.instagram.com/miriampersand/>

## ROBERTA VÁZQUEZ



Roberta Vázquez (Santiago de Compostela, 1989) is an illustrator and comic book artist. She lives and works in Barcelona. She has contributed to publications such as *Vice*, *El Jueves*, *El País Semanal*, *Marie Claire*, *Glamour* and *Cáñamo*. In 2019 her first comic book *¡Socorro!* was published by Apa Apa publishers.

She is currently working on her first children's book for Blackie Books, while continuing to self-publish her fanzines and work as a freelance illustrator.

<https://www.instagram.com/robertavazquez/>



## 05.- CURATOR BIO

### MONTSERRAT TERRONES



Graduate in Humanities (UAB) and Advanced Studies in Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature (UPF). She has worked in the world of comics since 2003 as an editor, agent, translator, promoter and teacher. She was editor at Ediciones La Cúpula and is currently publishing director of Garbuix Books and Editorial Finestres. She is also involved in the study and dissemination of the figures of female comic book editors.

## 06.- CATALOGUE

### Texts by:

**Eudald Espluga.** Ten things you didn't know about the millennial generation

**Montserrat Terrones.** *Nine authors in search of new forms of expression*

**Gerardo Vilches.** *New influences and references for new times*

**Andrea Galaxina.** *From cuttings to the explosion: a proposal for a brief genealogy of the fanzine and self-publishing by girls*

**Marc Charles.** *The impulse of the marginal image*

**Marta Pérez Ibáñez.** *Authors, creators, fighters. Pencil-wielding warriors*

**Mery Cuesta.** *In your house and mine: shifts between the experimental comic and contemporary art*

## 07.- GENERAL INFORMATION



**#CòmicCCCB**

**#CómicoCCCB**

**#ComicCCCB**



twitter @cececebe



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instagram @cccb\_barcelona



### **Dates and opening times**

2 December 2022 – 14 May 2023

Open from Tuesday to Sunday and bank holidays from 11.00 – 20.00.

Closed non-bank-holiday Mondays



### **Venue**

CCCB Exhibition Room 3



### **Prices**

€6/€4 reduced

Sunday from 15.00 – 20.00, free with advance booking

Discounts and free tickets at <https://www.cccb.org/ca/visita>



**Photos and video of the exhibition in the CCCB digital press room**

<https://www.cccb.org/en/services/press>

**CCCB Press Department: Mònica Muñoz-Castanyer and Irene Ruiz**

933 064 123 · 606 449 921 · [premsa@cccb.org](mailto:premsa@cccb.org) · C/ Montalegre 5, 08001, Barcelona



## 08.- EXHIBITION CREDITS

**GRAPHIC CONSTELLATION. YOUNG WOMEN AUTHORS OF AVANT-GARDE COMICS** is an exhibition of the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) which is open from 2 December 2022 to 14 May 2023.

### **Artists**

Bàrbara Alca  
Marta Cartu  
Genie Espinosa  
Ana Galvañ  
Nadia Hafid  
Conxita Herrero  
María Medem  
Miriampersand  
Roberta Vázquez

### **Project Management**

Jordi Costa

### **Curator**

Montserrat Terrones

### **Idea and script of the section “Millennials: a Generation in Dispute”**

Eudald Espluga

### **Coordination, research and documentation**

Clara Duch and Iris García  
With the collaboration of Roberta Tenci and Anissia Libera Fontana

### **Project control and production**

Mònica Ibàñez

### **Exhibition design**

Espai e\_ Anna Alcubierre  
With the collaboration of:  
Jordi Bruna (authors' artistic installations)  
Laura Galofré (props and furniture)  
Laura Salvador (planimetry)

### **Design of exhibition graphics**

Todojunto

### **Set-up coordination**

Àlex Papalini i Mario Corea

### **Industrial set-up**

Central de Projectes

### **Graphic production**

Nogales

### **Lighting, electrical and other work**

Gabriel Porras, Rosó Tarragona, Francisco García, Òscar Monfort, José Luis Molinos

### **Registration and conservation**

Neus Moyano, Susana García, Josep Querol

### **Installation of original pieces**

Lotema

**Insurance:**  
CONFIDE/AXA

**Text translation and revision**  
Jordi Curell  
Sue Brownbridge

## **AUDIOVISUALS**

**Coordination and preparation of files**  
Juan Carlos Rodríguez

**Filming of interviews**  
José Antonio Soria  
Juan Carlos Rodríguez

**Editing of interviews and production of videos Section 2**  
Juan Carlos Rodríguez  
With the collaboration of David Fabre

**Production of introductory and end videos**  
Toni Curcó

**Audiovisual documentation**  
Isabel Andrés

**Video translation and subtitling**  
36Caracteres

**Audiovisual installations**  
Marc Desmonts, Igor Viza and New Media

**With the collaboration of** the Finance, Hiring, Human Resources, Systems, Technical and General Services, Mediation, Debates and Communication services of the CCCB.

**And with the special collaboration of**  
Apa Apa Còmics  
Sapristi