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CRISTINA BANBAN PRESENTS
LORQUIANAS AN EXHIBITION IN
DIALOGUE WITH LORCA'S
FEMININE UNIVERSE

Lucía Martínez Rubio



Cristina BanBan presents Lorquianas. Image: Albert Font.

We spoke with Cristina BanBan about her newly opened exhibition, *Lorquianas*, a series that pays tribute to Federico García Lorca and the women who inhabit his work. On view until September 10, 2025, in the Empress Hall of the Palace of Charles V at the Alhambra in Granada, read on to discover all the details—and why it's an exhibition you shouldn't miss.

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Between Granada and New York, between the real and the symbolic, *Lorquianas* was born. An exhibition that not only pays homage to Federico García Lorca but also reinterprets him through a deeply feminine, contemporary, and personal perspective.

In the majestic Palace of Charles V within the Alhambra, Cristina BanBan presents her first institutional exhibition—a journey that engages in dialogue with the poetry, theater, and timeless symbols of the poet's universe.

At *Vanidad*, we spoke with her about what it means to paint with Lorca's work as a traveling companion and how her female figures become almost mirrors of the soul in this exhibition.

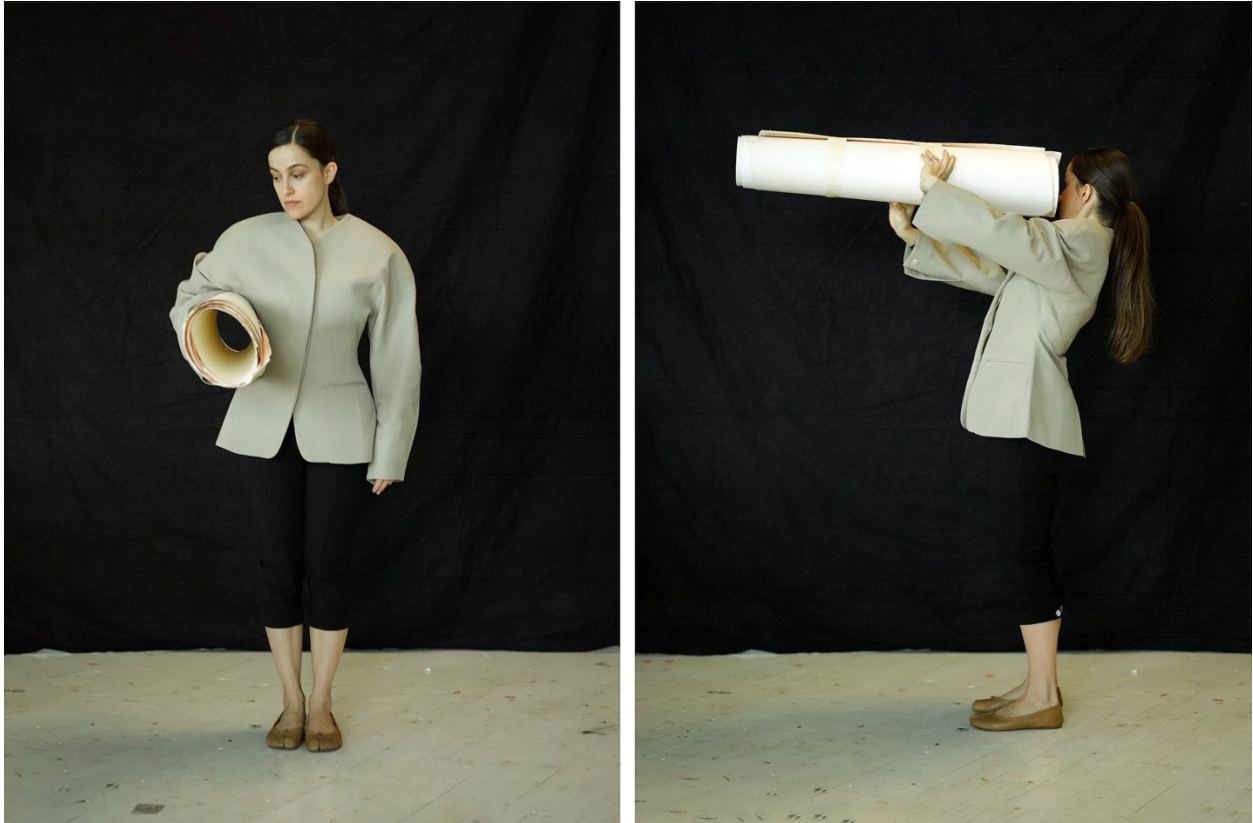


Image: Albert Font.

Cristina BanBan: "I found it incredibly compelling to explore the relationship between the archetypes of Venus and the Virgin. These are concepts and stereotypes that, in one way or another, women are still burdened with today."

Cristina, *Lorquianas* is your first institutional exhibition. What does it mean to present this series in such an iconic place as the Alhambra?

The Midnight Foundation (*Fundación Medianoche*) created this project and organized an artist residency for me at the Federico García Lorca Center, allowing me to carry out research that would

SKARSTEDT

serve as the foundation for the paintings in the exhibition. The project itself is already ambitious, so having the exhibition take place in the Palace of Charles V within the Alhambra is a dream come true. I'm incredibly proud to be part of it.

The exhibition is based on your research into Federico García Lorca's archives. How did the poet's work influence your creative process?

This was the first time I conceived an exhibition in dialogue with another artist, and it significantly transformed my creative process. I spent weeks reading, visited the houses where Lorca lived, and filled a notebook with concepts, analogies, fragments of poems, and sensations that resonated with me.

Once I returned to New York, that artist's notebook became the starting point for an extensive search for photographs that, to me, evoked the poet's words. In an almost surreal way, through the juxtaposition of symbols and language, I gradually created this series of seven paintings and eight drawings in which my women bring Lorca's ideas to life.

Some of the works reference theater, *La Barraca*, *Yerma*, as well as themes such as religion, mourning, and Venus.

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Image: Albert Font.

Your work often transforms everyday elements into powerful metaphors. How did you use this approach to reinterpret Lorca's work?

Transforming the everyday into metaphor has always been central to my practice. With Lorca, I used the same approach to engage with his symbols—such as the moon and mourning—and give them a

SKARSTEDT

more contemporary meaning. His universe is filled with symbols that, although deeply rooted in their historical context, continue to resonate universally.

Rather than illustrating his texts, I tried to enter his world through my own perspective, translating those symbols into my visual language. I took simple elements—a veiled body, a gesture, a landscape lined with poplar trees—and transformed them into images that speak of emotion, femininity, desire, and pain.

What did you discover about Lorca that surprised or particularly resonated with you afterward?

His drawings, which I wasn't very familiar with, struck me as sublime in their honesty and simplicity. They are exquisite.

Their naïve—even kitsch—aesthetic reminded me of techniques that also appear in my own drawings, such as overlapping lines, double faces, eyes without irises, and an emphasis on hands.

Those drawings had a profound influence on my work for *Lorquianas*.

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Image: Albert Font.

In *Lorquianas*, you explore themes such as femininity, destiny, and intergenerational dynamics. How do these ideas connect with your earlier work?

Women have always been both the subject and the vessel of my work, though in recent years I approached them in a more universal way. I focused on women and their complex emotions, represented through large, powerful figures that nearly filled the canvas. Stylistically, my figurative language had been gradually dissolving into abstraction.

For this project, however, I returned to figuration and realism because I needed those tools to tell this story.

These characters appear clothed or unclothed, wearing shoes, veils, or white bridal garments—elements that had never appeared in my earlier paintings, which were more timeless. This time, both the clothing and the architectural elements are much more prominent in order to provide context.

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Image: Albert Font.

What kinds of female characters do we encounter in this series? Is there one in particular that stands out?

There's a mixture. Some come directly from Lorca's stories, while others are representations of real women who could belong either to the past or to the present.

I've drawn on the archetype of Venus, as in *Venus 2025*; the Virgin or bride, as represented in *Multitud* (*Multitude*); and the character of *Clown*, a female Pierrot. I've also portrayed real women from different generations, as in *Lujo y ajuar* (*Luxury and Trousseau*).

My intention was to create an image that embraces both reality and fiction, inviting viewers to lose themselves within it. What is imagined, and what is real?

I found it particularly interesting to explore the relationship between the archetypes of Venus and the Virgin—the contrast between the sensual woman, danger, and sexuality. These are concepts and stereotypes that, in one way or another, women continue to carry today.

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Windows appear repeatedly throughout the exhibition, symbolizing the boundary between the private and the public. What other key images or symbols can we find in the series?

The figures in this series inhabit clearly defined settings, making architectural elements such as windows, arches, and wooden chairs much more prominent. These help create a sense of time and place.

Other symbols include vases containing fish, which can be interpreted as representing the cycle of life and the inevitability of endings. Masks, the clown's ruff, veils, and even red shoes also function as important symbolic elements.

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Image: Albert Font.

Beyond the inspiration for this project, Lorca is deeply connected to his homeland, Andalusia. What impact did working in Granada—a city so central to his work—have on you?

I was invited to visit the center's archive, where I had the opportunity to study Lorca's original drawings, photographs, and manuscripts firsthand.

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The experience was deeply liberating, both professionally and personally. I immersed myself in the city's atmosphere, with its unique magic, soundscape, and extraordinary light.

I believe artist residencies are incredibly enriching because the landscape and the surrounding context have a direct influence on your work.

The exhibition will also be presented in Paris during Art Basel. Do you plan to adapt *Lorquianas* to its Parisian context?

The exhibition will expand because the venue will consist of a different number of galleries, but its focus will remain the same, and the concept established in Granada will be preserved.

The idea is to bring the project into another context during an international art fair, enriching this ongoing dialogue with Lorca, whose work remains remarkably relevant today.



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Image: Albert Font.

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Technically, you've worked in both large-scale paintings and works on paper. How did you decide which pieces should take which form?

The installation is organized into two galleries: one dedicated to works on paper and the other to paintings.

In the second gallery, the eight drawings are displayed in vitrines opposite another wall of drawings. This wall presents the earliest stages of the project, including pages from my artist's book created during and after my residency. Visitors can read key ideas, fragments of poems, and see drawings displayed alongside facsimiles of the Lorca drawings that influenced me most—Venus, the maiden, the clowns.

Together, they form the more conceptual, intimate, and contemplative side of the project.

The paintings, by contrast, were meant to be monumental and commanding, occupying much of the main gallery. Their scale also creates a visual dialogue with the palace's original vaulted ceiling and arches.

What would you like audiences to feel or reflect upon when they encounter your *Lorquianas*?

My hope is that viewers will recognize how relevant Lorca's legacy remains today through a sincere and honest interpretation of what his work has inspired in me, especially regarding these women.

These figures seek to reclaim women's place in history, art, and society. I hope visitors can recognize themselves in them, question the stereotypes that still persist, and connect with the blend of beauty, pain, strength, and desire that runs through both Lorca's stories and our own contemporary realities.