

Fundación Eugenio Granell

Granell and his favourite characters



ROOM 2

There are four years between the creation of these two oil paintings: *Los trabajos de Venus*, 1954 and *Los juegos de Venus*, 1958. These fleshly forms featuring strong sexual insinuation arose before entering the period of paintings that Granell called *Paisajes Mágicos* (Magical Landscapes).

The paper weight *La Venus de Velázquez*, 1945 was one of Granell's first objets trouvés. Venus, the second planet from the sun, is called after the Roman goddess of love and beauty. Venus is perhaps one of the women that have most inspired creators. She represents love, beauty, fertility, sex, prosperity, victory, desire. By means of her children the Aeneads, she became the mother of all Romans.

It is not surprising that this metal figure on a glass object reminded Granell of Velázquez's painting, *La Venus del espejo*.

Los cuatreros del Rey Salomón is one of the paintings from the period of *Paisajes Mágicos*. Solomon was the third and last monarch of the kingdom of Israel, before it was divided into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. He reigned for approximately four decades: 965-928 B.C. According to the Bible, he was renowned for his wisdom and wealth; he had a large harem that included Pharaoh's daughter, and in his old age he started worshipping other gods. During his long reign, he undertook many building projects.

It is not surprising that the construction *Bodegón de Zurbarán* reminded Granell of the beautiful still lifes painted by such a special and admired artist as Zurbarán.

Another construction honours the *Princesa de Éboli*: Ana de Mendoza de la Cerda y de Silva Cifuentes (1540-1592). She was from a very powerful family and, at the age of 12, married Rui Gómez de Silva, the prince of Eboli (Kingdom of Naples). She was a woman of great talent and beauty. It is not known exactly how she lost her right eye, which did not detract from her beauty. She had 10 children. She was also very fond of luxury, which explains the necklaces in this artwork by Granell.

La coronación de Theotocopulos en el salón de los espejos. The painting's title makes mention of El Greco. I am not surprised that this small painting, in which the depicted figure is repeated several times, reminded Granell of the well-known Hall of Mirrors in the Royal Palace of Aranjuez.

Atlas de la Plaza del Toral. At the top of the building that now houses the Granell Museum there is a figure known as Atlas, the Titan god of endurance and astronomy. He is identified with the Atlas Mountains in northwest Africa (now Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia). When Granell would pass by this building as a child, he thought that the figure was carrying an "empanada" (Galician pie) on his shoulders.

Homenaje al gran gallego Cela, "Celita" (Alfonso Cela, bullfighter 1886-1932). Alfonso Cela, known as Celita, was born in San Vicente de Carracedo, Lugo. Although he learned the butcher trade in Madrid, it was bullfighting that attracted him. Fortunately for him, on one occasion he was spotted by a bullfighting empresario of the large bullring and offered an opportunity.

Granell turned another object, a metal spoon rest with a cross on the top, into a tribute to *Isabel la Católica*, 1987. Isabella I of Castile is one of the most important women in the history of Spain. She was the queen of Castille (1474-1504), and the queen consort of Sicily (1469) and of Aragon from 1479 through her marriage with Ferdinand of Aragon. She and her husband backed Christopher Columbus in his voyage of discovery.

Sketch for *El encuentro de la serranilla con el Marqués de Santillana*. (Marquis of Santillana, Guadalajara 1398-1458). A military man and poet of the Pre-Renaissance, he was related to, among others, the great poet Jorge Manrique.

El artificio de Juanelo. Juanelo Turriano Cremos, an Italian-Spanish engineer and inventor in the court of Carlos I. He is known for building a hydraulic mechanism to supply water to the city of Toledo, bringing water from the Tagus River up to the Alcázar. It was considered a great invention at that time, although it is not known how it worked.

El amor del poeta Macías, a Galician troubadour from the 14th c. He is believed to be from Padrón and was known as "El Enamorado" (The Lover). He belongs to the so-called Galician-Castilian school; his works appear in the Cancionero de Baena.

SALA 3

Paolo Uccello suelta una paloma. Uccello was an Italian painter and mathematician. He worked on the use of perspective and was interested in displaying it in art. His works likewise feature the use of pomp and elegance, which were also of interest to him.

He was particularly attractive for the Surrealists, especially due to his large painting *The Battle of San Romano* (1456). The quality of wonder that it contains, such as "the pink or green horses, its ironclad knights whose helmets and headdresses create dream-like or Apocalyptic beings...". Uccello, according to the surrealist José Pierre (a close friend of Granell's), "introduces us into a perfectly oneiric atmosphere."

I also believe that the small, pink detail in Granell's portrait, at the right side of the painting, a wall with a door, shows a clear use of perspective, something unknown in Granell's work.

Van Eyck retrata al matrimonio Arnolfini. Little is known about this artist. One of the first mentions is from The Hague, a city in the Netherlands. Arnolfini was a wealthy merchant, and I am not surprised that Granell's own work inspired the title. In Van Eyck's portrait, Giovanna, Arnolfini's pregnant wife is wearing a beautiful, elegant green dress. In between them, in the background, there is a round mirror, which could be another source of inspiration for the title, in view of the colour blue that, in Granell's artwork, also appears in the centre.

La lapidación de Hypatia, filósofa. Hypatia was one of those exceptional women that Granell always admired and respected. She was a philosopher that, apart from beautiful, was also very intelligent. She taught philosophy and astronomy in Alexandria. According to history, Hypatia was murdered by two fanatical Christians that accused her of inciting a serious conflict between two important figures in Alexandria: Orestes and Bishop Cyril of Alexandria.

Arnaldo de Vilanova funde el agua y el fuego de Sicilia. Granell, a great admirer of philosophers, beautifully pays tribute to this philosopher from Valencia (1242-1311). Vilanova was also a doctor. "Considered the best doctor in the 12th c., a theologian and social reformer". He is also described as a "Catalan visionary and doctor". (Biographies and Lives on the Internet).

El regalo de Jonàs. Jonah, a prophet in the Old Testament and in the Jewish Tanakh, whose name means "dove" in Hebrew. Jonah had the mission of going to Nineveh to establish "the limit of Israel, from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah (the Dead Sea)". To avoid fulfilling this mission, Jonah set sail for Tarshis (Spain or the Iberian Peninsula), which is VERY far from Nineveh. Jonah fell asleep while the ship became threatened by tempestuous winds. The sailors asked Jonah to help them by invoking his "god," and when he failed to do so, they considered him guilty of their sufferings. They then threw him overboard. He was swallowed by a large fish for three days and three nights, before being vomited out into the sea again.

Homenaje a Flammarion. Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) was a French astronomer who wrote 70 books. His best-known one, *Astronomie Populaire* (1878), made astronomy known to the general public of that time. His brother Ernest Flammarion (1846-1936) was a known editor. The initial success of his publishing company was based precisely on this famous work by his brother Camille, which became the 19th century's first best-seller.

Armida. This artwork is based on the poem by Italy's Torquato Tasso about the Saracen sorceress Armida, who was sent to stop the Christian crusaders during the First Crusade's siege of Jerusalem, by

murdering the soldier Rinaldo while he was sleeping. However, she falls in love with him instead.

This oil painting, which was perhaps painted in Guatemala, depicts -I believe- Armida on the right, when facing the artwork, and Rinaldo, the young soldier she fell in love with.

Un sueño jeroglífico de Caperucita Roja. Hieroglyph, an element used in a system of predominantly pictorial writing, in which words are represented by symbols and figures instead of alphabetical symbols. The popular tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* ("Caperucita Roja") contrasts life in the village, a safe place, and a possible dangerous experience in the forest. It is a warning tale. I believe that in this painting by Granell the blue figure on the right might be Little Red Riding Hood, since there is a touch of red on top of her "head." The other threatening figures might be the well-known wolf, perhaps the green figure below the girl; the large yellow figure that seems to be surrounding her, since this colour begins at the right of the painting and joins the erect figure in yellow. We should not forget that when Little Red Riding Hood reaches her grandmother's house, she does not know that the latter has been replaced by the wolf.

Since the tale was passed along orally, it is impossible to know how many changes it experienced over the years. The different versions include that of Charles Perrault, who was perhaps the first to write the tale down (1697); he used it to warn girls about speaking to strangers. The Brothers Grimm (1812) wrote the "most innocent version with less erotic elements."

El sueño diurno de Balso Snell. Granell was inspired by the first and short novel by North America's Nathanael West, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*. The young protagonist meets the Trojan Horse and the only way he can think of entering it is by means of the "Anus Mirabilis". Inside, the young man encounters a series of writers in search of an audience. In the author's own words, the purpose of the book is "a protest against writing books." (Wikipedia)

El tren de Campoamor. Clara Campoamor Rodríguez (1888-1972). A Spanish politician and feminist that devoted her life to defending women's rights when the Spanish Constitution was being drafted in 1931, during the Republic. Before women were entitled to vote, she was elected to the Constitutional Assembly of 1931. She left Spain during the Spanish Civil War and died in exile in Switzerland. She is now buried in San Sebastian's Polloe Cemetery. (Wikipedia).

El encuentro de Jules Laforgue con la reina de Alemania. Jules Laforgue (Montevideo 1860-Paris 1887, at the age of 27). A poet of French-Uruguayan origin. His parents moved to Paris and in 1881 he started "working as the French reader for the Empress Augusta."(Wikipedia).

We have already seen that Granell was interested in the subject of ceremony, since it is something that humanises us. The poet is in red and the queen in blue, in what might be a garden if we consider the tree in the background, behind the wall in front of which the oil painting's figures appear. Then the lawn on which they are standing insinuates a garden. It was painted during the time he returned to figuration. Many observers have commented that the figures remind them of the figures used in cardboard puppet theatres, which Granell greatly admired as a child.

Three constructions:

Hatsepsut. Hatshepsut was the pharaoh queen that enjoyed the longest reign in Egypt. She was the daughter, sister, and wife of kings. She proved to be an implacable queen. Her lineage, education, and great understanding of religion all contributed to her success.

Las galas de Circe. Circe was an enchantress in Greek mythology. Through the use of potions, she made her enemies forget about their home, and by means of a magical wand, she turned those that offended her into animals.

El encuentro solemne de Istar con Priapo el joven. Ishtar was the goddess of fertility, love, and sex in the Assyrian culture of Mesopotamia. She was an important goddess in this culture (3500 BC) until the arrival of Christianity.

Priapus is a mythical figure. He was a minor god of fertility, of both nature and all animals related to agricultural life. He was a purely phallic character and is depicted with an enormous phallus. In this construction, I think that Priapus is represented by the third figure that is holding a sword, from right to left. I assume, without being certain, that Ishtar is the figure that he is looking at, the fourth from right to left. Ishtar was the guardian of the storehouse containing dates, wool, meat, and the grain required for living.

El verdadero retrato del bandido de Córdoba, oil painting, and the construction *Ídolo cordobés*. Granell was attracted by this character that arose in 19th-century Spain, which was characterised by many injustices and a lot of poverty. It was a way of seeking revenge against oppressors. There was an Andalusian bandit called "El Tempranillo" (José María, el Tempranillo), who was active in Lucena, Cordoba (1805-1833, Málaga). He is described as a "rebel and liberal that was active in Sierra Morena."

These armed robbers rarely worked on their own. They attacked people on dangerous mountain or forest trails.

Casanova de gala (construction). Casanova was an adventurer and author. His book *The Story of My Life* provides an accurate picture of the customs and norms in the Europe of his time (18th century).

Dafne y Apolo vueltos árbol y tronco (metamorphosis). Apollo was the Greek god of art and music. This myth is related in Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*. Eros got angry at Apollo for making fun of his archery skills. As a punishment, he wounded Apollo with a gold arrow. At that very moment, a nymph called Daphne passed by Apollo and he fell in love with her. Eros then wounded Daphne with a lead arrow, which made her reject Apollo.

El aprendizaje de Dafne y Cloe. Daphnis and Chloe are a boy and girl that are abandoned in the forest, where they are found by a goatherd and shepherd, respectively. The children grow up together and fall in love, eventually getting married.

Chamán. The shaman is someone that has the power to change reality or a tribe's collective perception. They mainly live in hunter and gatherer civilisations in Asia, Africa, America, and Oceania. The word originally comes from the Tungus language in Siberia: saman = one who knows.

El constructor de tótem. The totem is a tall, vertical construction. They are normally covered with drawings or carved with stories of interest to their peoples. The word totem comes from the Ojibwe language that is spoken in parts of southern Canada, as well as in neighbouring parts of the United States. There are family totems or those that tell the story of someone that did something unworthy. Others celebrate somebody or are funeral totems. They are a very particular and personal way of recording something.

When Eugenio and Amparo toured Canada, they wanted to obtain one. However, the car they were travelling in was small and its roof would not have supported the construction's weight.