

LEONORA CARRINGTON

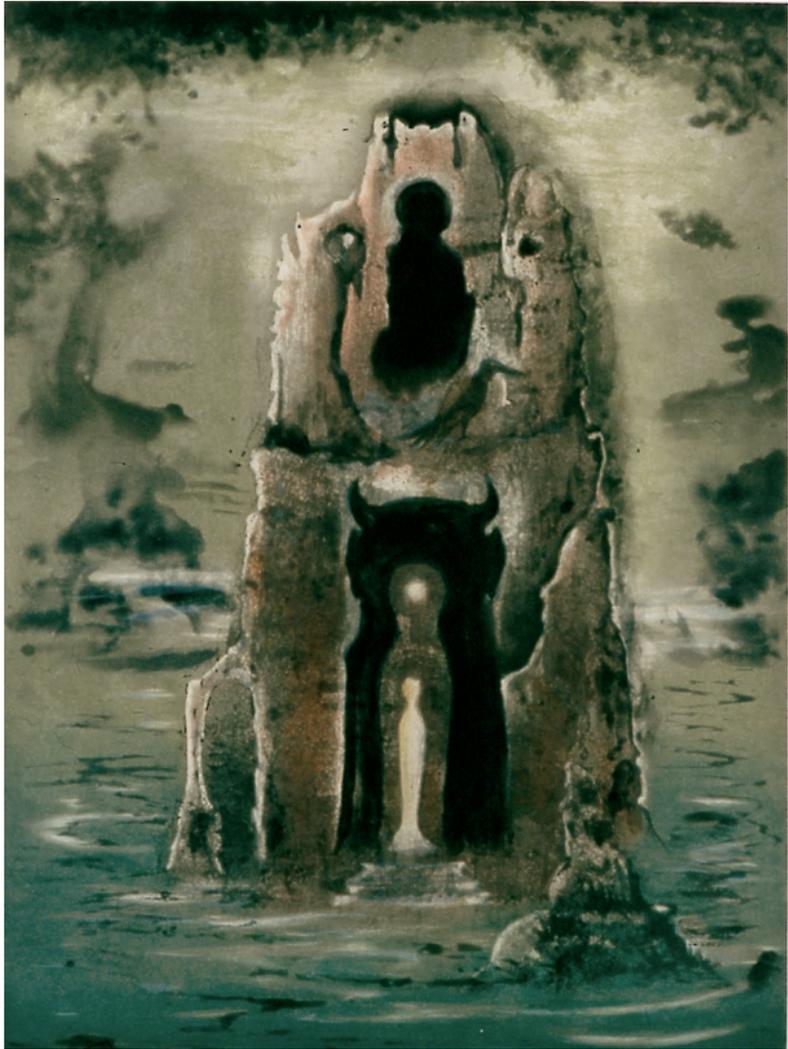
IN THE VIKTOR WYND MUSEUM
OF CURIOSITIES, FINE ART AND NATURAL HISTORY

LEEDS COLLEGE OF ART

15 July – 2 September 2016

THE VIKTOR WYND MUSEUM

September – December 2016



Leonora Carrington, ***The Memory Tower***, 1995. Colour intaglio. Edition of 30. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

CURATOR'S FOREWORD

CATRIONA MCARA

A long-term dream of mine has not only been to work with Viktor Wynd but to curate his impressive collection of Leonora Carrington artworks. This collection is macabre as it is unique, bringing together little-known prints and drawings which detail the surrealist bestiary of Carrington's imaginative universe (explored further by Marina Warner), as well as four early canvases from Carrington's pre-surrealist period (analysed in-depth by Susan L. Aberth). An anecdote by Wynd and short story by Carrington's son, Gabriel Weisz, further nuance the visual narratives under consideration.

Until now, this collection has never been shown together. Leeds College of Art is delighted to host this special congregation, a major part of its *Leonora Carrington/Lucy Skaer* research exhibition (15 July – 2 September 2016). The artworks included in this catalogue will tour subsequently to The Viktor Wynd Museum in London.

We would especially like to thank Viktor Wynd for his enthusiasm, generosity and support in realising this exhibition as well as Susan L. Aberth, Gabriel Weisz Carrington, and Marina Warner for their erudite contributions to this catalogue. The photography is by Chris Renton and the catalogue has been designed by D&M Heritage Ltd. Further grateful thanks and acknowledgement to: Chloe Aridjis, Jonathan P. Eburne, Sean Kissane, Lynn Lu, Steve Lucas, Wendi Norris, Jeffrey Sherwin, Lucy Skaer, Samantha Sweeting, and colleagues at Leeds College of Art.

THE BLACK PEACOCK

GABRIEL WEISZ CARRINGTON

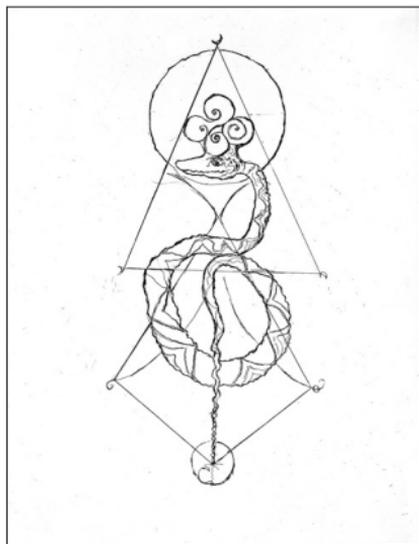
Two wolves greeted Leonora; she came out of her residence, a place that had an enormous collection of clocks all of which were protected by bell jars. Each clock had a conversation with its neighbours. So the noise was quite impressive, and time consuming.

The two wolves led her to the forest, there were red bark trees, which were very tall, and a delicate jasmine and oak like perfume pervaded the wood. A black peacock asked Leonora if she had already been born. Leonora was a bit puzzled by the question, but since it could be a very profound or else a very stupid question, she hesitated. 'I have just been born in this place'. 'Good' answered the ebony peacock and gave her a glittering knowledge stone.

The wolves led her to a very large cave, although they didn't proffer a sound, Leonora could understand each one of their thoughts. They wanted her to paint a mural over one of the walls. Through mind words they told her that she was very well-known among all animals in this forest and that it would make them very happy if she could grant them that favour. So Leonora picked a few underground flowers, those that glow in the dark, and are saturated with intricate pigments, was given a wolf bristle brush and started work on her mural. Although the place was pitch black, she brought out her glittering stone. Image ideas flashed in her mind and she set them in the mural. Unseen castles, built by long forgotten architects guided her hands. Oblong shapes growing from shallow cubes and elliptical channels grew on the background. Shadows materialised into edifices. Creatures only seen in magical boxes walked, ran or glided in this magnificent dimension.

Once Leonora finished her work the two wolves gave her a box. 'Don't open it till you are back at your place and never wear it in front of people'. Leonora glided through the fog. The peacock asked her: 'Have you died?' 'Not in this world King of the Darkened Feathers and cobalt voice'. 'Good' answered the ebony peacock and gave her a kiss.

When Leonora reached her place, she climbed the staircase to her room and opened the box. She brought out a hat made of volcanic mirrors. The wolves of her mind explained that when she wore this hat she would understand all the secrets that people tried to conceal from her or from any other person. Leonora climbed into her bed and went to sleep; her firefly body was visible from a distance.



Leonora Carrington, *Beasts: Snake*, 1998. Suite of 5 etchings, each with a separate text page; text by Gabriel Weisz Carrington. Edition of 60. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, **Beasts: Tapir**, 1998. Suite of 5 etchings, each with a separate text page; text by Gabriel Weisz Carrington. Edition of 60. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Leonora Carrington, **Beasts: Ox**, 1998. Suite of 5 etchings, each with a separate text page; text by Gabriel Weisz Carrington. Edition of 60. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.





Leonora Carrington, **Beasts: Flight**, 1998. Suite of 5 etchings, each with a separate text page; text by Gabriel Weisz Carrington. Edition of 60. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Leonora Carrington, **Beasts: Cave**, 1998. Suite of 5 etchings, each with a separate text page; text by Gabriel Weisz Carrington. Edition of 60. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. Photo credit: Will Lytch. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



THE CROCK OF GOLD: LEONORA CARRINGTON AND THE VIKTOR WYND COLLECTION

SUSAN L. ABERTH

If you believe in the occult adage ‘like attracts like’ then you can begin to understand the internal logic of The Viktor Wynd Collection. When a young and precocious Mr. Wynd encountered Leonora Carrington’s extraordinary writings they left an indelible impression on his imagination that changed the course of his creative life.¹ The work of Carrington, whether written or visual, can indeed have an unexpected effect as they exert a mysterious and even spellbinding pull, underneath her customary mantle of wicked humour. The works Mr. Wynd has amassed range widely in date, medium, and subject matter; yet reveal a quirky playfulness shared by both collector and artist.

Extremely rare are four paintings dating from 1935-36 when Carrington was attending art schools in London, first the Chelsea School of Art and then the Ozenfant Academy. Although displaying some of the technical clumsiness of student work, they are fascinating for what they can tell us about the artist’s early interests, as well as the development of her style. The two still lives appear to be close in date, and are perhaps class assignments. *Still Life* has the obligatory flowers and fruit and struggles a bit with brushstroke, perspective, and arrangement, nevertheless it has a charming naiveté and a shade of blue the artist would come to favour. *Still Life with Creature* displays a more interesting selection of objects – odd things brought incongruously together and displayed on a carpet. Significantly the centre of the composition

holds a leather-bound book, foregrounding her dual love of the visual and written arts, lifelong pursuits. A silver chalice with top, half an orange, and an unidentified fruit surround the book, while to the left a quasi-indistinguishable black shape, with prolonged scrutiny, appears to have a bird's profile (a stuffed hen?). In the lower right is a crowned brass figurine, kneeling with arms spread as if welcoming us to view the work. This amusing and grotesque piece of Victorian bric-a-brac is reminiscent of the little goblins and fanciful creatures found in her boarding school sketchbooks and in a series of watercolours she did in 1933 titled *Sisters of the Moon*. Equally, it foretells the many fantastical characters that will parade through a lifetime of her artwork with an enigmatic yet comical sense of determination.

A small landscape, *Hazelwood Hall* (1935), depicts the estate her family inhabited after vacating Crookhey Hall, her legendary childhood home. The view is from the back, looking in on the gardens and skeletal greenhouses. There are many elements to this youthful exercise that would come to fuller fruition later such as the careful play between the wild and the cultivated, the transformation of mundane domestic spaces into fairytale settings, and there is also the slightly melancholy air of an outsider looking in. But by far the most prophetic of the paintings is *Hyena in Hyde Park*. One can imagine the eighteen-year old Carrington, new to and alone in the noisy city, traveling to the stables in Hyde Park to watch the familiar and comforting scene of people riding. These black and white horses, their elegant profiles in full gallop, look more like carousel horses dancing up and down than real horses in a posh London neighbourhood. As if to reinforce that sense of unreality, an androgynous figure stands to the right in an odd striped costume, accompanied by a hyena, Carrington's favourite

animal in the zoo. The androgynous figure, the white galloping horse, and the hyena are all characters in her famous *Self Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)* executed but a few years later in 1937-38 and now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. If we were to compare the two paintings we would see that there is a tremendous leap in sophistication within a very short time and for this Carrington owes a debt to the teachings of Amédée Ozenfant and to the surrealist milieu she would soon find herself in as Max Ernst's companion. As *Hyena in Hyde Park* amply demonstrates, Carrington had a fully formed vision prior to moving to Paris and meeting André Breton, but her involvement with the surrealists propelled her to express herself with less conformity and greater complexity.

The drawings, etchings, linocuts, intaglio prints that comprise the rest of this collection remind us of how deep Carrington's commitment was to the rigors of line on paper. Again, it was thanks to Ozenfant's relentless discipline that Carrington came to master the pencil and pen.² When the artist executed the *Untitled* etching for the surrealist journal *VVV* in 1943, she had been reunited with her teacher who had also left war-torn Europe for New York City. It is clear that Carrington and Mr. Wynd share a love of animals, for here we can see badgers, whales, snakes, cats, tapirs and a few hybrid creatures as well. Mysterious caves, mediums falling into trances, women cooking, and kabalistic conjuring, some of the artist's favourite subjects, abound in this collection. No doubt Leonora Carrington would have delighted in The Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities, Fine Art and Natural History, a surrealistic compilation of strange fact and fiction. Fortunately, Mr. Wynd was able to meet the great lady herself and the photograph that chronicles this encounter appropriately shows them seated at her

humble kitchen table. For this was no ordinary piece of domestic furniture, as one can readily see in the series of etchings of a badger with mediums at a séance table – but Carrington's own private portal to other dimensions.

ENDNOTES

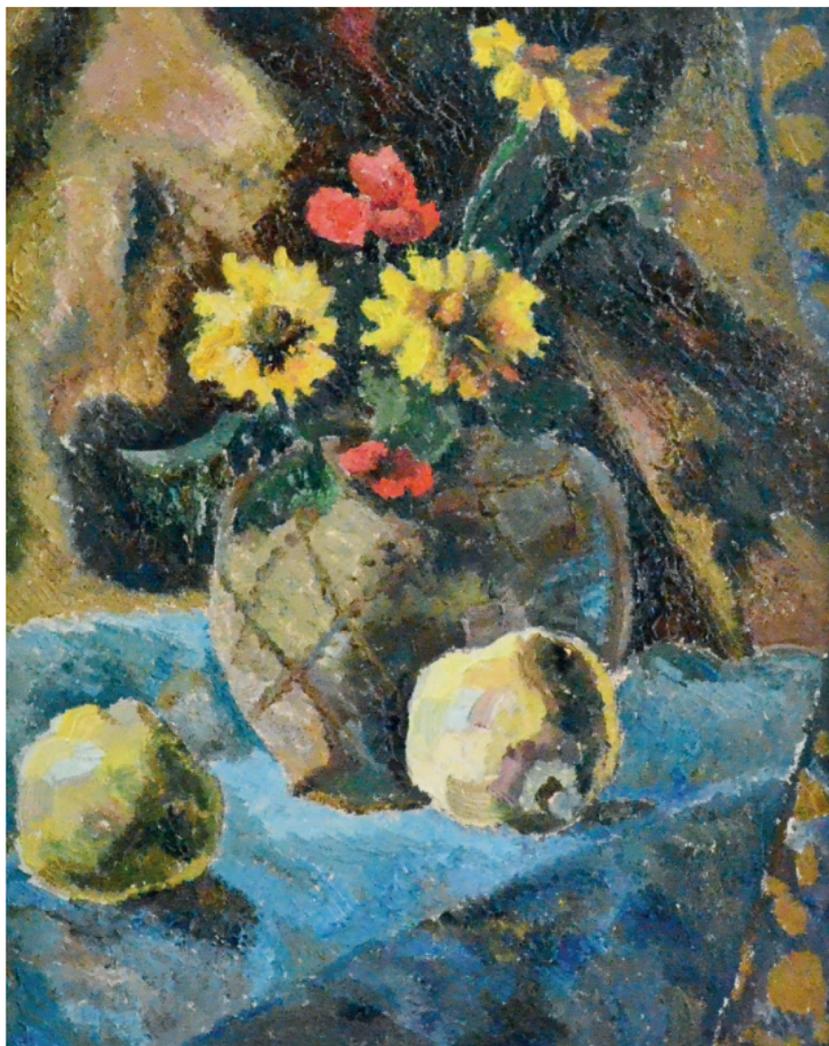
- 1 Leonora Carrington experienced a similar revelation, albeit at a younger age, when she first read James Stephens' *The Crock of Gold* (1912). This fantastical tale of Irish magic and encounters with the fairy folk opened her eyes to what was really going on in the world around her, confirming in a soulfully deep way what she always knew to be true.
- 2 Over a lifetime of interviews Carrington would credit Ozenfant with teaching her the rigours of drawing.



Leonora Carrington, *Hyena in Hyde Park*, 1935. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, *Hazelwood Hall*, 1935. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, *Still Life*, 1935. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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Leonora Carrington, **Still Life with Creature**, 1935. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

TEA WITH CARRINGTON

VIKTOR WYND

Primarily as a writer, Leonora Carrington has influenced me more than anyone else. When I was sixteen, my brother threw me a copy of Carrington's *The Seventh Horse and Other Tales* and the world never looked the same again. Where before there had been gritty characters written by Sterne, Surtees and George Borrow, painted by Constable and Turner, there was now a universe of dreams, of shifting shapes and the shadows of clouds, mental landscapes and porous air; a world of dreams, darkness and magic that I never imagined existed outside my own head. Through her, I became interested in the surrealists, the dadaists and the Italian primitivists.

In 2008 I nervously accepted a longstanding invitation from my oldest friend, the Mexican novelist, Chloe Aridjis, to take tea with Leonora Carrington at her house in Mexico City and spent an afternoon listening to tales of Max Ernst before the war, a talking jackdaw and Edward James's obsession with washing his hands in buckets of Eau de Cologne. Alejandro Jodorowsky had sent his love to his old friend and collaborator - this elicited the response 'Where is he now?' Answer 'Paris.' A sniff, and 'Lucky Paris' was the sole reply.

Since then I have been slowly building up a collection of Carrington's work. I know this is silly and I should have just stuck to ones that I have somewhere to hang (at present I have space for two but own around 35), but collecting is addictive, a psychological condition, a disease, and I can never resist more, so when the opportunity came recently to acquire her etching from the 1943 *VVV* portfolio published by the surrealists in exile in New York it was only ever going to be a question of yes, and the

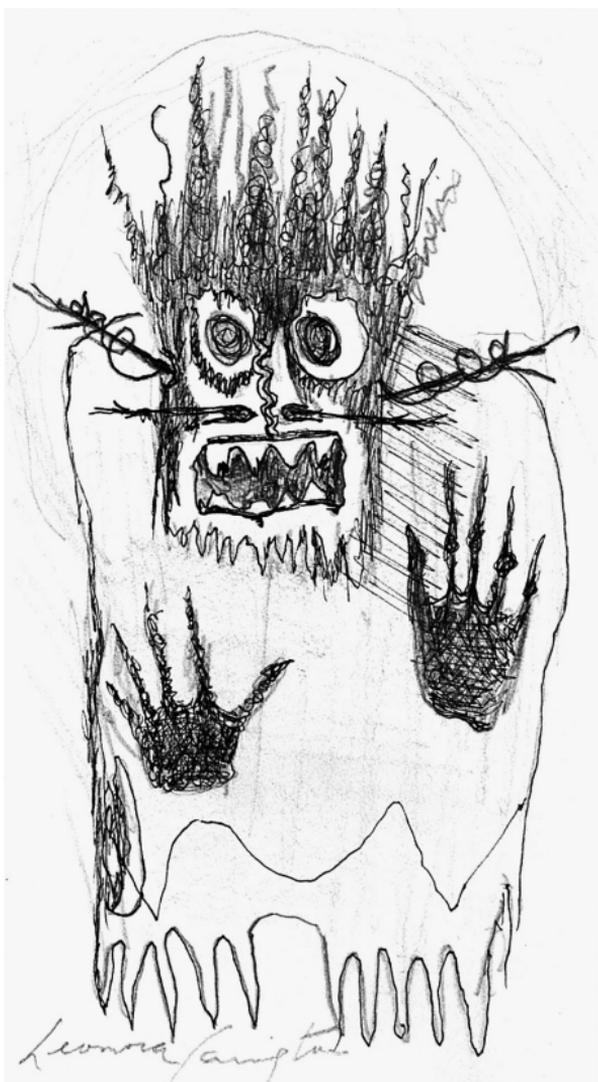
itch to acquire more I am sure has not had its final scratch. Indeed, on the day this catalogue goes to press I seem to have acquired three more. One day it would be nice to hang them all up and look at them together, one day...

A variation of this text was first published in *The Independent: RADAR* (7 March 2015).



Leonora Carrington, **Untitled drawing**, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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Leonora Carrington, *Untitled drawing*, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, **Untitled drawing**, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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Leonora Carrington

Leonora Carrington, *Untitled drawing*, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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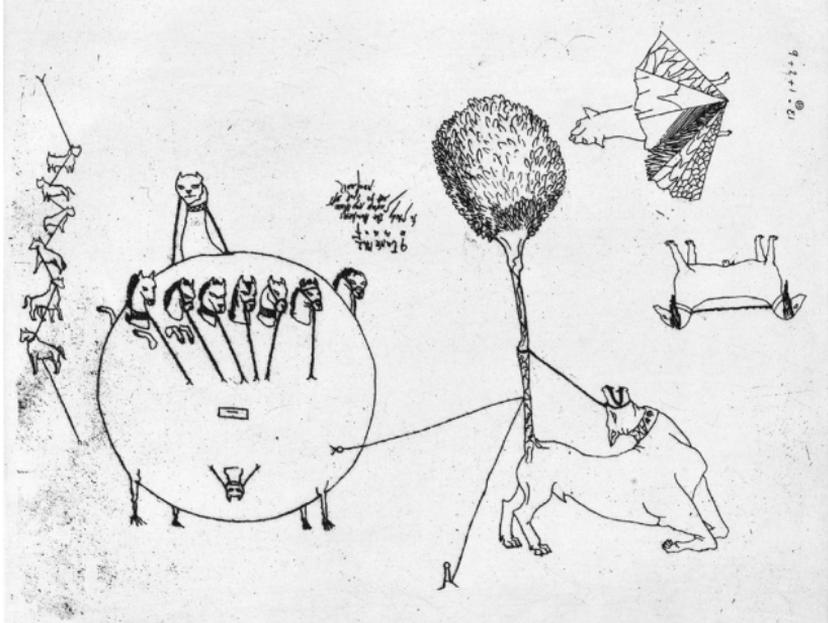
Leonora Carrington



Leonora Carrington, **Untitled drawing**, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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Leonora Carrington, **Untitled drawing**, undated. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum.
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Leonora Carrington, *Untitled from VVV*, 1943. Etching. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Leonora Carrington, *Badger Causes Table to Fly as Medium Falls in Trance*, 1987. Etching. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



LEONORA CARRINGTON: BADGER

MARINA WARNER

During one of the many moments of clairvoyance that Leonora Carrington relates in her memoir, *Down Below*, the artist describes how she sought ‘through gentleness an understanding between the mountain, my body, and my mind...’ and how she talked to animals ‘through the skin, by means of a sort of “touch” language... I could draw near animals where other human beings would put them to precipitate flight’.¹

Leonora always brought into play a most wonderful menagerie of familiars, but her subjects differ from the tradition of surrealist fantasy because they aren’t the ‘Poetical Animals’ of Thomas Browne – dragons or manticores, or even grylli out of Hieronymus Bosch and medieval bestiaries. Hers are real animals, transfigured into characters – lovers and allies and alter egos to whom she feels very close. A she-hyena becomes the Débutante’s friend and ally, in the early short story of that title,² and Igame the wild boar has a furious love affair with Virginia the heroine of another tale, ‘As They Rode along the Edge’.³ Above all, it’s horses who (one has to use ‘who’ not ‘that’) dominate her passionate attachments. The creaturely, the furry, the stinky exercise a powerful fascination: Carrington’s universe is saturated with smells and textures and it’s worth imagining them when looking at her art; she returns again and again with a kind of voluptuous attraction and repulsion to animal warmth, pelts, lairs and dens. For her, this is evidence of their deeper involvement with the life principle itself and with nature, the ultimate source of wisdom. ‘The matter of our bodies’, she once said, ‘like everything we call matter, should be thought of as thinking substance’. Badgers, with their gamey stench and

famously messy habits, are one of the species that qualifies for this loving identification and, as the artist began to think about her life ebbing, Badger begins to appear more often, a friendly companion and avatar. In three prints of dream voyages, Badger seems to be taking the role of Anubis the Jackal (another stinky, irresistible creature), a psychopomp taking her/us over to the other side. To press home the sense of the animal's mediumistic powers, Badger manifests a shadow side and helps turn tables to see spirits.

In the case of this trio of Badger etchings, it's also significant that Carrington often depicts faces in profile to show one ringed or prominent eye, or portrays her subjects with unmatched eyes, such as a pit bull with a black patch over one eye in *Bird Seizes Jewel* (1969), or the mysterious doctor of hidden learning in *The Ancestor* (1968). Her Badger, particularly in the etching, *Medium Sinks into Trance and Badger Shadow Appears*, displays his uncannily but naturally bespectacled eye, and I am reminded that André Breton writes that Carrington once told him, 'The task of the right eye is to plunge into the telescope, while the left eye interrogates the microscope'.⁴

Carrington's pursuit of a mystical surrealism was deeply felt and cultivated over a long life of apprenticeship to different ways of inner exploring (from psychoanalysis to Tibetan Buddhism). 'All religions are real', Carrington once commented. 'But you have to go through your own channels – you might meet the Egyptians, you might meet with the Voodoos, but in order to keep some kind of equilibrium it has to feel authentic to you'. In the midst of this serious quest, her unique imagination was always also mischievous, her wisdom playful and funny, her Badger guides are beguiling friends, rather than stern or earnest gurus. Carlos Fuentes rightly called her art 'ironical sorcery'.⁵ Ironical sorcery doesn't quite catch it, though, because it misses Carrington's deep

connection to the rueful humour of the fabulist tradition – and its animal mediums found in fables from Aesop to Kafka, Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter, and J. R. R. Tolkien.

I count it among my most cherished memories that when Leonora was living in New York in 1987–88, I saw her almost every day. We would go for long walks all over the city and I was able to see with her eyes and to hear her talk in her deep, warm, funny old fashioned English voice, as she ranged over scores of subjects. The apartment she rented was a small dark single room basement, but it was she wanted. She disliked being above ground, she said, and wanted to work on the same table where she ate, and mix her paints in her kitchen ('Painting is like making strawberry jam – really carefully and well', she told me.) Although in her paintings, her subjects are often airborne – as they are in the table-turning scene from the Badger series – she would never take an aeroplane and travelled between New York and Mexico on the bus. But it strikes me now that she needed to feel she was living in the safety of a burrow; she was making it her den, and I could not have been happier to be drawn in.

NOTES

Quotations from Leonora Carrington come from conversations that took place from 1987 to 1988 in New York. I am very grateful to the artist for this time spent with her, and the inspiration she gave me.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *Down Below* [1942], in Leonora Carrington, *The House of Fear, Notes from Down Below*, trans. Kathrine Talbot with Marina Warner, intro. Marina Warner (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), pp.163–209:169.
- 2 Carrington, *House of Fear*, *ibid.*, pp. 44–48.

- 3 In Leonora Carrington, *The Seventh Horse and Other Tales*, intro. Marina Warner (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), pp. 3–15.
- 4 André Breton, *Anthologie de l'Humour Noir* (Paris, 1950), pp. 333–37.
- 5 Carlos Fuentes, 'Leonora Carrington or Ironic Sorcery' in *Leonora Carrington: Oils, Gouaches, Drawings and Tapestries* (Institute of Anglo-Mexican Culture, 1965).



Leonora Carrington, *Medium Sinks into Trance and Badger Shadow Appears*, 1987. Etching. 30 x 37.5cm. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Badger Takes Medium-Shadow
in a Boat to A Cave
Down to Underworld



Leonora Carrington, *Badger Takes Medium-Shadow in a Boat to a Cave Down to Underworld*, 1987. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Leonora Carrington, *Alien Whale Sphinx Goose*, undated. Linocut on rice paper. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

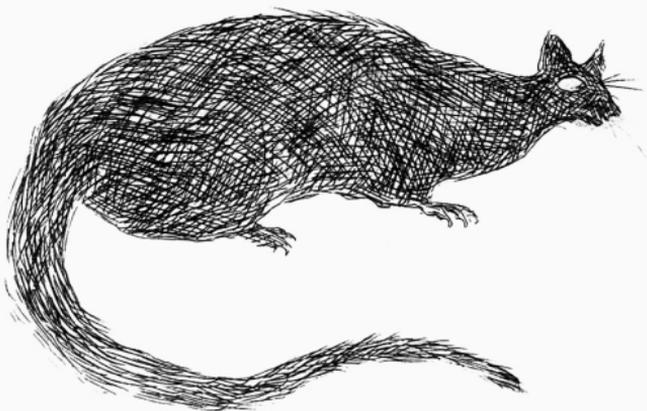


Leonora Carrington, *Menashe Y Rabi Mendl*, 1974. Colour lithograph. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, *Sopa de pollo, (Chicken soup)*, 1985. Engraving on paper. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.





Leonora Carrington, **Black Cat**, 1996. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

Leonora Carrington, *Untitled*, 1989. Etching. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.



Leonora Carrington, *Untitled*, 1989. Etching. Collection of the Viktor Wynd Museum. © Estate of Leonora Carrington / ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2016.

