The NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2017, LAMIA (Lamina) (2016) by Rayco Pulido was published in the same year as El ala rota by Antonio Altarriba and Kim, the latter paying homage to a mother and conceived after some readers complained about her scant presence in the family story of El arte de volar. It does not seem to coincide, however, with a cultural role, or at least one that a traditional society, alone could accomplish, or a role that women's art is based on. Unlike El ala rota, a family memoir presented realistically, Lamia broaches the subject from a fiction genre--a sort of Spanish hard-boiled in Jim Thompson's manner--and the assertion of formal artifice. Lamia is a 32-year-old orphan, struggling to get ahead in the Barcelona of 1943 where “a killer remains at large”. Convicted of her expected of her, she has managed to find a “husband” and “get pregnant” while the radio plays a replica of the famous Spanish radio show El consultorio de Elena Francis [Elena Francis, Agony Aunt]. The portrayal of post-war, post-Francoist Spain is emblematic and theatrical, in a mode precisely because this summary of the country was and serves as a contrast to the present-day. RAYCO PULIDO (Teide, Gran Canary 1978) had just adapted Benito Pérez Galdós in Nela (2013), a remarkable graphic novel that planted the seed of LAMIA RAYCO PULIDO [2016]. His drawing style, expressive genre, and the work's somber feel, as black and white, looks like an impossible cross between Chester Gould and Frank Miller, and very aware of the latest trends in the avant-garde comics. If Lamia runs like the clock on its title page, it owes as much to the excentric situations and characters as to its fundamental themes, the questions of gender and the geometric caricatures, in powerful black and white, looks like an impossible cross between Chester Gould and Frank Miller.

The NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2017 marks the 10th anniversary of the National Comics Award. For this reason, the VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR CULTURE AND SPORTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAGA, THE GENERAL FOUNDATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAGA (FUGMA) —which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary— and the MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS have wanted to pay tribute to the ninth art in Spain with a collective exhibition.

December 14, 2017—January 13, 2018 Exhibition Hall of the Rector’s Office of the University of Málaga Curator: Pepo Pérez

The NATIONAL COMICS AWARD is a prize granted by the Spanish Ministry of Culture since 2007, following a parliamentary initiative by the late Carme Chacón. It represents a decisive turn in the recognition of comics in Spain, by equating it with other cultural activities distinguished with National Awards (such as Spanish literature, visual arts, etc.). By doing so, the Ministry ratiﬁed the changes that took place in the late 20th century in the hierarchy of Fine Arts and the absolute distinction between high modernism and the industrial “pseudoculture” despised by “apocalyptic” critics such as Clement Greenberg. Since the 1960s, the “integrating” essays of Umberto Eco and others had pointed in the current direction. Today we assume that the rejection of commercial art or comics has less to do with its cultural importance or aesthetic excellence than —as Bourdieu showed— with socio-economic class issues affecting the formation of taste. The erosion of the high culture / commercial culture frontier was detected as one of the symptoms of postmodernity in arts. For decades, visual artists have incorporated inferences from the “low” culture, and many areas of the latter have adopted strategies of the “high” one. Comics is one of them. The symbolic capital that this National Award has added to comics, a “new art” for the 21st century, must certainly not be underestimated. The award, as it is officially deﬁned, aims to “distinguish the work of Spanish authors, written in any of the Spanish languages, which according to the judgment of specialists of proven competence has been outstanding in the creation of comics”. The diffusion and cultural legitimation thus provided have been highlighted by publishers and booksellers, in view of its undeniable industrial impact, as well as by both critics and authors, encouraged by the recognition given to those who have received it. This exhibition aims to shed light on the creative process of all the winning works of the National Comics Award during the ﬁrst ten years of its existence.

The ﬁrst NATIONAL COMICS AWARD presented in 2007 was won by HECHOS, DICHIOS, OCURRENCIAS Y ALGO MAS DE BARDIN EL SUPERREALISTA (Facts, Sayings, Occurrences and Wandering of Bardín the Superrealist) (2006), a work on the cusp between the comics of the end of the 20th century and that of the 21st. Its author, MAX Fernandez (Barcelona 1956), has had a long career dating from the underground comic of the 1970s and his characters in El Vibora magazine (Gustavo, Peter Pank) during the ephemeral boom of Spanish adult comics in the 1980s and his later stages of artistic reinvention. At the end of the 1990s, in the depleted Spanish comics industry, Max published short comic strips with a character inﬂuenced by Chris Ware. Bardín the Superrealist was a cyphe with no real psychology —a resort of popular comics, almost a character of Bruguera publisher—that allowed him to explore his favourite subjects in different formats and media: self-published comics, the avant-garde comics magazine NSLM (1995-2007, founded by Max and Pere Joan), the national press (El País) or animations for television. In a “superreal” universe created by an artist who chose his pseudonym in honour of Max Ernst, the author addressed subjects a state humble, and the approval for reaching this stage of enlightenment according to this mature Max, using an exquisite graphic synthesis in the style of both French-Belgian ligne claire and Spanish tebeos (comic books) of Bruguera School (1950s-1970s). The Bardín strip cartoons are often drawn essays, humourous speculations that connect the Surrealist references (Buchloh, Does, Dali, Cirlot) with the psychoanalysis of Jung or the pre-Romantic morbidity of Füssi’s Nightmare (1781), a painting mentioned in comical key. Around 2006 a new Spanish comic industry emerged —the superrealists opened its doors to welcome in the nicest of its scattered material together with some unpublished works. The book represented another peculiar feature of the graphic novel, a term as conventional as it is inaccurate: it comprises short stories, it is not a “novel”, nor does it need to be.
The NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2009 went to LAS SERPENTES CIEGAS [The Blind Snakes] (2008). The scriptwriter FELIPE HERNÁNDEZ CAVA (Madrid 1953) has been considered a pioneer of Spanish adult comics since his work in the 1970s with El Cubón group. It was not the first occasion that Cava broached the memory of the Spanish Civil War which he himself booted into fiction techniques. He took advantage of certain resources to articulate his story: the typical detective search, the dubious hero and the false narrator, the horror narrated in the first-person —there is a recurrent theme in the subtext— the psychopath typical of the criminal genre, the theme of the victim who remembers a fantastic element. The historical scene is the confrontation, at the end of the 1930s, of political systems (Fascism/Comunism) leading up to the catastrophe of World War II. The leading characters, members of the housing committee of the Catholic Front, are the result of failures in the collective identity. All this was the result of the war and of the war's aftermath, a period in which Communists and Anarchists is devastating: cruel internal struggles, ingenuous, purposeless idealists, unpleasant characters, and a psychopath who discovers an ex to kill at will in the revolutionary ideology. The keyboard cartonista Bulletin (1988) appears as a result of the series of Fraus in this period. Zapico's work uses style to best use to give life to characters and settings. His outstanding work on visual documentation is on a par with the originality shown by the Argentine artist Roberto Arlt in his description of the Buenos Aires which, at that time, seemed very futuristic.

In the mid 2000s initiatives on the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism were promoted although the NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2010, EL ARTE DE VOLAR (The Art of Flying) (2009) was considered even earlier for very intimate reasons. This internationally successful graphic novel exemplified what Marianne Hirsch has called 'intertextuallity': that is, the interdependent and transgenerational memory experiences shared and transmitted through generations. Zapico, in the case of the biography, history, a testimony or a feature story and there are many examples among these award-winners. This is the case of VTOL, a dream within a dream.

The creator's nightmare is the rebellion of his creature. The story may be traced back to the Biblical Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The subject can be traced back to the Biblical Genesis with a quotation of the immortal painting itself. The dense and easy-going book includes fictitious "documents", official reports, archaeologists' diaries, newspapers and sometimes personal winks, gags and kind gestures, also accessible to the young reader, that allows Guarnido a great visual spread in the tradition of the French-Belgian comics, a trade in which Velázquez is very comfortable although he avoids the smooth Tintin-esque line and adopts a rough and sombre stroke —he hand-draws in pencil and then uses digital colour—in consonance with the tone of the story and the aesthetics of the nouveau bande dessinée, the early 2000s.

In much the same way as Paco Roca in Amargas, Miguelanxo Prada tells us in his own style in ARDÁLEN [ Ardálen] (2012) that we are what we remember. In this graphic novel, NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2013, a middle-aged divorcé begins to search for her identity by investigating the life of an absent grandfather who emigrated to Cuba, never to return, during the dictatorship of the lost grandfather. However, his memories are fragile and unstable, he confines reality with fantasy. The comic presents itself as a model of "remembrance" and "truth", Spanish idiosyncrasy, history as an account constructed from every present. The profound prior trauma", defined "through identifying with the victim or witness of the trauma, modulated by the insuperable distance that separates the participant from the one born after". Like its predecessor the Spanish graphic novel Un largo silencio (1997) by Francisco and Miguel Gallardo, ARDÁLEN is also a family memoir where the son, scriptwriter ANTONIO ALTARRIBA (Zaragoza 1942), comic theoretician and author since the 1980s literally supplants his father's voice from the text. 

The NATIONAL COMICS AWARD 2011 was summarised in the gigantic monument book that has become the "impeachable city" appearing in LAS AVENTURAS DEL CAPITÁN TORRENO, PLAZA ELÍPTICA (The Adventures of Captain Torreno, Plaza Elíptica) (2011), the comic about a small farmer who embraced Anarchism and fought on the Republican Front. After the war, he lived a life cut short by exile in France and a humiliating return to Franco's Spain. In his old age, after suffering long periods of depression, he could remember only the small people's life, like much of Andalusian rural life in the 1930s and 1940s, but no more. The comic is divided into eight volumes with its panels on the fourth floor. El arte de volar is also a family memoir where the son, scriptwriter ANTONIO ALTARRIBA (Zaragoza 1942), comic theoretician and author since the 1980s literally supplants his father's voice from the text. The book revisits the Alicante (province) comic book, a tradition in which Velázquez is very comfortable although he avoids the smooth Tintin-esque line and adopts a rough and sombre stroke—he hand-draws in pencil and then uses digital colour—in consonance with the tone of the story and the aesthetics of the nouveau bande dessinée, the early 2000s.

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