

Visual History and Media Construction of Leonora Carrington's Artistic Identity

This paper layers a 'composite portrait' of the British-born/Mexican Surrealist Leonora Carrington via studying the under-researched photographic, cinematic and televisual mediations of the artist. Its specific objective is to analyse the visual construction of Carrington's artistic identity, both in terms of historical narratives, as well as representational praxis. Young, rebellious and alluring, Leonora Carrington persists in our collective imagination through Lee Miller's 1930s spontaneous and private portraits of Surrealist friends. In 1942, after joining the émigré circle of European Surrealists in New York, Carrington is featured in portraits by the fashion photographer Hermann Landshoff taken at her apartment in Greenwich Village. During her Mexican years Carrington reappears as an aesthetic subject in Kati Horna's photographic series *Ode to Necrophilia* (1962) published in the Mexican avant-garde journal *S.NOB*. The magazine's *Iconographia Snobarium* issue also featured an oval photomontage portrait of Leonora Carrington with a collaged snobbish masculine visage – a creative prank on Carrington's own upper-class background (that she rejected in order to evolve artistically). Leonora's mediated aesthetic identities multiply through the film medium with cameo performances in two New Mexican Cinema productions – *En este pueblo no hay ladrones* (Alberto Isaac, 1964) and *Un alma pura* (Juan Ibañez, 1965) based upon homonymous short stories by Magic Realists Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes. Later, Carrington re-appears on screen in a range of TV documentaries such as *Imaginación a galope fino* (Canal 22, 2006) and *The Lost Surrealist* (Teresa Griffiths, BBC, 2017) that represent the artist's iconic image in Mexico (where she spent her last 60 years) and the recent (re)discovery of Carrington in her native Britain. Thus, the analysis explores the media constructions of Carrington's artistic identity and the historical narratives that render the artist as a visible and invisible trailblazer on each side of the Atlantic. By tracing multiple creative partnerships and artistic collaborations, this paper also attempts to reflect on the internationalisation of the Surrealist movement within a network of cross-cultural encounters and shared imaginaries.

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