

## *#59 Magazine*

JORGE GALINDO

A conversation with one of the best contemporary  
Spanish painters about his life and work

Interview and Photography by Mart Engelen  
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**Mart Engelen: You are considered to be one of the best Spanish painters and praised for your unique paint handling on canvases. How would you describe your paintings?**

Jorge Galindo: I see my paintings as an extension of my life. I paint, and through my paintings you can see my whole life, just like Mick Jones said about playing the guitar. The style, the genre and the subject don't matter. I have experimented with both figuration and abstraction, and my subjects have been various over the years. When you think about how to carry out a series of paintings, there is a clear intentionality. But what is interesting and fun is that you don't know what you are going to end up doing. Chance intervenes and takes you to other places and so afterwards it changes a lot from what you had initially planned. This gives you a capacity for surprise that has always been interesting for me to maintain. I have always done what is the least expected of me. I want to maintain that shockeffect. I want to surprise myself with what I'm doing. When I finish a series I have already learned how to do those paintings, so then I find it monotonous to continue doing them. Like Francis Picabia used to say, "After smoking a cigarette, I'm not interested in the butts".

**ME: And where does your inspiration come from?**

JG: All the series of paintings which I have worked on have been nourished or inspired by a very particular iconography. My parents used to take me as a child to El Rastro, Madrid's flea market. Since then, I have been an avid flea market visitor. Every time I travel, I feel the need to go to flea markets. The materials I gather are both the inspiration and the base for most of my series. Since the 90s I have used cut-outs from old magazines in my collages, which sometimes serve as preparatory drawings for some paintings, but also as autonomous works. I have needed enormous amounts of materials, ranging from old magazines to postcards or album covers. I have included it all in my work. These collages have been very important during my career. The last series of flower paintings are all based on old postcards of flowers that have worked as sketches for the paintings.

**ME: Julian Schnabel had a significant impact on your artistic development. Please tell me more..**

JG: Julian and I first met in 1991, thirty years ago. He was holding a workshop in Madrid at the Circulo de Bellas Artes. I was 24 then, so I attended as a student. On the second day of the master-class he asked to visit the studio of whomever was closest to the Circulo. At that time, I shared a studio nearby with many other artists, so we went to visit it. Julian saw my last paintings and other older ones which had been stored there since my

first exhibition, which had taken place two years earlier. I hadn't sold a single painting. He started to move around my old work - paintings, photomontages and sketchbooks - which he liked. He's very generous and helped me a lot at the beginning, buying some of my paintings, which allowed me to become a full time artist. We have been friends since then. I have admired his work ever since I saw it in Seville's Cuartel del Carmen in 1988. The title of that show was Los Reconocimientos, and it is one of the exhibitions that has impacted the most in my life.

Previously I had seen a painting of his that was a huge influence for me: Some peaches (Sebastian's summer poem), from 1984. It is both a beautiful painting as well as a lesson in painting. A dramatic and compulsive conception of painting joins us together. That same concept is what brought us together for our last exhibition, a two-man show at Vito Schnabel's Gallery, Jorge Galindo and Julian Schnabel: Flower Paintings.

**ME: You made an impressive statement together with Santiago Siena in 2012 with the black and white video *Los Encargados* ("Those in charge"), on the political situation and corruption in the Spanish government at the time. Now almost ten years later has the situation improved?**

JG: The situation has not changed at all. Not one bit. Those in charge are still there. the only difference is that King Juan Carlos, who led the parade, has fled Spain and is a refugee in Abu Dhabi. I would even dare to say that the present situation is more serious. People do not want to think about it, but our emeritus king has fled the country.

**ME: And why, at the time, were the portraits on the roofs of the seven black limousines placed upside down in your video?**

JG: Santiago and I are both from Madrid. When we met we were students drawn to creating pieces that were in some way unsettling, uncomfortable. When we planned *Los Encargados* in 2012, we also wanted to make a sort of site-specific piece about our city and country. At the time, Santiago and I had both started working at Helga de Alvear's gallery and it was partly because of her support that we were able to carry this piece out. It was also in her gallery where the paintings were shown for the first time. The political situation back then was something to be ashamed of. Our objective was, in some way, to condemn the corruption and irresponsibility of those in charge of the Spanish crisis. Placing the portraits upside down was a way of putting them up for public scorn, following the exposure of the parade.

In 2011, Kim Jong-un's father, Kim Jong-il, died. The funeral procession carried a huge image of Kim Jong-il on top of a car. We wanted to imitate that same spectacle, adding the

*Warszawianka* ("Whirlwinds of Danger") as the soundtrack whilst all the presidents of Spanish democracy, after Franco's death, paraded behind the king.

**ME: Although we have all had to deal with lockdowns and many restrictions in the past fifteen months, it hasn't stopped you creating many new paintings and so far this year you have already had five important exhibitions and you have a new exhibition coming up soon at the Hall Art Foundation in Schloss Derneburg with the title *Flower Paintings* and works made in collaboration with Pedro Almodóvar. What will be on view at this show?**

JG: This show was actually planned for summer 2020 but due to the pandemic we had to push it back until now. The flower paintings made prior to the lockdown will be shown, as well as some of the collaboration paintings I made with Pedro Almodóvar in 2019. The paintings work really well along with the location, which is amazing. The fact that my work is being shown where Baselitz lived and worked for a long time is mind-blowing for me. I'm a great admirer of his.

**ME: How was this collaboration with Pedro established?**

JG: Pedro Almodóvar has been a collector of mine for many years. The last exhibition I had at Soledad Lorenzo's gallery, about eleven or twelve years ago, was precisely a series with the theme of flowers. One day, he came by the gallery to select some paintings for the sets of the film he was shooting at the time, *La piel que habito* ("The skin I live in"). He also bought a painting for himself that can be seen, ten years later, in *Dolor y Gloria* ("Pain and Glory"). Soledad Lorenzo introduced us then. Back at the time I was living in London but he kept going to my exhibitions. In 2018 he presented his flower and still-life photographs at the Marlborough Gallery. That theme somehow brought us together, it invited us to work from it a year later, joining both techniques, painting and photography. He had asked me to make a drawing for *Dolor y Gloria*, which was in some way the basis of the plot. Once the commission was finished, we started working on our collaboration. At first, the intention was that Pedro would bring his new series of photographs of flowers, enlarge them, and I would paint them. But we realised that the project became richer and more collaborative if the intervention was done by four hands. And it was essential for that to happen, for what we intended to do, to work

**ME: I believe you made the first flower paintings in 2009. What made you decide to restart the flower paintings ten years later?**

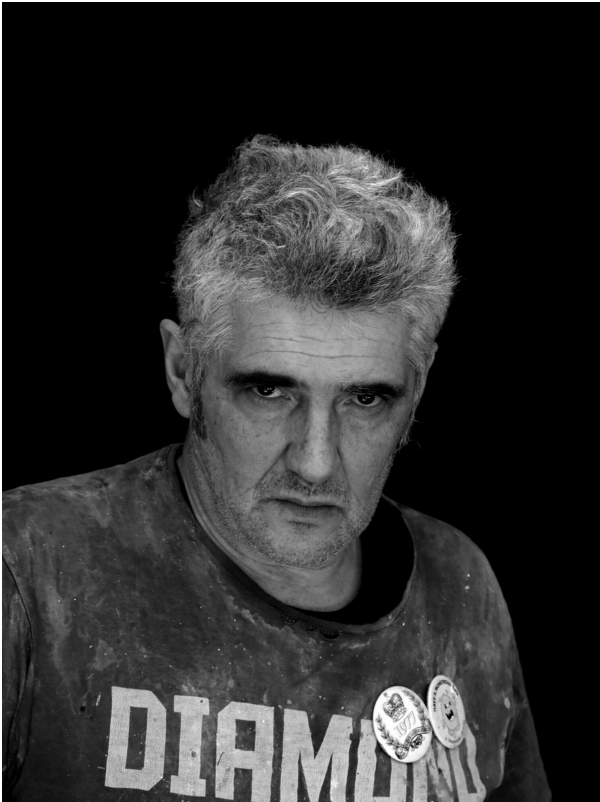
JG: Yes, the first series began back in 2009 and was shown

that same year at Soledad Lorenzo's gallery in Madrid in an exhibition entitled *Flowers and torn papers*. After this first 2009 series I moved to London and focused on other projects, so I had the feeling that I had left it unfinished. Pedro Almodóvar had bought two paintings from that exhibition and, coincidentally, it was Pedro with whom I returned to paint flowers ten years later, in 2019. At the end of our collaboration I wanted to pick up the flower paintings I had left unfinished back in 2009, so these last ones are a continuation of those in some way.

**ME: What is the difference between your early flower paintings and the recent ones?**

JG: The inspiration for my first flower paintings first came from music, I wanted to paint still lifes, just as the one by Fantin-Latour on the cover of New Order's album *Power, corruption and lies*, which I listened to compulsively in the studio back then. I made some bouquets to paint them au naturel but the whole result was terrible. I couldn't manage to paint them the way I wanted. I thought I had to paint the flowers in the same way I had painted most series, using my collages and old images and cut-outs as a reference. I bought all the old postcards of flowers and still lifes I could find online and I started to paint from them, either on canvas or on accumulations of advertising posters torn from the street. That's when I got the paintings with the strength, colours and intensity I wanted, the subjects were not real flowers but the unreal flowers of the postcards. The main difference, however, is that as of now I have made some paintings over a digitally printed canvas with enlarged images of those old postcards.

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Jorge Galindo, Borox, Toledo, Spain 2021



Studio Jorge Galindo, Borox, Toledo, Spain 2021



Jorge Galindo at work in his studio, Borox, Toledo 2021



View of the house's main entrance. On the wall: Julian Schnabel, *Rita Feli, Portrait of Felicidad Moreno*, 1993



*Jorge Galindo at work in his studio, Borox, Toledo, 2021*



*Jorge Galindo, Las Flores Puissantes, 2020  
300x275cm, oil on canvas.*



*Studio Jorge Galindo, 2021*



*Jorge Galindo at work in his studio, 2021*



*One of the studios of Jorge Galindo and his wife Felicidad Moreno, Borox, Toledo 2021*



*Entrance of Jorge Galindo studio, 2021*



*Jorge Galindo, Fotomontaje pintado, 2005*



*Dining room with table by Julian Schnabel and on the wall: Painting by Julian Schnabel, (Untitled) 2007*