

Rippling waters. Dappled shadows. Sound waves. Pomegranate seeds. Wilting flowers. Luz Carabaño's abstract paintings have echoes of things that we can name, shapes we can touch or tease with our fingertips. They speak in hushed tones of physical forms once sensed. Of nature. Of fragments. Yet the contours that the artist traces with oil paint remain enigmatic, shadows of observations that she once held – related, but flattened, distilled, shifting into colours anew amid changing light.

*She says, to retrace is to touch anew and remember.*

*She says, silence is the stillness of presence.*

*She says, a spell is cast as the daylight vanishes.<sup>1</sup>*

Take the duck-egg blue of *oleaje* (2026), which speaks of fading light as it subtly greys into a purplish slate while clinging onto its memory. Amorphous ribbons of lilac swell and surge as hazy waves traced into a sea of abstract symbols. It chimes with the flickering of *parpadeo* (2026), though here the lilac twinkles underneath a veil of coral that reaches for moments of opacity, while unable to deny its need for the diaphanous. This is colour as vapour that diffuses to satiate the picture plane.

Something of Carabaño's surfaces makes me want to press my cheek to her paintings. I would not want to leave behind any trace of make up or the day's dirt; I would not want to steal away their pigment upon my skin. The impulse is not simply to do with how silky these surfaces are – Carabaño primes them with layer upon layer of gesso, which she then sands until, could they speak, they would be silver-tongued and oh so persuasive. Nor is it the gliding applications of velvety paint, which are absorbed by porosity. Nor their subtle curves, shaped by a wooden skeleton that betrays the rectangle beneath an epidermis of linen.

Rather, they ask for intimacy. Small in scale, these paintings want you to step closer. To look through their window. Carabaño's choice of scale defines her own bodily relationship to the work. She often sits down to paint and lets the concentrated area of the canvas fill her visual space, while her arm and hand make similarly focused movements.

Her process begins with being out in the world, looking. Consciously looking. Perhaps for peculiarities or particularisms, and sometimes a "magical" moment just happens to be there:

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“chance ready-made drawings, paintings on surfaces, on things, on objects that are out in the world.”<sup>2</sup> Photographing these observations, Carabaño becomes “a collector of images”<sup>3</sup>. She is essentially searching for strangeness, which is then retraced as “another kind of strangeness that happens in the painting process.”<sup>4</sup> It is activated by blurs, the curving edges of the canvas, the combinations of colour and line that seem unable to remain still. They never quite settle.

Carabaño’s jewel-like delicacies are slight but visceral. Sensorial. They seek a meeting point, be it a cheek or a memory or an atmosphere: a moment of exchange in which a reverberation oscillates and a pattern continues to ripple.

*She says, paintings contain multiple times.*

*She says, painting is a searching process.*

*She says, it’s a blur that envelops like a fog.*<sup>5</sup>

The fog of *penumbra* (2026), for example, sees blues of many shades that gently blur to bring cerulean, turquoise and teal into a misty fold. Its subtle circular forms exist in some kind of half-light, semi-darkness or shadow that obscures them into indeterminacy, at once eerie and enticing. *granada* (2026) is a black pearl of hazy iridescence, proffering its strange contours amid a palm of pastel purple. And though it started life as a photograph of paving stones, *juego de círculos* (2026) is a painting that delineates circles of sky blue and dusky pink that could be the arteries of a beating heart as much as pebbles scattered upon the shoreline. Together they are mere echoes, transformations: *resonancias*.

Isn’t the island of Hydra also all echoes searching for eyes and ears in which to settle? Stolen moments that contain multiple times. Its shapes, sounds and colours meet those of stories, memories and gestures. There are whispers of Cohen’s songs still drifting in the air. Outside, nature echoes: sunshine reflects off turquoise waters, rippling upon adjacent rocks as diffused refractions of light. Sharp angles of shade are cast by terracotta rooftops, offsetting the spindly shadows of pine trees that cling to the limestone bluffs. Look up and you might see the surprising curve of a spectral moon rising into the late afternoon sky; the sun makes her descent slowly, unwilling to relinquish her own sharp ring of heat. And the generosity of the island’s sunset is an endless echo: its pale pinks, brooding purples and fiery oranges do not discriminate between the softness of a cloud, the distance of a gentle horizon, or the sea’s stark mirror, each a surface upon which to wreak a havoc of colour in a closing blaze of glory.

When I visited Hydra with friends many years ago, I too

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soaked up the singularity of the island. I let the sun blind me with its brilliance radiating off the water. Listened closely to the waves. We draped our arms around one another's shoulders, forming curved arcs of companionship. And I have a misty memory of one friend who sparkled in sequins and looked out to sea, multiple futures shining within each of the dress' dimpled disks: black pearls of possibility. Such are my recollections, transitory moments now suspended; reverberations that perhaps still concatenate across the island, and have reappeared as traces in Carabaño's paintings. Ripples. Curvatures. Kindred spirits. Resonances riding upon the same wave.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes derive from Luz Carabaño, *an echo, a shadow, a shape: Record of Creative Work* (unpublished Master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2022), p. 11, p. 27 and p. 33 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with the author via Zoom, from LA (Carabaño) to London (Elderton) (13 June 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Carabaño, *an echo, a shadow, a shape*, op. cit., p. 30, p. 30 and p. 39 respectively.