

# Leonora Carrington

## The Symptomatic Surreal

Sep 8, 2026 — Jan 31, 2027 | Faro Santander - Fundación Banco Santander, Spain

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) was born in Lancashire into a wealthy family, before rejecting the conventions of the upper class in which she had been educated and moving to Paris in 1937 to become an artist. There she began to cultivate the surrealist language with her own artistic style, fusing mythology, Celtic folklore, alchemy, and occultism with a profoundly feminist and rebellious imagination.

In 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War, Carrington experienced a psychological crisis, and in August 1940 she was hospitalised for four months in Peña Castillo Sanatorium, Santander, under the supervision of Dr Luis Morales. She later described this period as "down below", an experience which was, for her, like 'being dead'. Yet rather than an end point, this psychic descent marked a period of profound inner transformation. The exhibition takes descent and ascent as its guiding metaphors, evoking the underworld as a space not only of death, but also of transformation and renewal.

'The Symptomatic Surreal' is the first institutional exhibition dedicated to the paintings, drawings and texts created by Carrington during the Second World War (1939 - 1944). Despite having limited access to artistic material during the war, Carrington worked with sketchbooks, creating a visual record of that period of deep crisis. Through the drawings she made in her Santander notebooks between 1940 and 1941, before emigrating definitively to Mexico, this exhibition traces Carrington's flight from Nazi-occupied France, her hospitalisation in Francoist Spain and her subsequent passage through Madrid and Lisbon until she reached New York. Reunited with her surrealist friends in exile, she began a period of intense creativity during which she painted, wrote and participated in important surrealist exhibitions.