

MARIFÉ NÚÑEZ



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Marifé Núñez is a contemporary Spanish artist born in Córdoba and trained in graphic design, whose practice spans illustration, painting, and sculpture. After working in advertising agencies in Seville, Gibraltar, and Marbella, she first developed a career as an illustrator of children's books before dedicating herself entirely to the visual arts.

Since 2017, she has led her own gallery project, Es Arte Gallery, in Marbella. In 2023, the gallery relocated to Hotel El Fuerte Marbella, in collaboration with Fundación Fuerte, where Núñez exhibits her work in dialogue with that of other artists. Established over the years as a significant cultural space on the Costa del Sol, the gallery has become a point of encounter for collectors, art enthusiasts, and contemporary creation.

Her work has been exhibited in Milan, New York, Korea, Vienna, and Madrid, as well as at art fairs including Art Madrid and JustMad. In 2022, she presented her series *Birds in My Head* to great success. Her works form part of private collections in Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, Belgium, France, the United States, Dubai, and other international locations.



Painting Against Ageism Toward Women: Marifé Núñez

Andrea García Casal (art critic)

"[I] dare to think that lately, [...] older women are beginning to step out of line and display in public a witty bodily freedom [...] sending signals to those who are still trapped in the imaginary of youthful beauty that we like ourselves much more than in other times, more than we ever could have imagined under the old aesthetic regime. [...] Other qualities may seem interesting to us, may please us—such as creativity, a sense of humour, courage, [...] so that we become an older person with whom others feel comfortable."

Anna Freixas. Yo, vieja: apuntes de supervivencia para seres libres. 2021.

The psychologist and gerontologist Anna Freixas offers a series of highly perceptive reflections in her essay *Yo, vieja: apuntes de supervivencia para seres libres* (2021). The quotation above—drawn from a synthesis of several paragraphs—speaks of the older woman today, the one whom Freixas proudly names *vieja* ("old woman"), who, at least in a fair number of cases, is more self-aware and freer with respect to the "old regime," and not only the "aesthetic" one.

There is no doubt that ageism is one of the most visible forms of discrimination today. It evaluates and classifies individuals according to their age and then disadvantages them depending on the stage of life they are in. Youth is often as glorified as it is disparaged, since it is associated with instability—not because young people necessarily have less experience of any kind, for that is not always the case, but because of the current context surrounding young people and the difficulties they face in building their lives. However, old age is the stage of life that suffers most from ageism. While in other eras old age was viewed positively, as a sign of knowledge and experience, this conception has clearly changed over time, and the ageing process has been devalued. As a result, people who accumulate decades of existence end up being undervalued.

Just as Freixas denounces these issues, so too does the painter Marifé Núñez (Córdoba, ?), through her series *Abu Power* (2024–2025). Here, the artist portrays older women in a playful and carefree attitude, enjoying life's pleasures and immersed in a wide variety of activities. She affectionately refers to them as grandmothers, with the intention of integrating her *viejas*, following Freixas, into normative and constraining life, opening up a path of new and joyful possibilities for elderly women. Not all of her protagonists are grandmothers, however, yet they still have every right to enjoy themselves, whether in company or alone. Núñez prefers to depict them on their own, nodding to the habitual solitude of older people, but confronting it with pleasure so as to make the most of free will, instead of retreating into sadness and withdrawal. Some of the actions these women carry out may strike the viewer as somewhat surprising, since ageism conditions society—usually unconsciously—leading it to believe, especially in the West, that older people cannot engage in certain activities, either because of their physical and/or psychological condition, or because they supposedly do not know how to do them or cannot understand them. They are regarded as limited and ill-adapted to the present.

Núñez presents women surfing, skiing, or riding a motorcycle—things that may seem unusual, but not impossible. It is ignorance about old age that shapes the viewer's perception.

Even so, it is clear that there are countless possibilities, since not all people arrive at old age in the same way. Moreover, a seventy-year-old may be in better condition than a ninety-year-old when it comes to carrying out certain physical actions—or vice versa, from a different perspective. Núñez, however, focuses on showing those women who have managed to reach old age in a way that is not merely dignified, but also entertaining, full of adventures and challenges, which may even be found in simple moments such as looking through a photo album to revive memories or having a drink by the sea. The artist aligns herself with Freixas's thinking and also with the ideas of the philosopher Ana Hardisson Rumeu, seeking, like her, to fight against the stereotype of old age—especially female old age: “[O]ld age was surrounded by fatalistic beliefs that it was a sad stage of life, with no prospect of anything new. Old age was considered a burden, a misfortune. [...] I came across the term ‘juvenilitis’ in a book by Germain Greer, and it struck me as highly expressive and entirely appropriate to refer to neoliberal society, which considers youth the only stage of life that is of interest, because it is the stage in which production takes place” (Anna Hardisson Rumeu, interview Anna Hardisson, *the feminist gaze on old age*, by NORTEvisión, 2023).

Thus, through her painting, Núñez challenges ageism and, more specifically, the iconography of female old age and the attributes that define it—iconography describes, analyses, and clarifies a subject represented in the visual arts; an attribute is a characteristic element of a specific iconographic motif, for example, the apple in Eve from Genesis, which allows for correct and fluid identification. The iconography of old age is frequently pejorative in the case of women. The artist asserts the worth of older women in a world saturated with stereotypes and gender inequality. In the West, the establishment of allegories—personifications of ideas and concepts—was relentless; from the Renaissance onward, they were valorised and codified in such a way as to give rise to the unpleasant image of

the old woman that still lingers in the collective imagination today. In line with the art historians María Elena Díez Jorge and María Esther Galera Mendoza, “[T]he greatest number of elderly women in Renaissance painting is found primarily associated with vice and evil, sustaining the Christian idea that links the decrepitude of the physical body with sin, evil and death” (María Elena Díez Jorge and María Esther Galera Mendoza, “Venerables ancianos” y “viejas alcahuetas”: imágenes pictóricas en la Edad Moderna, in *Cuad. Art. Gr.*, 35, 2004). In their research, Díez Jorge and Galera Mendoza analysed how the elderly woman embodies—while the elderly man is practically excluded from any exception at all—a multitude of negative aspects of human nature, of vices or misfortunes that befall it: apathy, laziness, fraud, envy, plague, and so on.

Núñez's protagonists turn this situation on its head, a situation that becomes transhistorical and transdisciplinary, because it extends beyond the history of Western Early Modern art and adapts to the passage of time with a validity strikingly similar—surprisingly, yet truly so—to that of past centuries. Her women, besides maintaining a lively and joyful attitude and displaying a wide range of leisure activities, are genuinely capable of embodying that vitality. The painter chooses to exaggerate the size of their heads, emphasising the eyes in relation to the rest of the body, because “the eyes are the mirror of the soul.” This oft-repeated saying originates with the statesman and philosopher Cicero, and became established in Spanish proverbial culture in the following form: “[T]he face is the mirror of the soul, and the eyes its betrayers.” The eyes of Núñez's characters are enormous and bright, expressing a unique energy, transforming these women into timeless beings who do not restrict their pleasures because of a specific age. Their eyes betray the vitality these women radiate, even though they are hidden behind spectacles. Yet not even poor eyesight can stop them in their daily lives. Beyond the subjects represented and the aesthetic of these cheerful elderly women, the chromatic quality of the work—expressed through the use of local colour, yet generally with lively and intense tones—supports the idea that “older women are beginning to step out of line and display in public a witty bodily freedom.”





A Universe in Three Acts

Over the past few years, Marifé Núñez has built a coherent and expanding body of work around a single subject: the older woman. Not as an object of nostalgia or compassion, but as a fully realized protagonist — with history, with power, with presence, and with a future.

The three series that make up this proposal differ in tone and form, yet they speak the same language and enrich one another. Presented together, they offer the viewer a complete vision of a singular and urgent artistic universe.

The Beauty of the Fleeting (2024)

*Memory, identity, and the passage of time
Intimate and poetic*

Abu-Power (2025- 2026)

*A critique of ageism against women through
sport and action
Energetic and assertive*

Abu-Power: Wings of freedom (2026)

*The older woman and the symbolic:
freedom, mystery, presence Surreal and elegant*



"Entering my mother's house after her death was to feel that everything remained in its place, and yet nothing would ever be the same again."

Self portrait - The empty space

The Beauty of the Fleeting

and the Comfort of Memory

Inspired by the figure of her mother, Consuelo, this series explores memory, identity, and the inevitable passage of time. Each female portrait is accompanied by an iconic handbag that functions as a narrative thread — not as a luxury accessory, but as a time capsule, carrying letters, photographs, and half-fulfilled dreams.

The series combines traditional painting with hyperrealistic avatars generated through artificial intelligence, inviting the viewer to question the authenticity of images and reflect on the relationship between the analogue and the digital, the real and the constructed.

The protagonists — Elena, Laura, Rosa, Lucía, Gabriela, María, and Claudia — each have their own name and a story behind every gaze.



Gabriela, Coffee and memories in Puerto Banús - 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)

Gabriela: Coffee and Memories in Puerto Banús

Every afternoon, Laura enjoys a stroll and a coffee at her favourite spot in Puerto Banús, caressing her old handbag that she acquired on a youthful trip to Italy. This faithful travel companion, now with the passage of time, bears the marks of a life full of adventures, dreams realised and others that were left behind. With each scratch and each mark, Gabriela remembers the days when her elegant handbag was the object of admiring glances. Today, she sees in it a deeper beauty, marked by the experiences lived.





Elena, Silent Witness

Elena relives moments of happiness in the stillness of her living room, through a photo album. Images that whisper memories: her youth in the village with her mother, her wedding, the birth of her first daughter. Each photograph is a moment of life that comes alive.

Next to her, resting on the carpet, is her handbag, a gift for her 50th anniversary. This silent companion has witnessed important chapters of her life, from major family events to intimate moments. As Elena immerses herself in nostalgia, her handbag becomes a mute witness to her story.



Elena, Silent Witness - 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)



Rosa, Timeless Elegance - 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)

Rosa: Timeless Elegance

Rosa, a lifelong neighbour, is known for her elegant style. Seated in her cosy living room, in a comfortable velvet armchair facing a warm red wall, Rosa reflects on her life on the stage. With a handbag hanging from her arm, a whimsy full of personal memories, it symbolises the richness of her history and the serenity she enjoys in the comfort of her home. Despite never having married, her life is full of fulfilment, surrounded by great friends.





Laura, Echoes of Eternal Love .92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)

Laura: Echoes of Eternal Love

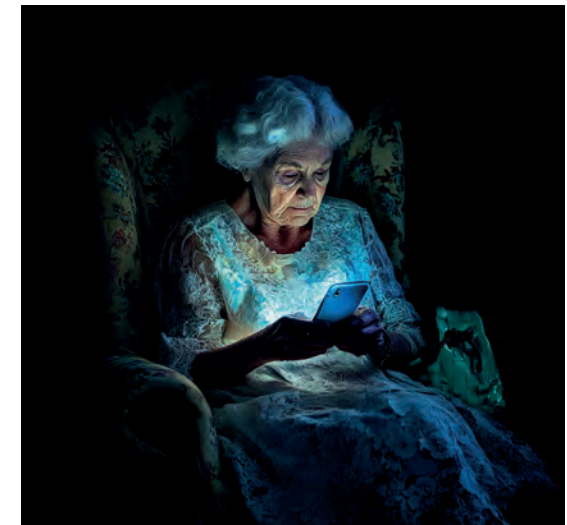
In the living room of her home, Laura sits with a handbag on her lap. The handbag, a symbol of timeless elegance, holds love letters from her husband, as intact as the day they were written. Though it has witnessed countless social events and galas, her true treasure lies in those papers that encapsulate an immortal love. For Laura, this haute couture accessory is more than a luxury item; it is a chest that guards precious and personal memories.





Lucia: Connected Through Generations

Sitting under the warm glow of a lamp in her living room, Lucia waits for a video call with her son who lives far away while looking at photos of her grandchildren on her mobile phone. Next to her, the Pau-er bag, a recent gift from her daughter, still has a new scent. This bag is not just an accessory, but a symbol of the bonds that connect the generations, reminding her that despite changes in styles and fashions, family love remains unchanged.



Lucía, Connected Through Generations - 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)



Maria: The Impatient Wait

Maria waits impatiently for the family reunion. In her bag, she carries a small bag of sweets to surprise her grandchildren. She smiles at the thought of the laughter and conversations that will fill the day. Memories of her childhood mix with the excitement of sharing special moments with her family. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee and the warmth of the home blend with the joy of the family gathering.



Maria, The Impatient Wait - 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)



Claudia, A day at the Beach- 92x92cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)

Claudia: A Day at the Beach

With her floral outfit and a Loewe basket, Claudia embodies boundless freedom and modernity regardless of age. Her wide gaze invites us to reflect on the fleeting nature of life and the depth of memories. This moment at the beach transcends time, becoming a space for contemplation and affirmation: life always holds new possibilities, regardless of the weight of the years.



THE
ABU-POWER

MARIFÉ NÚÑEZ



"I paint women who have learned to hold themselves up, to laugh, and to keep moving forward with beauty and truth."

The Abu-Power

The second opportunity

Abu-Power directly confronts one of the most deeply rooted prejudices in our culture: the invisibility of women beyond a certain age. Its protagonists are grandmothers who surf, play tennis, ride motorcycles, perform in a rock band, cycle, and play golf. Each one has her own name.

With her unmistakable style — figurative painting, caricature, and impeccable technique — Núñez creates figures that are at once tender and explosive, humorous and deeply political. Humor is the vehicle; empowerment is the destination.

The series was first presented in August 2025, with four works sold during that exhibition. It is currently in active expansion, with new pieces in progress.



Alba, nights of Rock & Roll - 94x84 cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Raquel, Route and Rebellion - 94x94cm - Acrylic on canvas (2024)



Isabel, Mojito under the Sun- 82x82cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Diana, holiday in Spain- 94x94cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Johana, Fairway Queen - 94x94cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Mercedes, A luxurious Descent- 80x80 cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Emma, Winning the Race - 80x80 cm - Acrylic on canvas (2026)



Carla , Match point - 94x94 cm - Acrylic on canvas (2026)



Eva, the wave is mine - 94x94 cm - Acrylic on canvas (2025)



Eva, the wave is mine - 35x30 cm - Sculpture made with resin, cement and acrylic paint (2025)



Gilaine, wings of freedom - Acrilly on canvas - 100x120cm

The Power to fly - Abu-Power

A symbolic exploration of feminine freedom

This new series extends the Abu-Power discourse into a more symbolic and surreal territory. Núñez's women appear here accompanied by birds — flamingos, storks, herons — in compositions that evoke freedom, mystery, and a timeless elegance.

The bird acts as an alter ego, a presence that amplifies the personality of each protagonist. These are women who have never stopped flying, even though the world may have tried to convince them otherwise.

The series is currently in active development and will be integrated into the exhibition as its most poetic and open dimension.



Celine: Pass, Present & Future - 80x100cm - Acrylic on canvas (2026)



Sofia, *La vie en rose* - 80x100 cm - Acrylic on canvas

"I paint against ageism, against that absurd idea that, with age, a woman should fade away, shrink herself, or become invisible. I paint to remind us that life does not end at a certain age; it transforms, expands, and takes on another truth, another beauty, and another strength. Abu-Power was born from that conviction and from the deep desire to celebrate the joy of living, of having lived, and of continuing to live. This project is in motion, like life itself: growing, opening up, and finding new ways to fly. And as long as I continue to feel that emotion, that urge to observe, to imagine, and to paint, Abu-Power will continue to expand with me."

Marifé Núñez