

Álvaro Urbano

GRANADA GRANADA

«... some verses are necessary to go on living,
but too many can drive a man mad.»

Isabel Abascal

GRANADA GRANADA is an exhibition in two chapters. The first at Travesía Cuatro's space in Guadalajara, and the second in Mexico City. In both, Álvaro Urbano (Madrid, 1983) imagines an encounter between the architect Luis Barragán and the poet Federico García Lorca. As a sort of guide, Álvaro dreams of the mute witnesses of the encounter, the plants, the floors and the architecture as an empty memory of those who left.

The starting point for this story is Casa Franco, designed in 1929 by the tapatío architect. The Moorish influence can be perceived in the patios, doors and woodwork, as well as in the use of light and the presence of water in the small garden, elements that fascinated Barragán on his trip to Andalusia.

«The discovery gave me a sensation not unlike the one I had when, walking through a narrow, dark tunnel in the Alhambra, I was given serene, quiet and solitary, the beautiful courtyard of the Myrtles of that ancient palace. It contained what a successful garden should contain: nothing less than the entire universe. Such a memorable epiphany has never left me and it is not by chance that, since the first garden I created in 1941, all those that have followed have humbly tried to echo the immense lesson of the plastic wisdom of the Moors of Spain.»

Luis Barragán,
for his 1980 Pritzker Prize award speech

Barragán's infatuation with the city of Granada and his confessed admiration for García Lorca are embodied in a pomegranate blossom that Urbano finds in the Casa Jardín Ortega in Mexico City.

TRAVESÍA CUATRO
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«Features of the pomegranate blossom. The pomegranate blossom is solitary, although it is sometimes found in groups of two or three buds at the end of the branches. The pomegranate flower is hermaphroditic, male and female at the same time. The pomegranate blossom grew in the capital of al-Andalus, which we now call Granada. The pomegranate blossom sprang from the deep red blood of the goddess Aphrodite.»

Isabel Abascal

During the summer of 2022, Álvaro Urbano visits the Huerta de San Vicente, the house where the García Lorca family spent their summers in Granada, and where Federico wrote *Yerma*, *Bodas de sangre* and *Romancero gitano*. The poet refers to the balcony of his bedroom in the Huerta as the place where the city appeared before him in all its splendor “... in front of my balcony, stretched out in the distance with a beauty never equaled”.

Entering Federico’s domestic intimacy, Álvaro perceives the tension between memory and myth. Today, in the Casa Franco in Guadalajara, the floors, the balcony and the memories of García Lorca’s empty house, behind whose window is raining. It is the memory of Urbano that makes the encounter possible: Federico and Luis in Granada in the summer of 1924. It is in Mexico City, where the link between Lorca and Barragán takes the form of a garden, plants that Álvaro finds in the poet’s poems and in the architect’s gardens, and which seek to reach each other. While the sun sets on the balcony in Guadalajara, the dawn breaks on the balcony in Mexico City. Thus these chapters contain –like the gardens of the Alhambra– an entire universe, a sleepless night.

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Álvaro Urbano is a Berlin-based Spanish artist whose work investigates the latent emotions and memories –both collective and private– in architectural spaces, often using history, film and theater as starting points. His work is developed through different media such as performance and spatial installations.

He has recently presented his work at Bergen Assembly, Norway; Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York; La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Boghossian Foundation, Brussels; Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; CAB, Brussels; Moscow International Biennale for Young Art; PAC, Padiglione d’Arte Contemporanea, Milan; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, among others.

He has also presented his collaborative work with Petrit Halilaj at Frankfurter Kunstverein; Palacio de Cristal, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Autostrada Biennale, National Library of Prishtina, Kosovo; the 17th Quadriennale di Roma; Biennale Gherdëina, Ortisei, Italy; and S.A.L.T.S., Basel.

Upcoming projects include a solo show at TEA Espacio de las Artes in Tenerife, Spain and another in MUSAC, León, Spain; a group show at Collegium, Arévalo, Spain, curated by Chus Martínez. Alongside Petrit Halilaj he will present a site-specific exhibition at Ocean Space by at TBA21 in Venice, Italy.

His work is part of Collection Lafayette Anticipations – Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, TEA Tenerife, Spain, Colección Museo Jumex, Mexico City, FRAC Bretagne and FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, France.

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