

The artwork is a dark, textured painting. A central, dark, almost black shape, resembling a large, stylized eye or a face, is the focal point. This shape is filled with intricate details: two large, realistic human eyes with brown irises and white sclera are positioned horizontally across the center. Above and below these eyes are several smaller, white, rose-like flowers on thin green stems. The background is a mix of dark brown and black tones, with some lighter, reddish-brown areas that suggest a landscape or a textured surface. The overall style is surreal and detailed, characteristic of Leonora Carrington's work.

GALLERY
WENDI NORRIS

LEONORA CARRINGTON'S BESTIARY
Art Basel

Messe Basel, Messeplatz 10, 4005 Basel
June 13-16, 2024

LEONORA CARRINGTON'S BESTIARY

Press Release

"Once a dog barked at a mask I made; that was the most honourable comment I ever received."
(Leonora Carrington in 'Commentary,' "Leonora Carrington: A Retrospective Exhibition," New York: The Center for Inter-American Relations, 1975, p. 23)

Gallery Wendi Norris is pleased to present *Leonora Carrington's Bestiary*, a wide range of artistic mediums from the celebrated artist's oeuvre in the gallery's first-ever presentation at Art Basel from June 13 – 16, 2024. Appearing in the art fair's Feature section, *Leonora Carrington's Bestiary* showcases one of the greatest sources of inspiration for the artist, the animal kingdom. The presentation is a testament to the gallery's deep relationship with Carrington, highlighting the diversity of her artistic output and the role of animals within her practice. Gallery Wendi Norris collaborated with Carrington on her last solo exhibition during her lifetime and has been championing her work and legacy since her death in 2011.

A fascination stemming from her childhood, animals were deeply influential in the development of Carrington's imagination as a young artist and continued to serve as primary subjects over fifty years. The presentation explores how the artist created a world brimming with animalia and deployed animals as agents of humor, figures of critique, and sources of camaraderie in a veritable bestiary of both zoological forms and mythical creatures.

In Carrington's ecology, animals are accorded equal status with their human counterparts. They appear as hybrid figures, totemic forms, surrogate selves, cosmic familiars, or protagonists. Recently featured in the 59th Venice Biennale, *The Milk of Dreams* (2022), *Portrait of Madame Dupin* (1949) portrays Carrington's subject as a statuesque figure with a black butterfly instead of a neck and head. Playing with the tradition of portraiture and the idea of hybridity, Carrington creates a symbolic portrait of her subject, using the butterfly to allude to aspects of her character rather than paint a conventional likeness. This commingling of creatures upends the dichotomy between man and beast and blurs the distinction between human subject and animal object. *Double Portrait* (c. 1937-40) is unique in Carrington's oeuvre in that it is the only known double portrait of herself and her fellow artist and then lover, Max Ernst. Distinctive and pivotal, it features several of the quintessential themes and motifs (her horse alter-ego, play with gender and sexuality, and the androgyne, to name a few) that Carrington would introduce in her earliest work and go on to develop throughout the eight decades of her artistic career. *Carriage* (1946) takes the shape of a combined wagon and bird, with miniaturist painting depicting the coexistence of traditional animals and those that have been anthropomorphized.

Through her leveling of the species, Carrington calls into question the symbolic weight historically invested in animals. From Greek mythology to Aesop's Fables, the animal kingdom has been retrofitted to serve as ciphers for human morality, assuming human traits, flaws, and failings. Turning this tradition on its head, Carrington investigates the animal nature of humans: how we are, in fact, closer to our bestial brethren than we would care to admit.



LEONORA CARRINGTON

Double Portrait, c. 1937-1940

Oil on canvas

25 3/4 x 32 1/8 inches (62.8 x 81.5 cm)

LC0127



LEONORA CARRINGTON

Carriage, 1946

Mixed media, papier-mâché,
fabric, and metal

5 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches (14 x 21.6 x 14 cm)

LC0130





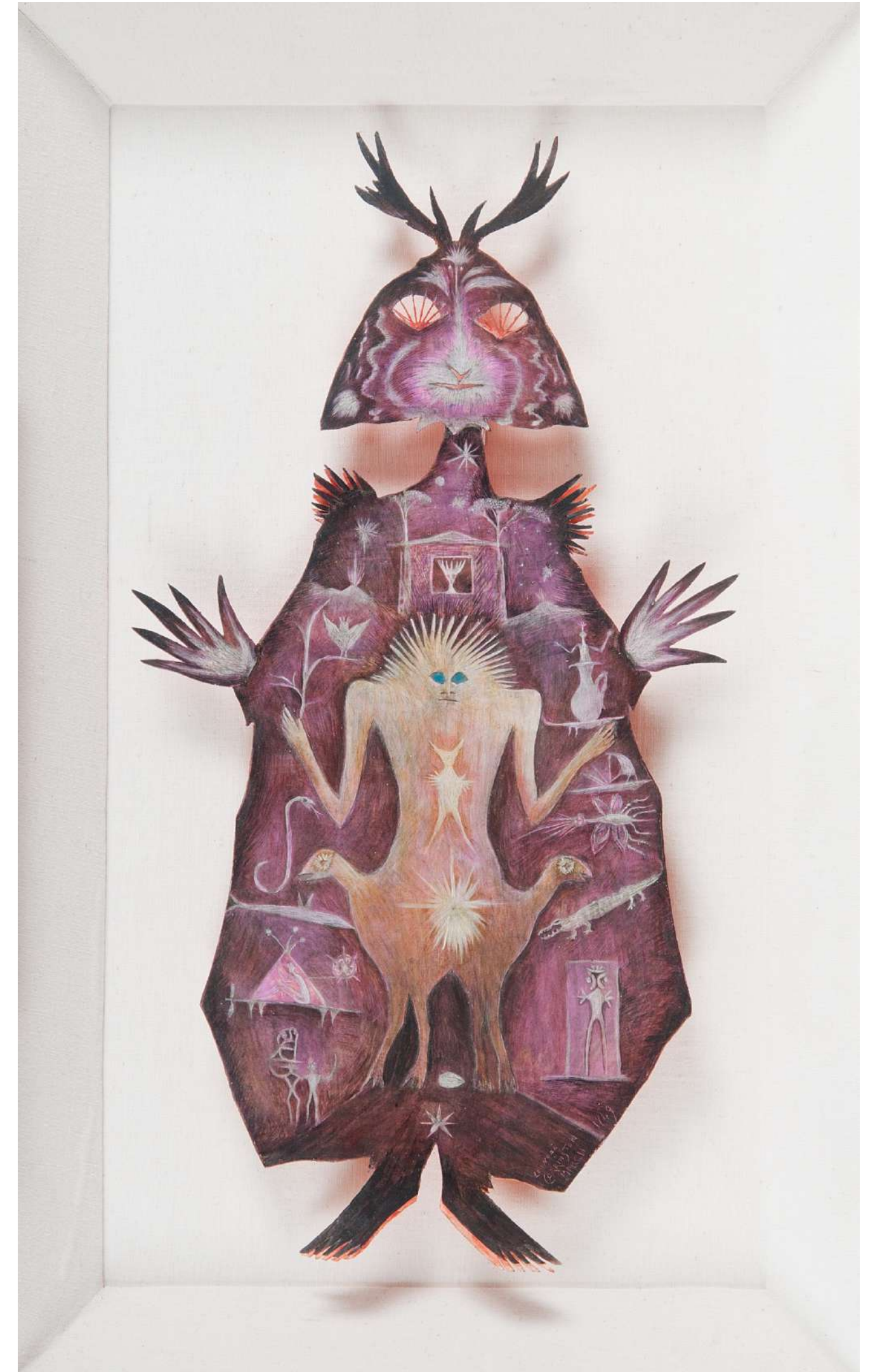
LEONORA CARRINGTON

Fina mosca, 1949

Oil on paper

20 1/8 x 10 5/8 inches (51.1 x 27 cm)

LC0135







LEONORA CARRINGTON

Portrait of Madame Dupin, 1949

Oil on panel

18 x 6 1/4 inches (45.7 x 15.9 cm)

LC0042



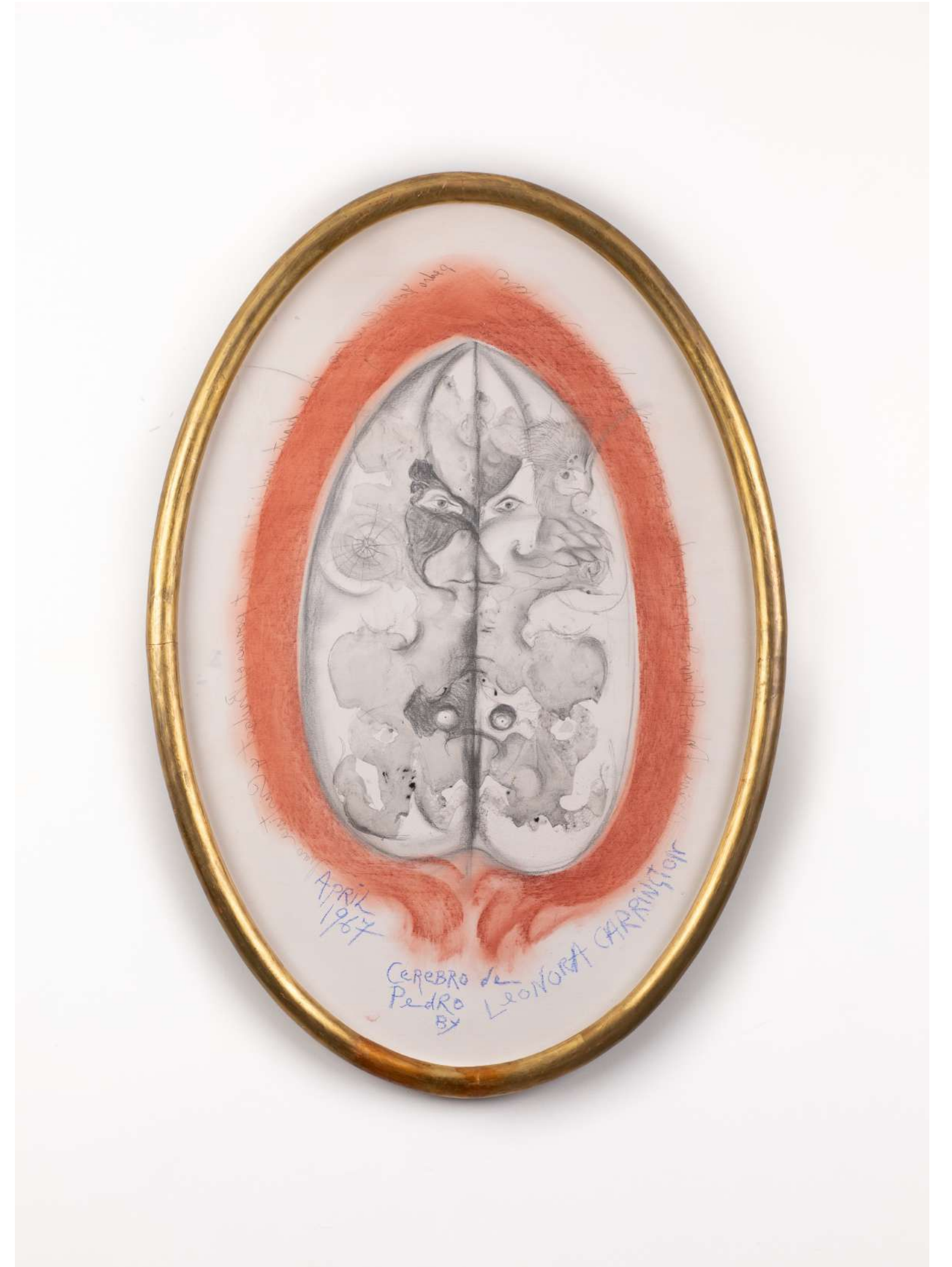
LEONORA CARRINGTON

Cerebro de Pedro, 1967

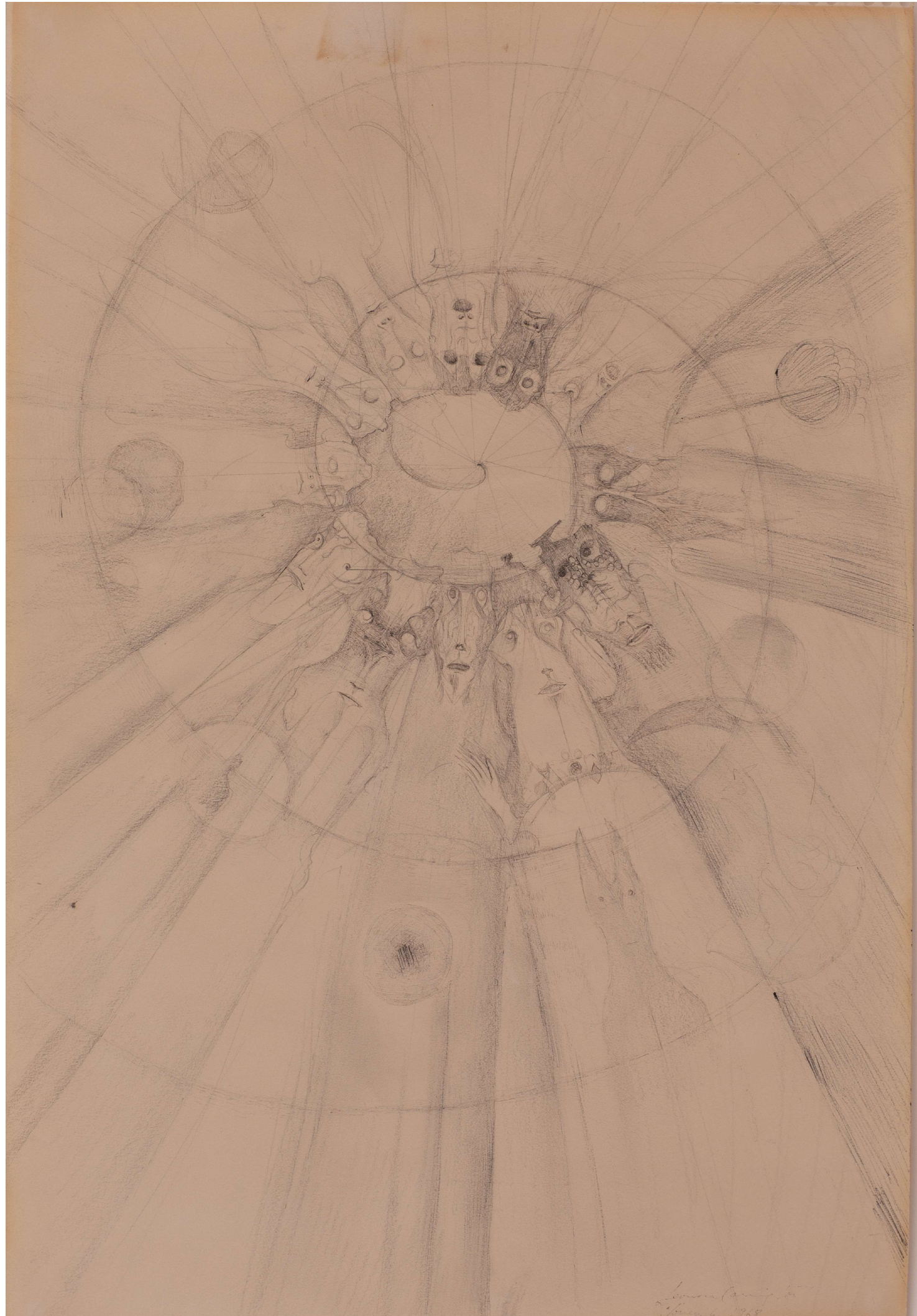
Mixed media on paper board

28 1/2 x 19 1/4 inches (72.4 x 48.9 cm)

LC0129







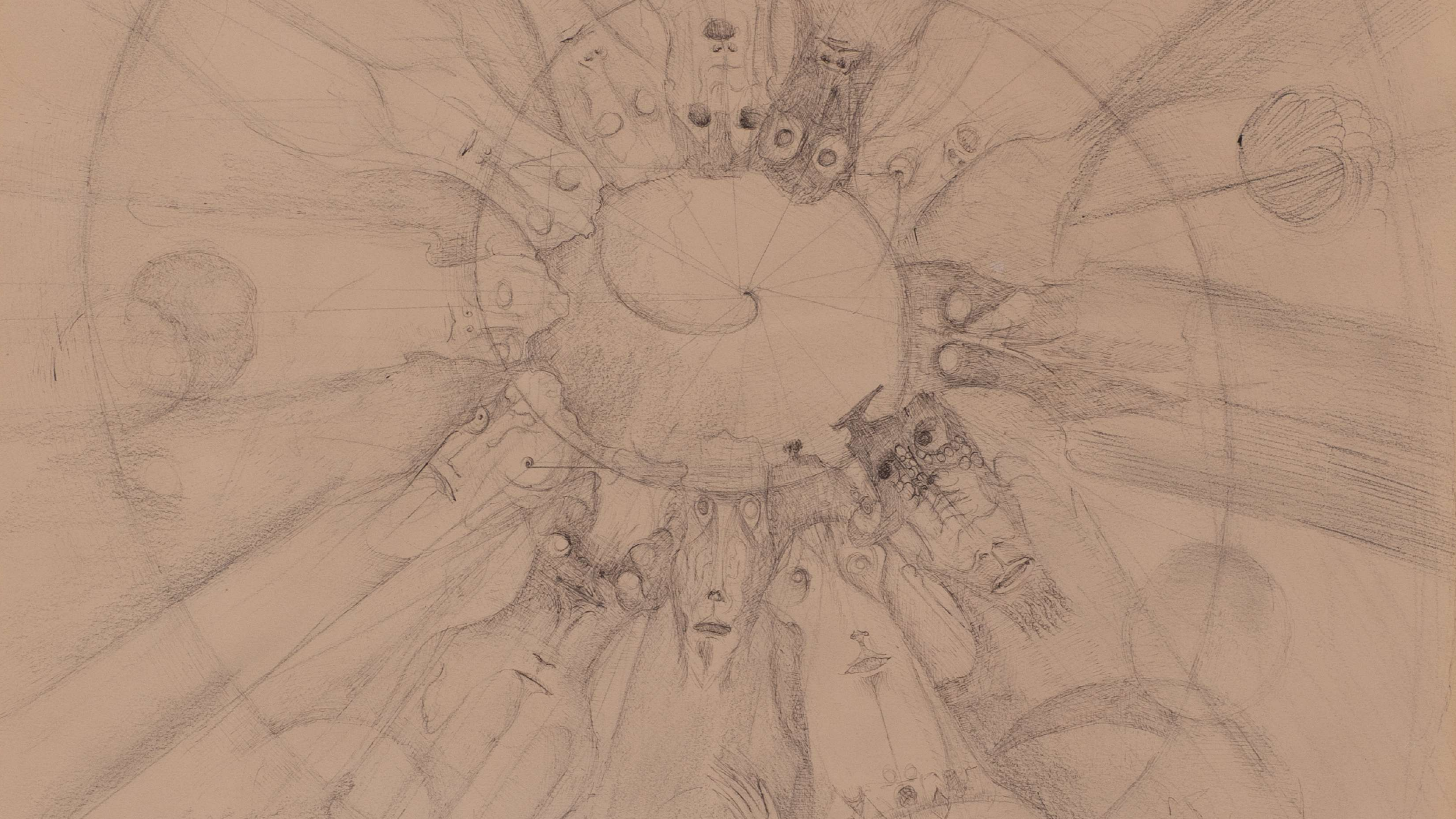
LEONORA CARRINGTON

Exile in New York, 1968

Pencil on paper

18 x 12 inches (45.7 x 30.5 cm)

LC0017





LEONORA CARRINGTON

Internal Combustion, 1969

Gouache on vellum

12 1/2 x 7 inches (31.8 x 17.8 cm)

LC0073





LEONORA CARRINGTON

Untitled (Animal group), c. 1970

Watercolor and ink on paper

20 3/4 x 30 inches (52.8 x 76.2 cm)

LC0131



LEONORA CARRINGTON

The Lovers, 1987

Oil on canvas

29 7/8 x 40 1/2 inches (75.9 x 102.9 cm)

LC0134





LEONORA CARRINGTON

Biography

Leonora Carrington was born in 1917 in Lancashire, England and passed away in 2011 at the age of 94 in Mexico City, Mexico. A leading artist of the 20th century, Carrington incorporated painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles, printmaking, and writing into a body of work produced throughout her nearly seven-decade career.

Raised in the English upper class, Carrington's early life was privileged, yet her personal freedom was restricted by the conventions of traditional gender roles. However, Carrington's childhood was imbued with magical stories of Celtic mythology and folklore, as told by her Irish mother, grandmother, and nanny. In these fantastic tales of humans, animals, and nature living harmoniously as joined forces against threats of injustice and violence, she found ideas which would profoundly influence the rest of her life.

In 1937, Carrington's mother gifted her a copy of Herbert Read's *Surrealism*, which served as her first introduction to the growing avant-garde movement. While studying at Amédée Ozenfant's academy, Carrington met Max Ernst, and they began a romantic relationship. Together they moved to Paris where Carrington was introduced to André Breton, Yves Tanguy, Leonor Fini, and the larger community of artists and intellectuals in the city. In 1938, she participated in the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* in Paris and a Surrealism exhibition in Amsterdam, cementing her position in art history among the Surrealists despite personally disagreeing with the categorization as such. While she and the Surrealists shared a disdain for bourgeois values, Carrington was resolutely autonomous, never ascribing to common Surrealist motifs.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the German-born Ernst was considered an enemy alien and arrested. Alone in France, Carrington's mental stability weakened. With friends she fled to Spain, but along the journey her psychological state continued to deteriorate, leading to her forced admission into a sanitarium in Santander. She would later recount this experience in her memoir *Down Below* (1943).

Carrington escaped Spain in 1941 and passed through New York before arriving in Mexico City in 1942. She found a home in Mexico with fellow European émigrés Remedios Varo, who became her close friend, and the Hungarian photographer Emerico "Chiki" Weisz, whom she married in 1946. Carrington continued to exhibit internationally. As she experienced marriage and motherhood, Carrington's work became steeped in archetypically feminine iconography, such as cooking motifs and domestic interior scenes. She recognized the remnants of an ancient magic still present in the acts of making food, having a family, and painting pictures. She saw the similarities between what she was doing at home and what alchemists attempted to do—both involved manipulating inanimate matter to harness its life-endowing properties.

LEONORA CARRINGTON

Biography

It was in this period that Carrington revisited the Renaissance practice of using tempera paint, made from pigment and egg yolk, to imbue her aesthetic vision and the physical substance of her paintings with life itself.

Her art was well-received in Mexico, and in 1963 Carrington received a government commission to create a mural for the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, which she titled *El mundo mágico de los mayas* (*The Magical World of the Maya*). In the 1960s and 1970s, Carrington became a political activist, hosting student meetings at her home and co-founding the Mexican women's liberation movement in 1972. In the 1980s, the renowned mural was moved to the Regional Museum of Anthropology and History of Chiapas in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, and in 1986 Carrington's political involvement earned her the Lifetime Achievement Award at the United Nations Women's Caucus for Art convention in New York. In 2005, Leonora Carrington received Mexico's National Prize of Sciences and Arts.

Carrington's work has been acquired by museums worldwide, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Tate, London, United Kingdom; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy; National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands, among others.

Since Carrington's passing in 2011, her work has been the subject of the following solo museum exhibitions: *Leonora Carrington: Revelation* at the ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj, Denmark and Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid, Spain (2022-2023); *Leonora Carrington: Magical Tales* at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Monterrey, Mexico (2018); *Leonora Carrington* at the Tate Liverpool, United Kingdom (2015); and *The Celtic Surrealist* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2014). Her work has also been featured in the exhibitions *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States* (2012) at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; *Fantastic Women: Surreal Worlds from Meret Oppenheim to Frida Kahlo* at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany (2020) and the Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark (2020); *Surrealism Beyond Borders* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2021) and Tate Modern, London (2022); *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernities* at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy (2022) and Museum Barberini, Potsdam, Germany (2022); and the *59th Venice Biennale, The Milk of Dreams* (2022), the title of which was taken from a book by Leonora Carrington. Most recently, Carrington's work is celebrated in *IMAGINE! 100 Years of International Surrealism* (2024–2026), an exhibition honoring the 100th anniversary of the birth of Surrealism. Beginning at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, the show travels to the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, the Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

