



VILLA MAGDALENA

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Two new galleries are looking for their place in Madrid's art boom.

Ianko López
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The first exhibition of Villa Magdalena in Madrid, newly installed. On the left, the abstract painting **F4S1.8** by Richard Tinkler, and on the right, the figurative work **Apparenze mutevoli senza compromesso** by Cecilia de Nisco. Photograph: James Rajotte.

As a child, Cy Schnabel used to frequent the Opera district and the Austrias quarter of Madrid -precisely where he has just opened his new art gallery. "I used to come here to eat with my parents and my twin brother, Olmo, just next door at Casa Ciriaco," he recalls. A long-established traditional eatery that's almost as close to him as the specialty coffee spot -unmistakably tinged with the aroma of gentrification- where this interview takes place. Across the street stands the Church of San Nicolás de Bari, one of the oldest in Madrid. What's missing, however, are other art galleries in the area, something he sees as a distinguishing feature: "My proposal is different in a city with an already very dynamic gallery scene. I found the space after a year of searching in more typical areas like Carabanchel or Justicia. And it coincided with my mother [the San Sebastián native Olatz López Garmendia] moving to Madrid to live right nearby." This is the second branch of his gallery Villa Magdalena: he opened it in 2020 in a family home in San Sebastián, and it will maintain its program- focused on painting by national

and international artists of different generations- during the summer months.

Madrid has long been an attractive location for the expansion of international galleries -such as Germany's Carlier Gebauer, Switzerland's Mai 36, Colombia's La Cometa, or Cuba's El Apartamento- and is now extending that pull within Spain itself. Bombon Projects, whose first space opened in Barcelona in 2017 and has become one of Spain's most established young galleries -having participated in international fairs such as Art Basel Paris or Liste, and this year also Frieze London- has teamed up with Crisis, from Lima (Peru), to launch the Bombon Crisis project in the Malasaña neighborhood. This area is indeed characterized by a high density of gallery activity: its neighbors include Sabrina Amrani, Prats Nogueras Blanchard (also with a presence in Barcelona), Espacio Valverde, El Apartamento, and The Ryder; and not far away are Travesía Cuatro, Elba Benítez, Ehrhardt Flórez, La Papelería, and La Cometa. "We



VILLA MAGDALENA

really wanted to do something here, but we didn't want to do it alone, so we spoke with different colleagues," says Joana Roda, owner of Bombon alongside her partner, the artist Bernat Daviu, and who co-directs the gallery with Ana Ramírez. "Then I got pregnant and everything went on standby, but three months after giving birth, our colleagues from Crisis called us and said they had found the space, so we went for it. Everything came at once: our daughter, being selected for Frieze, the Madrid venue... Sometimes that's how life works." Their partners at Crisis -Alexandra Morales, Alejandra Monteverde, and Juan Luis Balarezo- had seen it clearly: "Being in Madrid responds to the desire to more closely support our artists, some of whom live in Europe, and also because this is a city that is culturally and emotionally close to us, and is currently experiencing a very interesting moment."

This is something everyone agrees on, without triumphalism. For Cy, it is very important to respect the artistic scene that already exists in the capital and to engage with it: "I have friendships with colleagues here, such as Travesía Cuatro, Ehrhardt Flórez, Belmonte, El Chico, or The Ryder." Bombon Projects shares close relationships with many of them. Joana Roda adds: "We also have artists who have never exhibited in Madrid, so for us the idea of exchange is important—helping the Barcelona scene and the Madrid scene to intermingle. One of the first things we did was speak with the Arte Madrid gallery association, because I'm on the board of the Barcelona association and I strongly believe in collaboration."

Another key factor is ARCO Madrid. Beyond sales, Spain's leading art fair has provided them with visibility, contacts, and professional experience. Cy Schnabel attended this year for the first time with Villa Magdalena, in the Opening section for new galleries -the same section Bombon participated in back in 2019 before moving into the general section, where it is now an essential presence. There, it has presented projects by artists such as Lara Fluxà or Eva Fàbregas, who until recently exhibited at Nave 0 Matadero Madrid and with whom Bombon opens the season at its Barcelona space in September. For Crisis as well, ARCO has been a fundamental step. "Madrid is a fantastic hinge between Europe and Latin America," they say.

The Spanish language also acts as a common denominator. Cy, son of the American painter Julian Schnabel and half-brother of the New York mega-gallerist Vito Schnabel, developed his own personality through his mother tongue: "For a long time, the influence of my father and older brother caused me anxiety, but thanks to the Spanish language I grew up with in San Sebastián and Mexico, I was able to develop my own creative perspective. I'm grateful for that to

Olatz and my amona [grandmother], because I developed a different sensitivity, different values. I've tried to take the best qualities from each culture and mix them together." Meanwhile, Bombon and Crisis grew closer when they both began participating in the Swiss fair Liste and organized a party for Latin galleries. "Speaking the same language felt like being at home," says Joana Roda.



Cy Schnabel portrayed in the same space as his gallery, still under renovation. Photograph: James Rajotte

Bombon Crisis and Villa Magdalena opened their Madrid spaces in the spring. The former with Agnes Essonti (from Bombon) and Raúl Silva (for Crisis), who had already coincided in the Generación 2024 exhibition at La Casa Encendida. Villa Magdalena also brought together a duo: the Italian figurative painter Cecilia de Nisco and the American abstract artist Richard Tinkler. For all of them, opening new spaces in Madrid represents an opportunity to reach new audiences and agents within the sector. As Ana Ramírez from Bombon puts it: "We don't see Madrid as a triumph or the promised land, but as a point from which to reach many others."