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THE PORTER COLLECTIVE

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THE CENTER LIES AT THE **MARGINS**

By Iñigo de Amescua

Nuria Mora did not have anything planned. She simply painted with friends on empty walls of abandoned businesses, using urban furniture stealthily, illegally, reclaiming her space. She used the street and its surroundings like a late 20th-century Hannah Höch, creating cuts in the metropolitan fabric of large surfaces, advertising, and depersonalization. Nuria is a pioneer and has become a reference by evolving in her work, adding new mediums, “doing,” as she herself asserts. This work philosophy has led her to participate in the Venice Biennale and to exhibit her work in institutions such as the Tate Gallery, the Joan Miró Foundation, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Johannesburg.



bell hooks—yes, that’s how we start this interview, in lowercase but with imposing women—argued that: “marginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation...it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. [...] It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds”. hooks, the pseudonym of the writer and activist Gloria Jean Watkins, granted what happens on the margins a unique, instinctive freedom. Nuria Mora (who studied Interior Architecture and Fine Arts in Madrid) began to show her art on the margins, in public space, before our very eyes, like Basquiat, Futura 2000, Taki 183, or Haring: “I started painting on the street when I was very young, and little by little, I have managed to build a language in that medium, using the street as a playground, as a support, as a place of experimentation and as an open-air studio. All that remains within me and is present in my work today. In fact, you can read those influences in the work of all of us who were part of that scene and continue working today. The street is present in our ways of doing, in our ways of solving. I, for example, feel very comfortable with large formats, I work a lot with textures or rescue graphics from my own street language for the work I do now.” From the street to her debut at Arco 05 with the Vacío 9 gallery, to the Matadero de Madrid, La Casa Encendida (where she intervened the facade), the Museum of Altamira, Le Piloni in Niort, the Museum or the Recoleta in Buenos Aires. Nuria continues to cultivate those relationships and is a member of the Plastic Team collective with friends and artists like SixeArt, Eltono & Nano4814.

We’ll come back to graffiti later, let’s go further back now. Do you remember the beginnings of your relationship with art in the broadest possible sense of the word?

For me, thinking about the beginning of my connection with the arts is like if you were to ask me something like ‘When did you start talking?’ I’m sorry... but I don’t remember. When did I start painting and considering that as art? I think considering what I was doing as art is something that others have seen later... for me, it has always been very natural and also very difficult to define. One thing is art, and another thing is the art market, which is governed by experts, curators, merchants... and another issue is art that may or may not be for sale and may or may not be commercial but is still art.

It can be good or bad, but it is an intrinsic expression of the human being. How do you explain something like Altamira otherwise? Art is a way we humans have of communicating with each other without words and without explanations in between. We are sensitive to certain subtleties or impulses, we are prepared from birth to be sensitive to art and beauty.

So, for you, is it more about emotion than discourse?

Initially, yes, but they also feed off each other. I mean, there are discourses that can move you and that can really stem from a certain type of sensitivity that can be much more rational. This sensitivity can be reflected in a discourse typical of conceptual art or it can come from a more visceral and irrational plane, more primal, from an inexplicable impulse that you yourself cannot explain, to which you are particularly sensitive. Really, the only indispensable ones for creating and appreciating any type of artistic expression are the artists and the people who enjoy the work. It has always



Portrait of Nuria Mora ©Iñigo Amescua
Photography courtesy of estudio Nuria Mora





been part of my life. At home, they always supported me, and I have always been surrounded by materials to paint; it was something natural. Then you start challenging yourself, craving improvement and learning. Drawing can be learned, painting cannot. It has more to do with something subconscious and with something that is within you and, in my case, it is and has always been there. It is a way of communicating with the world, I couldn't explain it better.

Nevertheless, you entered the art world from the margins, the outside.

Yes, and I still inhabit them. The thing is that now I am also part of this circuit. The moment you do something that many people like, the system wants to swallow it up. It is very difficult to remain pure. I arrived at art through painting on the street, and the place from which I defend urban art is from the precarious, the self-managed, the self-produced. From what is done clandestinely, in a critical way and only with the aim of being in the world. The moment that becomes a business, you also lose your discourse. Today I live it without nostalgia; it was natural at a certain moment and is part of my life. Urban art now has often been reduced to large murals, almost always hyperrealistic, sponsored by big brands and city councils. Before, we worked using more means of expression like light, sound, sculpture, glass,...

Today, Nuria's focus begins with a project she has been immersed in since the pandemic alongside SpazioC21, an institution dedicated to promoting the work of contemporary artists rooted in urban art based in Reggio Emilia. An initiative led by two collectors who, as Nuria jokes, have acted as her "Medicis" for some years now and have allowed her to carry out a residency in their facilities and scale up her ceramic project with brilliant multicolored totems that reach up to five meters in height. What else do you have in store for this 2024? "I'm still painting non-stop, very much non-stop, and now I'm going to South Korea for an art fair in Busan, then I have a group exhibition in Belgium and another fair in Copenhagen. Additionally, I'll have a solo show here in Madrid at We Collect." •



