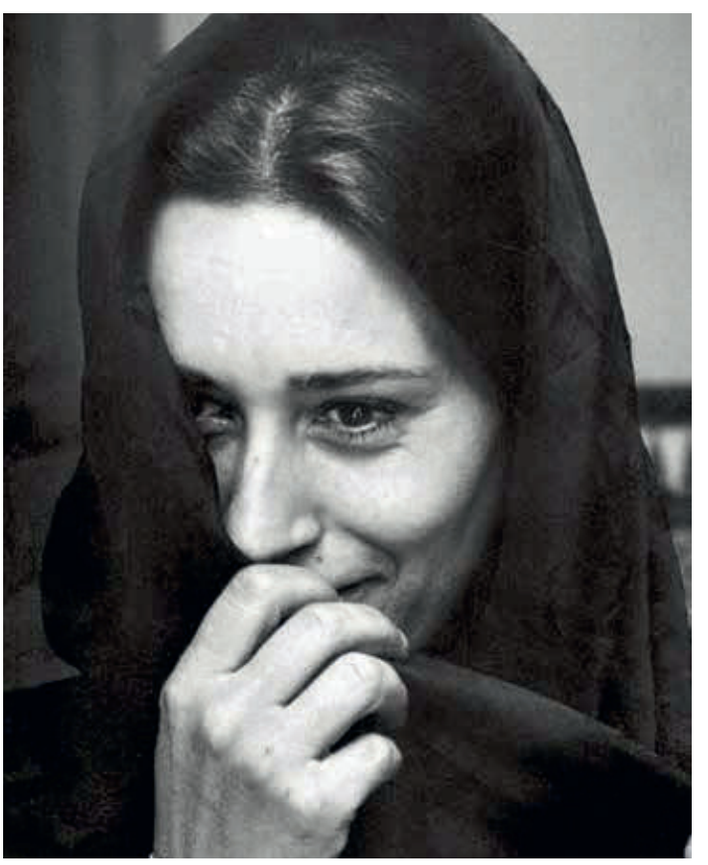

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA MINISTERIO DE CULTURA

THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA MUSEO NACIONAL

With the collaboration of

Comunidad de Madrid

ISABEL QUINTANILLA

LETICIA DE COS MARTÍN

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to remain anonymous.

A Woman Paints Time

Someone has left a room or not yet entered. Isabel Quintanilla's paintings spring from that absence, from that stillness which always displays traces of life, from that time which has ground to a halt or from the light that falls on objects. Her works, still unknown to the public at large, are the subject of the first retrospective that the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza has devoted to a Spanish woman artist in its thirty years of existence.

Many of the pieces shown here have never been exhibited in Spain before, despite the fact that Quintanilla established a bridge of modernity between the twentieth century and the great classics of Spanish painting. For decades her formal precision, her sobriety so close to nature and devoid of rhetoric, and her mastery of color were better understood and appreciated internationally, especially in Germany.

Quintanilla worked hard and had to overcome all the barriers that Franco's dictatorship and an unequal society imposed on women – especially on women artists, including her lifelong colleagues and fellow realists Esperanza Parada, María Moreno and Amalia Avia.

"We've reflected what we are, how we live, what's been closest to us, what we know best," commented Quintanilla in an interview on the occasion of her retrospective at the Centro Cultural Conde Duque in Madrid in 1996. Quite a declaration of creative honesty, this statement is the focus of the unique gaze that underlies this Madrid-born artist's paintings.

It only remains for me to express my gratitude to the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza for this exhibition and for its efforts to lend visibility to women artists, as well as to the public and private lenders who have generously enabled us to enjoy the candid splendor of Isabel Quintanilla's works here in Spain.

Ernest Urtasun
Spanish Minister of Culture

Isabel Quintanilla's work has always been linked to Madrid, not only because she was born and lived here, but also because she was one of the members of the group known as the "Madrid Realists." On this occasion, however, the painter is the sole subject of an exhibition staged by one of the capital's leading institutions, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, in what is the first show that the art gallery has devoted to a Spanish woman artist in its more than thirty years of existence. The choice is extremely appropriate and timely, as Quintanilla is one of the most outstanding representatives of contemporary Spanish realism and a source of pride for the Comunidad de Madrid (Autonomous Community of Madrid).

This magnificent artist gained great recognition in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s and her success was reflected in the large number of works that were acquired by public institutions and collectors in that country. Many of these pieces have remained there ever since and are now returning for the first time to our region, the place where the artist drew inspiration for and produced most of her oeuvre. Indeed, much of what is depicted in these paintings consists of objects and corners of the successive studios and homes that Isabel and her husband Francisco López, also an artist, had in the capital, as well as urban views of Madrid and the region's landscapes.

The Comunidad de Madrid has been collaborating with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza since 2015 on a wide range of projects, including the exhibition devoted to the abovementioned group of Madrid Realists in 2016, to which Quintanilla contributed with great enthusiasm and interest. Sadly, the painter died not long afterwards, though the institution's management had already informed her of its intention to hold this solo exhibition. Isabel Quintanilla would have been highly satisfied with this magnificent show, which we are confident will secure her a rightful place in the history of art as an artist committed to the belief that realism is a direct means of eliciting a full emotional response from the spectator.

We would like to thank the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza for its dedicated and thorough efforts to give exposure to women artists. We are also grateful to Leticia de Cos, the show's curator, for her in-depth research on Isabel Quintanilla, both in Spain and in Germany, which has enabled us to bring back and enjoy her most iconic works.

Isabel Díaz Ayuso
President, Comunidad de Madrid

The *Madrid Realists* exhibition that opened at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in 2016 provided an excellent opportunity for visitors to discover the paintings of Isabel Quintanilla. It also gave Leticia de Cos, the show's technical curator, the chance to meet the artist as well as her husband Francisco López and their son Francesco. This personal contact, coupled with an in-depth study of Quintanilla's work, enabled her to devise the current retrospective.

Up until now Isabel Quintanilla had not received the recognition she deserved as a prominent name on the Spanish art scene of the second half of the 1900s. Beginning in the 1970s, her works were frequently shown in various German cities and acquired by museums and collectors in that country, a fact that prevented her from being better known in Spain. Indeed, half of the pieces on view here have been brought from Germany. The only thing that saddens us is that Isabel, who died in October 2017, has not been able to enjoy this retrospective.

The curator has charted the course of Quintanilla's career and life through the genres and subjects she explored. The artist's still lifes combine classical arrangements with contemporary objects, such as a Duralex glass, a telephone or a sewing machine (her mother's means of providing for her family), which recall a particular period of Spain's past. Quintanilla painted *experienced reality* and much of her oeuvre depicts the spaces she lived in: the bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom, the sewing corner and the artist's studio. Although these interiors are nearly always devoid of figures, the people in her life – her husband and her son – are latently present in them. Everything exudes intimacy: the windows through which light enters from the outside and the doors that take us further inside.

Along the way the show stops to present Isabel Quintanilla's female colleagues and friends, the three women painters who were part of the group of Madrid Realists: Esperanza Parada, Amalia Avia and María Moreno. It then looks at landscape and the city, the horizon of the countryside and urban views before ending with the intermediate spaces – courtyards and gardens – that are so characteristic and such constant features of her body of work. One of the most valuable contributions made by the curator in her essay in the catalogue is her contextualization of Quintanilla in the history of European painting: from Pompeian frescoes to Pieter de Hooch's courtyards and Samuel van Hoogstraten's interiors, Vilhelm Hammershøi's mysterious rooms and Aureliano de Beruete's landscapes.

I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the collectors and museums that have contributed to this exhibition by entrusting us with their works by Quintanilla. The collaboration of the artist's son Francesco López was vital to bringing the project to a successful conclusion. The Comunidad de Madrid has reaffirmed its commitment to exhibition sponsorship with this show. My warmest congratulations to the curator, Leticia de Cos, for her splendid work, and to the whole team at the museum.

Guillermo Solana
Artistic Director, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

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LETICIA DE COS MARTÍN

ISABEL QUINTANILLA: EMOTION MADE PAINTING

Isabel Quintanilla
Washbasin in the Colegio Santa María, 1968

[cat. 49]

AN EARLY DECLARATION OF INTENT

> The truth is that I thought I was there [at art school] to learn to paint and only God knew where I would go from there. [...] I was partial to Monet and Chagall, I liked the Impressionists a lot, but more modern than that...[1]

Isabel Quintanilla Martínez was born in Madrid in the summer of 1938 in the throes of the Spanish Civil War, when the capital was under attack from the Nationalists.[2] She was the firstborn child of a middle-class family with no connections to cultural circles that might have awakened in her an interest in art. Isabel's innate skills surfaced naturally at school and her family did not hesitate to hone them by enrolling her for classes at artists' private studios until she passed the entrance exam for the school of the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando [San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts] when she was barely fifteen.

Quintanilla, by nature strong-willed from an early age, very soon chose to be a realist. It was not the easiest option in 1950s Spain, where 'modern' meant Art Informel, represented by Manolo Millares (1926–1972), Antonio Saura (1930–1998), Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012) and Lucio Muñoz (1929–1998), among others. Isabel had known Muñoz since they crossed paths at the Casón del Buen Retiro when copying reproductions of artworks to prepare for the art school entrance exam. It would appear that Isabel at no point was tempted by abstraction. The young artist unhesitatingly sifted out what did not interest her from what did. We know that during those formative years all the members of the group later known as the 'Madrid Realists' were in contact with other colleagues whose styles were very different from their own. Isabel, for example, followed with interest the work of Eusebio Sempere (1923–1985), which is hardly surprising given her admiration for Paul Klee (1879–1940): "He seemed to us to be wonderful and a very great painter [...], but that didn't mean that you had to do the same things as he."[3] She respected the fact that some of her colleagues were keen on Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and others chose the path of abstraction, but she remained faithful to her own preference for realism within the Spanish tradition. "We knew who [Gustave] Courbet was. [...] But the truth is that for us, or at least for me, the Spanish painters were more important. A [José Gutiérrez] Solana was much more important because it portrayed something that I felt, that had more to do with me, that I understood and knew how to look at."[4] At the time access to information on what the international avant-gardes were doing was generally limited: few artists could afford to travel out of the country to find out for themselves what was going on abroad. Quintanilla claimed never to have felt culturally isolated during that period, though it is likely that her perception was distorted by the passage of time.[5]

The Table Lamp, a painting executed in 1956 [cat. 2], is Isabel's oldest surviving piece. This small canvas attests to the path she had already chosen to follow: objects such as those portrayed here are repeated in dozens of her compositions. Still life is a genre traditionally associated more with small objects than with grand causes, and it is precisely this lowlier status that makes it so versatile and credible. In *The Table Lamp* Quintanilla created a still-life scene from what she had at home.

cat. 2

Isabel Quintanilla
The Table Lamp, 1956

fig. 1

Willem Claesz. Heda
Still Life with a Silver Tazza, a Roemer and Oysters, 1632
Oil on panel, 52 × 73 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

It consists of a table with cloves of garlic, a glass, bay leaves, a lemon and an open pocket watch. The last two items lead us to suspect that during one of her visits to the Museo del Prado Quintanilla may have viewed, for example, Willem Claesz. Heda's exquisite *Still Life with a Silver Tazza, a Roemer and Oysters* [fig. 1], where we also find a clock beside a half-peeled lemon. Watches were costly and highly prized items, as were the virtues of punctuality and temperance in the Protestant ethic of Heda's country of birth, the Netherlands. It has not been possible to confirm whether the watch depicted in *The Table Lamp* belonged to Isabel's father – the father who had died prematurely but continued to be spoken of often at home[6] – though the young artist probably knew that the objects represented in Dutch still-life pictures were carefully chosen to speak of things that were more significant than they seemed. There is every indication that the glass (here used as a table lamp) is the first of the many, splendid glasses that Isabel drew and painted over the course of her lifetime. The manner in which the objects are arranged in this small picture likewise varied very little in subsequent works: a frontal, slightly raised viewpoint close to the chosen motif and a neutral ground that frames the composition.

If we look for references closer in time to Quintanilla, we find *Peaches and Roses*, a small still life painted that same year by her friend and colleague Antonio López (b. 1936) [fig. 2]. There are several similarities: the brownish palette, the close viewpoint, the neutral ground and the same family of objects, all illuminated by light from an imprecise source that enters from the right. The mutual influence between these two artists would be frequent and evident in their works.

fig. 2

Antonio López
Peaches and Roses, 1956
Oil on canvas, 55 × 75 cm
Private collection, Madrid

The other early painting that still survives is *Still Life in front of the Window*, executed in 1959 [cat. 3], during her last year at art school. Objects displayed in front of a window are another recurring theme in Quintanilla's works and a common subject of the Madrid Realists. This picture shows part of an interior devoid of human figures (another shared aspect), though there are two clues that help us guess who

cat. 3

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life in front of the Window, 1959
[detail]

the absent person is. One is the white coat lying on the chair, and the other, almost in the center of the composition, is the letter on the table addressed to 'Isabel Quintanilla, Madrid, 1959'. Considering that art students typically wore white coats, could this be interpreted as a gesture of self-assertion of the choice of what was soon to become her profession? Isabel was only twenty-one at the time. The chair with the coat draped over it is a still life within a still life. Her husband, sculptor Francisco López (1932–2017), must have had this painting in mind (and physically close by) when he made the small drawing entitled *Coat on the Chair* (1960), and his brother Julio López (1930–2018) probably did too for his own sculpture *Chair with Raincoat* (1964). The support for this painting is a fairly coarse burlap (out of necessity, as finer canvases were in short supply) and parts of the weave have been purposely left visible. Another device characteristic of the period is the deliberate charring of a few areas of the canvas, which was common practice in the works produced by Lucio Muñoz and Antonio López around that time. The painter kept *Still Life in front of the Window* for herself. It must have had a special significance for her, as it is depicted in at least two other works. We will reveal which ones in due course – if readers have not already discovered this for themselves.

Italy

It had been just over a year since Quintanilla completed her studies at San Fernando when she and Francisco López moved to Rome. Francisco had won a four-year scholarship at the Academia de Bellas Artes de España [Spanish Academy of Fine Arts] in the city. "We've still got a few works from the Roman period, particularly a self-portrait in pencil [cat. 1] that inspires inviolable feelings of admiration, fondness and nostalgia in me as it's not just a self-portrait but also a faithful description of those shared years at the Academy."[7]

Quintanilla's time in Rome was one of great happiness alongside her husband, who was not only a role model but constantly encouraged her to work and further her training. Francesco, their only son, was born in this period. Professionally speaking, the Italian sojourn was a period of learning and total freedom to work unhampered by conditioning factors. The young Isabel explored the city and its museums and monuments and travelled around the south of Italy. "What I do believe has sometimes been reflected in my painting, in those gardens of Rome, is Pompeian painting," she stated.[8] These impressions of Pompeian frescoes and ancient Roman paintings are among the influences that can be traced most clearly in her later works, such as the *Bowl of Fruit* painted in 1966 [cat. 9], by which time she was back in Spain. Would these grapes not, like Zeuxis's, have deceived a bird or two?

Before arriving in Italy, Quintanilla had already explored the cityscape genre. In Madrid she had made a few paintings (currently unlocated, of which only photographs survive) of the new outlying districts. Her Roman views are based on a scheme that remained unchanged in subsequent works: a high viewpoint and a horizon line halfway up the canvas, giving rise to sweeping panoramas such as *Nocturne in Rome* [cat. 5]. This painting is unusual in that in one of the corners it includes a woman holding a baby who appear unrelated to the view of the city behind them. The picture is a tribute to her son, whom the couple had left in Madrid, where he was born, until they returned to Spain permanently. That year, 1964, Antonio López painted *Atocha*, a city view with a copulating couple in the

lower part who, like the figures in Quintanilla's work, appear out of place in the scene. Works like these have led these artists to be associated with magical realism. In fact, the first major group exhibition devoted to Quintanilla and her realist colleagues in Germany was entitled *Magischer Realismus in Spanien heute* [Magical realism in Spain today]. Franz Roh coined the term magical realism in 1925 to refer to the New Objectivity movement and the challenges faced by European painting in its return to realism after an intense period of expressionism. Both Isabel and Antonio experimented with the juxtaposition of real and unreal – a feature in common with Surrealism – in their works of the late 1950s and early 1960s. When asked about this, Quintanilla admitted that there could indeed be a connection: "Our painting [...] can almost seem like a dream. [...] When you depict an object, you always give it a different character from reality."[9]

PAINTINGS OF FAMILIAR OBJECTS

The time Quintanilla spent in Italy had led her to adopt a dark palette, coarse supports, flat light and a transcendent reality. Back in Spain, however, she produced paintings characterized by vibrant colors and a light that molded forms, but above all by their prodigious execution. The painter stressed that this apparent facility of technique came only after a great deal of work, something that she experienced as a constant struggle to overcome the challenges posed by painting every day: "You need to master technique to express what you want. It's essential to have technique but not let it stifle you."[10] Her command was such that we lose sight of the brushstrokes across the entire surface of her pictures. This technical mastery was very time consuming, though she accepted this in a disciplined manner, for patience and painstaking work are inherent in all forms of realism.

"I paint everything that I see, or rather, that I know."[11] As we suspected, Quintanilla painted what was close at hand. Everything was powerfully subjective for her – everyday objects that were shared, inherited, in short, loved. Therefore, the reality she captured was always autobiographical; however, this did not prevent it from being a reality that is tremendously appealing to any spectator, as it has something with which we all identify. For emotion resides in simple, familiar and everyday things. Viewing her paintings, we relive our own experiences. For Isabel this was something that distanced her from American hyperrealism, a movement with which the painting of the Madrid Realists is often associated, but from which they, especially Quintanilla and Antonio, preferred to dissociate themselves. "We had nothing to do with them [...], we were culturally different countries. [...] They copy from a photograph, they even enlarge it and then color it. Though, ultimately, they are telling you something about reality, and that's interesting, but not the way they do it."[12] Why, then, did they not identify with hyperrealism? As Isabel stated, one of the main differences between them resided in the process: the photorealist painters used photographs that after being developed were transferred to canvas by means of different, painstaking systems. Nor did the Spanish realists adopt those exaggerated closeups that sometimes stun viewers. In their opinion, hyperrealist works lacked an emotional and narrative charge and prioritized accuracy in representation. These arguments could be refuted by citing artists such as Audrey Flack (b. 1931), the most important female representative of the first generation of photorealists, who depicted objects to which she had a strong personal attachment, arousing emotions and nostalgia for a bygone era.

When asked about his dependence on photography in connection with the *Hyperréalistes américains/Réalistes européens* [American hyperrealists/European realists] exhibition organized by the Centre national d'art contemporain in Paris in 1974, Richard Estes (b. 1932), one of the foremost practitioners of hyperrealism, replied: "I don't try to reproduce photography, I use photography to make a painting. [...] I could not make the paintings I make without photography. The advantage of photography is that you can stop things: they only exist for a second. You could not do that if you position yourself in the street."[13] Could we imagine Antonio López painting his views of the Gran Vía without being right there in the street?

These diverse approaches to reality were the subject of several exhibitions held all over Europe in the 1970s, in which Quintanilla and her colleagues were invited to take part. For example, in 1973 the Städtische Kunsthalle in Recklinghausen opened an ambitious show entitled *Mit Kamera, Pinsel und Spritzpistole. Realistische Kunst in unserer Zeit* [With camera, paintbrush and spray can: realist art in our time] featuring works by photorealists, hyperrealists and realists in order to classify each. The title of the main essay in the catalogue was something of a declaration of intent: *Naturalismus, Realismus, Fotorealismus: Versuch einer Begriffsklärung* [Naturalism, realism, photorealism: an attempt to clarify concepts]. The Spaniards also had a section of their own in the Paris show that later travelled to other European capitals. Isabel kept the catalogues of each of these exhibitions in her studio.

Quintanilla was reluctant to base her work on photographs because, as she used to say, she needed the stimulation of the real object and the different nuances it offered her in each session. But this practice was not common to the whole group. Amalia Avia (1930–2011), Isabel's colleague and friend, usually worked from photographs she had taken herself, and Francisco and Julio López also turned to photographic reproduction for certain projects. Isabel only acknowledged having used photography for commissioned portraits if the subject could not attend continuous sittings.

Even if they know this – that the artist only painted from life – it is common for viewers of her paintings to comment that they "look like photographs." And indeed, Quintanilla's gaze was undoubtedly photographic: "I can only show a reality. [...] What is decisive here is the situations, the viewpoints, the light, the distances; what is predominant here is the moment, the motifs and the eye, that is, the gaze upon what is happening, but nothing else!"[14] Isabel's obsession was to capture the trace left by light when it falls on objects. Is that not photography?

The Duralex Glass: A Nod to Pop Art?

Some of the everyday objects Quintanilla most enjoyed painting were the glasses that she and her family used daily. They were manufactured by Duralex, a French multinational whose products exemplified modern life in the 1960s and were very popular with Spain's incipient consumer society. "We were painting a reality that was that of Spain at the time, and perhaps they [the authorities] didn't want to give it publicity. We might not have been convenient or 'exportable'. We painted what we had. [...] Though perhaps Duralex wasn't worthy of being shown abroad or broke with the traditional refinement of still life."[15] That is how Isabel defended her work

against the lack of attention it received from the authorities of the time who, in their bid to convey a more modern image of the country, gave preference to the practitioners of Art Informel when choosing the artists who would represent Spain at the biennials and other international events. These setbacks did not deter her from her principles: "I've never thought about whether what I painted was modest or not. It was my reality."[16]

Had Quintanilla not dated her works, not only the Duralex glassware would help us situate them in time: so would other products such as the Ajax cleaning powder [cat. 20], the jar of Vicks VapoRub ointment [cat. 22], the triangular bottle of La Española oil [cat. 34], the Helios jam [cat. 40] and star home appliances of the period such as the food processor in *House Corner* (*Rabbit*) [cat. 26]. Isabel was not oblivious to the aims of the media and advertising: to convert brands into markers of a particular time and place. We know that television and fashion magazines standardized tastes, causing homes to be filled with the same drinks, foodstuffs, and cleaning and beauty products, and as far as culture was concerned with the same idols, songs and so on. Pop Art had emerged in the late 1950s in the United Kingdom and in the early 1960s in the United States, making the new culture of mass consumption and the *American way of life* the object of its activity. Isabel had seen Pop Art in the catalogues her art dealers sent her from time to time. Judging by some of her works, such as *Cutlery* [cat. 20], we might regard Quintanilla as a chronicler of the *Spanish way of life* and the tub of Ajax cleaning powder, so popular in the country, as the equivalent of the bold *Brillo Box (Soap Pads)* (1964) painted by Andy Warhol (1928–1987).

Where were all these objects located? The natural setting for still life is a table, but Quintanilla also made use of window ledges (one of her favorite backdrops, most likely because they are close to the source of natural light), the kitchen counter and even the refrigerator.[17]

Let us return to her drinking glasses. We find more than fifty of them (a dozen are featured in this retrospective) in her output. They are generally the single subject of a small picture. The light caresses and shines through them in such a way that they no longer appear as inert objects. Quintanilla depicted them masterfully, be it in drawings or in paintings, as attested by the renditions in *Glass on Top of the Fridge* [cat. 15] and *Pansies on Top of the Fridge* [cat. 16]. The motif is the same: the location of the vase and the angle of view match almost down to the last millimeter and in both the natural light extends the shadows beyond the edge of the composition, though in the oil painting the flowers add a touch of color. However, in a version produced slightly later, *White Carnation* [cat. 18], the glass is still positioned in the center but the light is artificial and comes from a greater height, shortening the shadow cast by the object. With a reduced palette of whites, grays and ochers, Isabel created a luminous work that attests to her skill at capturing light.

It is highly likely that while strolling around the galleries of Spanish masters in the Prado, Isabel stopped in front of the still lifes by Luis Meléndez (1716–1780) to gaze at his virtuosic *Still Life with Box of Jelly, Bread, Salver with Glass and Cooler* [fig. 3]. Like Meléndez, Isabel took delight in contrasting the opacity and coldness of the silver with the reflective and transparent qualities of the glass, as in *Still Life with Lilies* [cat. 38] or *Night* [cat. 59].

Viewing all these glasses painted by Quintanilla over the decades, we could even trace the evolution of Duralex's designs throughout the firm's history. The painter captured the passage of time, which is heightened by the inclusion of timepieces beside some of these glasses in the manner of a small *vanitas* [cat. 8].

fig. 3

Luis Meléndez
Still Life with Box of Jelly, Bread, Salver with Glass and Cooler, 1770
Oil on canvas, 49.5 × 37 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

cat. 38

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Lilies, 1995
[detail]

cat. 59

Isabel Quintanilla
Night, 1995
[detail]

Heterodox Still Lifes

> Good, a pair of plastic sandals; a handkerchief; a blue-striped towel; a red belt. [...] A comb; an aluminium lunchbox; a fork; a napkin; a small mirror; a tin of sun cream.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

In keeping with the classical tradition, fruits and vegetables are the main subjects of Quintanilla's arrays of still life: pomegranates, grapes, quinces, garlic and cauliflowers, as well as foods that are less decorative but very typical of Spanish cuisine, such as a skinned rabbit, a raw chop and even a ham. This repertoire is combined with very disparate objects such as a handbag, a pair of sandals, a purse, a packet of cigarettes, a razor blade and nail polish. The decisions she took as to which objects to portray give meaning to Isabel's most frequently uttered statement about doing something new using traditional language. The playwright Francisco Nieva said that "they could not have been painted 'before', meaning that her faithfulness to the model spares her from seeming a copy of anything. [...] She is radically serious and contemporary."[18] Quintanilla painted the present, not the past or the future, as they cannot be seen, or touched, or smelled. Assembling some of her most personal belongings, she converted still life into self-portraits. In her compositions we do not see the painter but we discover a lot about her tastes and personality. This happens, for example, when we stop to examine *Bathroom* [cat. 22]: it speaks of a coquettish woman who is the mother of a small child and dons a white coat at some point. Could she be an artist?

In another of her masterpieces, *The Blue Table* [cat. 37], we find a pair of gloves and some keys alongside objects traditionally found in still-life scenes: a small porcelain jug, a plate of grapes and a glass of wine. One of the international Old Masters whom Quintanilla most admired was Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). In one of the

fig. 4

Vincent van Gogh
Still Life of Oranges and Lemons with Blue Gloves, 1889
Oil on canvas, 48 × 62 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

cat. 37

Isabel Quintanilla
The Blue Table, 1993

fig. 5

Vincent van Gogh
Shoes, 1887
Oil on cadboard,
32.7 × 40.8 cm
Van Gogh Museum,
Amsterdam (Vincent
van Gogh Foundation)

cat. 41

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Shoes, 1994

Dutch artist's works, *Still Life of Oranges and Lemons with Blue Gloves* [fig. 4], we see a pair of blue gloves against a white background, exactly the opposite to the Spanish painter's light-colored gloves on a blue tablecloth. In one of his letters to his brother Theo, Van Gogh referred to the "chic" appearance this accessory lent his painting and expressed the need to produce appealing works for the market.[19] Another item of clothing that drew both artists' attention were shoes. Van Gogh had been a pioneer in incorporating them as a motif [fig. 5]; he purchased used footwear because he was interested in things that "bore the scars of life."[20] In the pastel painting *Still Life with Shoes* [cat. 41] Quintanilla paints her sandals beside a clothes peg, a spoon, a hammer, a pencil sharpener and a spatula. It is difficult to interpret this delightful assortment of objects, though why not consider it another self-portrait that defines her through this group of utensils as a woman concerned with her appearance, a painter, a craftswoman and a housewife?

Other compositions such as *Still Life with Newspaper* [cat. 40] may seem more coherent at first sight, for everything we see in them is related to some extent. Here we find a light-filled table set for breakfast with fruit, jam, a boiled egg, the day's press – but wait, what are the long-bladed scissors doing there?

Painter and Dressmaker

"When my mother wasn't painting, she'd be sewing. She was an amazing needleworker. Whenever she had a bit of free time, she would mend garments. She was a meticulously tidy worker. She inherited all this from her mother, María, who was a dressmaker and altered upper-class ladies' dresses. As a child, Maribel [Isabel] would go with her."[21] These statements made by the artist's son are revealing, for sewing and the related utensils appear all over the place in many of her works [fig. 6]: a sewing machine, scissors, thimbles, an ironing board. "When my father died [...] my mother and one of my aunts took up sewing. [...] I've inherited my mother's skill and character. She was very determined, just like me. She accomplished everything she set out to do. She was very good with her hands. She sewed very well and had a very good clientele. That's how she provided for the family."[22] Was Isabel thinking about herself as a painter when she spoke of her mother as a skilled and perfectionist dressmaker? Quintanilla's admiration for her mother was absolute and expressed in her spoken statements, but above all in another of her masterpieces, *Tribute to my Mother* [cat. 23] – a mother we do not see in this or any other work but whom the artist constantly had in mind. For viewers the sewing machine probably conjures up memories of a time when many Spanish homes had a Singer or an Alfa, because it was customary for clothes to be made or at least mended at home.

Being able to sew was traditionally a characteristic virtue of women, whose job it was to run the home in an orderly manner. It was seen as a beneficial activity in that it saved money for the domestic economy and was also a morally healthy pastime. Whereas being forced to learn to sew was 'torture' for many women, for others it was a way of expressing their creativity. This dualism is also found in female artists' own experiences. We have seen that Isabel defended the trade and practiced it with pride, whereas a classmate of hers, Spanish-based German artist Ana Peters (1932–2012), used it to denounce the differences between men

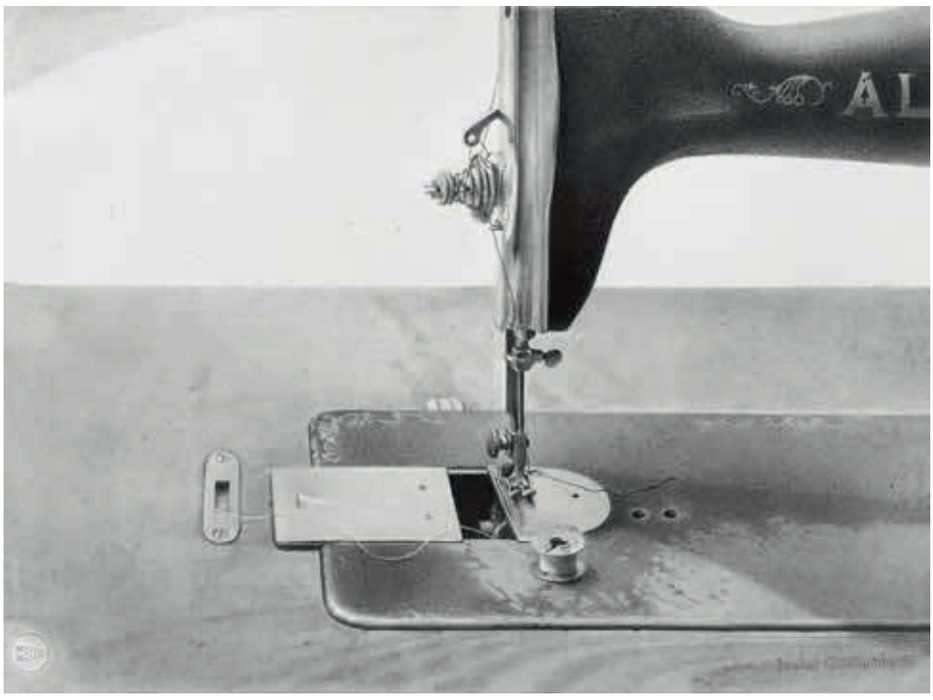


fig. 6

Isabel Quintanilla
Sewing Machine, 1970
Pencil on paper, 22.3 × 29.2 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Melvin N. Blake (1927–1999) and Frank M. Purnell (1930–1994), New York, gift of the Estate of Melvin Blake, 22 January 2003

and women. An example is her ironic design for June in the 1967 calendar published by Estampa Popular.[23] Entitled *Assure Your Future with a Correspondence Course in Dressmaking* [fig. 7], it shows a modern woman at the start of a long path, weighing up the benefits of learning to sew to make the journey easier.

By a coincidence, the Galería Edurne had staged Isabel's and Ana's first monographic exhibitions in 1966, one immediately after the other. Quintanilla's show simply bore her name, while Peters's was entitled *Imágenes de la mujer en la sociedad de consumo* [Images of women in the consumer society]. The German painter is considered one of the first artists to have held a feminist exhibition in Spain.

Other women realist painters displayed the same fondness as Quintanilla for linking painting and sewing. In *Self-Portrait in Salzburg* (1960) the Toledo-born Amalia Avia depicted herself sewing beside a window, a motif borrowed from a photograph her husband took of her during a trip to Central Europe. Several other canvases by Avia are focused on dressmakers' main piece of equipment, the sewing machine: *Sewing Machine* (1980), *Sewing Machine Store* (1987) and *The Sewing Machine Corner* (1991), and one also appears in *The Dining Room* [cat. 72]. María López, daughter of María Moreno (1933–2020), explains that her mother was also a superb seamstress, having inherited this skill from her grandmother, who had been a professional dressmaker. María recalls how, when they were children, she and her sister Carmen practiced both painting and sewing in their free time. Esperanza and Marcela, Esperanza Parada's (1928–2011) daughters, make very similar statements. They remember how their mother used any free moment to sew and make garments and tapestries in which she gave free rein to her creativity, weaving her own designs.

fig. 7

Ana Peters
Juny, Estampa Popular calendar, 1967
Silkscreen print on cardboard, 35 × 24.5 cm
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

fig. 8

Francisco López
Isabel sewing, 1973
Pencil on paper,
48 × 35 cm
Private collection

Francisco López often portrayed his wife absorbed in this pastime, as in the exquisite drawing *Isabel sewing* [fig. 8] showing her engrossed in her work.

Tribute to my Mother [cat. 23] and *The Sewing Room* [cat. 24] are exercises in nocturnes, like many of Isabel's paintings. In both cases the choice of a nighttime setting is related to her personal memories of seeing her mother stay up until late to finish her jobs on time. In *The Sewing Room*, large circular projections on the wall, ceiling and cupboard, an effect of the lit floor lamp, heighten the drama of the scene. These very intimate settings recall works by German Romantic painter Georg Friedrich Kersting (1785–1847). In Kersting's scenes of domestic interiors the shadows cast by artificial light create an atmosphere of semidarkness that arouses typically Romantic feelings in viewers, such as intense nostalgia, the experience of solitude and a yearning for the loved one. For example, in *Young Woman sewing by Lamplight* [fig. 9], Kersting gives us a sneak peek of a young woman engrossed in her sewing beneath the bright light of an oil lamp, completely oblivious to our gaze.

A similar atmosphere, steeped in intense drama, is found in Quintanilla's *The Telephone* [cat. 42]. Let us interpret this painting as if it were a film still. The telephone immediately fires our imagination and prompts us to fantasize:

cat. 24

Isabel Quintanilla
The Sewing Room,
1974

fig. 9

Georg Friedrich Kersting
Young Woman sewing by Lamplight, 1823
Oil on canvas,
40.3 × 34.2 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung,
Neue Pinakothek,
Munich

Who has called? What was the call about that caused the recipient to hurry out of the room after taking note of something and forget to switch off the light? The sharp, powerful light of the adjustable lamp is perfect for achieving this effect. "Solitude moves me: that telephone there, a place usually filled with hustle and bustle, and suddenly something seems to have become speechless, suspended in the air, and leaves you breathless. That moves me so much that I want to try and paint it."[24] *The Telephone* is the work that ends this section and gives way to the next. Although it is a still life full of objects that grab our attention as they are recognizable (what Spanish family has never had one of those Heraldo model desk phones in their home?), here the artist has broadened the angle of vision to show us a corner of her studio.

cat. 42

Isabel Quintanilla
The Telephone, 1996

> Through an open window, they could see a woman in the kitchen, and through another identical window on the other side of the door leading to the passageway, a gleaming chrome bedstead and a yellow bedspread.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

"I paint my studio because that's what I've got here, I see it every day and I like painting it."[25] Inarguably, whatever the genre, Quintanilla's painting is always autobiographical. Is there anything more intimate than one's own bedroom? Isabel opened the door of hers to us: the newly made bed, the chest of drawers, the perfume, the lamp. The objects are all present but there is no trace of the people who inhabit this space. According to art historian Charo Crego,[26] the tradition of paintings lacking human presence had been established by Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–1678) in *The Slippers* [fig. 10]. This work was not well received in its day; indeed, it is known from technical studies of the canvas that the artist subsequently painted in a dog and even a girl to avoid that intolerable solitude.

If we go forward in time in art history, Quintanilla can be seen to have practiced a Spanish-style interpretation of *Zimmerbild*, a genre of painstakingly depicted domestic or palace interiors devoid of human presence. It emerged in Germany in the late 1700s and spread across Europe owing to its success with the bourgeois public. It reached its height of popularity in Germany during what was known as the Biedermeier period – a style characterized by realistic execution and the choice of a subject matter that showed the pleasant and elegant side of bourgeois life. Isabel does something similar with her homes and studios. Many painters practiced this genre, among them Eduard Gaertner (1801–1877), an artist Isabel followed [fig. 11].

fig. 10

Attributed to Samuel van Hoogstraten
The Slippers, 1650/75
Oil on canvas,
103 × 70 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris

cat. 43

Isabel Quintanilla
Bedroom, 1966

fig. 11

Eduard Gaertner
Bathroom in the Royal Apartments, 1849
Watercolor on paper, 25.6 × 30.1 cm
Hessische Hausstiftung Schlossmuseum, Kronberg im Taunus

cat. 53

Isabel Quintanilla
Grand Interior, 1974

fig. 12

Isabel Quintanilla painting *Grand Interior*, 1973. Photograph by Stefan Moses

The absence of people in Quintanilla's paintings does not mean that we cannot sense who inhabits these spaces. It is as if the artist were inviting us to play a game: to guess who is going to knock on the door, who might appear in any of those corridors or who has been listening to the transistor we see on the window ledge. In the delightful drawing *Interior at Night (Corner of the Studio)* [cat. 45] the artist tells us that the space has an owner: her husband, the sculptor. She does so through the sacks of plaster of Paris powder and the bas-reliefs leaning against the wall, just as the baby bouncer chair in the background puts her son Francesco in the picture.

Quintanilla captures a precise moment of reality and lets the spectator fill it in with the story it suggests to them. Artist Juan Muñoz (1953–2001) praised the narrative power of drawings of rooms: "An ordinary room is very interesting: I find the ordinary highly suggestive; you can create stories from an extremely ordinary situation. Something can happen in any ordinary situation."[27]

Washbasin in the Colegio Santa María [cat. 49] is a totally empty space, yet something tells us that it has witnessed a constant stream of pupils and teachers going to wash their paintbrushes as they comment on what happened in class. But let us continue with the game. In *The Door* [cat. 55] we see traces of dirt beside the lock and bolt (that protects the intimacy of the person who lives there) which someone must have opened and closed repeatedly to leave such a visible trace. Let us examine it more closely: a door and a toilet. This motif was new to her repertoire: although she had shown us her bathroom in a drawing of 1972 [fig. 13], the toilet was concealed behind the washing machine. No doubt Isabel began exploring this area after seeing the bathrooms Antonio López had been depicting since the late 1960s [fig. 14].

cat. 55

Isabel Quintanilla
The Door, 1974

fig. 13

Isabel Quintanilla
Bathroom, 1972
Pencil on paper,
56.5 × 40 cm
Unlocated

It is in these bold choices that her mantra is again evident: doing something new using traditional language. As we have seen, of the male colleagues in her group, Antonio and Francisco were her role models. They often discussed work and the challenges posed by painting.

In *The Door*, besides the open bathroom door we see a portion of another that is closed: it is the entrance to the studio on Calle Primera. Psychiatrist Anita Eckstaedt analyzed this work and considered it the expression of the trauma that Quintanilla experienced due to her father's untimely death in one of Franco's concentration camps: "When, on gazing at a door, one thinks of comings and goings, looking at a closed door may bring to mind the idea that somebody should be arriving. [...] The paradox of the two doors is a device for enduring inner tension and, accordingly, also pain, the pain of an uncertain wait with neither a beginning nor an end. This pain has not yet given way to mourning."[28] We have no way of knowing whether or not there is any basis for this interpretation.

fig. 14

Antonio López
Bathroom, 1966
Oil on panel,
228 × 129 cm
Private collection

Mapping the Home

> The light from the kitchen had spread out into the garden from the lit kitchen window. It melted into the diffuse glow of evening.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

Quintanilla had only to move her easel a few meters across the room for a new motif to emerge. If we were to compile all her paintings of the interiors of her homes and studios we would be able to reconstruct in detail the layout and decoration of each of the rooms, even the family's progressive refurbishments of these spaces where life and work were intermingled. Once again, this evocative journey would be full of clues as to who had been there and what they had been doing.

It is common to find references to the paintings of Adolph Menzel (1815–1905) in texts about Quintanilla; in particular, her works are compared to the so-called 'private paintings' that were produced by Menzel early on in his career but, on his own wishes, remained in his studio until after his death. Isabel's son states that his mother assembled all the catalogues and articles she could find about this German master. "It's true that my painting may have something in common with that of Menzel," she said. "He did interiors too, he also painted his bedroom and his home, his environment. He painted ordinary things."[29] Specifically, it is common to find reproductions of the German's enigmatic interior *The Balcony Room* [fig. 15] in publications on Quintanilla. Like her, Menzel was a painter obsessed with detail, both in his larger scenes of contemporary history and in these smaller oil paintings produced for his private enjoyment. In *The Balcony Room* the spectator's gaze is drawn to the curtains billowing in the gust of wind that enters through the window.

fig. 15

Adolph Menzel
The Balcony Room, 1845
Oil on cardboard,
58 × 47 cm
Alte Nationalgalerie,
Berlin

fig. 16

Isabel Quintanilla
The Lamp, 1977
Oil on canvas,
150 × 122 cm
Private collection

But note the flaking on the background wall, which Menzel had no qualms about highlighting, lending the apparently idyllic room an air of neglect and imperfection. There may be a similar intent in Isabel's *The Lamp* [fig. 16], as to the right of the window and on the ceiling she depicts with singular precision what appear to be plastered areas. In Quintanilla's picture the net curtains are decorated with floral embroidery similar to that of Menzel's curtains, which are hung using the same system of rings. In contrast to the German artist's painting, in the Spaniard's everything is much colder and more static.

fig. 17

Vilhelm Hammershøi
Interior in Strandgade, Sunlight on the Floor, 1901
Oil on canvas,
46.5 × 52 cm
Staten Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

fig. 18

Still from Woody Allen's film *Interiors*, 1978

Let us now examine another Nordic artist known as the painter of silence and light. Like Quintanilla, Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864–1916) focused on painting the interiors of his Copenhagen home. However, unlike her, he sometimes included a figure viewed from behind, his wife Ida [fig. 17]. Hammershøi used to move his easel around the house in search of fresh inspiration. Other times he remained in the same place and the variations stem simply from the differences in the light at various points in the day. Despite capturing this changing light, the Danish painter used a reduced palette of whites, ochre, grays and blacks.[30] All these scenes, steeped in silence and stillness, provoke after a while an opposite effect to the warm, inviting interiors painted by his Dutch neighbors, of whom Hammershøi was nonetheless an heir. Despite representing tidy, harmonious interiors, his paintings are cold, unsettling and somewhat claustrophobic. And this is precisely what makes him different from Quintanilla: whereas the Dane's works prompt us to reflect on certain moral values and express a certain criticism of the society of the time, hers seek to fire the spectator's imagination or trigger a memory. Woody Allen recreated Hammershøi's rooms in the sets of *Interiors* [fig. 18], his most melodramatic film that paid a personal tribute to Ingmar Bergman, whom he idolized.

Like Hammershøi, Quintanilla used changing light to convert the same motif into a different painting. This can be seen in *Dusk in the Studio* [cat. 57] and *Nocturne* [cat. 58]: they show the same window nearly fifteen years apart (the panes and the radiator have been modernized), but the effect of the light changes everything. In daytime light the interior is in semidarkness, but when night falls the indoor space is revealed to us. The artist spoke of this as follows: "The theme or anecdote, as an isolated element, by itself, is not sufficiently exciting or suggestive to interest me. I need to shroud it in the mystery that light gives things, and I might often work on the same themes several times, depending on the moment and time in which they are immersed. Clean, bright and luminous colors with the diaphanous morning light, hues that are tranquil at the warm, golden hour of dusk and mysteriously cold when bathed in steely nocturnal light."[31] Artificial light, as we saw when discussing Kersting's oeuvre, heightens the sensation of intimacy and is a perfect ally for achieving the artist's desired aims. That is why in 1995 she returned to the same corner of the home to paint *Night* [cat. 59], in which the focus is now on the table. However, it is not just any table: it is the workbench of her father-in-law, who was a silversmith. And in it there is a new invitation to play a game: Isabel has painted the drawer open to reveal the tools inside. She also dabbled in silversmithing herself when she was not painting or sewing and had a soft spot for that table. She drew and painted it for thirty years. But *Night* is not simply a tribute to her father-in-law: we also find a thimble (her mother is present again) beside the flowers in water and a clock – once again, a signal to viewers that life is short.

Night brings us an apparition: Francisco López in the studio [cat. 61]. The sculptor is engrossed in writing (Quintanilla made the most of the long periods her husband spent working on his doctoral thesis). Almost as if he were another of her possessions, he blends in with this interior in which many of the elements seen earlier can be identified, such as the canvas hanging behind Francisco, *Still Life in front of the Window* [cat. 3], Isabel's first large painting. This device of a painting within a painting dates back a long way in art history. Amalia Avia was fond of this practice. In *My House* [fig. 19] she paints what is hanging on the

fig. 19

Amalia Avia
My House, 1976
Oil on panel, 58.5 × 82 cm
Librería Antonio Machado
Collection

cat. 61

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior. Paco writing,
1995

walls, works by Spanish contemporary artists close to Avia and her husband Lucio Muñoz: *The Visit* (1969) from Equipo Crónica's *Guernica* series, a drawing by Julio González (1876–1942) and oil paintings by Salvador Victoria (1928–1994) and Manolo Millares.

This section ends with another telephone, the one silently hanging on the wall in *The Red Door* [fig. 20]. Like the transistors and televisions we have seen in the rooms of the dwelling, it indicates that its inhabitants were not completely self-engrossed and *were* in contact with the outside world. In *The Red Door*, Quintanilla at last fully opened the main door of the studio to go into the outside world. Not that she takes us very far: in the background we see the fence surrounding the plot and a large pine tree across the street that blocks our view, but at least we are outdoors. In their indoor scenes Dutch artists ushered in the tradition of painting a figure seen from behind in the center of the composition, usually a woman, gazing outside through an open window. The subject became very popular with Romantic painters. Viewing these works, the spectator identifies with the person viewed from the back. In *The Red Door*, however, Quintanilla avoided using any figures so that we could occupy the same place as her and enjoy the same view.

Eckstaedt interpreted this work from a psychiatric point of view as a new stage in the artist's career. "For the first time an open doorway has appeared in Isabel Quintanilla's paintings. It is the door that leads outside, towards life or towards the world. The colors and tones inside the hallway are light and luminous. They no longer denote affliction. [...] The mourning process is over."[32] The psychiatrist's analysis possibly makes sense if we compare this picture to a work executed immediately before it, *The Hall* [fig. 21] (a hitherto unpublished oil painting). Although it is from the same year, we know that it was painted earlier because the modern wall telephone is not there. The angle of vision is similar, though here the painter positioned herself further away from the door, treating us to a wider view of the hallway. The focus is once again on the door, but here it is only slightly ajar, letting in just enough light for us to not need the artificial illumination of the ceiling lamp to appreciate everything in detail. To the right of the composition we see another door that is almost completely closed and gives us only a narrow glimpse of a space in total darkness on the other side. Was Quintanilla really undergoing a major life change which she expressed through these two magnificent canvases?

fig. 20

Isabel Quintanilla
The Red Door, 1978
Oil on panel, 164 × 108 cm
Private collection,
Germany

fig. 21

Isabel Quintanilla
The Hall, about 1977
Oil on canvas, 100 × 70 cm
Private collection,
Germany

fig. 22

Esperanza Parada and Amalia Avia by the Fontana di Trevi, Rome, in 1956

MORE THAN COLLEAGUES

Besides Isabel Quintanilla, three other women painters belonged to the group of Madrid Realists: Esperanza Parada, Amalia Avia and María Moreno. The purpose of mentioning them here is not to analyze or compare them aesthetically but to speak of them as women artists who met during their formative years in Madrid. As children they all suffered the injustices of the Civil War in their families and went on to share friendships, trips and pastimes. And all four married fellow artists, who were also friends.

The Madrid Realists were the first group in Spain in which the women were not only more numerous than the men but also enjoyed the same importance as their male colleagues. Antonio López attributed this to the fact that they all explored the same themes.

Quintanilla recalled those days as follows: "In that period, it was unimaginable to think that a woman could earn a living from painting. Very few women lived off painting, though when I started studying art about ten percent of the class was female. But there were hardly any women who appeared in the art world and made a living from their profession. I could cite María Antonia Dans, Menchu Gal, Marisa Roesset, Julia Minguillón, Delhy Tejero. There were a few women who *were* known, but I don't know if they lived completely off their art."[33] Apart from them, the Spanish art scene of the first half of the 1900s had witnessed a smattering of female artists such as María Blanchard (1881–1932), Olga Sacharoff (1889–1967), Maruja Mallo (1902–1995), Remedios Varo (1908–1963) and Ángeles Santos (1911–2013), but it is only in the past few years that various institutions have started devoting monographs to them.

There were four women realists, but in terms of affinities we might group them into two pairs: one was Esperanza Parada and Amalia Avia and the other was María Moreno and Isabel Quintanilla. Parada and Avia met at Eduardo Peña's academy in Madrid in about 1953. They rented and shared a studio with two other young female artists in order to be able to enjoy greater creative freedom away from the centers under the sway of the male perspective. Neither of the two had studied at the official

art school, but they frequented the company of students of the San Fernando Academy. In September 1956 they went on a short trip to Italy thanks to a grant Esperanza had received from the Ministry of Culture [fig. 22]. As their daughters recall, it was unusual at the time for Spanish women to travel unaccompanied by men. The trip marked an experience of discovery that strengthened their bond and proved personally and professionally enriching. Esperanza, for example, was fascinated by mural painting of the Trecento and Quattrocento, as can be seen in the technique she later applied to her canvases. Between 1955 and 1960 the two of them attended the open classes at the Círculo de Bellas Artes [Fine Arts Circle] to complete what they had learned from Peña, and above all to further their knowledge of drawing. They were night sessions in which they could draw from live models at a small cost.

Moreno and Quintanilla met in 1954 at the Casón del Buen Retiro, then a museum housing art reproductions. They went there to prepare for the entrance exam for the school of fine arts of the San Fernando Academy, where they were in the same year until graduating in 1959. In 1956 María Moreno spent a few months in Paris to gain firsthand experience of the art scene – once again, this was unusual at the time. Like Quintanilla when she returned from Rome, after finishing her studies Moreno taught drawing at several state secondary schools in Madrid. Teaching was the simplest way of earning a living from a profession not too far removed from her passion.

They all frequented the same cultural circles in Madrid. In 1954 Amalia Avia and other classmates at the Peña academy travelled to Paris with the students who graduated from the San Fernando Academy. It was during that trip when she met her future husband, Lucio Muñoz. The following year a group show of the work of Antonio López, Lucio Muñoz and brothers Julio and Francisco López Hernández opened at the exhibition hall of the Directorate General for Fine Arts. Esperanza went to the opening (most likely with her friend Amalia) and there she was introduced to Julio, who became her husband eight years later. María and Antonio met during his last year at San Fernando; Antonio was a close friend of Francisco

fig. 23

Isabel Quintanilla and Francisco López in María Moreno's studio, 1973. Photograph by Stefan Moses

fig. 24

María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla and Francisco López with Ernest Wuthenow in Germany

López's and that is how Isabel got to know Francisco. It was normal behavior for a group of young people who met up regularly to share their concerns and desires. "At one of the Sunday studio parties where we ate mature cheese and drank red wine to the sound of Line Renaud's records I met Antonio López. He was sitting in a corner with a big smile on his face and very messy hair. I was struck by how young he was and asked Lucio, 'who's that kid?' 'Don't you know him? He's Antoñito, the best painter in the school'."[34] Isabel recalled those first meetings as follows: "I met Lucio when I took the art school entrance exam. Funnily enough we'd both gone to Doña Trini's academy. [...] Paco's brother [Julio López] was in Lucio's class at the school, they were mates. And Lucio spoke to me about his friends Julio and Paco. One day we went to meet them at the studio they shared in Cuatro Caminos. [...] I became friends with them and with Antonio as well. [...] I was amazed by how much these people in the group knew. [...] It was a privilege to have them as friends and we've carried on meeting, being like brothers and sisters, and discussing art with the same passion, with the same enthusiasm as before, an enthusiasm that's shared by the whole group. It's our life."[35]

Understandably, it is difficult to talk about the women artists without mentioning the men. It was the same for the women themselves. Each in their own way, they all expressed how having artist husbands had conditioned them at some point or forced them to make certain choices. Amalia, for example, stopped working with Juana Mordó because that was the gallery which represented Lucio and she did not wish to be seen as a 'painter's wife'. Isabel used to say that sharing the same profession with her husband had been a great advantage in her case. As for Esperanza Parada, we know that after marrying Julio she worked at the Galería Biosca and was later hired as a secretary at the abovementioned Galería Juana Mordó, but she gave up working for several decades after her daughters were born to enable her husband to devote himself to art full time. As a result, her output was smaller than that of her female colleagues. For Moreno, marrying a figure of the caliber of Antonio López led her to almost fully abandon her own career and focus on supporting him. Her daughters recall how their father encouraged her and, after much insistence, persuaded her to take up art again for short periods. Antonio acknowledged having learned and drawn inspiration from María's approach to painting.

Another feature common to the women realist painters was the many exhibitions in which they took part both in and outside Spain. Owing to the circumstances described above, Parada participated in fewer exhibitions (her first monographic show opened in 1957 at the Sala Macarrón in Madrid). In 1966 Quintanilla and Moreno had their first solo exhibitions at the Galería Edurne. Beginning in 1970 they both took part in many group shows devoted to them and their husbands in Germany, to which both couples often travelled with gallerists Ernest Wuthenow [fig. 24] and Herbert Meyer-Ellinger. This explains why, as in Quintanilla's case, many of María Moreno's works are currently in German private collections.

In the 1970s Amalia Avia also took part in some of the exhibitions held in Germany under the umbrella of Spanish realism as well as in *Contemporary Spanish Realists* at the Marlborough Gallery in London in 1973. During the 1980s her work continued to be shown regularly.

It is important to stress that all these artists painted what, when and how they wanted. Francisco Nieve stated of them: "The women painters were the boldest, even in a sense the most masculine, as there is a curious defiance in all of them: in Amalia there is something of Zola or a female Dicenta, painting the doors, corners, rooms and shops of a defenseless and active city, with the gray bleakness of the days, of everyday life that has taken a battering, full of corners with the interest of ruins. A vision that is lyrical through the modern paradox of being 'cold'. In María Moreno and Isabel Quintanilla the objective quality is not cold, it is colored but implacable. They do not allow the 'conventionally female' to appear anywhere, they draw like Vermeer or Ingres, embracing the most hardline realism, that which is stunning for its concentration or precision. 'Splendid masters'."[36]. Nieva's words were no doubt intended as praise, but a praise that acknowledges what is not feminine about them: his positive critique is based on the statement that they are good because their work seems to have been executed by a man rather than by a woman. Were the women realists unaware of this patriarchal undercurrent? Definitely not. Indeed, Amalia Avia spoke about it when she had the chance: "As praise, I have been told that my paintings seemed to be done by a man. I have said thank you for the praise, but I would like my paintings to possess a deep and truly feminine sentiment."[37] Quintanilla once stated that she considered critics had treated her fairly and that she had generally not felt she had been treated differently for being a woman, but when she had been she didn't like it.

> "Tito, what do you think about girls wearing trousers?" [...]
> "The fact that women have started smoking now has taken all the pleasure out of smoking for me."
> "Honestly, you want to keep everything for yourselves. As if you didn't have enough advantages already."
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

> The garden comprised an area surrounded by three old brick walls attached in turn to the rear wall of the house; some parts were overgrown with honeysuckle and vines that were trained along horizontal wires. And there were three small trees: acacias.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

Pieter de Hooch (1629–1684) is considered the inventor of a new subgenre within Dutch genre painting: he was the first to depict the red brick rear courtyards, bustling with activity and sheltered from prying gazes, that were so characteristic of homes in his country. For Quintanilla the courtyard, a small garden between the house and the street, was a very important space for inspiration and work.[38]

Her first examples of garden-courtyards date back to her Roman period, when she painted several views of the gardens of the Spanish Academy, where her husband was staying and where she went to visit him every day as well as to paint. These pictures express the admiration she felt for ancient painting, which she discovered in Italy: "I was impacted by Roman painting and later, when we went to Pompeii and I saw Pompeian painting, I became fascinated by it. It conveys a beauty, a serenity, an inner luminosity."[39] The painted walls of those Pompeian houses displayed a great variety of themes: from history and mythological paintings to landscapes, still lifes and gardens. The latter appeared on the walls surrounding the courtyards and gardens inside the residences, creating an effect of greater breadth and depth of the actual garden. The scenes they recreated had a wealth of detail and provided plenty of information about the species of flora and fauna of the period. In *The Academy Garden* [cat. 75] Quintanilla painted one of the institution's inner courtyards. The result brings to mind the mural decoration of Villa Livia [fig. 25]: the monochrome background, the frontal view, the idealized vegetation, the low wall dividing the space. In all of these works Isabel derived enjoyment from recreating the reds of those ancient frescoes that made such an impression on her [fig. 26].

fig. 25

Villa Livia frescoes at Prima Porta, Rome, 30–20 BC

fig. 26

Still Life with Peaches and Nuts, fresco, Pompeii, 1st century BC–1st century AD
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

cat. 76

Isabel Quintanilla
The Lemons, 1965

After returning to Spain, the couple always lived in houses with a courtyard and a small area of land around them. When Quintanilla wanted to paint nature, she paid attention to her close surroundings with which, as with objects, she had an emotional bond. In this respect Isabel resembled the Impressionists and, like them, she cultivated and tended to her flowerbeds with the idea of painting the species that grew there at some point. Although the gardens she depicted were less luxuriant than those of Gustave Caillebotte (1848–1894) at Petit Gennevilliers or Claude Monet (1840–1926) at Giverny, Isabel, who was more enquiring minded and curious, spent time with her husband looking after different varieties of flowering plants and fruit trees in the garden of their home. In her paintings and drawings we thus find roses, lilies, mock oranges, violets, pansies, wisteria, hydrangeas and, among the fruit trees, fig and quince trees.

The first studio Isabel and Francisco had was on Calle Urola, in the residential area of El Viso (the couple rented it together with their friend Rafael Moneo). This studio had a backyard which, although not the backdrop to as much activity as De Hooch's, appears in several of Quintanilla's compositions. Indeed, her strategy for finding new things to paint was similar both inside and outside the house: by slightly shifting her easel or varying its distance from the motif, she succeeded in turning the same subject into something different. For example, in *Wall outside the Calle Urola Studio* [cat. 80] her gaze was drawn to the courtyard wall. In later works it was the stocks [cat. 79] and pansies [cat. 82] planted in front of that wall that grabbed her attention. In these compositions there is a contrast between the beauty, delicacy and hopefulness of nature and the lifelessness, roughness and hardness of the concrete and iron. This image could serve as an allegory of that dreaded moment when a writer, composer or painter faces the challenge of creating something on a blank sheet of paper or canvas.

fig. 27

Adolph Menzel
View of a Courtyard, 1867
Gouache and watercolor on paper, 28 × 22 cm
Private collection

fig. 28

Gabriele Münter
View from her Brother's House in Bonn, 1908
Oil on cardboard, 47.2 × 33.6 cm
Carmen Thyssen Collection

fig. 29

Isabel Quintanilla painting in the garden of her studio on Calle Primera, Madrid, 1973
Photograph by Stefan Moses

cat. 84

Isabel Quintanilla
The Fig Tree, 1973

Gazing around this somewhat oppressive courtyard, the artist stopped at some scaffolding [cat. 78]. Since when has scaffolding been worthy of being painted? Since toilets, washbasins, rubbish bins or rubble were – indeed, for the realists, if something was part of reality, it could be the subject of their paintings. In May 1962, *Time* magazine published an article entitled "The Slice of Cake School" analyzing the work of a group of artists: Wayne Thiebaud (1920–2021), Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), Andy Warhol and James Rosenquist (1933–2017). The magazine stressed that despite not knowing each other, these artists seemed to have reached the same conclusion that the most trivial and even vulgar elements of modern civilization could become art when they were captured on canvas. Warhol stated in that interview that he was then painting soup cans.

When painting in the open air, Quintanilla did so from life. Many photographs show her at her easel outside, and her husband often drew her at work in the garden. Isabel found this outdoor space to be an ideal environment for observing and concentrating on her art, away from distractions and inquisitive gazes.

There is no human presence in *The Fig Tree* [cat. 84]. So far, nothing new; however, in this drawing the artist is saying something about Francisco López, her husband. Wrapped in plastic in the lower left area is the plaster model of *Ophelia Drowned*, executed by the sculptor in 1964, as photographs of the period document.

For Quintanilla drawing was as important as painting: "For me it's sometimes more marvelous than painting a picture. When I'm tired of painting, I set about drawing though, of course, you also draw when you paint. [...] Drawing involves a very special mental transformation, judgments are made in gray."[40] In her drawings she captured the atmosphere as astonishingly well as she did in her paintings: "I use a simple, classical technique to achieve this: graphite, blending stump and sometimes charcoal. And I always copy from life."[41] We would be forgiven for thinking that the artist's oil paintings involved precise preparatory drawings, yet we know that she barely sketched on the canvas before applying the paint. Her drawings arouse the same emotions in the viewer as her oil paintings do; they have no less of an expressive charge. This fig tree is completely skeletal, but the change of season transformed it into the lush, leafy specimen we see in the oil painting she produced on the same subject twenty years later [cat. 89].

Summer [cat. 90] situates us inside the house, though the brightness of the light and the lush vegetation outside invite us to venture out and past the enclosure that constantly stands in the way of our gaze. The painter herself seemed to need to move away too and took her easel up to the top floor of the studio so that she could see the neighboring residential complexes and the great city in the background. The angle of vision in *Inner Courtyard*, executed in 1976 [cat. 85], recalls a painting in the Carmen Thyssen Collection, *View from her Brother's House in Bonn* by Gabriele Münter (1877–1962) [fig. 28]. The German artist's work also has an intimate and personal side. She sketched the subject during a visit to her brother: she made the studies from the balcony of the house and when the work was finished she gave it to him as a memento of the days spent together. Yet Quintanilla's model was not Münter but, once again, Menzel, this time his watercolor *View of a Courtyard* [fig. 27] in his home in central Berlin. He produced several compositions from that same window and painted this one in particular from memory, as by then he was no longer living there.

The whole sinuous ribbon of the Jarama could be seen curving and shining away, except where it was hidden by a bend; then it would reappear farther off, growing thinner as it moved south, until it was lost in the distance, behind the last hills that sealed the valley off from the horizon.

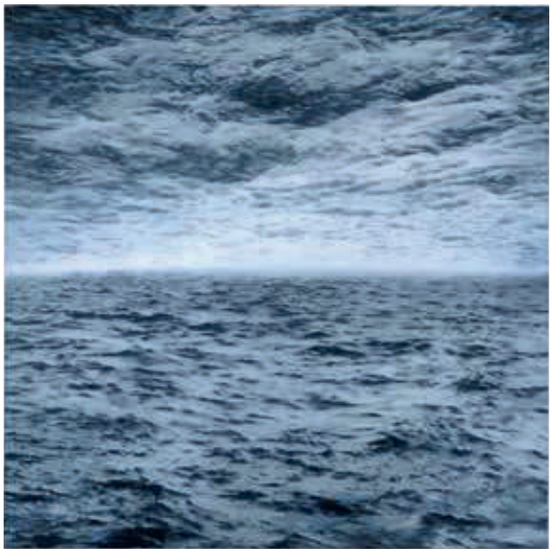
Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

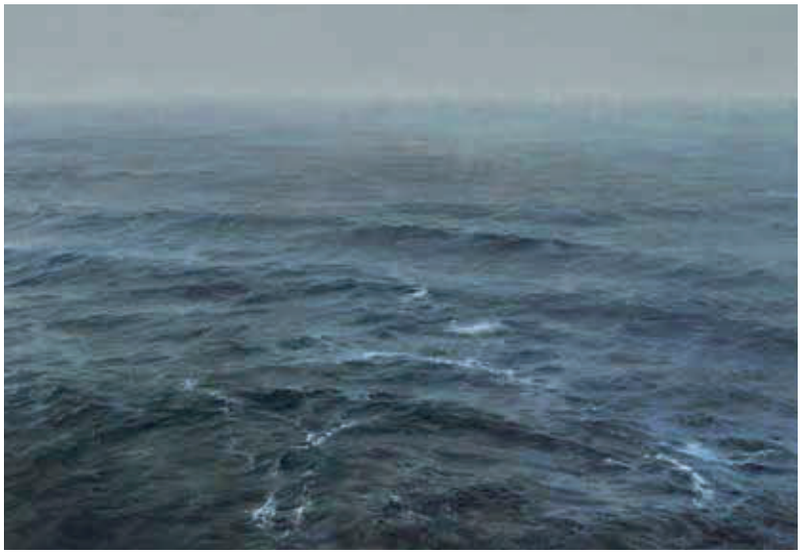
fig. 30

Aureliano de Beruete
The Guadarrama from La Moncloa Hill, 1893
Oil on canvas, 48 × 79.5 cm
Museo Sorolla, Madrid

cat. 96

Isabel Quintanilla
Sierra de Guadarrama, 1990–91





When Isabel Quintanilla ventured beyond the garden wall into the outside world she came face to face with nature. As with most of the motifs she painted, not all scenery attracted and moved her equally.[42] The landscapes of Castile, Extremadura and the mountains around Madrid, marked by the horizontality of their distant topography, were the ones Isabel identified with.[43] One of the landscape artists she looked to was Aureliano de Beruete (1845–1912): "What prompted Beruete at the sight of nature is what is prompting me; it's the same as when Velázquez painted the Villa Medici!"[44]

It is easy to understand what appealed to her about Beruete's landscapes, as they both painted from life, working around Madrid (particularly near the Sierra de Guadarrama) and had Velázquez very much in mind [fig. 30].

One of Quintanilla's early landscapes is *The River Jarama*, dated 1966 [cat. 91], in which she paints a bend in this Madrid river and, as usual, does so from a high viewpoint, greatly broadening the view and stressing the horizontality by means of the format of the canvas. The picture is a tribute to Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's novel *The River* [*El Jarama*], which greatly marked the group and which they discussed in their gatherings. The writer described his story as taking place in a delimited time and space. Is that not what occurs in Quintanilla's painting?

Other times Isabel turned her attention to water in nature.[45] In the seascapes from her early period we see the shore and even the occasional figure and boats, but over time the shore disappeared and water filled almost the entire surface, with only the horizon line as a guide to the space. She preferred northern seas: we know she enjoyed traveling with her friends along the north coast of Germany and was attracted to the light and the harshness of these waters. There is an X-ray-like quality to her seascapes that recalls the manner the sea is painted by Gerhard Richter (b. 1932), whose work was shown alongside Quintanilla's in several group exhibitions in the 1970s. Richter's *Seascape* [fig. 31] was included in the 1978 show *Als guter Realist muss Ich alles erfinden* [As a good realist, I have to invent everything] in Hamburg, where Isabel was represented by five drawings. She had this catalogue and probably visited the show personally.

fig. 31

Gerhard Richter
Seascape (Sea-Sea), 1970
Oil on canvas, 200 × 200 cm
Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin

cat. 92

Isabel Quintanilla
The Cantabrian Sea, 1973

fig. 32

Eduard Gaertner
View towards the South: Panorama of Berlin from the Roof of the Friedrichswerder Church, 1834
Oil on canvas, 91 × 93 cm (center panel); 91 × 110 cm (side panels)
Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin–Brandenburg, Gemäldesammlung

cat. 102

Isabel Quintanilla
Rome, 1998–99

fig. 33

Isabel Quintanilla
View of the Outskirts of Madrid, 1969
Pencil on paper, 25 × 34.5 cm
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA

The City from the Hill

> Vallecas was slightly to the left, down below, almost at the foot of the slope. They were about eighty to a hundred meters above it.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

We have seen how, faced with nature, Quintanilla preferred wide-open, tranquil landscapes steeped in light. She sought something similar in her urban views. She interpreted the city as if it were a natural landscape; for her a building was like a crag, and a street a meander. She chose to paint two cities: Madrid and Rome. Both capitals interested her on account of her deep emotional ties with them and their characteristic light. For Quintanilla light was the most important aspect of a painting, be it of a glass or a panoramic view: "The light is what creates the drawing for you, not that the drawing truly exists, it's the light that provides the contour of the drawing, the line for you. If the light enters through somewhere else that line disappears. The light is what's hardest to paint."[46]

A constant in her city views is the distance and height from which she painted them. Even early on during her first visit to Rome in 1962 [cat. 7], she painted the city from her husband's apartment in the Academy, located at the top of the Gianicolo hill. She used the same formula in later panoramas such as that of 1998–99 [cat. 102], her most ambitious urban view in terms of the size of the canvas. Quintanilla divided the surface equally: the upper part is all sky and the lower part is a compact mass of buildings that are easily identifiable and subdivided in turn by the row of vegetation that marks the course of the river Tiber.

This exercise recalls Eduard Gaertner's large 360-degree panorama of Berlin [fig. 32]. Viewing the German artist's perspectives, spectators have the impression of strolling along Berlin's elegant, wide avenues. Quintanilla's son Francesco recalls that during her trips to the German capital his mother visited the city's museums and most likely saw the works by this painter of city views who created visual records of cosmopolitan nineteenth-century Berlin with marvelous precision. Throughout that century panoramas were a worldwide phenomenon, a painting genre that predated photography and film.

Quintanilla lived away from the center of Madrid and painted her views of the city from there [fig. 33]. Isabel and Francisco recalled their well-known working sessions with Antonio López and María Moreno around the Vallecas district, from where they depicted the city and the increasingly populated suburbs. Antonio and María devoted many of their works to the capital's best-known streets, such as the Gran Vía, and Francisco also made drawings of them, but Isabel always kept to the outskirts. Her son remembers her saying she was unable to shut out the bustling city atmosphere in the same way that the others did. Nor does Isabel appear to have enjoyed the time spent painting in the open spaces of the outlying districts surrounded by the racket of the onlookers – curious youngsters from neighboring areas.

As with other genres, Quintinilla's views of Madrid have much in common with Antonio López's. Describing the value of city views, López stated: "In the beginning, examples like Vermeer are helpful, but he is distant. [...] A panorama of a major city is the grand setting of humans, where they go about their lives, and it is a setting equivalent to the other interior space, which is the studio."[47] Isabel used to go up to the top of the Torres Blancas building in Madrid [fig. 35], where Antonio López spent six years painting one of his most iconic works [fig. 34]. This explains why, in Quintanilla's abovementioned view of Rome, the layout of the composition is identical and, although they depict different times of day, the importance both artists attached to light is evident.

fig. 34

Antonio López
Madrid from Torres Blancas, 1976–82
Oil on panel, 145 × 244 cm
Private collection

fig. 35

Antonio López, with Francisco López and Isabel Quintanilla, painting on the rooftop of the Torres Blancas building, 1973
Photograph by Stefan Moses

SUCCESS AND RECOGNITION IN GERMANY

> I shouldn't think so. It's whether or not you can do the work that matters. What's age got to do with it? The older you are, the more experience you've got.
>
> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *The River*, 1956

Darmstadt, Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Hannover, Dusseldorf, Recklinghausen, Leverkusen, Mannheim, Kassel, Hamburg, Nuremberg, Braunschweig, Baden-Baden… Quintanilla's works were shown in each of these cities throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This fact helps understand why fifty percent of the pieces on view in this retrospective come from Germany. The critical and commercial success Quintanilla enjoyed in that country is unquestionable. Why was she so successful there? A major factor is the demise of the new avant-gardes in the 1970s, which led artists and the market alike to turn to realism for alternatives.

Ernest Wuthenow, a collector and founding partner of the Galería Juana Mordó in Madrid, decided to promote the oeuvre of a few Spanish artists abroad. Together with gallerists Hans Brockstedt and Herbert Meyer-Ellinger, he set about presenting the whole group of realists in a serious and intelligent manner, especially Antonio López, María Moreno, Francisco López and, of course, Isabel Quintanilla. These three dealers' web of contacts made it possible for Quintanilla's oeuvre to enjoy a strong and continuous presence in their country.

In 1975 Wuthenow stated of Isabel in connection with the *Spanische Realisten: Zeichnungen* [Spanish realists: drawings] exhibition: "A great talent, which is asserted on the basis of work and perseverance."[48] Juana Mordó asked Quintanilla to join her portfolio of artists, but Isabel preferred to continue working with the German gallerists: "I was very happy with the Germans. […] They got us international exhibitions, which we wouldn't have achieved working with national galleries. They took us to biennials, fairs. They enabled us to earn a living from painting."[49]

Quintanilla was invited to take part not only in solo and group shows but also in biennials and courses. Her participation in Documenta 6 at Kassel in 1977 attests to the recognition she had earned in only seven years since her exhibition debut in Germany. That year's Documenta confirmed the proposals of the two previous editions, which had brought to Germany a wide range of works by photorealists and Pop artists. Documenta 6 strengthened these new aesthetic conquests by encouraging continued reflection on the way of life imposed by the capitalist system. For the first time in these exhibitions' twenty-two-year history artists from East Germany were included, all representing different realist sensibilities. Three drawings by Isabel Quintanilla plus another three by Francisco López, three by María Moreno and one by Antonio López were shown in the Orangerie building and one by each was reproduced in the *Realität, Hiperrealität, Irrealität* [Reality, hyperreality, unreality] section of the catalogue on drawing alongside pieces illustrating other trends as diverse as Constructivism, abstraction and Pop Art.

In 1987 Darmstadt awarded Quintanilla the city's Art Prize and in 2000 it staged a major monographic exhibition of her work. She interpreted this as follows: "The Germans are capable of appreciating variety in art: it's possible that our way of looking at it seems novel to them. [...] I realize that a German can understand our art better than a Frenchman because Spanish painting has a strength, an expression, a very special charge, a vigor very similar to what happens with German art. [...] German painting has an anguish that's more similar to that of Spanish painting."[50] Historian Jürgen Schilling stressed that Germany was surprised to see how in Spain, an outsider to the international art scene mostly for political reasons, there was a realism as independent as it was forceful.[51]

* * *

If we compare the small bowl of fruit Quintanilla painted on returning from Italy in 1966 [cat. 9] with *Still Life with Sienna Background* of 2017 [cat. 10], could we tell, without knowing the dates, that they were painted fifty-one years apart? Logically, they show an evolution, though as the artist herself stated: "My painting has no stages: I believe I have progressed gradually. That is all."[52]

It is plausible to think that, unconsciously, this last *Still Life with Sienna Background*, which she delivered to her gallerist Íñigo Navarro shortly before her death, was her way of bringing her career to a close by looking back to her beginnings, to Italy and to everything that period meant to her as a person and as an artist. Once again, life and work were closely entwined. Isabel Quintanilla carried on painting until her death because she continued to come across motifs that moved her.

1 Teresa Posada Kubissa, "Conversación con I. Quintanilla," pp. 19–27, in *Isabel Quintanilla: Exposición antológica* [exh. cat. Madrid, Centro Cultural del Conde Duque], Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1996, p. 20.

2 The Nationalist forces were the faction made up by the rebel part of the army, the bourgeoisie, the landed gentry and the upper clases, which had the support of Fascist Germany and Italy – Ed.

3 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 24.

4 Ibid., p. 19.

5 "It's true that there wasn't so much money for traveling. But we were familiar with and read Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Faulkner. We knew who Manzú and Marini were. There were bookshops like Clan, Buchholz and Fernando Fe that could get you everything you were interested in in the way of literature or art books." Ibid., p. 22.

6 Speaking about her sister, Isabel once stated: "She was called Fina, Josefina, after my father. She believed for quite some time that my father was alive because one of my aunts used to write letters to her as if they were from him." See María del Pilar Garrido Redondo, *Isabel Quintanilla: La pintura como autobiografía* [doctoral thesis], Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2019, p. 305.

7 Ibid., p. 65.

8 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 23.

9 Ibid., p. 26.

10 Conversation between Guillermo Solana and Isabel Quintanilla (2016) in "La tarde en 24 horas," available at www.rtve.es/play.

11 María Dolores Ruiz de la Canal y Ruiz-Mateos, "La pintura de Isabel Quintanilla (y II)," pp. 215–25, in *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba de Ciencias, Bellas Letras y Nobles Artes*, vol. 59, no. 115, 1988, p. 219.

12 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, pp. 24–25.

13 *Hyperréalistes américains/Réalistes européens* [exh. cat.], Paris, CNAC, 1974, p. 44.

14 Jürgen Schilling, "Luz a espuertas o radicalmente reducida," pp. 39–56, in *Realistas de Madrid* [exh. cat. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza], Madrid, Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2016, p. 40, note 2.

15 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 324.

16 Ibid.

17 Antonio López had already paid attention to this home appliance in *Icebox* (1966), returning to it years later to produce a more modern version, *New Refrigerator* (1991–94); in the latter we see that López also adopts a Pop Art approach and shows a few product brands such as La Cocinera pastry sheets, Heinz ketchup, Hellmann's mayonnaise and Danone yoghurts, though a yoghurt from this brand already appeared in the 1966 version.

18 Francisco Nieva, "Isabel Quintanilla en la encrucijada milenaria. La puerta más estrecha del arte," in *Isabel Quintanilla* [exh. cat.], Madrid, Galería Leandro Navarro, 1996, n.p.

19 "I've just finished a new canvas which has an almost chic little look to it, a willow basket with lemons and oranges – a cypress branch and a pair of blue gloves, you've already seen some of these fruit-baskets of mine." Letter from Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, Arlés, 22 January 1889, available at www.vangoghletters.org.

20 See the commentary on this painting on the website of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

21 Conversation between the author and Francesco López Quintanilla, Isabel's son.

22 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 305.

23 The Estampa Popular movement was founded around 1960 to convey an image of the country different to that which the Franco regime wished to export. Its usual medium was woodblock prints, to distinguish itself from the elitist and commercial conception of art.

24 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 21.

25 Ibid., p. 26.

26 Charo Crego, *Dentro: La intimidad en el arte*, Madrid, Ábada Editores, 2023, p. 68.

27 *Juan Muñoz: Dibujos* [exh. cat. Santander, Centro Botín], Santander, Fundación Botín–Madrid, La Fábrica, 2022, p. 17.

28 Anita Eckstaedt, *Sichtbar machen und Bildern Sprache geben*, Giessen, Psychosozial-Verlag, 2019, p. 61.

29 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 325.

30 "I honestly do not know why I use just a few, muted colors. [...] It feels natural to me. I most certainly think that a picture works best, in purely coloristic terms, the fewer colors it has." See the commentary on this work on the website of the Staten Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen.

31 Isabel Quintanilla, "Mein Werk im Realismus der Gegenwart," in *Isabel Quintanilla: Ölbilder 1955–1987 Zeichnungen 1966–1979* [exh. cat.], Hamburg, Galerie Brockstedt, 1987, n.p.

32 Eckstaedt 2019, see note 28 above, p. 82.

33 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, pp. 313–14. Actually in this statement Isabel mixes artists from two generations: Roesset, Tejero and Minguillón, of the start of the century, and Gal and Dans, of the 1920s.

34 Amalia Avia, *De puertas adentro: Memorias*, Madrid, Taurus, 2004, pp. 199–200.

35 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, pp. 314–15.

36 Francisco Nieva, "Una muestra fundamental," pp. 129–31, in *Otra realidad; Compañeros en Madrid* [exh. cat. Madrid, Sala de Exposiciones Monte de Piedad], Madrid, Caja de Madrid, 1992, p. 16.

37 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 108.

38 As Charo Crego mentions in her book, see note 26 above, p. 85.

39 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 322.

40 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 27.

41 Jürgen Schilling, "Isabel Quintanilla – Leben und Werk," in *Isabel Quintanilla* 1987, see note 31 above, n.p.

42 According to a conversation between María José Pena García and the painter, Isabel complained that despite spending many summers in Galicia, she found the region's landscape difficult to capture and that it did not arouse in her the emotion she needed to make it a subject of her paintings.

43 "I paint things that attract me. For example, I love the open landscapes of Segovia, they attract me, I feel a connection with them." In Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 336.

44 Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 25.

45 "I love painting seas. The landscape that I feel, that I capture, has open horizons, La Mancha with that special light, not the mountainous kind." In Posada Kubissa 1996, see note 1 above, p. 26.

46 Interview with Isabel Quintanilla, in "No es un día cualquiera," Radio Nacional de España, 19 June 2016, available at www.rtve.es/play.

47 In *López: Grandes genios del arte contemporáneo español. El siglo* xx, Madrid, Unidad Editorial, Biblioteca El Mundo, 2006, p. 116.

48 Ernest Wuthenow, [prologue], in *Spanische Realisten: Zeichnungen* [exh. cat], Zurich, Galerie Kornfeld, 1975, n.p.

49 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 323.

50 Ibid., pp. 323–25.

51 Jürgen Schilling, "Isabel Quintanilla – Leben und Werk," in *Isabel Quintanilla* 1987, see note 31 above, n.p.

52 Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 6 above, p. 335.

WORKS ON DISPLAY

Isabel Quintanilla
Pansies, 1971

[cat. 82 detail]

AN EARLY DECLARATION OF INTENT

1

Isabel Quintanilla
Self-Portrait, 1962
Pencil on paper, 53 × 38 cm
Private collection

2

Isabel Quintanilla
The Table Lamp, 1956
Oil on canvas, 32.5 × 40.5 cm
Private collection

3

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life in front of the Window, 1959
Oil on canvas, 87 × 100 cm
Private collection

4

Isabel Quintanilla
The Road (Motorway), 1960
Oil on canvas, 61 × 73 cm
Private collection

5

Isabel Quintanilla
Nocturne in Rome, 1964
Oil on canvas, 55 × 82 cm
Private collection

6

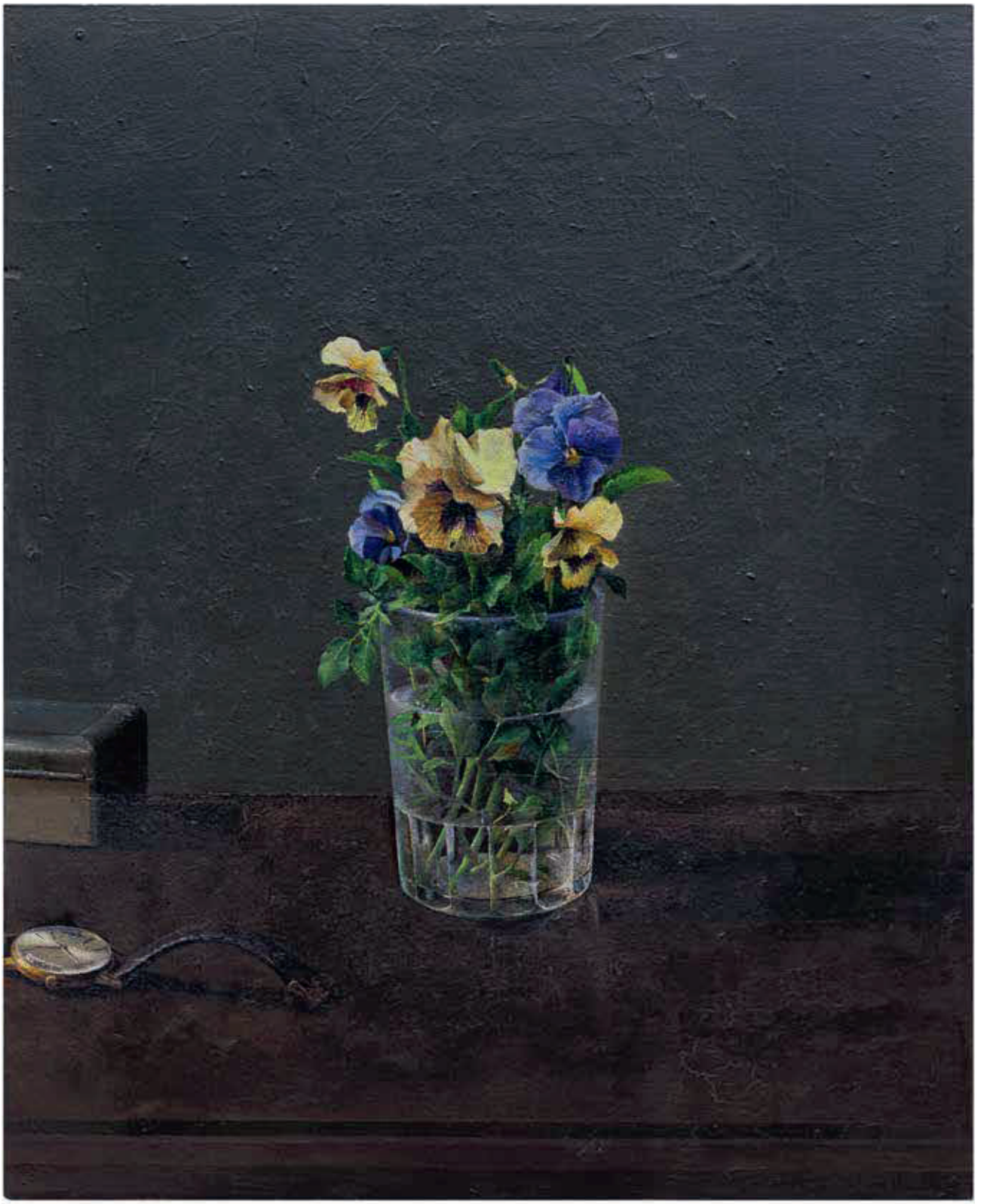
Isabel Quintanilla
Delphi, 1963
Oil on panel, 50 × 70 cm
Private collection

7

Isabel Quintanilla
Rome (The Red Building), 1962
Oil on canvas, 78 × 108 cm
Private collection, Madrid

8

Isabel Quintanilla
Pansies and Watch, 1964
Oil on panel, 37 × 29.5 cm
Private collection



9

Isabel Quintanilla
Bowl of Fruit, 1966
Oil on panel, 29 × 38 cm
Private collection

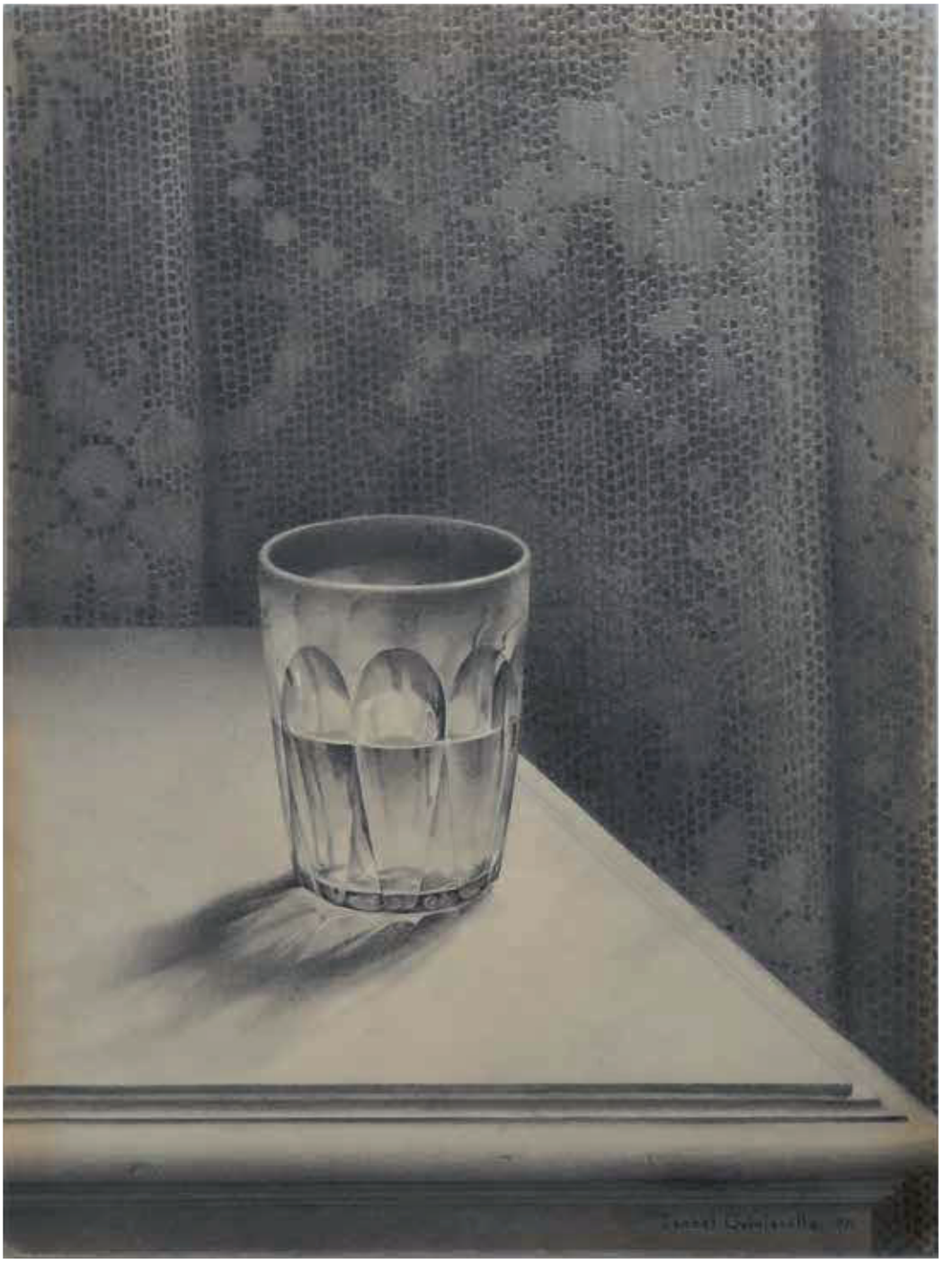
10

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Sienna Background, 2017
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
44 × 48 cm
Private collection

PAINTINGS OF FAMILIAR OBJECTS

11

Isabel Quintanilla
Glass of Carnations, 1969
Oil on panel, 40.4 × 31 cm
Private collection

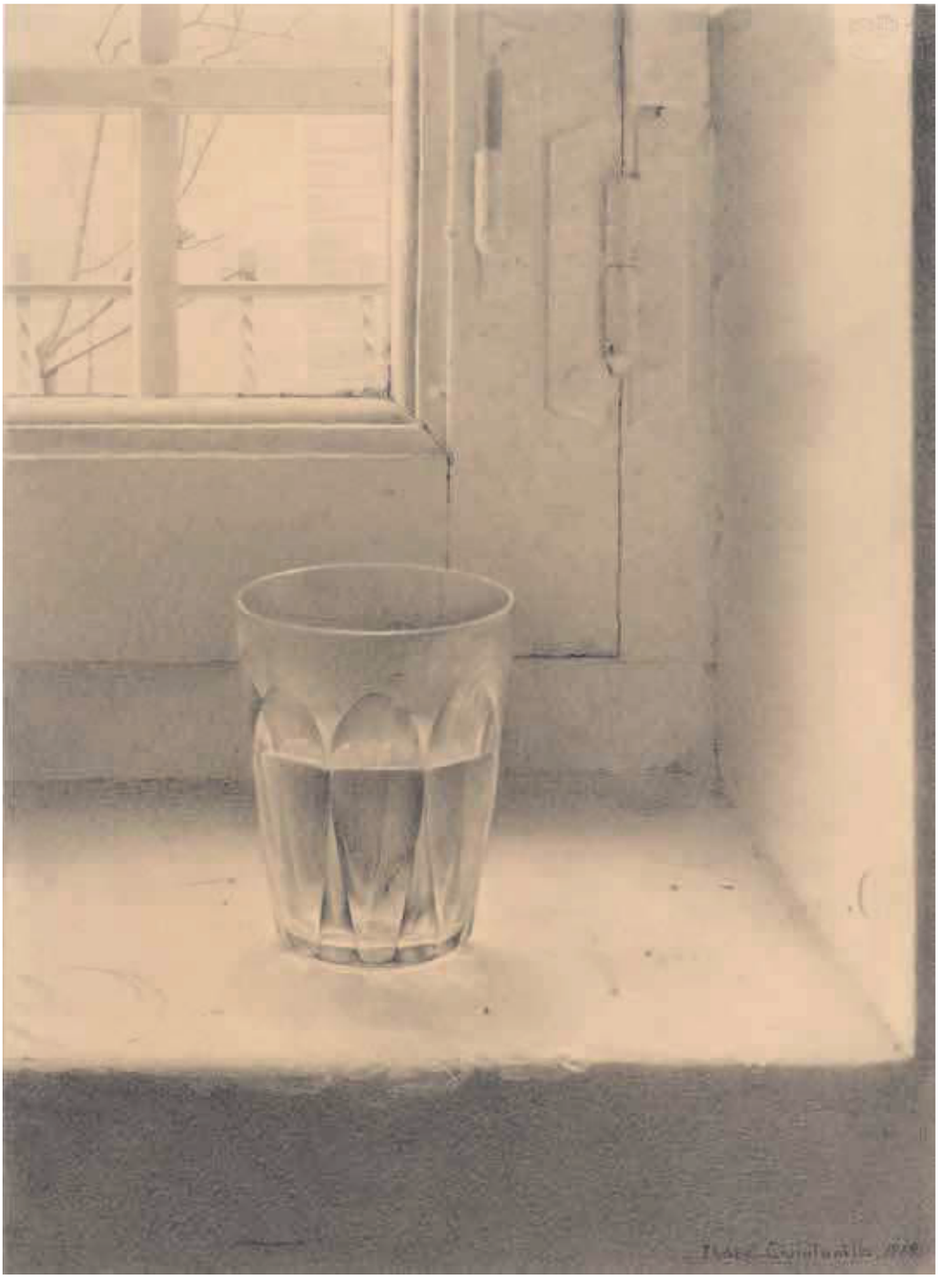


12

Isabel Quintanilla
Glass and Curtain, 1971
Pencil on paper, 34.5 × 25 cm
Private collection, Germany

13

Isabel Quintanilla
Glass, 1969
Pencil on paper, 34 × 25 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

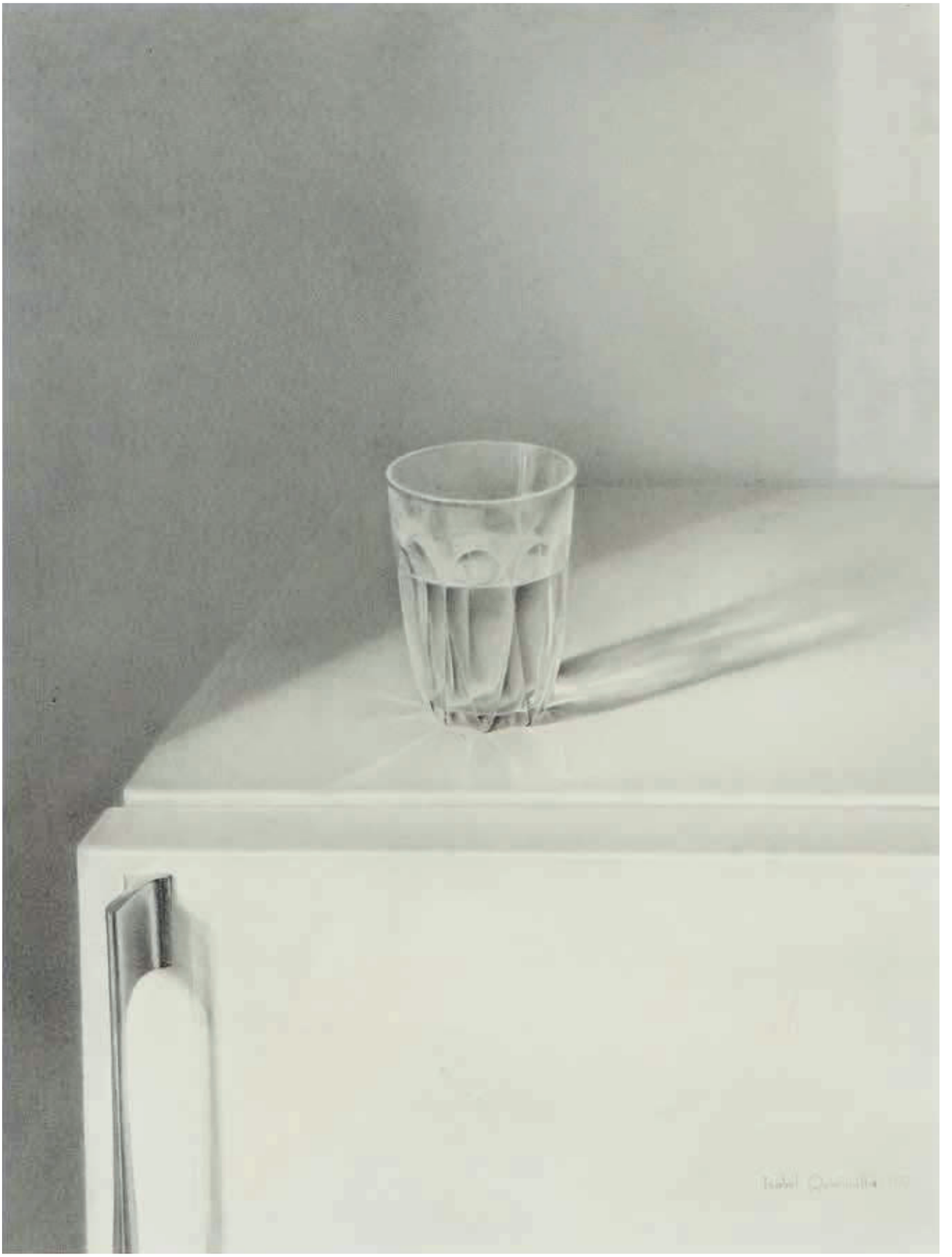


14

Isabel Quintanilla
Medicine, 1971
Pencil on paper, 25 × 35 cm
I. Goetz, Germany

15

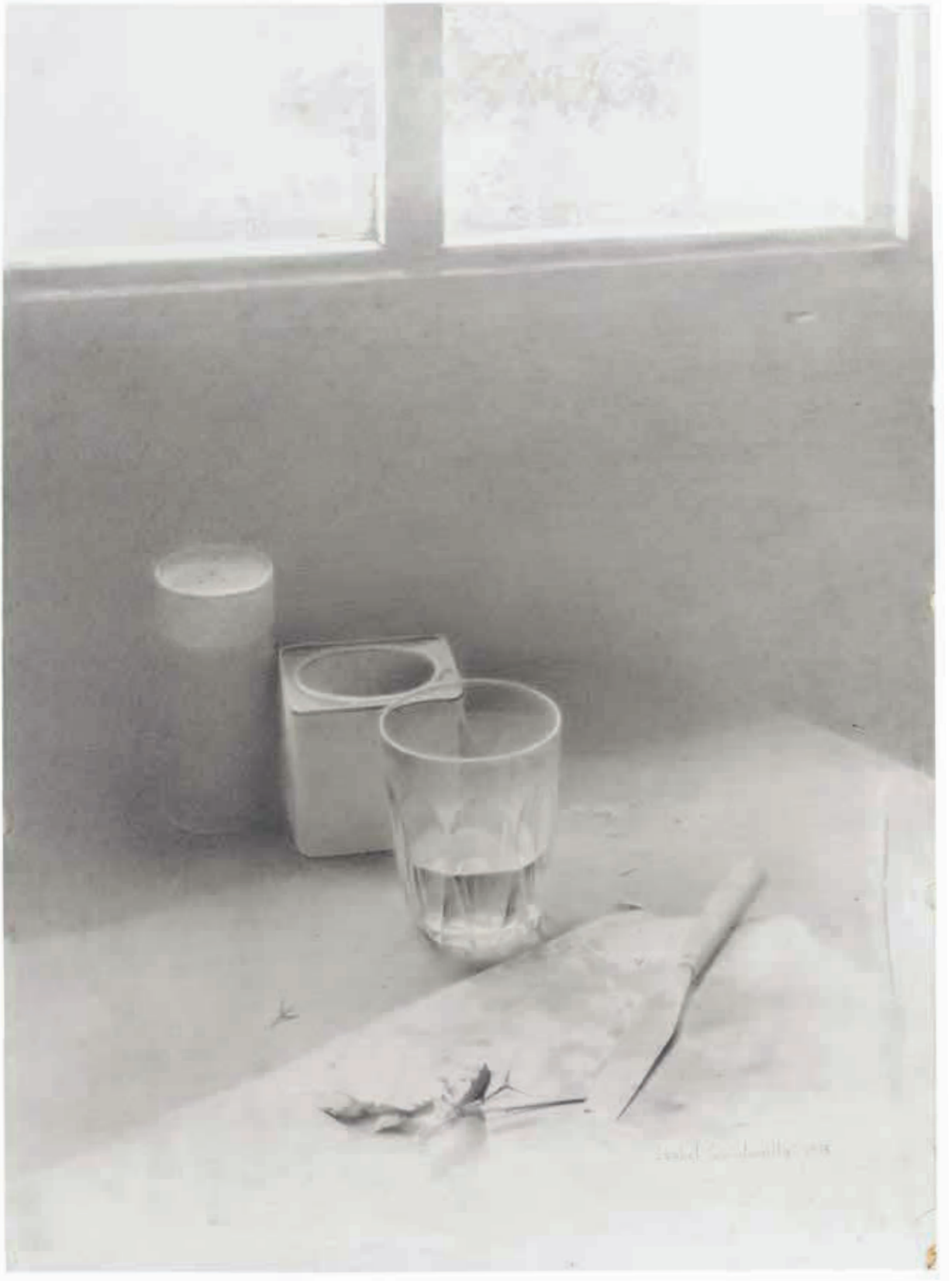
Isabel Quintanilla
Glass on Top of the Fridge, 1972
Pencil on paper, 48 × 36.5 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin



16

Isabel Quintanilla
Pansies on Top of the Fridge, 1972
Oil on panel, 41 × 33 cm
Private collection. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid


Isabel Quintanilla



17

Isabel Quintanilla
Glass and Spatula, 1975
Pencil on cardboard, 49.1 × 36 cm
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung,
acquired in 1979 with lottery funds

18

Isabel Quintanilla
White Carnation, 1974
Oil on panel, 42 × 33 cm
Private collection,
Madrid


Isabel Quintanilla. 11/5

19

Isabel Quintanilla
Kitchen I, 1970
Pencil on paper, 48.4 × 62.8 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Kupferstichkabinett

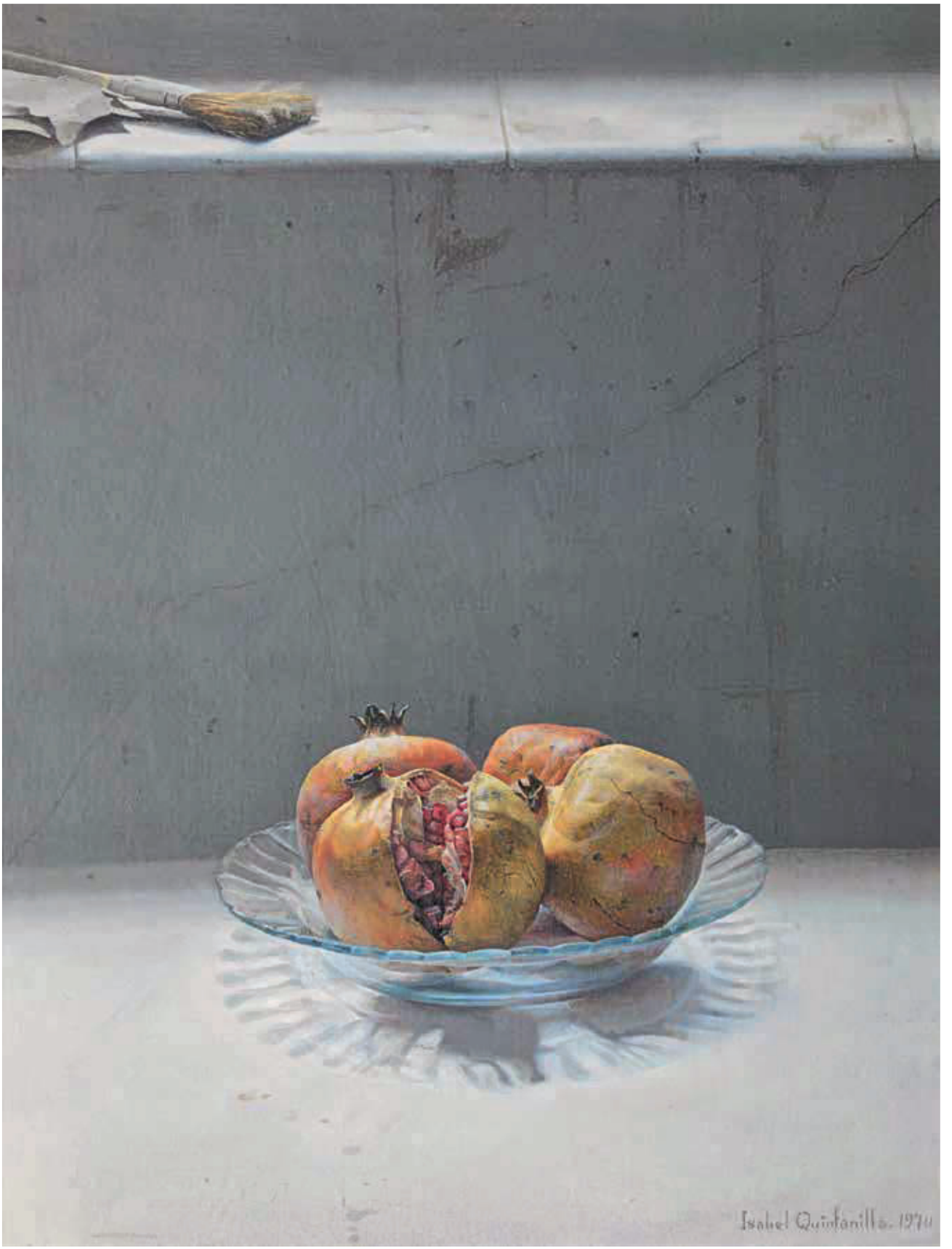
20

Isabel Quintanilla
Cutlery, 1971
Pencil on paper, 46 × 36 cm
Private collection, Germany


OFERTA

21

Isabel Quintanilla
Pomegranates, 1970
Oil on canvas, 40 × 29.5 cm
Private collection, Germany


Isabel Quintanilla. 1974

22

Isabel Quintanilla
Bathroom, 1968
Oil on panel, 100 × 75 cm
Private collection

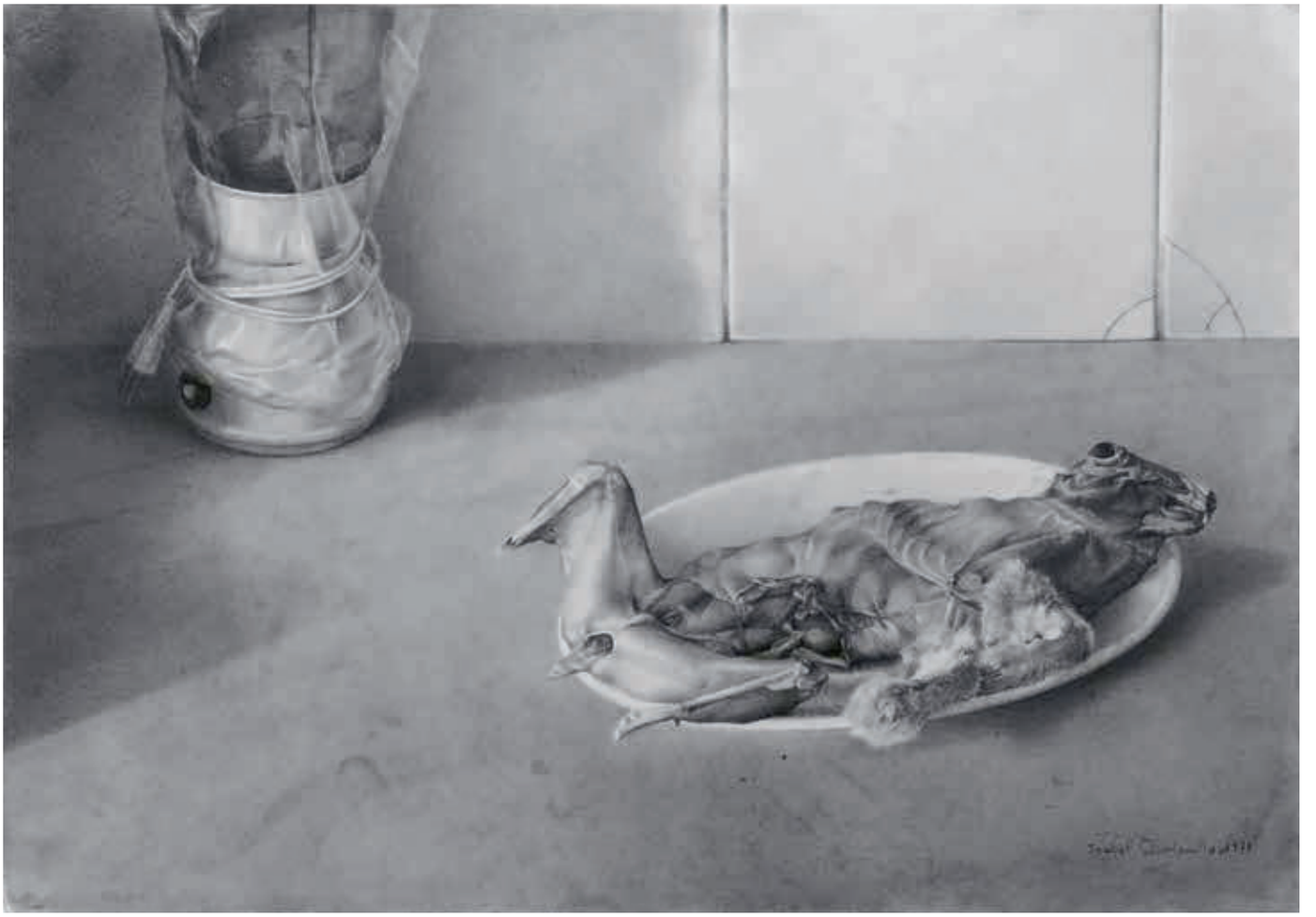

Baby
Powder

23

Isabel Quintanilla
Tribute to my Mother, 1971
Oil on panel, 74 × 100 cm
Pinakothek der Moderne,
Munich

24

Isabel Quintanilla
The Sewing Room, 1974
Oil on panel, 100 × 82 cm
Private collection



25

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Rabbit, 1971
Pencil on paper, 36.5 × 51 cm
Private collection, Germany

26

Isabel Quintanilla
House Corner (Rabbit), 1971
Oil on panel, 60 × 80 cm
Private collection. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro,
Madrid

27

Isabel Quintanilla
Grapes, 1975
Oil on panel, 46.5 × 70 cm
Hedda Remer

28

Isabel Quintanilla
Lilies in a Green Vase, 1979
Oil on canvas, 51 × 45 cm
Kunststiftung Christa und Nikolaus Schües

29

Isabel Quintanilla
Fish, 1979
Pencil on paper, 60 × 76 cm
Florian Koch Collection,
Frankfurt

30

Isabel Quintanilla
Fish, 1989
Oil on canvas, 55 × 73 cm
Peter and Sibylle Voss-Andreae,
Hamburg

31

Isabel Quintanilla
Sausages, 1990
Oil on panel, 135 × 100 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

32

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life and Curtain, 1990
Pastel on paper, 64 × 84 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

33

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Quails, 1991
Oil on panel, 81 × 100 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

34

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Ham, 1991
Oil on canvas, 124 × 100 cm
Kunststiftung Christa und
Nikolaus Schües

35

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Melon, 1993
Watercolor on paper, 61 × 81 cm
Private collection

36

Isabel Quintanilla
Watermelon, 1995
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
70 × 100 cm
Private collection. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid

37

Isabel Quintanilla
The Blue Table, 1993
Oil on canvas, 83 × 75 cm
Private collection

38

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Lilies, 1995
Oil on canvas, 55 × 50 cm
Peter and Sibylle Voss-Andreae,
Hamburg

39

Isabel Quintanilla
The Cauliflower, 2003
Oil on panel, 46 × 48 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

40

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Newspaper, 2005
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
90 × 80 cm
Private collection

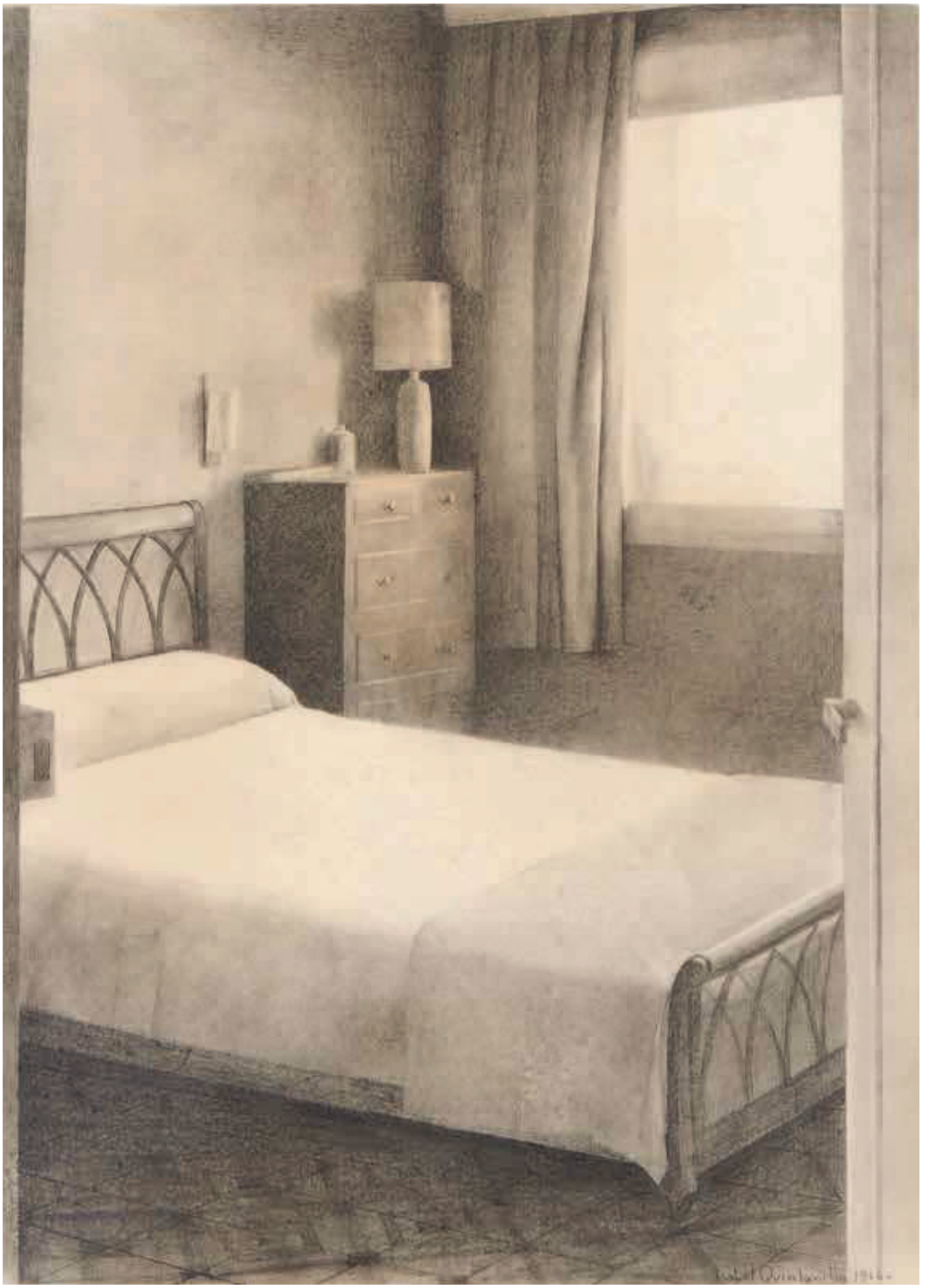
41

Isabel Quintanilla
Still Life with Shoes, 1994
Pastel on paper, 60 × 70 cm
Private collection

42

Isabel Quintanilla
The Telephone, 1996
Oil on panel, 110 × 100 cm
Private collection, Madrid

THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF ABSENCE



43

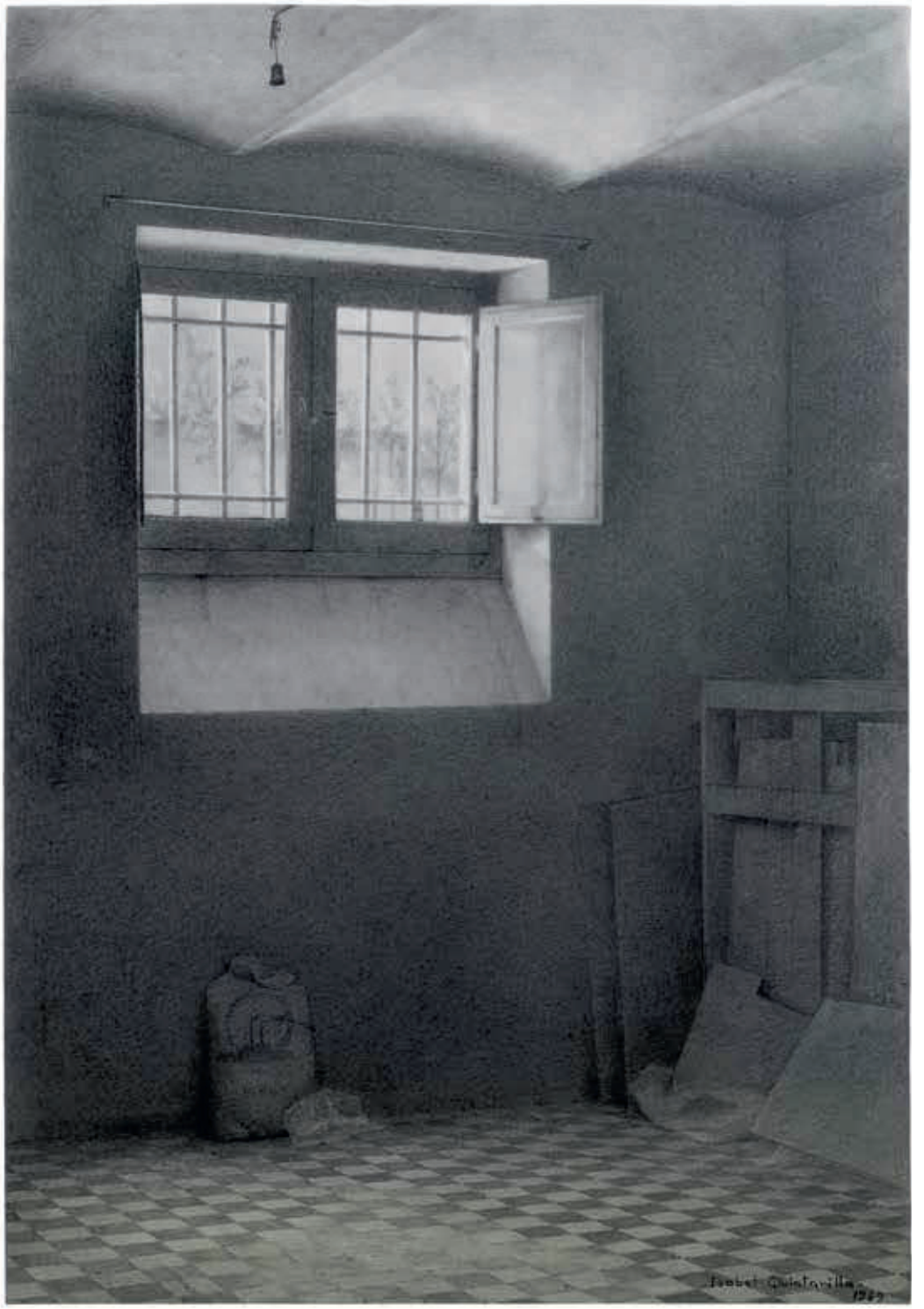
Isabel Quintanilla
Bedroom, 1966
Pencil on paper, 44 × 34 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

44

Isabel Quintanilla
Studio, 1970
Pencil on paper, 48 × 39.5 cm
Walter Feilchenfeldt
Collection, Zurich

45

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior at Night (Corner of the Studio), 1971
Pencil on paper, 66.5 × 50.5 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Kupferstichkabinett

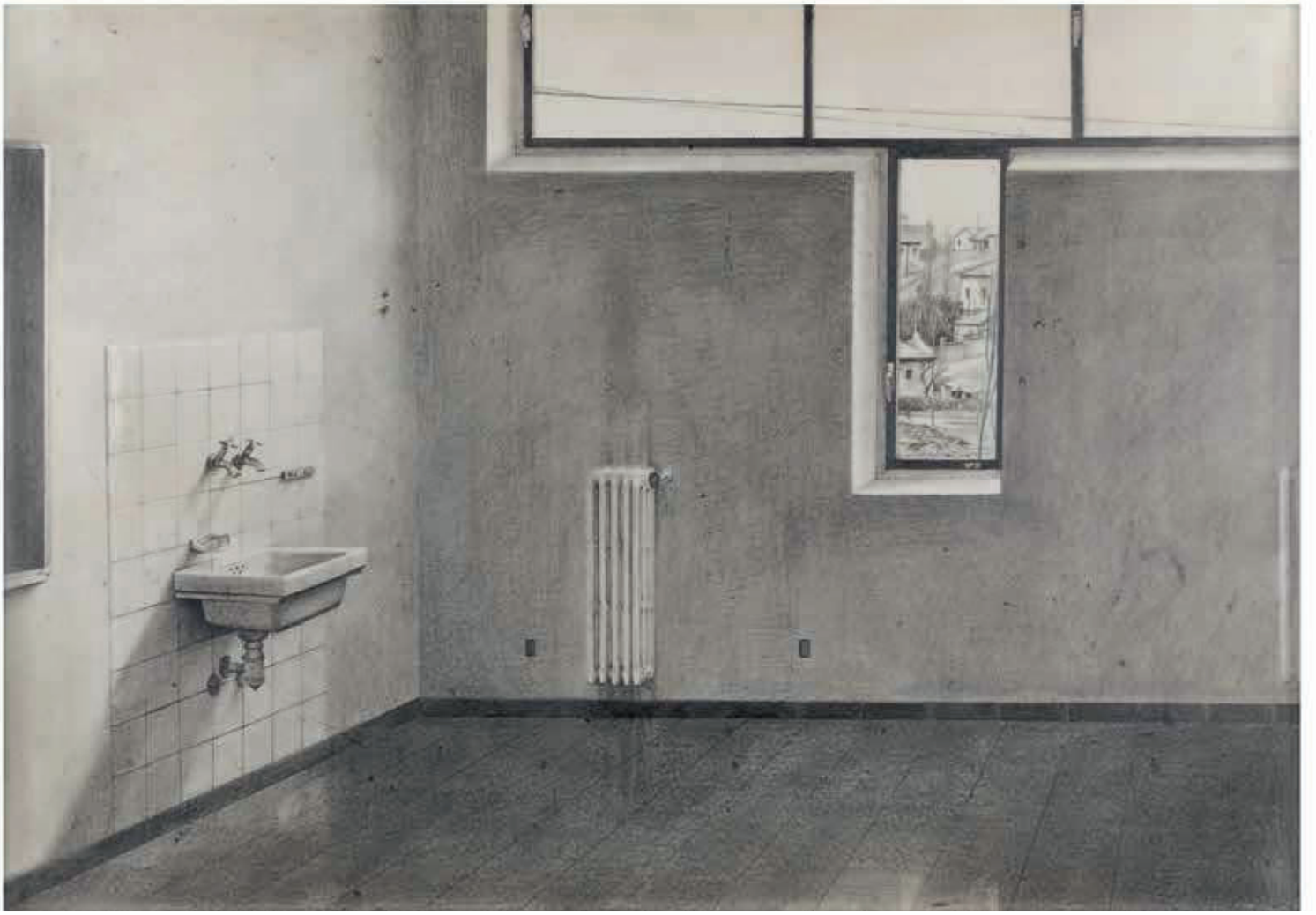


46

Isabel Quintanilla
Window, 1969
Pencil on paper, 43.5 × 30 cm
Private collection

47

Isabel Quintanilla
Window, 1970
Oil on panel, 132 × 100 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin



48

Isabel Quintanilla
Washbasin in the Colegio Santa María, 1968
Pencil on paper, 50 × 70 cm
Private collection

49

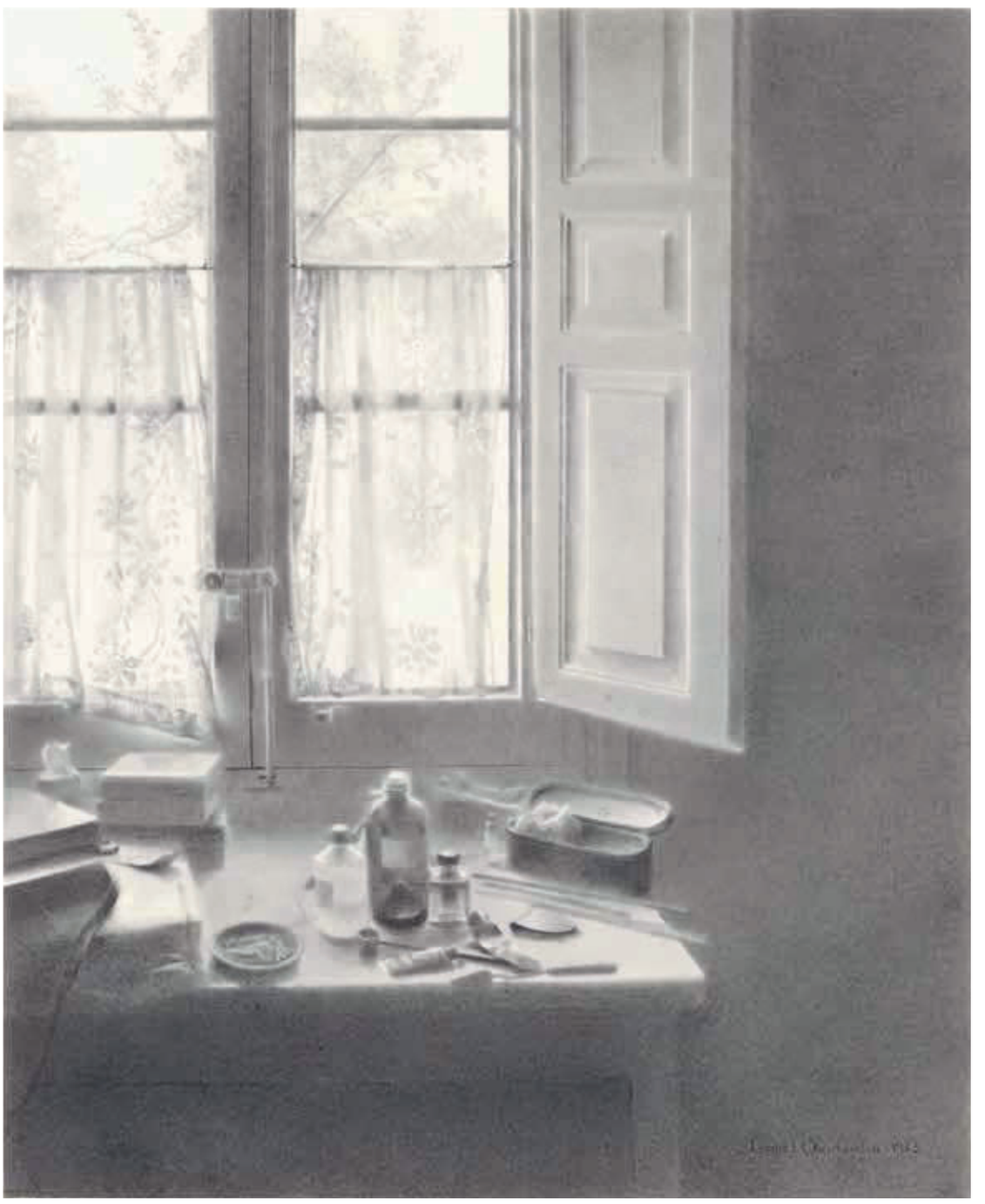
Isabel Quintanilla
Washbasin in the Colegio Santa María, 1968
Oil on panel, 100 × 70 cm
Private collection, Germany

50

Isabel Quintanilla
Window with Rain, 1970
Oil on canvas, 52.5 × 65 cm
Private collection

51

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior, 1973
Pencil on paper, 48 × 39 cm
Hamburger Kunsthalle,
Hamburg

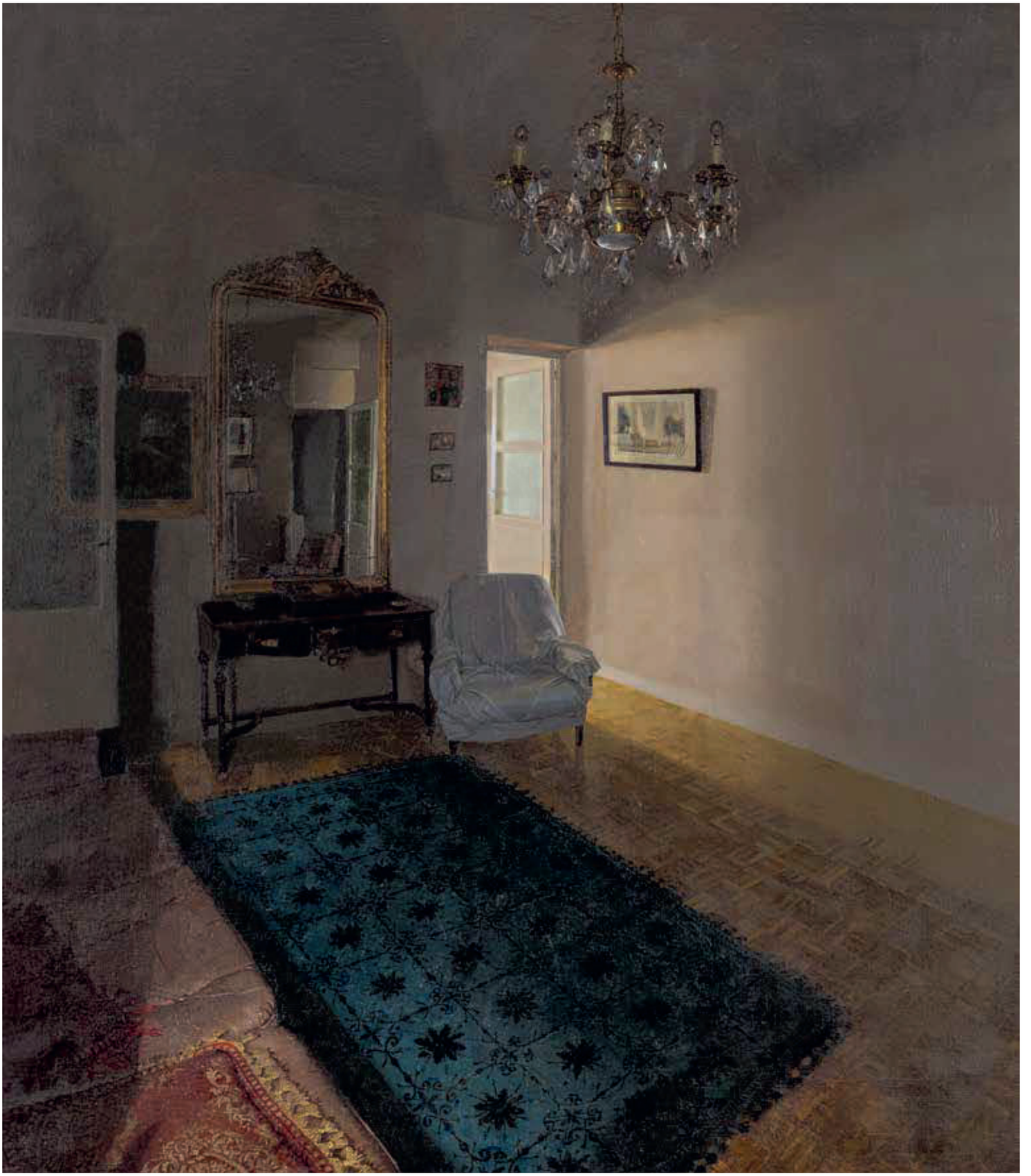


52

Isabel Quintanilla
The Mirror, 1974
Oil on panel, 28 × 25 cm
Private collection

53

Isabel Quintanilla
Grand Interior, 1974
Oil on canvas, 150 × 130 cm
Ellinor Scherer Collection



54

Isabel Quintanilla
The Cottage, 1967
Oil on panel, 64 × 45 cm
Private collection

55

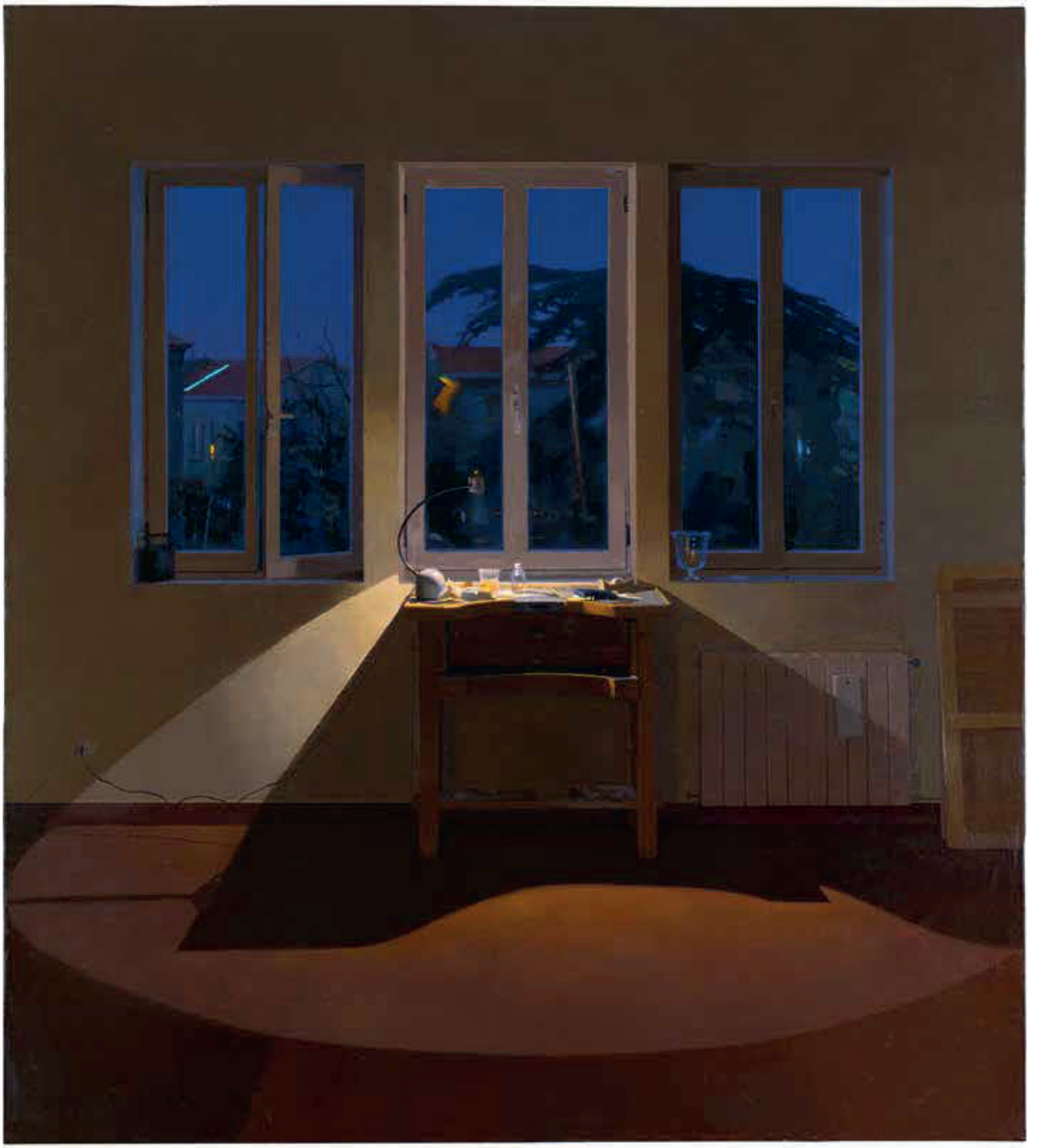
Isabel Quintanilla
The Door, 1974
Oil on canvas, 56 × 40 cm
Private collection

56

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior, 1976
Oil on canvas, 100 × 69.5 cm
Private collection

57

Isabel Quintanilla
Dusk in the Studio, 1975
Oil on panel, 122 × 139 cm
Private collection, Germany

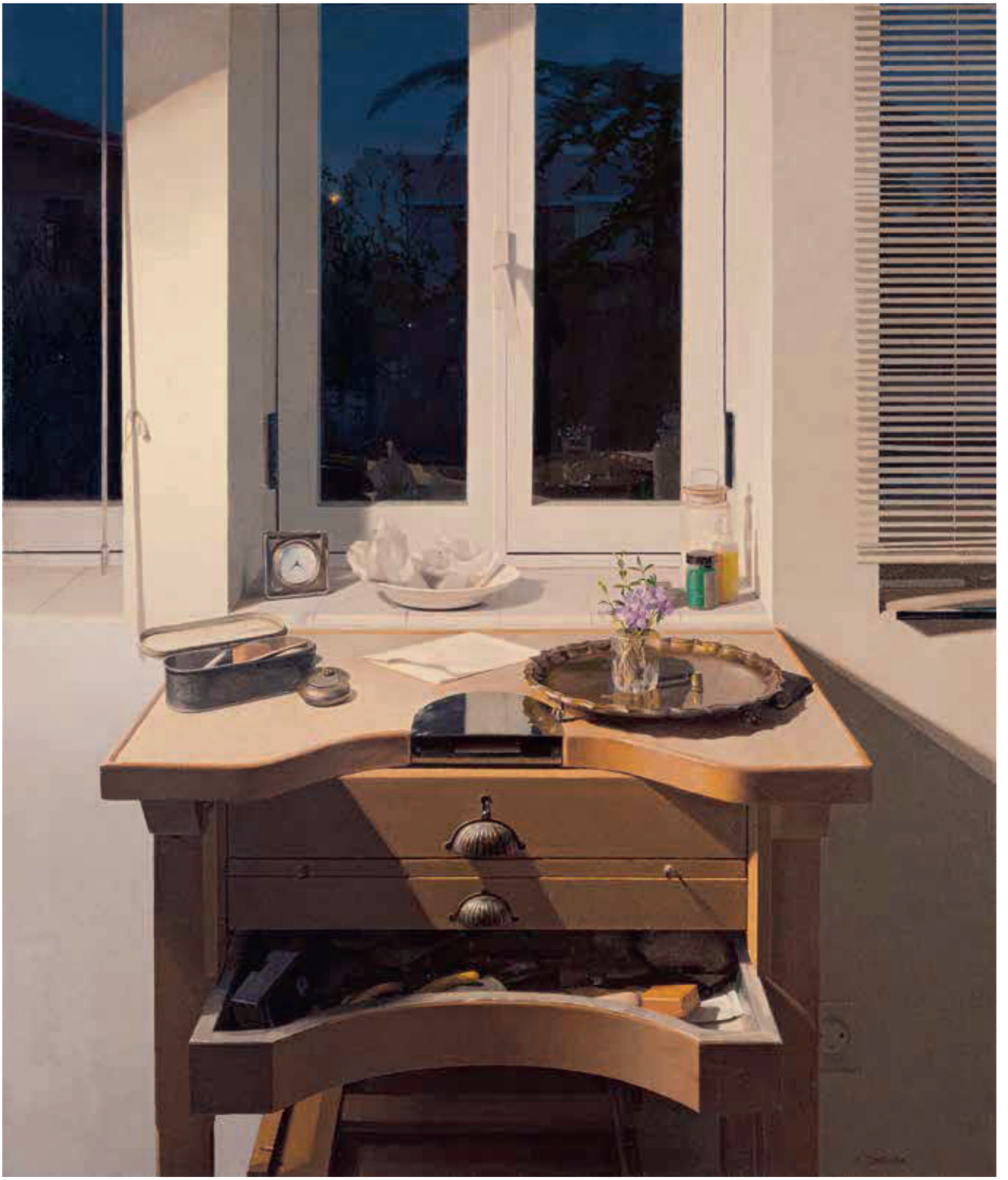


58

Isabel Quintanilla
Nocturne, 1988–89
Oil on canvas, 100 × 90 cm
Kunststiftung Christa und
Nikolaus Schües

59

Isabel Quintanilla
Night, 1995
Oil on canvas, 130 × 110 cm
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo
de Madrid

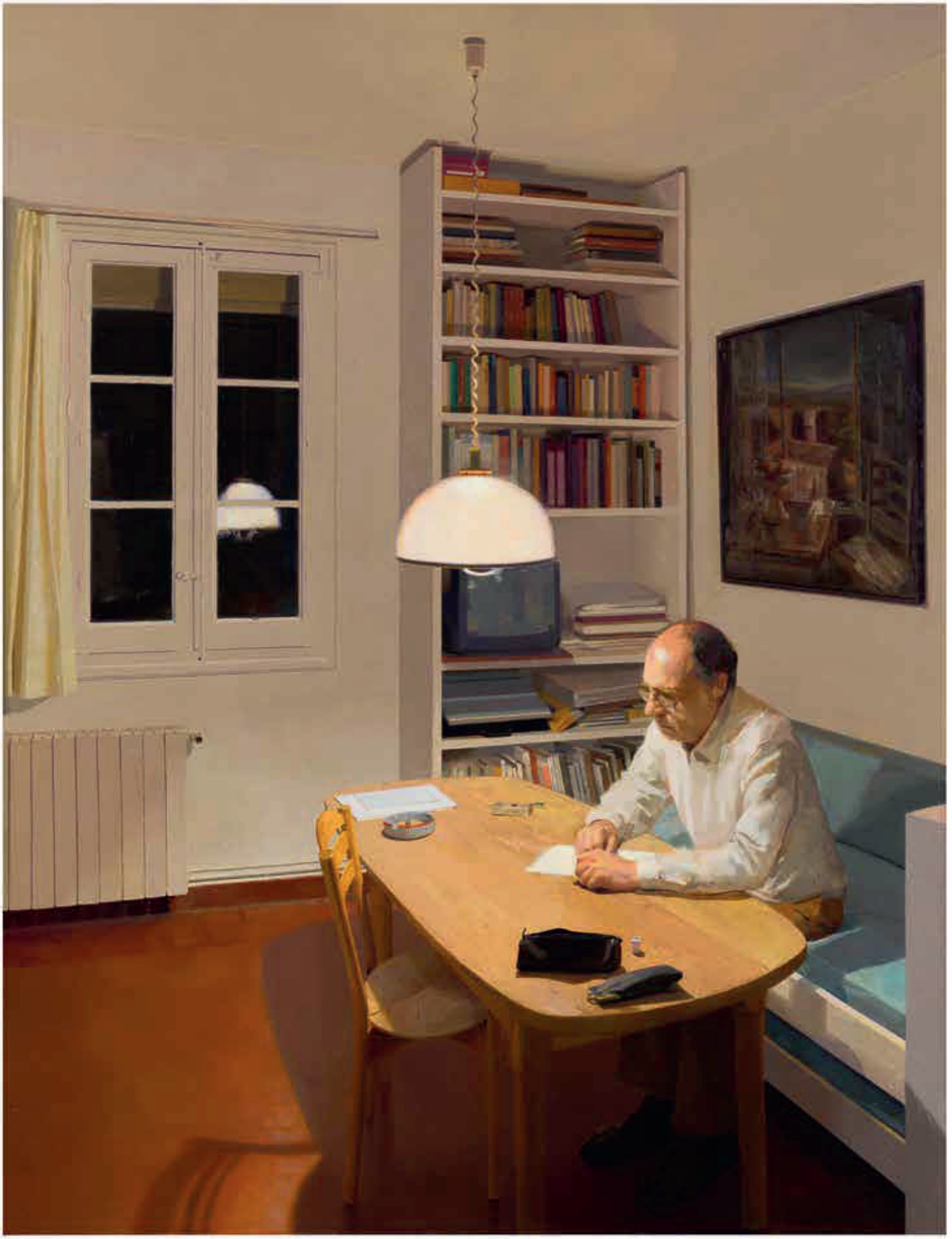


60

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior at Night, 2003
Oil on canvas affixed
to panel, 90 × 80 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

61

Isabel Quintanilla
Interior. Paco writing, 1995
Oil on canvas affixed
to panel, 130 × 100 cm
Private collection



MORE THAN COLLEAGUES

62

Esperanza Parada
Still Life on Black Table, 1959
Oil on canvas, 60 × 80.5 cm
Private collection

63

Esperanza Parada
Still Life with Newspaper and Mirror, 1959
Tempera and oil on panel, 57.5 × 102 cm
Private collection

64

Esperanza Parada
Still Life with Three Chairs and Palette, 1960
Oil on panel, 55.5 × 100.5 cm
Private collection

65

Esperanza Parada
Nocturnal Landscape, 1959
Tempera and oil on panel,
60 × 70 cm
Private collection

66

María Moreno
Window, 1972
Oil on panel, 120 × 96 cm
Private collection

67

María Moreno
Garden in Tomelloso, 1975
Pencil on paper, 73 × 102 cm
Private collection, Germany

68

María Moreno
The Garden in Madrid, 1982–86
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
87.5 × 105.4 cm
Private collection, Reus. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid

69

María Moreno
Still Life, 1996
Oil on canvas, 97 × 127 cm
Private collection

70

Amalia Avia
Cristina's House, 1983
Oil on panel, 45 × 96 cm
Cristina Alberdi Collection

71

Amalia Avia
Piti's Balcony, 1988
Oil on panel, 62 × 35.5 cm
Muñoz Avia Family Collection

72

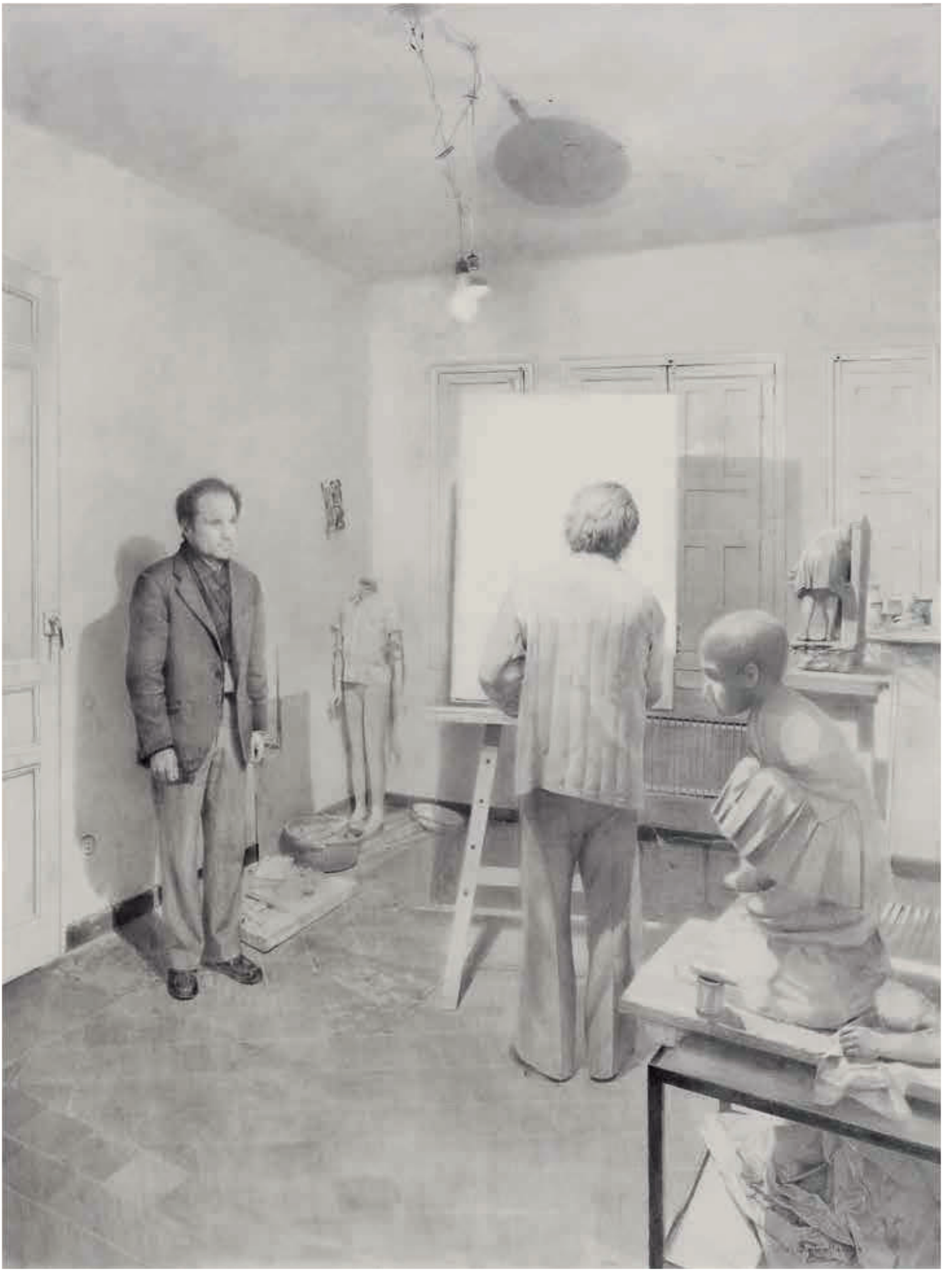
Amalia Avia
The Dining Room, 1987
Oil on panel, 81 × 50 cm
Muñoz Avia Family Collection

73

Amalia Avia
The Dresser, 1989
Oil on panel, 100 × 81 cm
Muñoz Avia Family Collection

74

Isabel Quintanilla
The Artist's Husband drawing Antonio López, 1974
Pencil on paper, 95 × 71 cm
Private collection, Germany



HORTUS CONCLUSUS.
DOMESTIC NATURE

75

Isabel Quintanilla
The Academy Garden, 1963
Oil and tempera on canvas,
80 × 100 cm
Private collection, Madrid

76

Isabel Quintanilla
The Lemons, 1965
Oil on panel, 55 × 70 cm
Private collection

77

Isabel Quintanilla
Garden, 1966
Oil on panel, 122 × 217 cm
Private collection

78

Isabel Quintanilla
Calle Urola Courtyard (the Scaffolding), 1968
Oil on panel, 72.5 × 57.5 cm
Private collection

Courtyard of the studio on Calle Urola, around 1968

79

Isabel Quintanilla
Stocks on Garden Canes, 1970
Pencil on paper, 60 × 45 cm
Private collection, Zurich. Courtesy Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid

80

Isabel Quintanilla
Wall outside the Calle Urola Studio, 1969
Oil on panel, 100 × 70 cm
Banco de España Collection

81

Isabel Quintanilla
Grapes in the Courtyard, 1972
Oil on panel, 61 × 81 cm
Private collection

82

Isabel Quintanilla
Pansies, 1971
Oil on panel, 58 × 74 cm
Private collection, Madrid

83

Isabel Quintanilla
The Cypress, 1978
Pencil on paper, 75 × 52 cm
Private collection, Madrid

84

Isabel Quintanilla
The Fig Tree, 1973
Pencil on paper, 96 × 72 cm
Private collection, Germany

85

Isabel Quintanilla
Inner Courtyard, 1976
Oil on panel, 46 × 42 cm
Galerie Brockstedt,
Berlin

86

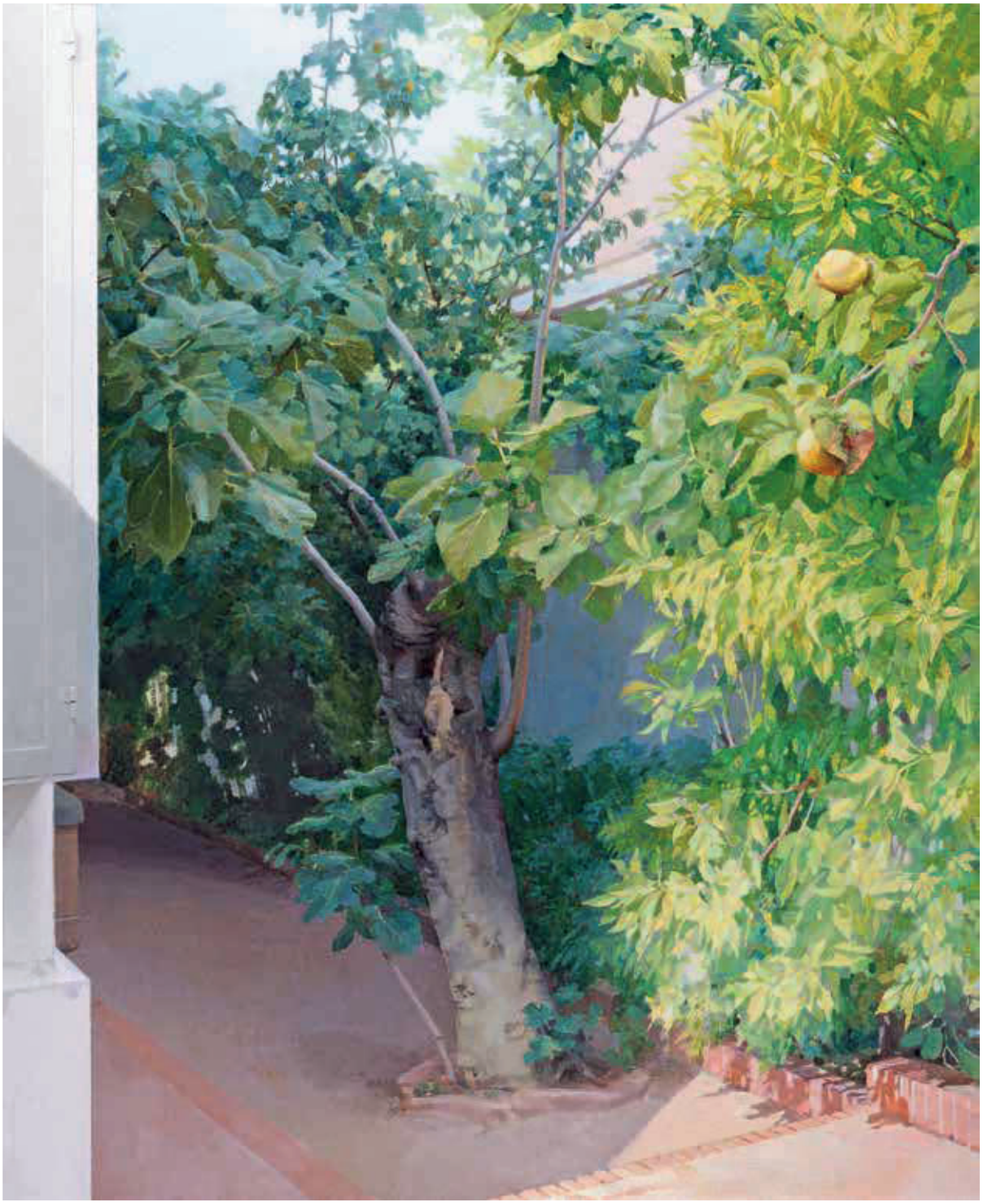
Isabel Quintanilla
Alfonso XIII Residential District,
Calle Primera, 1994
Oil on panel, 81.5 × 62 cm
CaixaBank

87

Isabel Quintanilla
Window, 1986
Oil on canvas affixed
to panel, 60 × 80 cm
Private collection

88

Isabel Quintanilla
Home Entrance, 1987
Oil on canvas, 82 × 82 cm
H. Greten



89

Isabel Quintanilla
The Fig Tree, 1995
Oil on canvas,
104 × 85 cm
Private collection

90

Isabel Quintanilla
Summer, 1992
Oil on canvas, 138.5 × 109 cm
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo del País Vasco
Collection. Artium Museoa, Vitoria-Gasteiz

CHERISHED LANDSCAPES

91

Isabel Quintanilla
The River Jarama, 1966
Oil on panel, 49 × 79 cm
Private collection

92

Isabel Quintanilla
The Cantabrian Sea, 1973
Oil on panel, 68 × 100 cm
Frank Harders-Wuthenow Collection.
Courtesy Galería Leandro Navarro,
Madrid

93

Isabel Quintanilla
The Sea, 1980
Oil on panel, 80 × 100 cm
Private collection

94

Isabel Quintanilla
Wood Pasture Landscape in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 1976
Oil on panel, 47 × 60 cm
Private collection, Madrid

95

Isabel Quintanilla
Sierra de Guadarrama, 1990–91
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
79.5 × 100 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

96

Isabel Quintanilla
View of Riaza, 1990–91
Oil on canvas affixed to panel,
90 × 100.5 cm
Private collection, Reus. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid

97

Isabel Quintanilla
Sierra de Santa Cruz, 1998–99
Oil on canvas, 85 × 104 cm
Kunststiftung Christa und Nikolaus Schües

98

Isabel Quintanilla
Sevilla la Nueva Landscape, 2001
Oil on canvas, 130 × 100 cm
Private collection

99

Isabel Quintanilla
Station, 1979
Oil on canvas, 65.5 × 86 cm
Private collection. Courtesy
Galería Leandro Navarro, Madrid

100

Isabel Quintanilla
Urumea Building in San Sebastián by Moneo, Marquet, Unzurrunzaga and Zulaica, 1982
Oil on canvas, 37 × 30 cm
Antón Capitel

101

Isabel Quintanilla
Il Fontanone, Rome, 1980
Oil on canvas, 56 × 52 cm
Private collection

102 [next double-page spread]

Isabel Quintanilla
Rome, 1998–99
Oil on canvas affixed
to panel, 135 × 220 cm
Galerie Brockstedt, Berlin

103

Francisco López
Portrait of Isabel, 1972
Polychrome wood,
51 × 48 × 28 cm
Private collection

104

Francisco López
Figure of Isabel, 1978
Polychrome wood,
165 × 56 × 46 cm
Private collection

RECOLLECTIONS

Tomás Bañuelos
Sculptor

The Many Sides of Isabel

I recall the many years of friendship and collaboration that began when I was still a student at the school, the many assignments involving long periods spent in the studio with Paco and Maribel [Isabel], and the many visitors and friends they welcomed with affection and admiration.

The phone would ring and Maribel would take the call upstairs, launching into a conversation in an understanding and affectionate tone before coming downstairs humming or tapping her feet – the flamenco lessons were paying off – and offering us a cup of tea while shoveling coal into the stove and complaining: "It's so cold! This time the coal they've brought isn't from your village, Tomás," as well as making comments about work: "Go on Paco, let me do it! [...] Can't you see...?" Grabbing the modeling stick from her, Paco would light a cigarette and take a break, still paying attention to her suggestions in complete harmony.

Maribel would be pottering about in the kitchen while the cat was mewing outside the window. It would finally come in through the cat flap, exchange expressions of affection with us and stand purring between her legs while she put down its bowl, opened the fridge and cut us a piece of cheese: "Are you hungry?", she would ask. On the small kitchen counter she would lay out a few morsels on a small glass dish that she took to the microwave. Sitting at the table by the window, she would leaf through the papers, reading the news out aloud, and do the crossword, putting a few questions to us. Before we could answer she would be darting upstairs where the picture that was awaiting her was coming along nicely – like the stew she'd just thrown together while the rest of us were eating the cheese.

I've been to the workshop so many times when they weren't there, though their presence was always latent. I'd worked in so many studios and had always been fascinated by their smell, which was different in each one. This studio's was uniquely special because of Maribel's fondness for essential oils made from plants she grew in the garden or brought from Trujillo; turpentine, oil paint, wax, plasticine and clay – all impregnated with the scent of cleanliness and welcoming harmony; the garden with its laurel bushes, the apricot tree, the fig tree, the quince tree and the lemon verbena; the blackbirds that learned from the nightingale, the cooing of the turtle doves and the 'sun of the Maribels' that Paco captured in sensitive and painstaking sculptures in many versions... the adventure of life: art school, friends, the Academy in Rome and also their home.

Leticia Feduchi
Visual artist

Isabel has always been a role model for me. Ever since I was a child, I was fascinated by her bowl of fruit that hung in a very special room in my grandparents' home. It would be safe to say that for me that picture was my grandparents' house. That's why her painting has been part of me since even before I knew I was going to be a painter.

Later on, as a young woman, I visited her studio one day. It was amazing. The choice of everyday objects as a subject seemed to me to be unique and modern and, together with her mastery, made an impression on me.

My other encounters with her were always at family events – for example, get-togethers of friends at the home of the Moneos, my aunt and uncle. She may even have seen exhibitions of mine at the Juan Gris gallery in Madrid.

One thing's for sure, she always asked me how my work was going, as did Paco. They were friendly, charming and always generous towards me.

María Pilar Garrido Redondo
Art historian

Canvases that Tell a Story

An artist's oeuvre is generally held to be a self-expression, in a sense. This statement seems to take on its full meaning when applied to Isabel Quintanilla, whose output is a chronicle of her most intimate experiences. A 'stroll' around Quintanilla's oeuvre therefore amounts to surveying an intimate world like that of so many other women but in her case converted into a lasting art of the highest standard. Her painting, which is truly exceptional, is a reflection of emotions and experiences, of learning and work.

To speak of this painter's life is to speak of her oeuvre. As in a diary, her personal and artistic biography is captured in the day-to-day experiences reflected in her paintings. In them real-life and pictorial experience merge into one, signaling dates, posing challenges, and charting a personal and aesthetic journey to which her painting bears witness. Analyzing her artistic progression is tantamount to surveying her life.

It might thus be said that Isabel Quintanilla's oeuvre is an autobiography in pictures, because art and life, the artist's trade and gaze, and mastery and feeling are entwined in it. We find snippets of existence in each picture, caught unawares by her brush, captured in paint. Her pictorial output is a sort of family chronicle in oil and pencil, a faithful reflection of what she was, what she saw and what she did.

Indeed, from her first to her last paintings Quintanilla attempted to convey to us the emotions that the nature of things aroused in her, choosing as a means of doing so her closest environment, the privacy of her home and her studio, the streets in her neighborhood, still lifes and landscapes bathed in light and unveiled by her – a light that surprised and captivated her, that revealed to her the existence of the motif and urged her to paint it, causing time to stand still, saving it from perishing.

She lent her voice to objects, rooms and landscapes so that, from the apparent silent stillness of the canvas, they leave a testimony and are capable of conveying to the viewer the feelings, experiences, memories and emotions of a life – her own – devoted to and reflected in art.

Esperanza and Marcela López Parada
Nieces of Isabel Quintanilla

When aunt Maribel [Isabel] came to our house, she used to play with us, drawing a house for us on two sheets of paper placed one on top of the other, joined together at what was supposed to be the roof. On the upper sheet she sketched the façade with large windows, a door like ours with wooden coffering and a little bell instead of a push button, sometimes a balcony. We cut around the windows using blunt-tip scissors and opened them to reveal the bedroom, the sitting room, the hall behind the door and the kitchen… all of which she had outlined in plain colors on the bottom sheet in felt-tip pen.

This was a game from her own childhood that she couldn't play with our cousin Francesco, who was too clumsy for this fiddly business of cutouts and surprises, the expectation of opening something that was closed and discovering what was concealed behind it.

For us that game is a perfect metaphor of her paintings, of her detailed rooms and white buildings, a symbol and representation of the pictorial relationship her work established between the exterior, almost intimate and silent, and the interior, luminous and radiant like a revealed secret, the pair that make up the inside and outside and the painting as the work that connects, relates and even inverts them.

You could live in her red wall with a rosebush, but you couldn't drink the compact, physical water contained in her material glass, as round and self-sufficient as a box, a receptacle without windows or cracks.

Nor did she outwardly display any flaws: she was quick-witted, courageous and determined. She seemed to know what she wanted and to have made a deal with a reality that she wasn't going to betray, a reality whose alliance she won through faith and trusting devotion. She was in command of her determination and strength – something that, given the volatile ambiguity we had to navigate due to my mother's characteristically Galician melancholy, aroused as much admiration as it did envy.

I [Esperanza] remember the day I arrived at the Academy of Spain in Rome on a scholarship, just as my uncle Paco had years earlier. Maribel had traveled there to be with him when they were newlyweds and had rented a room in a guesthouse in the Trastevere district where my uncle left burn marks on the sheets from smoking on the sly.

On the walls of the modest staircase leading up to the art theory scholarship holders' quarters I was greeted with an enlarged and framed copy of a well-known photograph of her in the Tomelloso countryside with Antonio López and María Moreno.

My aunt was in one of the corners, dressed in jeans and a bomber jacket, with her shoulder-length haircut and the chiseled cheekbones that drove my classmates wild. Looking downwards, she seemed strong yet delicate, part of the scene yet allusive, as if at once inside and outside the photograph, as if gazing from an exterior at an interior she would help reveal forever, which she would paint as a task that was also a fixed and powerful way of feeling.

Antonio López
Painter and sculptor

I met Mari and Isabel in 1954, first Isabel in Lucio's tower. The two were great friends, likeable, cheerful and very pretty.

Isabel and I were fascinated by all things modern. Very early on Paco gave me some postcards of Picasso and was the first to tell me about De Chirico. It was Lucio, who was older and traveled abroad, that spoke to us of things we didn't know about, though I must say that the Academy's library was very good. I recall taking out some handbooks on Cézanne and Matisse. I couldn't express reality without being familiar with modern art. Isabel and Paco began to take an interest in figurative art after their stay in Rome. Isabel learned a lot about methods there and I often consulted her; that's what's caused her paintings and mine to age so well. While they were in Italy we stayed in contact by letter and sent each other drawings; it's a shame not to have kept any of that.

My first trip to Germany was in 1973: I went to take some of Mari's works to an exhibition they were going to hold on her. Mari, Paco and Isabel were overjoyed about the great success they'd had there. At the same time they attended to matters and requests from Spain. It was compatible. Why did people like them so much in Germany? Why shouldn't they have?! People always like realism. Although I've always heard that figurative art is in crisis, it's not true. Those generations liked it and that's why they bought their works. When something is very good you have to have faith in it. Our painting has an irresistible charm and is better than any convention. Isabel was a painter who absorbed everything she discovered. When you see her painting, you feel that it was done by a specific person, there's a truth that can only come from someone who's looking.

I began painting Paco and Isabel having dinner. I did two pictures on the subject. I don't know where they can be. I was fortunate to have met them; our friendship survived all the difficulties – and there were quite a few. I often dream about them. I've come across a lot of people during my lifetime, but it only happens with them.

Isabel's painting is in this exhibition; Isabel's painting underpins everything.

Francesco López
The artist's son

I'll always remember my mother's determination to do things properly. This quest for perfectionism that comes across so well in her pictures extended to all areas of life. That's why she was a role model for me. She gave priority to managing and organizing things and keeping order above all, and applied that discipline to all her pastimes unrelated to painting – and there were a lot of them. I mentioned to Leticia de Cos, the curator of the exhibition who's made such an effort to compile her entire oeuvre, that I found it very hard to write a short testimony with so many images in my mind – some are vague recollections, others are more defined in my memory, but they all flash past like stations a train doesn't stop at. Perhaps childhood is the period I can pause at, and in which I feel more comfortable about referring to her in a few words. My childhood was her studio. Her studio and the countryside. Always the countryside. We were forever traipsing around fascinating spots, touring new places, climbing hills, exploring caves or shelters, digging at sites, visiting churches and searching for fossils. In fact, she was an active member of the Spanish Association of Friends of Archaeology for many years. She devoted much of her time to taking part in excavations, attending lectures and sourcing publications, and I accompanied her on these comings and goings willingly, under no obligation. Whenever possible, she engaged in outdoor activities – this applied to both her painting and her pastimes. Painting from life and taking pleasure in nature, always scanning the horizon. Catching a glimpse of a distant castle, a silo, a Pyrenean crag, the Atlantic Ocean or domesticated countryside in pursuit of traces of the past. There was no hermitage, church, chapel, cave, shelter or stone that didn't arouse her curiosity. Later on in Madrid we would scour the bookshops in search of some publication that was hard to find or attend lectures to which I happily accompanied her despite finding them boring or incomprehensible. And all this always had to be done properly and taken to its ultimate consequences. She found time to restore furniture, bind books, sew and mend clothing, learn to dance flamenco at an academy and sit down at a goldsmith's bench to polish a piece of jewelry. She had books piled up in every corner, as well as papers, photographs, documents and clippings of reviews published in newspapers and magazines, all kept in strict order and neatly labeled; this has greatly helped me to follow her tracks and put together a map of her private life. I haven't had to go to desperate lengths to find anything important; she always left a trail, like that made by ants crawling across dry grass. She often became discouraged and moody when she couldn't find something, which was evidently a result of taking on too much, of setting herself too many tasks and being unable to handle them. She was never wary of technological progress; on the contrary, if it helped assuage this thirst for curiosity and made life easier, saving her time, she was all for it. She discovered the internet towards the end of her life and enjoyed it in a very natural manner, as if she were not surprised by its arrival. This historicistic attitude shaped by her fondness for reading about the past most likely set her in very good stead for the future. I have no doubt that she would have carried on squeezing the most out of time had she not passed away. She left behind this marvelous oeuvre embodying her history as an eternal present.

Francisco López
Sculptor and husband of Isabel Quintanilla [1992]

I've always liked to take my time to watch with interest the sight of Maribel [Isabel] working on one of her pictures. I learn from seeing her attentive and self-engrossed, displaying a discipline I don't have, questioning reality with her gaze and laying out the colors on the palette in search of the passing light that's captivated her. I don't judge the absolute or relative value her work may have – as Machado said, "judging or correcting ourselves entails applying another's yardstick to one's own cloth" – but her paintings and drawings have brought me those aesthetic emotions, those legitimate satisfactions, that spiritual pleasure which only art objects can provide us with and that no other thing in life can imitate. And as an artist's satisfactions furthermore don't lie in what is done but rather in what is assumed to be done, I shelter behind my assumptions and that's enough for me.

Herbert Meyer-Ellinger
Gallerist of the group of Madrid Realists in Germany (1971–80)

During a meeting to establish the schedule of future exhibitions at the gallery, Ernest Wuthenow – one of the five partners of the Frankfurter Kunstkabinett Hanna Bekker vom Rath – proposed featuring pieces by a group of young Spanish realist artists whose work had never been shown in Germany. Ernest lived and worked in Madrid, though for business reasons he spent long periods in Frankfurt, where he had a second home.

We were intrigued and included a few works by Antonio López Torres, Antonio López García, Francisco López, María Moreno and Isabel Quintanilla in the gallery's early 1970 catalogue of artists. The resounding success of this initial proposal led us to organize an exhibition for that autumn.

Together with Ernest, I set about visiting the artists' studios in Madrid and putting together a selection of works for that exhibition. The trip was a marvelous experience for me, and I felt that they were very excited about the prospect of showing their work in Germany for the first time.

Magischer Realismus in Spanien heute [Magical realism in Spain today] ran at the Frankfurter Kunstkabinett from 10 September to 18 October 1970. As was expected given the previous experience, this presentation was a great success. More than anything, it laid the foundations for securing them important contacts with museums and galleries and it was agreed to hold future exhibitions. Shortly after the opening, art dealer Godula Buchholz decided to go on to host the whole show in Munich after it closed in Frankfurt.

In the summer of 1971, after the Frankfurter Kunstkabinett was dissolved, the Galerie Herbert Meyer-Ellinger was established in Frankfurt and officially opened on 5 October that year. I took responsibility for representing the Spanish artists except for Antonio López García, who by that time had a contract with the Marlborough Gallery in London. Ernest Wuthenow, a discreet partner, played a very important role in ensuring the continuity of the contract and keeping in contact with the Spanish artists.

It wasn't possible to stage solo shows for each of them during the first years of our collaboration because there weren't enough works, but during the following years we gradually assembled pieces for future individual exhibitions.

Isabel Quintanilla's first solo exhibition in Germany took place at the gallery in 1974. It ran from 21 May to 29 June and was entitled *Isabel Quintanilla: Ölbidler und Zeichnungen* [Isabel Quintanilla: oil paintings and drawings]. The Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, among others, purchased drawings by her. In 1979 the Kunsthalle in Nuremberg bought another

drawing of hers during a show entitled *Zeichnungen heute: Meister der Ziechnung* [Drawings today: Masters of drawing].

The contract with the artists was transferred to the Hamburg-based Galerie Brockstedt in 1980.

Rafael Moneo
Architect

What Isabel Quintanilla always wanted was for her pictures to be a faithful testament to the world around us – painting "what things are like" rather than exploring "how we see them." And not just things but also the houses we live in, the cities we inhabit and the fields we cultivate. What Quintanilla pursued as a painter was to reveal to us, to show us what the "soul of things, houses, cities, fields" was. Isabel used to say: "I see reality and it arouses such great emotion in me that I want to paint it, as if that emotion I feel could be conveyed in what I'm doing." Amazement at a reality that moved and disarmed her and of which she wished to leave a testament through her works. She shared her way of understanding what art has meant to humankind with her husband, sculptor Francisco López Hernández, and we should be grateful that her work has enabled us to view everything around us as something that has a life of its own, arousing in us a commendable love and respect for what exists. Quintanilla's talent, sensitivity and skill take second place to the value of her attitude towards the world, an attitude in which ethics and aesthetics are indistinguishable from one another.

A major exhibition like this one, which highlights the prominent place Quintanilla's work enjoys in what has been called the group of Madrid Realists, is also an opportunity to recall the woman through her paintings. Her still lifes and landscapes remind me of the young student brimming with enthusiasm who was just starting out at the school of the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts and is depicted in her delightfully drawn *Self-Portrait* (1962) [cat. 1]. And her late works – the interiors of her house or landscapes, be they of the city or countryside – bring to mind the mature Isabel, cheerful and willing to help, who sat as a model for her husband so many times when he captured her serene beauty. An Isabel who combined sensitivity with intelligence and whose skill at whatever activity she set her hand to did not prevent her from always displaying her creativity. The sensation that Isabel Quintanilla lives on is what I most value about this exhibition.

Íñigo Navarro
Galería Leandro Navarro

After joining the Galería Leandro Navarro in 1987, I often went with my father to visit Francisco López and Isabel Quintanilla's studio on Calle Primera in the Alfonso XIII residential district in Madrid.

Francisco's workshop was on the ground floor of their lovely house, where it was always a delight to see the sculptures and drawings he was working on. His friendly and endearing manner made for a pleasurable visit. Projects always cropped up and rarely did we come away without a sculpture for the gallery.

Isabel's studio was on the first floor. On entering you stepped inside her world where everything was everyday and familiar. There was normally some sort of still-life arrangement, objects from her close environment that she was painting. Flowers, fruit, Duralex glasses and plates, scissors, thimbles, a porcelain cup, a watch… everything was part of her life and it was fascinating to see the process whereby this world turned into stunningly beautiful pictures full of energy and technical perfection.

Isabel was an exceptional person. She made you feel at home in her house, as if you were someone very close to her. She was very straightforward in her opinions and spoke about Spanish cultural life in a very natural way. I had the privilege of witnessing many of her works, and in 1996 we managed to put together a solo exhibition with some of her most significant paintings.

She took part in countless group shows that we organized, for which we commissioned a few specific themes. She always supported our business and I believe that it's due to us that part of her oeuvre has remained in Spain, as her exclusive commercial agreement with German galleries meant that for years much of her work was purchased by international collectors.

She is constantly remembered at our gallery. Her oeuvre continues to be part of our exhibitions and projects.

Susana Pérez
Conservator-restorer
at the Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza

I reencountered artists Isabel Quintanilla and her husband Francisco López in connection with the exhibition on the Madrid Realists held at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in 2016.

He was a great sculptor and undoubtedly one of my best teachers when I studied at the school of the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts. Loved by all the students for his great familiarity, he knew how to get the best out of each one of us. At the museum I had the privilege of working on one of his sculptures and was happy to receive news that he was pleased with the result.

I have only words of admiration for Isabel Quintanilla. She was an outstanding painter with a huge ability to transmit what was around her. She draws us into her compositions and causes us to feel the space of places that have been part of our everyday lives.

The attention Quintanilla paid to each painting, the preparatory drawing, the choice of materials and her delicate palette were part of that perfection that comes naturally to the best artists.

It is not common for a conservator-restorer to work on paintings whose creator is still alive, and on the occasion of that exhibition we had long discussions about her methods, which always reveal the artist's personality. It was a pleasure to learn about the painstaking execution process, which attests to the extraordinary technique that underlies the naturalness and apparent simplicity of her paintings.

Her marvelous work and human warmth left a mark on all those of us who knew her.

ISABEL QUINTANILLA: BIOGRAPHY

For everything is in reality. What the artist does is transform that reality into another reality, which is art.

Isabel Quintanilla

Isabel Quintanilla at the school of the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts, Madrid, 1954–55

Isabel as a child with her mother, aunt and cousin, 1946

1938–1948

Isabel Quintanilla Martínez was born in the Pácifico district of Madrid on 22 July 1938. The daughter of José Antonio and María Ascensión, she subsequently had a younger sister, Josefina. During the Civil War her father volunteered for the Republican Army. Due to his training as a mining engineer, he joined as a captain, later becoming a commander. Following the war, he was arrested by the Franco regime. After serving in a Madrid prison, he was transferred to the Valdenoceda concentration camp (Burgos), where he died in 1941 as a result of the appalling conditions. Isabel was barely three. Her mother provided for the family by working as a seamstress.[1]

Isabel Quintanilla
Towards the Casón, 1997
Drypoint on copper plate,
25 × 30.5 cm
Private collection

↓

1949–1953

After attending several schools, Isabel completed her higher secondary education at the Beatriz Galindo state secondary school in Madrid.

At the age of eleven she took drawing and painting lessons with the painter Trinidad de la Torre in the Casa de las Bolas on Calle Alcalá. She also occasionally attended the studios of artists Maroussia Valero (1885–1955) and Manuel Gutiérrez Navas (1890–1971). To prepare for admission to the school of the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando [San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts], she enrolled for night classes at the Escuela de Artes y Oficios [School of Arts and Crafts] on Calle Don Ramón de la Cruz,[2] where she won the special prize in 1953–54. Like many other students, in her free time Isabel went to draw at the Casón del Buen Retiro, which at that time housed a museum of art reproductions. There she practiced copying plaster models of classical sculptures to stand her in good stead for the art school entrance exam, and discovered Gothic and Renaissance sculpture.

1 For further information about her childhood, see María del Pilar Garrido Redondo, *Isabel Quintanilla: la pintura como autobiografía* [doctoral thesis], Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2019, pp. 303–7.

2 As Isabel herself recalled: "Drawing statues, made of plaster. You started with small things and gradually moved on to bigger things, figures. [...] There were also classes in making casts, modelling, painting, line drawing and even culture. They gave you a very good grounding." Ibid., p. 309.

1954–1959

Isabel passed the art school entrance exam in June 1954. Applicants needed to be at least fifteen, the minimum age to be allowed to copy nudes from life. Isabel already knew painter Lucio Muñoz (1929–1989) from the Casón, and through him she met Antonio López (b. 1936) and brothers Julio (1930–2018) and Francisco López Hernández (1932–2017). María Moreno (1933–2020), whom she had already met at the Casón, was in the same year as her and became a lifelong friend.

In 1959 Isabel completed her studies and qualified as a teacher of drawing and painting. In September she received a teaching assistantship grant. She chose to serve as assistant to Professor Latiana, her former teacher and head of department at the Beatriz Galindo secondary school. She gave classes in artistic drawing and line drawing.

Her work was shown for the first time in a group exhibition entitled *Los niños* [The children] organized by the Granada-based Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta.

Landscaping class in Casa de Campo park, February 1956

1960–1964

On 26 October 1960 Isabel married Francisco López, that year's winner of the grand prize for art, consisting of a scholarship to study at the Academia Española de Bellas Artes de Roma [Spanish Academy of Fine Art in Rome]. The young couple moved to Italy in November. Isabel attended courses at the Istituto per l'Arte e il Restauro [Institute of Art and Restoration]. In Rome they interacted with other Spanish artists and musicians as well as foreign artists on scholarships from other institutions. Among others, they met and became close friends with essayist and poet Giorgio Agamben and musician Marcello Panni, who in turn introduced them to fellow composer Nino Rota. With them they attended shootings of films by Federico Fellini.[3] The couple thus came into contact with a much broader and more stimulating cultural scene than that of Spain in those days.

At the time it was compulsory for scholarship winners to travel around Europe for a year. Francisco and Isabel visited France, where they spent three months in Paris; the United Kingdom, mainly London; Switzerland; and Greece, where they stayed for another three months in Delphi. Their first solo exhibitions were held in Caltanissetta and Palermo (Sicily).

Isabel traveled to Madrid to give birth to her son Francesco.

Isabel and Francisco in Villa Adriana, Rome, around 1960–64

↓

3 "At the time Italian cinema was very prolific and original too, and both Maribel and I were keen admirers of the directors who made those astonishing films: De Sica, Fellini, Visconti, [...] and many others [...]." Francisco López, "Maribel," pp. 129–31, in *Pinceladas de realidad: Amalia Avia, María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla* [exh. cat. A Coruña, Museo de Belas Artes da Coruña], Santiago de Compostela, Consellería de Cultura, Educación e Ordenación Universitaria, Dirección Xeral do Patrimonio Cultural, 2005, p. 130.

Isabel Quintanilla in
a photograph of the 1950s

1965

The couple returned to Madrid, where they lived in the family home on Calle Menorca and worked in a rented studio on Calle Urola. Conscious of the fact that it was not easy to earn a living from art in Spain, especially for women, Isabel took up teaching again. She secured a job at Nuestra Señora Santa María, a school in Madrid.

1966

Isabel's first solo exhibition, held at Galería Edurne, mainly featured works executed in Rome. It was a great success with critics and public alike and practically all the pieces on display were sold.

Francisco López painting in a
street in downtown Madrid, 1973
Photograph by Stefan Moses

↓

1970

Galería Egam staged a solo exhibition of Isabel's work in Madrid.[4] Through this show the artist met collector Ernest Wuthenow, a founding partner of the iconic Galería Juana Mordó (established in 1964), who was responsible for the international promotion of the artists represented by the gallery and some of their colleagues. He played a fundamental role in building a network of contacts with prominent European galleries that included Spanish artists in their shows. Wuthenow accompanied the artists around Europe, acting as an interpreter and providing all kinds of support.

Wuthenow and Hanna Bekker vom Rath organized their first exhibition of the work of the Spanish realist group entitled *Magischer Realismus in Spanien heute* [Magical realism in Spain today] at the Kunstkabinett in Frankfurt. It featured works by Isabel Quintanilla, Amalia Avia, Antonio López, Julio López, Francisco López, Antonio López Torres (1902–1987) and María Moreno. The show traveled to several German cities and toured France and the United States.

Isabel Quintanilla with her
son Francesco photographed
by Francisco López

4 "After Egam I started to become known. I appeared in international newspapers, I was at Documenta in '77, in Paris, in Basel [...] Though not from Spain but from Germany. It was all arranged from Germany." In Garrido Redondo 2019, see note 1 above, p. 66.

Isabel painting in the courtyard of her studio on Calle Primera

←

1972

Isabel took part in her first group exhibition in New York at the Staempfli Gallery.

1973

She participated in *Mit Kamera, Pinsel und Spritzpistole: Realistische Kunst in unserer Zeit* [With camera, paintbrush and spray can: realist art in our time] at the Städtische Kunsthalle Recklinghausen.

1974

Isabel's first solo show in Germany was held at the Galerie Herbert Meyer-Ellinger in Frankfurt: *Isabel Quintanilla: Ölbidler und Zeichnungen* [Isabel Quintanilla: oil paintings and drawings].

She took part in a major exhibition entitled *Kunst nach Wirklichkeit: Ein neuer Realismus in Amerika und in Europa* [Art after reality: a new realism in America and in Europe]. After opening at the Kunstverein in Hannover, it traveled to the Centre national d'art contemporain in Paris (now the Centre Pompidou) as *Hyperréalistes américains/Réalistes européens* [American hyperrealists/ European realists], the Städtische Kunsthalle in Munich and the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam as *Kijken naar de werkelijkheid* [Looking at reality], ending at the Palazzo Reale in Milan.

Works by Isabel Quintanilla, María Moreno, Antonio López, and Francisco and Julio López were featured in *ARS74*, an exhibition held at the Kuvataideakatemia, the Fine Arts Academy of Finland in Helsinki. The show brought together pieces by more than a hundred artists to provide a broad-ranging overview of modern art of the day.

1975

Isabel and her colleagues took part in *Spanische Realisten: Zeichnungen* [Spanish realists: drawings] at the well-known Galerie Kornfeld in Zurich.

1977

Works by Isabel were chosen for *Realität, Hiperrealität, Irrealität* [Reality, hyperreality, unreality], an exhibition held at Documenta 6 in Kassel.

1978

Isabel took part in *Als guter Realist muss ich alles erfinden: Internationaler Realismus heute* [As a good realist, I have to invent everything: international realism today] at the Kunsthaus in Hamburg. This show also included pieces by Francisco López and María Moreno as well as by internationally famous artists such as Gerhard Richter (b. 1932) and David Hockney (b. 1937).

1981

Pittori spagnoli della realtà [Spanish painters of reality], featuring the work of the group of realist painters, was held in Milan.

María Moreno, Francisco López, Isabel Quintanilla and Hans Brockstedt in the north of Germany, 1977

↓

1982

Isabel was awarded a fine arts degree in painting from the Universidad Complutense in Madrid through validation of her earlier qualifications.

1987

Isabel was awarded the City of Darmstadt art prize, which Antonio López had won in 1974. That year her work was shown in a solo exhibition at the Galerie Brockstedt in Hamburg, which in 1980 became her only gallery in Germany.

1992

Isabel's paintings were displayed in a major exhibition staged by the Fundación Marcelino Botín in Santander entitled *Otra realidad: compañeros en Madrid* [Another reality: colleagues in Madrid]. It later traveled to the Casa de las Alhajas in Madrid and to the Ibercaja exhibition hall in Zaragoza. The show featured works by the artists established around the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts but also included abstract painters linked to them both professionally and personally, such as Lucio Muñoz.

1993

Isabel directed a course on graphic work at the Internationale Sommerakademie für Bildende Kunst in Salzburg.

1996

A retrospective of Isabel's work was held at the Centro Cultural del Conde Duque in Madrid, as well as a monographic show at the Galería Leandro Navarro.

Isabel and her husband traveled with María Moreno and Antonio López to Rome, where the Spanish Academy was showing their work.

1999–2000

The Kunsthalle in Darmstadt hosted a major monographic exhibition of Isabel's oeuvre.

Isabel and Francisco in the courtyard of their studio on Calle Primera, 1980s
Photograph by Giorgio Soavi

↓

Isabel and Francisco in their studio on Calle Primera, 2016
Photograph by Jaime Villanueva

↓

2005

Pinceladas de realidad: Amalia Avia, María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla [Strokes of reality: Amalia Avia, María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla] opened at the Museo de Belas Artes da Coruña.

2007

Isabel was included in an exhibition entitled *Doce artistas en el Museo del Prado* [Twelve female artists at the Museo del Prado].

2016

The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza hosted *Realistas de Madrid / Madrid Realists*.

2017

Francisco López died in January. Isabel Quintanilla survived him by only a few months, passing away on 24 October at the age of 79 in Sevilla la Nueva (Madrid).

2021–2022

The Galerie Brockstedt in Berlin staged a posthumous show entitled *Isabel Quintanilla: Gemälde und Zeichnungen* [Isabel Quintanilla: paintings and drawings].

Illustration credits

2024 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: fig. 6
Archivo Antonio López y María Moreno: cat. 66; figs. 2, 8, 24
Archivo Francesco López Quintanilla: image on p. 1, figs. 12, 23, 29, 35, images on pp. 152, 192–97
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