

FUNDACIÓN EUGENIO GRANELL

Surreal connections. Colmeiro, Granell and the Surrealism in exile



Manuel Colmeiro. *Surrealismo (Escenas de guerra)*, 1937-38



Eugenio Granell. *Autodecapitación*, 1948 ca.

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The project "Surreal connections. Colmeiro, Granell and the Surrealism in exile" is a reading about the impact of the Surrealism movement on Manuel Colmeiro's work throughout the 1930s and the 1940s, and therefore show the correlation with Eugenio Granell's work, a painter from the same generation and a role model on Surrealism since the 1940s. Both of them had their career marked by their exile and their long-time stay in Latin America.

What brings these artists together in their style is the context that they share, both escaping from their country due to political repression. They both landed in America. The painters bonded over this and what also brought them together was the fall of France under the Nazi regime in the 1940s. Many artists escaped from Europe to America, and they heavily influenced the USA's and Mexico's art with their presence. There's a huge compilation of documents and some other works from artists such as André Breton, André Masson, Wilfredo Lam, Wolfgang Paalen, Esteban Francés, Óscar Domínguez, César Moro and Roberto Matta stored in Granell's Collection. All of these pieces of art are proof of how successful this connection between artists has been. It's a fusion that had a fundamental role in the artistic evolution, especially during World War II.

In America's diaspora and in this generic context, Colmeiro and Granell went through some common social concerns that made them share some of the same artistic processes, even though they kept creating art in their own unique style. The artists saw the exile as a conflictive truth, they tried to fit in a new reality and they had to work their way through it. This integration goes hand in hand with the constant effort of renewing their artistic languages and keeping them up to date, making deeper and more direct connections with American art.

In Colmeiro's work, the series of drowned heads stands out from the rest of them. It was created with a very light form of surrealist language, a new type of art that he had already tried out in some of his previous work at the beginning of the 1930s. This form of art was very common between the artists from the republican side of the Spanish Civil War, who created art related to this very same topic. In these art pieces he tried to combine the intellectual republican world, the 'galeuista' movement and the popular movement, adapting these concepts and ideas to his new situation and context. He mostly represented war victims.

Both Granell's and Colmeiro's work around the 1940s has some exempt heads, like Granell's *Self Portrait* (1944), a piece of figurative art in which the main object is Granell's own head on the forefront. The background of the painting is a composition of amoeba-like shapes that, with the floating head being the main object, reflect a dreamlike ambiance. Granell worked on some more surrealist self portraits, such as *Indian Self Portrait* (1945), in which he was clearly influenced by Picasso's work. This series of portraits are a projection of Granell's desires and passing of time separated from his own physical self. Granell had found a deep connection with the indigenous world and he decided to manifest that through his art, making sure that he was representing all of the characteristic features of indigenous people in a respectful and accurate way.

Carlos L. Bernárdez
Curator