

Fundación Eugenio Granell

Granell and his Surrealist Friends

Eugenio Granell Foundation Collection

October 23, 2020 - 2021



Eugenio Granell, *Europa despedazada*, 1944. Oil/canvas, 50 x 61 cm. Eugenio Granell Foundation Collection

Friendship

This word was like a talisman for Granell throughout his life. In a letter to André Breton (1952) in Paris, when he sent him his first publication, *Isla, cofre mítico*, which he dedicated to Breton and his wife Elisa, he wrote: *I cannot find any other translation of my profound feeling than that which involves the word **friendship**... This is the word... that often seems to me to have the clearest meaning and the greatest power of human emotion, and I am completely sure that it exists, thanks above all to magical contact.*

When his good friend Benjamin Péret died in 1956, he again wrote to Breton: *I was not obsessed with the idea of death, but I have been with the idea of friendship, which has lived up to the expectations of human dignity, purely and simply. Which, in my opinion, is a very rare quality since it at least requires intelligence and courage, which can only be found together in the most exceptional individuals.*

Granell left Spain in 1939 to go into exile. In his wanderings from country to country, he not only made new friendships -frequently with fellow exiles- but also met up again with a lot of his Spanish friends, many of whom were Galician. He established solid friendships with many, as reflected in this exhibition featuring works by a range of artists from different countries, who demonstrated their friendship by giving gifts of their own work and writing many letters.

Especially noteworthy are the works created in Puerto Rico with his students, who participated in a very special exhibition called *El Mirador Azul*. Many of such ones became close friends, as was the case of Luis Maisonet.

The same is true of persons such as Abela, a Cuban that he met in Guatemala, along with Victor Serge and his son Vlady (whom Wifredo Lam was teaching to paint), with whom he coincided (as fellow exiles) in the Dominican Republic. After returning to Spain, he met the Galician artist Laxeiro in Las Ramblas of Madrid, where the latter had a studio above the Café Gijón.

After this return in 1985, he became a close friend of the Portuguese surrealists, especially Artur Cruzeiro Seixas and Mário Cesariny; this was also true of the Chilean couple Ludwig Zeller and Susana Wald. In Madrid, his new friends were Enrique Carlón, the young poet Bruno and the Argentinean artist Jorge Kleiman. Naturally, the collection also features several works by his brother Mario, as well as some by his Puerto Rican students Luis Maisonet, Cosette Zeno and Frances del Valle, among others.

Friendship should not be devaluated due to selfish personal aspirations. This is something that the Spanish exiles, with their unblemished ethics, learned and lived by, and thanks to which, survived. The works on display, along with the hundreds of letters that were exchanged throughout long and interesting lives, are proof of the great value that the wordfriendship entails.

Isaac Díaz Pardo and Granell struck up a close and interesting friendship when Granell returned to Spain and to Santiago. And they were so different (at least as regards their ideologies)! One was a nationalist, the other was not, one was a communist, the other was such a committed anti fascist and anti communist that, on several occasions, he was almost killed defending such ideals.

In relation to differences between friends, Granell wrote regarding those with the León muralist Vela Zanetti: *My differences with Vela Zanetti were strictly political. My friendship with him -sometimes interrupted due to the aforementioned- was always renewed and we are still friends today. His generosity and great humanity prevail over his vacillation in other matters. And my admiration for his artistic work -even though I did not share his aesthetic leanings- is reflected by the numerous texts I wrote about the evolution of his extensive work.*

It is worth recalling that this friendship began and was consolidated during the long years of political exile. His friendship with Isaac arose after Granell returned to Spain, when he believed (erroneously) that the influence of Franco's dictatorship was something of the past.

This is therefore not just another exhibition organised by the Eugenio Granell Foundation, but rather one full of ideals and hope in the most human concept possible: **friendship**.

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