

Leonora Carrington

The Symptomatic Surreal

Mar 25 — Aug 10, 2026 | Freud Museum, London, UK

'The Symptomatic Surreal' will be the first institutional exhibition dedicated to Leonora Carrington's drawings from her Santander sketchbooks, offering a unique vantage point from which to reconsider the artist's wartime output.

A Leonora Carrington painting – *Villa Pilar* – joined *The Symptomatic Surreal* from 1 July 2026 and will be viewable at the Freud Museum until 10 August. It is the first time *Villa Pilar* has ever been on public display.

British-born Mexican artist Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) is one of the most celebrated figures associated with Surrealism. She was a painter, novelist, and visionary whose sustained enquiry into the psyche informed her interests in mythology, psychology, alchemy, tarot, and other esoteric traditions.

Told through her sketchbook drawings and letters from 1938 to 1941 prior to her permanent emigration to Mexico, this exhibition follows Carrington's flight from Nazi occupied France, her hospitalisation in Sanatorium Morales in Santander, Spain, and her journey through Madrid to New York, where she was reunited with the Surrealists in exile in 1941. It was then that she entrusted the Santander sketchbooks to collector Julien Levy, which were held in his collection for over sixty years, until the sketchbook drawings were sold in 2004 and dispersed into various private collections.

This exhibition brings together material from Carrington's stay in Santander, placing her recurring motifs of horses and the underworld in dialogue with Sigmund Freud's collection of antiquities devoted to these themes. The exhibition is anchored by the presentation of *Villa Pilar* (1940), an early painting produced during Carrington's hospitalisation in Santander, offering the first ever opportunity to view the work on public display.

The Symptomatic Surreal is curated by Vanessa Boni.