

The **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2017, LAMIA** [*Lamia*] (2016) by Rayco Pulido was published in the same year as *El ala rota* by Antonio Altarriba and Kim, the latter paying homage to a mother and conceived after some readers complained about her scant presence in the family story of *El arte de volar*. It does not seem a coincidence, but rather a cultural turn with regard to women in our society. As in *El ala rota*, *Lamia* tells us of the subordinate and “invisible” role that a traditional society, let alone an autocratic one, allots to women—in both works about Francoist Spain. Unlike *El ala rota*, a family memoir presented realistically, *Lamia* broaches the subject from a fiction genre—a sort of Spanish hard-boiled in Jim Thompson’s manner—and the assertion of formal artifice.

Laia is a 32 year-old orphan, struggling to get ahead in the Barcelona of 1943 where “a killer remains at large”. Conventionally, as expected of her, she has managed to find a “husband” and “get pregnant” while the radio plays a replica of the famous Spanish radio show *El consultorio de Elena Francis* [*Elena Francis, Agony Aunt*]. The portrayal of post-war Spain is both symbolic and theatrical, in farcical mode precisely because this summarises how the country was and serves as a contrast to the present-day. **RAYCO PULIDO** (Telde, Gran Canary 1978) had just adapted Benito Pérez Galdós in *Nela* (2013), a remarkable graphic novel that planted the seed of *Lamia*. His drawing style, expressive geometric caricatures, in powerful black and white, looks like an impossible cross between Chester Gould and Frank Miller, and very aware of the latest trends in the avant-garde comics. If *Lamia* runs like the clock on its title page, it owes as much to the excentric situations and characters as to its fundamental themes, the questions of gender and the role of women in society. *Lamia* is laconic, to the point of not even alluding, in any of its panels, to the meaning of its mythological title.

PREMIO NACIONAL DE CÓMIC | 10 AÑOS. 2007-2017

NATIONAL COMICS AWARD | TEN YEARS. 2007-2017

Max | Paco Roca | Felipe Hernández Cava & Bartolomé Seguí
 Antonio Altarriba & Kim | Santiago Valenzuela | Alfonso Zapico | Miguelanxo Prado
 Juan Díaz Canales & Juanjo Guarnido | Santiago García & Javier Olivares
 Pablo Auladell | Rayco Pulido

2017 marks the 10th anniversary of the National Comics Award. For this reason, the VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR CULTURE AND SPORTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA, the GENERAL FOUNDATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA (FGUMA)—which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary—and the MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS have wanted to pay tribute to the ninth art in Spain with a collective exhibition.

DECEMBER 14, 2017 – JANUARY 13, 2018

Exhibition Hall of the Rector's Office of the University of Málaga

Curator: Pepo Pérez

The **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD** is a prize granted by the Spanish Ministry of Culture since 2007, following a parliamentary initiative by the late Carme Chacón. It represented a decisive turn in the recognition of comics in Spain, by equating it with other cultural activities distinguished with National Awards (such as Spanish literature, visual arts, etc.). By doing so, the Ministry ratified the changes that took place in the late 20th century in the hierarchy of Fine Arts and the obsolete distinction between high modernism and the industrial “pseudoculture” despised by “apocalyptic” critics such as Clement Greenberg. Since the 1960s, the “integrating” essays of Umberto Eco and others had pointed in the current direction. Today we assume that the rejection of commercial art or comics has less to do with its cultural importance or aesthetic excellence than—as Bourdieu showed—with socio-economic class issues affecting the formation of taste. The erosion of the high culture / commercial culture frontier was detected as one of the symptoms of postmodernity in arts. For decades, visual artists have incorporated influences from the “low” culture, and many areas of the latter have adopted strategies of the “high” one. Comics is one of them. The symbolic capital that this National Award has added to comics, a “new art” for the 21st century, should not be underestimated. The award, as it is officially defined, aims to “distinguish the work of Spanish authors, written in any of the Spanish languages, which according to the judgment of specialists of proven competence has been outstanding in the creation of comics”. The diffusion and cultural legitimation thus provided have been highlighted by publishers and booksellers, in view of its undeniable industrial impact, as well as by both critics and authors, encouraged by the recognition given to those who have received it. This exhibition aims to shed light on the creative process of all the winning works of the National Comics Award during the first ten years of its existence.

The first **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD** presented in 2007 was won by **HECHOS, DICHS, OCURRENCIAS Y ANDANZAS DE BARDÍN EL SUPERREALISTA** [*Facts, Sayings, Occurrences and Wanderings of Bardín the Superrealist*] (2006), a work on the cusp between the comics of the end of the 20th century and that of the 21st. Its author, **MAX** (Francisc Capdevila, Barcelona 1956), has had a long career dating from the underground comix of the 1970s and his characters in *El Vibora* magazine (Gustavo, Peter Pank) during the ephemeral boom of Spanish adult comics in the 1980s and his later stages of artistic reinvention. At the end of the 1990s, in the depleted Spanish comics industry, Max published short comic strips with a character influenced by Chris Ware. Bardín the Superrealist was a cypher with no real psychology—a resort of popular comics, almost a character of Bruguera publisher—that allowed him to explore his favourite subjects in different formats and media: self-published comics, the avant-garde comics magazine *NSLM* (1995-2007, founded by Max and Pere Joan), the national press (*El País*) or animations for television. In a “superreal” universe created by an artist who chose his pseudonym in honour of Max Ernst, the author addressed subjects with humour, a crucial element for reaching a state of enlightenment according to this mature Max, using an exquisite graphic synthesis in the style of both French-Belgian *ligne claire* and Spanish *tebeos* (comic books) of Bruguera School (1950s-1970s). The Bardín strip cartoons are often *drawn essays*, humouristic speculations that connect the Surrealist references (Buñuel, Dalí, Cirlot) with the psychoanalysis of Jung or the pre-Romantic morbidity of Füssli’s *Nightmare* (1781), a painting mentioned in comical key. Around 2006 a new Spanish comic industry emerged—the regular bookshop circuit opened its doors to welcome in the graphic novel—and Max compiled some of his scattered material together with some unpublished strips. The book represented another peculiar feature of the graphic novel, a term as conventional as it is inaccurate: it comprises short stories, it is not a “novel”, nor does it need to be.

The **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2008** was preceded by a stunning trajectory that surprised even its winner, **PACO ROCA** (Valencia 1969). **ARRUGAS** [*Wrinkles*] (2007) arrived just in time to become the phenomenon the Spanish graphic novel industry needed. The first 20,000 copies sold rapidly (today more than 66,000 sold just in Spain) and made it clear that this was no ordinary comic. In retrospect, its impact is easy to understand. Its main theme, old age and its associated illnesses—the main character is an elderly man suffering from Alzheimer who is admitted into an old people’s home—was a subject little treated in fiction. The fact that a comic, normally associated with childish adventures, could broach such a subject was a surprise to readers. Perhaps the main merit of *Arrugas* lies in its misleadingly gentle appearance that fed as much on the popular Spanish comics (the Bruguera School) as on the modes of representation of *bande dessinée* (the French-Belgian *ligne claire*) and American comics (the standard of Milton Caniff, from Alex Toth to David Mazzucchelli), not to mention Hayao Miyazaki’s animated films. His sympathetic figures and touches of humour allowed him to present difficult subjects, as anyone who has visited an old people’s home will recognise. Roca also did this to research for his graphic novel *Arrugas*, noting his observations on the home in a notebook that is on view in the exhibition. The main worries of the old people, their physiological needs and physical deterioration; the constant reminder of their “useful” working life; love and sex in old age, and the importance of fantasy to support reality. Yes, life is a dream. Memory is another important theme, as it always has been in all Roca’s works since. If memory is absent, there is neither individual nor collective identity and Emilio, the unforgettable main character in *Arrugas*, is losing his.

EVENTS:

December 14, 2017
 19:00 h. Round table:
CREANDO PREMIOS NACIONALES DEL CÓMIC. ENCUENTRO CON JAVIER OLIVARES Y SANTIAGO VALENZUELA.
 Board Room of the Rector's Office of the University of Málaga.

December 21, 2017
 19:00 h. Round table:
ESCRIBIENDO Y DIBUJANDO PREMIOS NACIONALES DEL CÓMIC. ENCUENTRO CON ANTONIO ALTARRIBA Y KIM.
 Assembly Hall of the Rector's Office of the University of Málaga.

January 11, 2018
 19:00 h. Round table:
DIBUJANDO PREMIOS NACIONALES DEL CÓMIC. ENCUENTRO CON MAX Y PACO ROCA.
 Assembly Hall of the Rector's Office of the University of Málaga.

GUIDED VISITS:

Mondays and Wednesdays
 at 18:00 h.

MAX | PACO ROCA | FELIPE HERNÁNDEZ CAVA & BARTOLOMÉ SEGUÍ
 ANTONIO ALTARRIBA & KIM | SANTIAGO VALENZUELA | ALFONSO ZAPICO
 MIGUELANXO PRADO | JUAN DÍAZ CANALES & JUANJO GUARNIDO
 SANTIAGO GARCÍA & JAVIER OLIVARES | PABLO AULADELL | RAYCO PULIDO

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

PREMIO NACIONAL DE CÓMIC 10 AÑOS 2007-2017

SALA DE EXPOSICIONES DEL RECTORADO
 UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

14 DICIEMBRE 2017 - 13 ENERO 2018

The **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2009** went to **LAS SERPIENTES CIEGAS** [*The Blind Snakes*] (2008). The scriptwriter **FELIPE HERNÁNDEZ CAVA** (Madrid 1953) has been considered a pioneer of Spanish adult comics since his work in the 1970s with El Cubri group. It was not the first occasion that Cava broached the memory of the Spanish Civil War, recreated here using hard-boiled fiction techniques. He took advantage of certain resources to articulate the story: the typical detective search, the dubious hero and the false narrator, the horror narrated in the first-person —there is abundant use of interior monologue—, the psychopaths typical of the most hard boiled crime fiction and an ambivalent fantastic element. The historical scene is the confrontation, at the end of the 1930s, of political systems (Fascism/Communism) leading up to the Spanish Civil War, the “rehearsal” for World War II. The leading characters, members of the International Brigades fighting on the Catalonian Front re-enact the failure of the collective utopias. The portrayal of Communists and Anarchists is devastating: cruel internal struggles, ingenuous, purposeless idealists, unpleasant characters, and a psychopath who discovers an excuse to kill at will in the revolutionary ideology. The veteran cartoonist **BARTOLOME SEGUÍ** (Palma de Mallorca 1962), cooperated with Cava in the first of a series and put his caricature style to best use to give life to characters and settings. His outstanding work on visual documentation is on a par with the screenwriter’s historical research. The book mimics the design of a French-Belgian comics album, a tradition in which Seguí is very comfortable although he avoids the smooth Tintinesque line and adopts a rough and sombre stroke —he hand-draws in pencil and then uses digital colour— in consonance with the tone of the story and the aesthetics of the *nouvelle bande dessinée* of the early 2000s.

In the mid 2000s initiatives on the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism were promoted although the **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2010**, **EL ARTE DE VOLAR** [*The Art of Flying*] (2009) was conceived earlier and for very intimate reasons. This internationally successful graphic novel exemplified what Marianne Hirsch has called “Postmemory”: a space “for the intersubjective and transgenerational memory, linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma”, defined “through identifying with the victim or witness of the trauma, modulated by the insuperable distance that separates the participant from the one born after”. Like its predecessor the Spanish graphic novel *Un largo silencio* (1997) by Francisco and Miguel Gallardo, *El arte de volar* is based on the oral and written testimony of the authors’ father. The work combines testimony, historical memory and autofiction in an intense account of the breakdown of the libertarian ideals of the Spanish Second Republic. It tells the life story of Antonio Altarriba Lope (1910-2001), a humble farmworker who embraced Anarchism and fought on the Republican Front. After the war, he lived a life cut short by exile in France and a humiliating return to Franco’s Spain. In his old age, after suffering long periods of depression, he committed suicide in 2001 in an old people’s home, much like the one portrayed in *Arrugas*, jumping to death from a fourth floor. *El arte de volar* is also a family memoir where the son, screenwriter **ANTONIO ALTARRIBA** (Zaragoza 1952), comic theoretician and author since the 1980s literally supplants his father’s voice from the text. **KIM** (Joaquim Aubert, Barcelona 1941), known for his satirical series *Martínez el Facha* (1977-2015) created an expressively realistic caricature with roots in the underground comix of the 1970s and Spanish post-war popular *tebeos* (comic books). Altarriba broadened the family memory in *El ala rota* (2016, again drawn by Kim), a biography of his mother Petra Ordóñez (1918-1998) covering practically the whole of the Spanish 20th century.

The **NATIONAL COMICS AWARDS 2011** could be summarised in the gigantic mop bucket that has become the “impregnable city” appearing in **LAS AVENTURAS DEL CAPITÁN TORREZNO. PLAZA ELÍPTICA** [*The Adventures of Captain Torrezno. Elliptical Square*] (2010). **SANTIAGO VALENZUELA**, its author, (San Sebastián 1971) became known in 2002 with the first album of a saga about a public servant who built a “Micro-world” in a basement, populated by little people who reflected our own humanity, a “waiflike” epic slowly unfolds between heroic fantasy and costumbrism absurdity. Seven volumes later, what began as a parody of Genesis had expanded into hundreds of pages with different tonal and thematic registers: revisiting the Demiurge myth, altering the framework of the narration (the “real” world of the public servant / Micro-world / religious mythology of the latter, etc.), gnostic-metaphysical ironic ramblings and continuous Biblical references. Valenzuela adds sardonic humour with traditional touches connecting directly with the picaresque novel and modern satirical literature, embodied here by the poignant figure of Pepe Gotera-like of the Madrid cheap tavern in the guise of Capitán Torrezno, accidental hero trapped in a shoddy model of the world. We could mention Cervantes, Swift or Borges, Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä del Valle del Viento* or the French cartoonists Fred and Moebius but in truth, Valenzuela’s vision is too idiosyncratic to bear comparison. In *Plaza Elíptica*, the *torrezno* (crackling) cosmology continues to advance towards a vanishing point on allegorical horizons, likenesses of our own history as humanity that allows the author to parody the political and religious power structures in a demystifying epic, drawn in an appropriately organic style. “The world, according to the Gnosis, is cubic” says the first page. Perhaps, as cubic is each panel of the strips, limited by the frames, where humanity’s doubles reside and which the Demiurge Valenzuela has brought to life for us, his readers. A dream within a dream.

Reality has been a theme *par excellence* of the graphic novel, the adult comics of the 21st century whether it be a biography, history, a testimony or a feature story and there are many examples among these award-winners. This is the case of the **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2012**, **DUBLINÉS** [*Dubliner*] (2011). Author **ALFONSO ZAPICO** (Blimea 1981) from Asturias is extremely conscious of the power of the caricature, as are all the winners who preceded him. Ultimately, when all is said and done, the modern comic stems from the caricatures of the 19th century and the illustrated satirical magazines. Using a watered-down ink and a talent for invoking symbolic caricature language, Zapico adopts a light stroke to present a biography of James Joyce and a convincing psychological portrait of the Dublin writer and his times, the convulsive Europe of the first half of the 20th century. The generation of Modernist writers to which he belongs, including an appearance by Ezra Pound and other literati, parade past us. The artist also pays attention to revealing details of Joyce’s personality —his restless wanderings around Europe, his dissolute life style and his serious eyesight problems— but that is not all that caught his attention. Zapico is especially interested in portraying the women in Joyce’s life: Nora Barnacle, the writer’s wife, Sylvia Beach, editor of *Ulysses* and owner of the mythical Paris bookshop Shakespeare & Company, or his principal patron Harriet Shaw Weaver, an active suffragette. This afforded him the possibility of including one of the movements that changed the society of that time, feminism —this epochal gaze also focuses on the problems Joyce had with censure. Zapico’s profound research sent him off to visit the cities Joyce had lived in and he recounts them in the first person in *La Ruta Joyce* (2011), a notebook of his journeys and the creative process of *Dublinés*.

In much the same way as Paco Roca in *Arrugas*, Miguelanxo Prado tells us in his own style in **ARDALÉN** [*Ardalén*] (2012) that *we are what we remember*. In this graphic novel, **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2013**, a middle-aged divorcée begins to search for her identity by investigating the life of an absent grandfather who emigrated to Cuba, never to return. The trail from old letters takes her to the village in Galicia where the elderly Fidel may (or may not) be a friend of the lost grandfather. However, his memories are fragile and untidy, he confuses reality with fantasy. The comic presents a subproblem: the price of remembrance and balm of forgetting —memories can bring back old rancours. “Remembering is not innocuous, but not remembering means not being alive” says another quote of this graphic novel. The dense and easy-going book includes inserts outside the narrative frame-work: fictitious “documents”, official reports, articles and extracts from encyclopedias all created by the author and linked to the plot. The work of **MIGUELANXO PRADO** (La Coruña 1958), veteran cartoonist recognized nationally in the 1980s and internationally at the beginning of the 1990s, has had important repercussions in Spain, France and other countries. In this particular work he returns to recurrent themes and tones of earlier works especially his animated film *De profundis* (2007). *Ardalén* marked a return to comics after the long business of making this film and a return to the rural landscape of Galicia and the mythical universe associated with the Atlantic ocean (*Ardalén* is an imaginary wind that blows from the sea inland) and magic realism. Prado represents this sea/country universe in rich colours using acrylics and coloured pencil on tinted paper on pages ready for direct reproduction, after adding the text and speech bubbles on computer.

“You look such an idiot, reading comics at your age” says a character in **BLACKSAD: AMARILLO** [*Blacksad: Amarillo*] (2013). **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2014** is the fifth installment of a series started in 2000, created by **JUAN DÍAZ CANALES** (Madrid 1972) and **JUANJO GUARNIDO** (Granada 1967) for the French comics market that soon attained wide international success. As in the previous albums, *Blacksad: Amarillo* combines apparently contradictory genres: the film *noir* with the Disney fantasy of humanoid animals that Guarnido presents with several more degrees of “realism”. The series is set in the United States (in Amarillo, Texas in this album) in the 1950s at the zenith of both genres, and exploits picturesque elements of popular 20th century imagination: the circus world, the bikers and beatniks of the “rebellious” youth culture of that decade. The *Blacksad* saga embraces the long tradition of funny animals to discuss motives and atmospheres of the time, alluding to social conflicts such as racism. Díaz Canales has written a script full of winks, gags and kind gestures, also accessible to the young reader, that allows Guarnido a great visual spread in the tradition of the French-Belgian comics. He uses carefully shaded water-colours that generate the appropriate atmosphere for each scene, a skill he acquired working in animation. The prize-winning authors consider this award represents a recognition of the commercial comics, the traditional comics medium for the most part of the 20th century. A mass cultural industry scorned for decades from the beacon of high modernism despite (or because of) its popularity, even before the new media —television, video games, internet and mobile devices— began “killing” the star of comics as popular mass entertainment. Because, if you are an adult and still reading comics, you are obviously an “idiot”. This was an extremely common opinion in the 1950s, *Blacksad: Amarillo*’s era.

Both born in Madrid **SANTIAGO GARCÍA** (1968) and **JAVIER OLIVARES** (1964) had worked together on a series of short comic strips about art history before **LAS MENINAS** [*The Ladies-in-Waiting*] (2014), which won the **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2015**. *Las meninas* is not so much a biography of Spanish painter Diego Velázquez as a cultural history of his most famous painting (*The Ladies-in-Waiting*, 1656), its creative process and influence down through the centuries, recreated through artists who adapted and used it as a yard stick when creating their own masterpieces. Goya, Picasso, Dalí, Buero Vallejo, Equipo Crónica and intellectuals all pondered on it. Foucault, for instance, who understood the painting as a structure of knowledge that invited the spectator to take part in a stand-alone representation of its own, appears in some panels of this graphic novel. “Well, of course it isn’t real, sir. It’s a mirror...” declared the playwright Antonio Buero Vallejo in a scene where a review of his play *Las meninas* (1960) criticises its “radical and obvious inauthenticity”. The baroque allegory of the mirror is the creative key for García and Olivares who build their *Meninas* with a fragmented, polytonal narrative (drama, comedy, farce and tragedy) that makes no attempt to conceal the formal artifice but, on the contrary, lean on the “charm of the double”. Using a series of “short cartoon strips” in changing narrative style they are able to touch lightly and visually on very serious subjects: representation, mimesis and “truth”, Spanish idiosyncrasy, history as an account constructed from every present. The profound prior documentation, that avoids erudite exhibitionism, proposes speculative interpretations on the life and times of Velázquez, navigating through narrative, essay, history and mythology. Allusions to the changing meaning of *Las meninas* and the “naming of things” depending on the gaze of every different era add a dimension of an “open” work in the fullest sense of the word to this comic, as enigmatic as the immortal painting itself.

EL PARAÍSO PERDIDO DE JOHN MILTON [*John Milton’s Paradise Lost*] (2015), **NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2016**, originated as an editorial commission to adapt in comics form the epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) offered to **PABLO AULADELL** (Alicante 1972), reputed illustrator and author of comics (one of them made in collaboration with the scriptwriter Felipe Hernández Cava). The task of illustrating this canonical Milton had been undertaken in the past by William Blake, Johann Heinrich Füssli or Gustave Doré but Auladell, inspired by the beauty of the text, accepted the commission for the project which would five years to complete due to editorial difficulties.

The creator’s nightmare is the rebellion of his creature. The subject can be traced back to the Biblical Genesis and its materialistic logic is that of the slave who rebels against his master. Furthermore, the thematic repertoire of the Romantic, Gothic tradition, subsequent to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) whose creature was inspired by the Satan of *Paradise Lost* had to be considered. In fact Mary Shelley began *Frankenstein* with a quotation from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* whose Satan, for the Romantics, personified the rebellion against God’s authority, the proclamation of free will and *non serviam*: “Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven”. Auladell represents this refusal in very expressive charcoal drawing that mutates, indicating the length of time (the life) taken to finish the book. The intensity of the process leaves its imprint on the result, a respectful adaptation of Milton’s text that introduces variations just by applying the language of comics. It was not merely a question of drawing the myths of Adam and Eve or the faithful and fallen angels (his changing design of Satan is memorable). It was important to use rhythms and pauses that permitted the *simultaneous sequence* of images typical of the comics page. Auladell’s working method, *alla prima*, without prior sketches, adds an immediacy that tarnishes the classical gravity of his figures.