

Victoria Cantons

The Hour Before Sunrise / La Hora Bruja

Tube Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Opening 21st March 2025

Victoria Cantons' work inhabits a space where painting, language, and memory intertwine, creating images that resonate on both intimate and collective levels. Her pictorial practice does not conform to a single movement or category; instead, it absorbs and transforms multiple artistic and historical references, ranging from the Renaissance and Baroque to Abstract Expressionism and Conceptual Art. Her paintings carry the gestural quality of Cy Twombly, the emotional intensity of Goya, and the interplay between language and image explored by artists such as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer.

Her artistic universe emerges not only from art history but also from her own biography. Raised in a multicultural environment and educated in fields spanning science, philosophy, and literature, Cantons develops a body of work where identity, perception, and memory are in constant flux. Her life trajectory, shaped by different geographies and cultural influences, has led to a practice in which the personal becomes a lens through which the universal is filtered.

Cantons does not merely reference art history; she interrogates and subverts it, incorporating fragments of images and concepts that have traditionally been dominated by established narratives. Her work confronts the past, reinterprets it, and projects it onto the present, generating a dialogue between tradition and contemporary concerns. In this sense, her work is not purely introspective; it is also an exploration of how art can serve as a field for resistance and re-imagination.

The Material Language of Her Painting

Cantons' painting is deeply rooted in materiality, texture, and colour. Her technique is built in layers, a process where each stroke leaves a trace of time upon the canvas. She works with oil, acrylic, gold leaf, oil stick, graphite, and enamel, exploring how these materials can simultaneously convey fragility and strength.

In her work, colour is not merely a compositional element but an emotional language in itself. Gold and silver evoke the sacred and the timeless; deep reds and blacks infuse the images with drama and urgency; soft and pastel tones introduce moments of pause and contemplation. This interaction of colour palettes gives her paintings an

internal rhythm, leading the viewer from tension to calm, only to be confronted once again by intensity in the next piece.

Another fundamental aspect of her work is the interplay between painterly gesture and image structure. She moves fluidly between expressive, free brushwork and the restrained depiction of figures that seem to emerge from the canvas's surface. This balance between abstraction and figuration creates a dynamic of appearance and disappearance, as if her images were in a constant state of materialization or dissolution.

The use of text in her paintings plays a crucial role in this equilibrium. Words—sometimes clear and direct, other times veiled and fragmented—function as an additional layer within the composition. They are not merely conceptual messages but pictorial elements that contribute to the rhythm and structure of the painting. Works like *Six Words (Hope, Faith, Love, Trust, Dream, Believe) 2023* and *Untitled (Words to live by) 2025* demonstrate how language becomes image, and image, in turn, becomes a form of visual writing.

The Exhibition: A Threshold Between Darkness and Light

There is a moment, just before dawn, when the night still dominates but light begins to emerge. It is a threshold between sleep and wakefulness, a moment of suspension, transition, and possibility. Traditionally, this time of day has been referred to as *The Witching Hour*, a period of mystery, intuition, and revelation.

Victoria Cantons' work inhabits this liminal space, a territory where identity, perception, and memory oscillate between definition and uncertainty. Her paintings, her words, her figures do not offer absolute certainties but rather open-ended questions, echoes of shared experiences, and fragments of stories that are never fully told.

The exhibition *The Hour Before Sunrise / La Hora Bruja* brings together a selection of works that explore these themes through different formats and materials. From written language to the most gestural pictorial expression, the show unfolds as an emotional landscape in which the viewer can find multiple points of entry.

The Works in the Exhibition

Text-based works, such as *Six Words (Hope, Faith, Love, Trust, Dream, Believe) 2023* and *Untitled (Words to live by) 2025*, serve as conceptual anchors within the exhibition. Their words—repeated, layered, or partially obscured—evoke the way language structures our perception of the world and ourselves.

Portraits, like *One day I will laugh about this (transgender woman)* 2022 and *Transgender Woman No.3* 2021, confront us with the presence of bodies in transformation—figures that emerge and dissolve, seeking to assert their existence within the space of the canvas and, by extension, in the world.

Floral and still-life paintings, such as *Untitled (Breathe Hope)* 2023 and *Untitled (What matters on the small scale of the human heart?)* 2023, capture the duality between vitality and decay, turning the rose into a symbol of persistence and vulnerability.

The video piece, *Clinging to My Own Beliefs / Belly Button Fuzz* 2017, introduces a temporal dimension to the exhibition, where moving images complement the static intensity of painting and the written word.

Each of these works contributes to constructing a space of transition and ambiguity, where images and texts invite a slow, contemplative engagement.

A Space for Resonance

Beyond its autobiographical dimension, Cantons' art does not seek to narrate a closed story. Her works do not provide answers but instead open a space where the viewer can project their own experiences, emotions, and memories.

The Hour Before Sunrise / La Hora Bruja immerses us in that transitional moment—a time of uncertainty where everything is possible, yet nothing is guaranteed. The exhibition invites us to inhabit ambiguity, embrace the unfinished, and find meaning in what remains undefined.

The works in this exhibition are fragments of an ongoing dialogue with art, history, and the artist's own experience. As spectators, we are invited to take part in this dialogue, to find within these images reflections of our own doubts, certainties, and transformations. Because in the hour before sunrise, when the world has not yet fully awakened, the imagination holds its greatest power.

Christian Dominguez
Madrid, 2nd February 2025