

La Vanguardia

Spanish artist Javier Calleja (Málaga) holds his debut solo exhibition in Paris

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Javier Calleja, the artist from Málaga, arrives in Almine Rech, Paris, on Thursday 2 June with 'This Is Your Lucky Day', his first solo exhibition in Europe since being added to the exclusive list of artists represented by the gallery.

The exhibition, which will remain open to visitors until 25 June, represents a step forward in his professional trajectory. Aspects of his creative process that have never previously been exhibited will be displayed for the very first time. It also introduces new compositional elements, plus a range of colours that the artist had not previously worked with.

Javier Calleja is embarking on a renewed phase of creativity, but his unmistakable visual and conceptual language continues to predominate. In short, his work is firmly embedded in the maxim governing the artist's creation: 'simple, though not easy'.

Calleja Studio points out that 'This Is Your Lucky Day' includes seven new sketches dotted with marks, notes and elements that may or may not be destined to become drawings, canvases, sculptures or variegated projects.

Colour tests, silhouettes of characters and hairdos, phrases and quotes merge with telephone numbers, dates and places on a single sheet of paper. They are fragments from the studio that reflect the inner monologue hidden behind the restless imagination of the artist from Málaga.

The exhibition begins with these drawings and continues through to the next room where the entire space is taken up with a selection of large-scale canvases: five new and colourful paintings framed in the style of classic works of art that highlight the artist's taste for playing with scale and proportion.

As always, Calleja is keen to alter perceptions and create an illusory image for his audience and the huge frames he has designed himself create a deceptive Lilliputian sensation. Visitors become part of the exhibition, to the point that they understand and see themselves reflected in these characters with enormous eyes.

At the same time, like a form of tribute, the ornamental frames emerge as a homage to the long-standing tradition of painting in one of the great capitals of European culture. The vitality of these new paintings, meanwhile, bring to mind traditional comic strips with the text arranged, in some cases, along Calleja's iconic characters rather than on their T-shirts.

This change also coincides with an adaptation to his characters' attire, which is more formal than usual. In short, the exhibition appears to shift between serenity and the everyday, with a touch of playfulness and hope, while at the same time giving a subtle and ingenious nod to the rich cultural tradition of France.