

## Talking about a past event: biographies

This episode has two parts. In the first part I am going to tell you about Leonora Carrington, an artist. In the second part I am going to describe one of her paintings.

### Part I. Leonora Carrington's Biography

Leonora Carrington was born on the sixth of April, 1917. She was born in Lancashire /lánkeshər/, in the northwest of England, the United Kingdom. Her father was a wealthy textile /tékstl/ tycoon. Her mother was Irish, and she told Leonora a lot of stories, Irish tales, for instance. Carrington also had a nanny, who told her Gaelic /géilik/ tales.

Leonora Carrington was expelled from several schools. Teachers thought she was disobedient. Leonora wanted to become an artist. Her father didn't want her to be an artist, but her mother agreed with her daughter. Eventually, her parents finally sent her to Florence, in Italy. After that, she continued studying Art in England.

The young Leonora Carrington saw her first Surrealist painting in Paris when she was ten! And she met a lot of artists there. In 1936 she visited an art exhibition in London by Surrealist painters. She loved Surrealism! Then, in 1937, when she was 20, she met Marx Ernst (a famous Surrealist painter) at a party in London. They fell in love and she ran away with him to Paris.

During the Second World War, the Gestapo in occupied France arrested Marx Ernst. He was taken to a concentration camp. Leonora was really worried! Peggy Guggenheim, his former wife, saved Marx Ernst. Peggy loved him very much and she also loved art and helped artists. Leonora Carrington managed to get to Spain. In Madrid she had a nervous breakdown, and she was taken to an institution in Santander, in the north of Spain. She felt very miserable in that place! Her nanny came to rescue her by submarine!! After that, she travelled to Portugal, where she married a Mexican friend who was a diplomat. After that, they flew to Mexico and they separated. One day, the artist met another artist and married him. They had two children.

Leonora Carrington lived and worked in Mexico for the rest of her life. She worked on Surrealist drawings and paintings, but also on Surrealist stories. She wrote in English, French and Spanish! She loved animals, and she was curious about esoterism. She did not come back to Europe to live. But she spent time in Chicago and in New York City in the United States. She died in 2011, when she was 94 years old! This makes me very sad. I appreciate artists very much, especially artists as courageous and free as Leonora Carrington!

Well, as you can see, her life was very interesting!

Oh my! I forgot to say something! A dear friend of hers was Remedios Varo, a Spanish painter, a Loyalist (Republicana). Varo also moved to Paris and then to Mexico during the nazi occupation of France. Well, here is what I wanted to say: in some Art books, their works are sometimes mixed up! I think both had a laugh with this!

## Part II. Describing a picture

I'm going to describe one of Leonora Carrington's pictures.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/210014434>

Leonora Carrington, a Surrealist artist, painted this picture in 1937 or 1938. It's called "Self-portrait". You can find this picture in the Met. The Met is the Metropolitan Art Museum in NYC. The artist painted this picture when she was living with Marx Ernst in the south of France, about one year before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In this picture you can see a young woman, the artist, in an empty house. The floor is red and the walls are white. The woman is wearing a brown T-shirt and an olive green jacket. She is wearing white pants ('trousers' for the British!) and Victorian buttoned boots. (Or she is wearing a pair of white pants and a pair of Victorian buttoned boots.) In contrast with the boots, her hair is long and dark and it looks wild! There is a hyena just opposite the artist. And I think they are having a conversation! But the hyena is now looking at us, like Leonora. Both of them are looking at us! Can you feel it?! Hyenas symbolized the Sexual Self for the artist. Behind the woman, there is a flying rocking horse. The horse is white and it is broken. It has no hair! I mean, it doesn't have a mane or a tail! (In British English, it hasn't got a mane or a tail!) There is a window, too. It has yellow drapes (curtains), like in the theater. I think it is a window, but I'm not sure. It could be a mural. Anyway, outside you can see another white horse. But this horse is alive! And it is galloping. Horses symbolized Leonora's Spiritual Self.