



*The Enrique Gran Foundation welcomes you to this encounter with the work of GRAN,..... a genius of abstraction, a creator excessive in charisma and talent, who 'lived by and for art' .*

*The filmmaker Víctor Erice, the painter Antonio López, the academic Francisco Nieva, the poet José Hierro, the director of the Prado Museum Francisco Calvo Serraller, or the writer Juan José Millás, among other personalities of our recent history, all admirers of this singular artist and human being, make the magnitude of the work and the legend of Enrique Gran even more understandable through their testimonies, because nothing defines the dimension of an artist better than the importance of those who analyse his legacy.*

*While you admire his work, let's get to know this brilliant artist in more depth.*

*Welcome to ..... 'The Universe of Enrique Gran'.*

*We begin.....*

*Born in Santander on 2 November 1928, from an early age he was already displaying the talent that would make him one of the best artists of his generation. With his personal vision of the abstract, he was one of the most brilliant and personal artists of Spanish painting, endorsed by the leading art critics.*

*Gran belonged to the illustrious generation of painters such as Antonio López, Lucio Muñoz, María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla, Amalia Avía,..., all students at the San Fernando Academy in Madrid, at the beginning of the 1950s.*

*During his training period in Paris, he came close to the postimpressionist painting of Cézanne (Sesan), Van Gogh and Picasso.*

*After a brief parenthesis, in which he worked with strong influences from Neo-Cubism, he approached Abstract Expressionism.*

*After his first individual exhibition at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, presented by the great painter Pancho Cossío, his international career took off with the exhibition of his work at the XXX International Art Biennial of Venice, as well as at the II Biennial of Paris, the Quadrennial of Finland, again at the XXXI Venice Biennial, at the VI International Biennial of Alexandria in Egypt, as well as various exhibitions in Belgium and Germany, among other destinations of reference worldwide.*

*He begins his relationship with the emblematic Galería Juana Mordó, in Madrid, and once again represents Spain for the third time at the Venice Biennale.*

*It was from the end of the 1960s onwards that his painting became part of important collections and his presence in exhibitions multiplied both in Europe and America.*

*There are also numerous individual exhibitions of his work, from the one held at the Museum of Fine Arts in his native city, Santander, to the last one in Spain, during the artist's lifetime, at the Conde Duque Cultural Centre in Madrid, passing through various museums and exhibition spaces of reference in our country.*

*Of the important group exhibitions in which he took part, if we could ask GRAN, he would undoubtedly highlight the exhibition 'Otra Realidad, compañeros en Madrid', an intimate encounter with María Moreno, Isabel Quintanilla, Antonio López, Lucio Muñoz, Joaquín Ramo, Francisco López, Julio López Hernández, Esperanza Parada and Amalia Avia, companions in life and profession, for as the critic and director of the Prado Museum,*

*Francisco Calvo Serraller, pointed out: 'artists have never been such friends'.*

*It is precisely one of these great friends, the genius of La Mancha, 'Antonio López', with whom Enrique Gran stars in the film jewel 'El sol del membrillo', by Víctor Erice, awarded at the Cannes Festival and considered the best film of the 1990s worldwide, leaving unforgettable scenes of these two great artists and friends for immortality, some of which have already become icons in the history of cinema.*

*In 1998 he produced his last great painting: the figure of Don Quixote de la Mancha, commissioned by the Eulalio Ferrer Foundation in Mexico.*

*A year later Enrique Gran died in a fire in his studio in Madrid. The life and work of a genius with a dramatic and epic ending.*

*Art, with capital letters, as a life trajectory'.*

*As we mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, we believe that there is no better way to quantify the importance of an artist than to listen to the analysis and the impression he generates in some of the most important representatives of culture and art in our country.*

*For this reason, this selection of testimonies, which will undoubtedly make up an effective portrait of the painter and his work, from 'other points of view'.*

**Francisco Nieva**, writer, Academician of the Royal Spanish Academy and Academician of the Academy of Performing Arts of Spain, said:

*'Has Enrique Gran been the most enigmatic and romantic figure of his group and even of his time?*

*It is certain that he was.*

*I knew his paintings before I knew him, and they made a serious impression on me: in what sense could they be called abstract or illusionist, materialistic or visionary?*

*There were reliefs and shadows of a photographic veracity. One might say visionary photography.*

*They suggested enormous cosmic collapses, amidst avalanches of light, aerial, swooping visions, as if watched from above by a divine 'creator' without restraint and without mercy, who took pleasure in producing a whole succession of dazzling cataclysms, each one with a different meaning, atmosphere and colour.*

*We see matter fly, we see whirlwinds of all kinds curling and spreading auroras and sunsets, mists and storms, with an inexplicable and magical realism, as if we were experiencing them 'for real'...*

*It also happened that this curious visionary of our time was a most handsome and attractive young man - the hero-painter with a virile naivety and an acute psyche.*

*An almost novel-like character, an affable Don Juan and thoughtful, full of a great and complex inner life.*

*It was highly gratifying to live and talk with him.*

*Nothing demonstrates this better than the sequence of a now historic film that immortalised him at his melancholy and affable best. What a presence he had, what the confidence of a true 'divo' in front of the camera!*

*This film is 'El sol del membrillo' in which he was Antonio López's interlocutor.*

*It was as if the director, Víctor Erice, had deliberately hired the best actor in Hollywood for this role - absolutely moving and expressive - and for one of the best scenes in this film, so full of discoveries and deaf and sharp emotions.*

*There we have Enrique Gran, that's how we have him, always fixed, always present and alive in him.*

*I would like to meet him again...'*

"La leyenda de Enrique Gran" (frg.), Publicación El Hacedor de Sueños, 2005 Centro Cultural Caja Cantabria, Santander

The painter **Antonio López**, said:

*‘Even then we were already going to see Enrique Gran's paintings with admiration, because a great painter is a great painter from the moment he begins.*

*I have never seen work in such a way, protecting himself so little and in something absolutely unprecedented and which corresponded to him....*

*The love of painting that I have experienced and that we have shared so much, after many years of knowing many people, you see that there have been very few who have had that level.*

*The marvel of seeing a painter work from his beginnings, and evolve towards non-figurative painting without changing the substance of his painting, in which there is nature, as in Caspar David Friedrich, or it can be in Beruete or in Goya... There is nature....., there is distance, ..... there is humidity, ..... there is solitude...*

*When he was Enrique Gran and he was with Juana Mordó and he was a painter who went to Venice, a modern painter, from time to time, he did a portrait that, either he was commissioned to do or he wanted to do,..., and he returned to figuration as Picasso could do, but of course, I think better. He made a turn with a naturalness..., without ceasing to be what he was. In other words,he encompassed, you could say, **EVERYTHING**’.*

Ciclo de conferencias (frg.) Ateneo de Santander  
“Año GRAN”, 2009

**Santiago Amón**, writer and journalist, wrote:

*‘Gran's painting does not give rise to the weaving of concrete symbols. Here only a global, revealing symbol palpitates and cries out: ....., the morose embodiment of a mythical world, the reverse and, at the same time, the identity of the real world...’.*

“La pintura de Enrique Gran y el lenguaje apocalíptico”(frg.)  
Catálogo exposición Galería Juana Mordó Madrid, 1972

**Pancho Cossío**, painter, opined:

*‘...And that's how much of a man this Gran is.*

*And that's how he goes through life, adorned with imaginary barracks and heraldic crests - it's not for nothing that he's from the mountains - that proclaim his heroic destiny. ...*

*And Gran, our Gran, was sparing in his choices: as a people he chose La Montaña, his mother's homeland, and as a profession, as a line of conduct in his life, painting. He chose no more.*

*So, you have before you a montañés painter, a “Franciscan”, a man faithful to the one who gave him “the being” ....., faithful also to a kind of mountain tradition: all of us (montañés painters) have had a rigorous academic training; all of us, too, have broken with it, guided in the new direction only by our individual and ideal pole star.*

*Thus, the Madrazos, founders of the montañés tradition, if not school, thus Casimiro Sainz, and Riancho, and Gutiérrez Solana, and... María Blanchard. So,... until Gran.’*

Catálogo exposición (frg.), Sala Minerva Círculo de Bellas Artes,  
Madrid, 1959

*This is what **Antonio Bonet Correa**, art historian and Academician of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando , said:*

*‘...Enrique Gran's tight, shimmering painting constitutes, in itself, a spectacle so fecund in emotions that it is comparable only to the eddies of rivers, the waves of the ocean or the night of a jungle with the myriads of phosphorescent insects and the tangle of climbing plants that block the way.*

*His dreamlike vision - which links him to the pre-Romantics and especially, within Spain, to Goya - is only exhausted in his selfabsorption of the phenomenal.*

*In many of Enrique Gran's paintings, the horizons are limpid and the surfaces are smooth and of the finest tones, brilliantly polychrome. A new world emerges from his paintings. The cosmos thus becomes relevant again. The dichotomy of his dazzling painting and at the same time of soft values, opens us to a renewed admiration for the soulful strength that man contains when dream*

*and reality converge inside his spirit and the pulse, accelerated or at rest, of the deep beat of nature is felt’.*

“El hondo latido de la naturaleza”(frg.) Catálogo exposición  
Fundación Santillana Cantabria, 1981

**Francisco Calvo Serraller**, *historian, essayist, art critic, Director of the Prado Museum and Academician of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, said:*

*‘Enrique Gran belongs to an illustrious generation of painters, all students at San Fernando in the early fifties.*

*Among them-Antonio López, Julio López Hernández or Lucio Muñoz- there is not always a stylistic kinship, although, yes, realist or abstract, of an extraordinary plastic virtuosity that only occurs when one lives steeped in painting...*

*Gran painted abstract expressionism but with the intimacy of an impressionist like Monet, very delicate like Sisley. That mixture of painting with a rabidly modern and very expressive gesture, he concentrated it with that sense of intimacy’.*

Libro “Otra Realidad, compañeros de Madrid”(frg.) Caja Madrid  
Madrid,1992

Documental “En los brazos de la luz” (frg.) de Marcos F. Aldaco, 2012

**Álvaro Martínez Novillo** *philologist, historian and Deputy Director of the Spanish Historical Heritage Institute, wrote:*

*‘...I remember that at that time he showed me a landscape entitled ‘Piedraluenga’, of large dimensions, which left me particularly moved. Faced with that painting, so resounding, so definitive, painted to be in a museum, I truly understood the greatness of its author, because a work like that is conceived with its back to the opinion of others, it emerges from within its creator as his own need, without thinking about who might buy it or what the critics will say about it. Nor whether it is fashionable or not. Works like this one, and Enrique Gran has many, especially in his last period, mark, in my opinion, a milestone in the art of the times in which we live.*

*Ever since I saw this singular landscape, I have not been able to forget it and it forms part of the cultural heritage of the time in which it has been my lot to live.*

*And for this I will always be grateful to him’.*

Publicación(frg.) El Hacedor de Sueños, 2005 Centro Cultural Caja Cantabria, Santander

**Amalia Avia**, painter, commented:

*‘Enrique Gran. Extraordinary personage as an artist and as a man. In both things he exercised his immense personality. Enrique did not look like anyone else, he did not speak in the manner of painters, he was different and his painting, so much his own, reflected everything that the man Enrique Gran carried inside...’.*

Publicación El Hacedor de Sueños, 2005 Centro Cultural Caja Cantabria, Santander

**Víctor Erice**, filmmaker, said:

*‘I met Enrique Gran in the autumn of 1990, just a few days after starting in Madrid the making of ‘El sol del membrillo’... His physical appearance lived up to his surname... I immediately had the impression of finding myself in front of a character from one of those adventure films that brightened up my childhood. So I don't think I'm exaggerating if I say that never has an artist working in front of the implacable eye of a film camera had a better travelling companion.*

*Indeed, his presence in the film soon proved to be very important, especially in his and Antonio López's recollections of certain years of their youth, those of the birth of their friendship in the early 1950s, when they were both students at the Madrid School of Fine Arts.*

*Enrique's memory of that period was, in general, marked by melancholy... A disturbing melancholy, yes, but also a creative one, which, as far as ‘El sol del membrillo’ is concerned, crystallised in his moving evocation of a photograph taken by Conchita, a fellow student, for which Antonio López and he had posed at the door of the San Fernando School...*

*It is clear that in Enrique's memory the photograph by Conchita was endowed with an aura that drew, in the expression on the faces of Antonio López and himself, the original imprint of the vocation. Or, in other words, the unmistakable sign of a form of*



*destiny capable of overcoming all the trials of reality, and which projected a figure of romantic lineage, that of the hero painter. An exemplary figure, with novelistic features,..., to whom Enrique Gran was always faithful...’.*

Publicación (frg.) El Hacedor de Sueños, 2005 Centro Cultural  
Caja Cantabria, Santander

**José Hierro**, poet, wrote:

*'Enrique Gran, sober, strong, intense,.....,has traveled his itinerary in a mysterious machine that took off, among nightmarish beings, from the hallucinatory and nocturnal planet discovered by the Goya of the black paintings '*

“7 ARTISTAS ESPAÑOLES DE HOY” Comunicaciones en el espacio,  
Ginebra Suiza ,1971

*And now that we are coming to the end of this meeting with one of our great and most personal artists, allow me to introduce myself: my name is **Jesús Ferreiro**, I am a journalist and President of the Titanic Foundation and I would like to tell you how I came to know the work of Enrique Gran and how I became fascinated by his painting.*

*On the occasion of the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic, we were looking for a national or international work as a global icon of this important anniversary that would represent the sunken ‘ship of dreams’, one hundred years after the tragedy.*

*After discussions with various experts, and an arduous search, we were fortunate enough to find a work by Enrique Gran. The painting was resounding and its strength, almost hypnotic, gripped you.*

*It was undoubtedly the painting we were looking for and we christened it ‘The Dream of the Titanic’.*

*It represented, in a masterly manner, the Titanic at the bottom of the sea, dismembered and rusted,..., it had lost all its funnels, but continued its voyage with imposing dignity on the seabed, as if unaware of its tragic and precipitous fate.*

*And when I became interested in learning about Gran's life, I could not help but draw a striking parallel between ‘The Legend of*

*Henry Gran' and that of the Titanic: huge even in name,  
fascinating, charismatic and ... with a tragic ending.*

“Cuatro esquinas para conocer a un genio”, exposición Centro  
Cultural Casa del Reloj Madrid ,2024

*On behalf of the Enrique Gran Foundation, thank you. Thank you  
for accompanying us on this journey to 'the art with a capital A',  
oblivious to fashions and conjunctures, of the great.....  
Enrique Gran.*