

Lockdown diaries: Camille, dancer, choreographer & environmental activist (US)

In the fourth story of [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#), we're hearing from Camille Hanson, a dancer, choreographer and environmental activist. She's originally from Minnesota (U.S.) and has been living in Madrid for 15 years. Camille offers a unique perspective on what it's like for artists in Spain right now during lockdown, as well as how quickly we can make change happen that affects the entire planet.

What was your life was like a week ago vs. today?

I'm a dancer, choreographer, and teaching artist. A week ago my studio classes were full and flowing with physical rigor. Now seven days later, I'm thankful just to be able to go outside for a 20-minute walk with my dog on a short leash held by a plastic glove while breathing through a face mask.

What do the street looks like?

One can sense the tension. The streets are a reminder that we're living through a plague. The mood is "Lynch" like – empty, strange, and unpredictable. Yet this empty space offers me a break from the fast pace. I welcome that. It brings with it a return to hearing birds sing and leaves ripple – the needed absence of speeding engines driving by.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Have you heard the applauding that happens every night at 10pm from the housebound balconies and windows of Madrid in honor of the Spanish medics? The sense of togetherness it creates is thrilling. However, the most encouraging experience for me has been discovering that we are capable of making change happen over night. In Spain, air, sea and land transportation have been reduced by 50 percent. China's pollution has dropped by a quarter. People are buying local and consuming less. Are these not the same behaviors we need to have happen for the environmental crisis?

A month ago, we were struggling to discuss the changes needed to stay under two degrees of global warming. Today we are witnessing just how quickly agreements can be made.

My work as a choreographer has been inspired by the environment for many years, so I am well aware that we cannot separate the state of the health of our planet from that of the health of our bodies and our lives.

How are you coping?

I believe this global health crisis is a reminder that we need to ask and offer support whether that support be emotional, physical, virtual or financial.

Over the past 72 hours I have had an unspeakable amount of performances and workshops completely suspended due to the coronavirus. Although, I am deeply sensitive to the emergency of the Covid-19, and what is happening for everyone, there will be no aid for me as an artist. There will be no compensation for the loss of these cancelled shows and contracts. In response to this loss, I have put together a fundraiser to help raise support – to keep my life and work afloat. In just 24 hours I've raised almost 50% of my goal. That's amazing. Support is life giving. I hope the darkness of the coronavirus cracks open light and opportunity for many of us. Maybe nourish the qualities of listening and connectedness to each other and the wider community of life.

What's the first thing you'll do once the lockdown is over?

Dance. And then I am going to get radical and completely stop supporting the animal agriculture industry. Their "business" is at the core of our environmental crisis which is at the core of our health crisis, in the sense of the link between humans' poor treatment of wild animals and the coronavirus. It is a dot to dot scenario. The challenge is obvious. It's time to cure the core.



If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

I would remind Sanchez and Iglesias* that the destiny of our lives cannot be separated from the destiny of earth.

**Pedro Sánchez is the current Prime Minister of Spain, and Pablo Iglesias is Second Deputy Prime Minister*

Here is [Camille Hanson's website](#)

See all stories of [Madrid Lockdown Series](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com

Lockdown diaries: Kristen, using this time for self-development and having proper phone calls with loved ones

Welcome to episode three of our series of stories from Madrid residents going through the current lockdown in Spain. Here we'll hear from Kristen Wiltshire, an English teacher and art enthusiast from Trinidad and Tobago who has been living in Madrid for 4-and-a-half years.

Kristen also runs the [Madrid Art and Culture](#) Facebook group where she shares tons of news related to the city's art scene. In light of the lockdown, she's recently been sharing several online resources to help keep us entertained these days, from free virtual tours of the world's beautiful museums to classes at prestigious universities. So check it out.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

Well Mondays are my long days at school. My first class starts at 9am but I work in a suburb so I wake up pretty early to get the direct bus at 7am to my school and then I'm going non-stop once school starts until 5pm. Last week I was a bit worried about catching the virus so I tried to sit away from other people and I washed my hands after each class if possible and used lots of hand sanitizer. I knew there was a chance they might close schools, as I had been monitoring the updates on the virus and I saw the numbers ticking upwards. But I didn't think there would be anything like a full shutdown.

Compare that to today, I'm home, of course and have been since Thursday last week. I had to go into work last Wednesday and even then wasn't taking this all that seriously – I even went to a movie on Wednesday afternoon (fortunately there were only two other people in the theatre) – but as the measures started getting rolled out, it became quite obvious just how real this was getting, not only for me but also on a global scale. I went out on Saturday to pick up groceries and stop off at the pharmacy but other than that, I haven't left my house. It feels a bit like when you're off sick because I'm waking up late on a Monday with no alarm except that it's eerily quiet in my neighbourhood. Even in my apartment as my roommate is a little under the weather.

What does the street look like?

I popped my head out of my living room window just now and it was very quiet. No one on any balconies or in the windows, unlike yesterday when the weather was better and there were a lot more people out. I saw about 4 people on the street, either going for groceries or walking a dog. They all gave each other a wide berth. I did see quite a few cars passing by

though on the main road.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Well I was really heartened by the applause for the health workers, pharmacists and shopkeepers that's been happening every night. And yesterday afternoon there were people playing music on their balconies and other people sitting out or leaning out their windows and enjoying it. It was the first time I've ever seen some of these people. In a way, it feels like this quarantine is forcing us to connect with our neighbours more which is a nice side effect.

How are you coping?

I'm an introvert so having to stay indoors isn't really difficult for me. I have a ton of books and podcasts and the like and I'm trying to think of this as a time to do all the things I always say I don't have enough time for. Almost as though we're frozen in time. I'm exercising more too which is good.

My tip would be to take this time to start on any projects you've been meaning to or to work on your Spanish or start an online course. Use this time for self development or to reach out to your friends and family and have a proper chat on the phone or by Skype. And if you're worried about your loved ones who are elderly or immunocompromised, try to talk to them as much as you can. I've been trying to talk to my grandmother every day and I pray for her and all the more vulnerable

people out there every morning. There isn't much more I can do to protect them but that gives me some peace.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over ?

Once the shut down is over, I'm probably going to go for a long walk in the sun. It will be nice to breathe some fresh air and stretch my legs.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

For the government I would say, please don't forget the homeless. They are especially vulnerable as they have less access to the types of facilities that most of us do.

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com

Lockdown diaries: Dan, CV writer & proofreader, stranded up north in the Basque Country

Here's the second story of our new series on what it's like to be in Spain right now during the lockdown. Daniel Catalan is a professional CV builder and writer specializing in career services. He's been living and working in Madrid on and off for almost a decade, and is currently on lockdown in País Vasco, as he was away on holiday there when the state of emergency was declared.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

A week ago I was at home in Madrid, attending to a surplus of several clients back-to-back in anticipation of a trip that I embarked on Wednesday morning to San Sebastian. The purpose of this trip was to become immersed in the local gastronomy, to take long walks on the beach and in the nature of the surrounding villages. I succeeded in these objectives during the first two days of the trip before embracing the gravity of the situation. Prompted to prolong the trip, I've been quarantining myself in a comfortable apartment here that I obtained via the online community of *Auxiliares en Pais Vasco*.

What does the street look like?

My window looks out to a nearby store of local Basque products where I'm able to stock up on essentials. The apartment is situated in the Old Town, which I was able to see in its regular lively state on Wednesday and Thursday before the country shut down. I took one of the last Pintxos and wine walking tours of this neighborhood with Devour Tours before they put a pause on all operations and I had a very positive experience. The contrast between then and now is like night and day.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

When shopping for essentials at the nearby store, unfortunately, they had no coffee to sell. The store is owned and managed by the staff of a popular pintxos bar called Gandarias which is situated next door. The shopkeeper and I made small talk at a safe distance, and he told me to wait outside for a moment after I paid for my purchases. He alerted the bar owner, who opened the shuttered establishment and emerged with a cup full of coffee grounds, and two bottles of wine which he gave to me for free.



How are you coping?

I have had a good fortune that my work is not interrupted and I can continue to attend to my clients remotely. I cherish the calls with them as they are meaningful interactions that give me a sense of purpose. If I'm being honest, I only feel completely distracted and at peace when immersed in my work. Many educators and tourism professionals have lost their jobs due to these volatile circumstances and have turned to my service for support as they seek to land on their feet. My mission is to provide the support that I wish I myself had received when I was abruptly sacked from a job in the past. Now that we're all in quarantine, this time can be used productively to reflect on aspirations and the finite nature of the human experience.

My days are filled with video calls with my loved ones in their various global corners. I have caught myself being more forgiving and even nostalgic when reflecting on persons from my past who I've consciously or mutually severed contact with over recent years. I have continued to see my therapist remotely, as that was how we would meet prior to this debacle. Rather than simply sharing memes, I've been consciously creating them myself.

My crucial tip to anyone reading this, and I cannot emphasize this enough, is to seize this opportunity to watch HBO's *The Wire*, a masterpiece of a series that had an enriching impact on my life and shaped my worldview when I first watched it in 2010.

What's the first thing you'll do once the lockdown is over?

Breathe clean air in the nature of any of the gorgeous villages that surround San Sebastian.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

To the Spanish government, my counsel would be to place an indefinite pause on the **autonomo* tax to give all freelancers room to breathe. All creative professionals are suffering greatly due to the indefinite pause in their income stream and I think it is unjust to give them an additional strain. Here's a [petition that we're signing](#) to hopefully make this happen.

**for all registered freelancers in Spain, you must pay a monthly fee of €280/month, regardless of income*

- Dan is also one of the most active writers on Naked Madrid, and has helped write several Madrid lockdown diaries. [Check out all his articles.](#)

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com

Lockdown diaries: Cat, primary school teacher & Naked Madrid contributor

Madrid is on its third day of lockdown. For 15 days we aren't allowed to go outside unless it's to the supermarket, to walk our dog, or to the pharmacy (or for urgent matters, i.e. going to the hospital). And we must go alone if possible. This has all happened very abruptly and it seems as though the rules keep changing every day. It's hard to explain what it feels like to be here right now, which is why I'd like to share personal stories of Madrid residents who are currently living through this.

First up is Cat Powell, a primary school teacher who works at a British school in Madrid. Originally from the UK, Cat has been living in Madrid for nearly a decade and she's also a key contributor to Naked Madrid.

What was your life like a week ago vs. today?

So this time last week looked a whole lot different to today. I'd never really spent time thinking about my freedom; only now do I realise how much I took it for granted. My workdays always start by grabbing a coffee on my morning commute, followed by a post-weekend catchup with colleagues and then

being cheered by the faces of the children in my class. My evenings would more than likely be spent at a spin class or having a *caña* with my partner at our local. As of today, none of that is an option. We're on lockdown in Madrid and now it's painfully clear to me how much of my daily life (and the seemingly mundane activities that it's made up of) are actually a true source of pleasure.

What does the street look like?

I live on Calle Ponzano, a street that even has its own hashtag #ponzaning. You usually can't move for revellers enjoying post-work drinks, tapas with friends and hives of *madrileños* sitting on benches watching the world gone by. It's now a ghost town, eerily quiet. I'm already longing for the days when we can all be fighting for a spot in the sunshine. Madrid without people on its *terrazas* truly feels like a city without its soul.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

I'm a primary school teacher so I'm receiving daily acts of kindness from my students who are sending in their work with sweet little notes and well wishes. As a natural extrovert and someone who loves to socialise, not having human contact is tough, but being able to give students praise (even from afar) is now raising my spirits as the first weekend of lockdown was tough. I'm not really a homebird and more than a few hours at home does not come naturally to me. In addition, the applause for healthcare workers at 10pm on Saturday was also incredibly uplifting and it really helped to create a feeling of unity

within the city that I call home.

How are you coping?

If you ask my boyfriend, he'd probably say not very well! We've gone through a few moments of panic and wanting to go home (to the UK) but I think we're now in a place of knowing that this situation is for the greater good. We've slowed down and we're going to try to find the simple pleasure of having more time, as really that's all we now have. I never had a breakfast that isn't rushed, so today we've just enjoyed pancakes. My skincare routine has ramped up as I've really no excuse now not to luxuriate in doing a face mask. I love reading, but it rarely happens with any regularity unless it's during the summer and on a sun lounger. I plan to read lots now and try to limit my screen time. Aside from that, I think my flat will never have been cleaner, I'll enjoy these days of 8 hours sleep and I'm thinking about signing up for an interior design course – let's see how much of Netflix I can work my way through first though!

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over ?

The first thing I'll do when lockdown is over is get to the beach. It's my birthday this coming Saturday and I was due to spend it in Valencia. I'm craving time with sea and sand, so my plan is to book a trip to Tarifa (my happy place) and throw caution to the wind – meaning treating myself to the fanciest hotel I can afford after being cooped up. Bring on room service and a glass of fizz on a rooftop.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

If I could tell the government to do one thing, it would be please allow the elderly or high-risk members of society to go to the supermarkets for one hour each day before the general public. I cannot imagine how overwhelming it must be to be swept up in this state of unknown and panic as an 80-something-year-old. I think that having that time period before others can go out would help to lessen the feeling of potential chaos in the few public places that are open.

- Cat Powell is also a key contributor to Naked Madrid. [Check out all her articles!](#)

See all [Madrid Lockdown Diaries](#) here

If you'd like to submit your story, please send an email to daphne@veracontent.com

The Story of the Rastro's Radical Flower Market

Every Sunday, one of the most authentic experiences in Madrid takes form. With little evidence of commercialization, the Rastro, Madrid's infamous flea market, continues to draw

locals, exchange students and tourists. The charm of the market oozes the Spanish ambiance that many are searching for in between the ever-growing number of chain restaurants and carbon copy stores. It's been around for over 400 years and has survived two dictatorships and countless wars, so it's safe to say that it will be around for some time.

The Rastro extends from La Latina to Ronda de Toledo, but the best finds are in the winding streets in between. Many start by getting out at the La Latina metro station and then walking to Plaza de Cascorro, considered by many as the start of the Rastro. The contrasting smell of burning incense sticks and the sight of people rummaging through second-hand Levi's reminds you that this is a market that caters for all.

As you battle your way through the crowds on Calle de la Ribera de Curtidores, and past the statue of soldier Eloy Gonzalo, the market livens up to the soundtrack of African drummers and eccentric jazz musicians. Now is a good time to sit and enjoy the first caña of the day and engross yourself in the busyness of the Rastro.

Further up is Calle Carlos Arniches where you can browse through old books. Or perhaps you may want to get lost in the expensive antiques of Plaza General Vara del Rey. Towards the end of the Rastro is Plaza de Campillo del Mundo Nuevo where children go with their fathers, who went before them, to swap football stickers. This plaza is full of old magazines, comic books and music to suit all ages.



Yet, one of the most curious areas is the political flower market. Instead of getting out of the La Latina metro station head for Tirso De Molina. As you enter the plaza from the metro station it looks no different to any of the other sections of the market. Most people don't give the stalls a second look as they see an assortment of flags, books and black t-shirts with rebellious slogans printed on them. However, upon closer inspection you can see that this is the most radical area of the Rastro.



In the square, next to the terraces full of people taking a rest from the busy city on a Sunday morning, sits the flower market. In between the flower stalls, the flags of political movements, and the short-lived second republic, wave in the wind above the foldable tables.



Many different political factions from Spain congregate here to sell their wares and show off their propaganda. The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), an anarcho-syndicalist trade union, are based close to here and they are easily identified by their black and red flag. The CNT are the main political Spanish presence here, and then there are various collective groups that pop up from time to time, the most intriguing being the Friends of North Korea (easily identifiable by their red and blue flag next to the entrance of the metro). There are also ecology groups, feminist groups and many stalls selling all assortments of t-shirts and badges.



This is also a place for activist groups to come and campaign and gain signatures for petitions. I've seen groups fighting gentrification in Lavapies to euthanasia campaigners, with the latter group getting their cause in front of the Spanish parliament. Proving that where there is a cause, there is someone fighting for it. Whether that is on a stall in the Rastro or down the road in parliament. That said, you are not likely to see Partido Popular campaigning for lower taxes here, this area is very much on the progressive left side of politics. In fact, it was once called Plaza del Progreso in the 18th century. Later it was renamed after Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina, whose real name was Gabriel Téllez. He was a monk who lived in a monastery which was on the site in the 17th century. However, he didn't write about god, he wrote erotically charged plays. As you can see the area has links to rebellious people.



The various groups, despite their differences on political theory, get along and many have been coming here for years. Busts of Lenin, purple feminist t-shirts and literature on the ecological state of the planet can all be brought here along with a bunch of daffodils. So why are old revolutionists and feminists sat with flower sellers?



During the time of the dictator Francisco Franco they banned all political parties. However, many people were resistant to his regime throughout the 35 years that he ruled over Spain. The Spanish Communist Party became a focal point, as the Spanish Socialist Party amongst others went into exile during the dictatorship. Even people that weren't sympathetic to the communist cause joined the party in secret. These people were more anti-Franco rather than pro-communist. There were also several other smaller groups spread out over Spain.

These various factions worked with foreign political forces from outside Spain, or Spaniards that had gone into exile. They would coordinate amongst themselves to make sure that Franco's regime never had an easy life. Their goal was to transition the country back to a state of democracy after the dictator's death. An example of this underground resistance

was the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco. He was installed as Prime Minister by Franco before his death, and many thought that he would continue the dictatorship after Franco had gone. A group put a bomb under his car and set it off as he was leaving mass.



Plaza Tirso de Molina was where these groups used to exchange political messages. They used the flower market as cover so that they could exchange political messages. The people that gather here today amongst the different coloured roses and bouquets continue to respect this tradition and meet here every Sunday. This is the story of the Rastro's radical flower market.

By Alan McGuire

Alan McGuire is a British writer living in Madrid. He is currently working on a book about Spanish society and a YouTube channel about modern Spanish history. You can follow him on Twitter [here](#).

Madrid Art Week 2020: a handy guide to make the most of it

It's the most wonderful time of the year! It's [Madrid Art Week](#) and that means that this weekend will be chock-a-block of art fairs. But how do you know which one to choose? If, like me, you have a *puente* and a free schedule, you might consider just hitting up as many as possible and it's certainly do-able but if you don't have as much time, money or energy, here's a handy guide.

7 Madrid art fairs to check out this weekend:

1. [Drawing Room](#)



I'm going to start out with [Drawing Room](#) which is my personal favourite and the one I try to head to every year. I like Drawing Room because it's smaller and a bit more intimate than a lot of the other fairs. It takes place at the Palacio Santa Barbara at Alonso Martinez which has 2 stories, I believe. As the name suggests, Drawing Room focuses on illustration and so you often get to see art that's a lot more naturally inspired, a bit more minimal and often very intricate. Drawing Room is open to the public from Thursday Feb 26th and runs until Sunday March 1st. General entrance is 10 euros.

2. [Art Madrid](#)

ART MADRID'20

15ª FERIA DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO

Edición Especial 15 Aniversario



Next up is my second favourite, [Art Madrid](#). If you want a bigger art fair feel with more diversity of art styles and mediums but don't want to go for broke with ARCO, Art Madrid is a good alternative. I have come across many of my favourite artists there like Lino Lago and Alejandra Atares (seriously check their work out!) but as it's bigger, it does warrant a bit more time. I would say you should expect to spend at least 2 hours there. Art Madrid takes place at the Crystal Gallery part of Cibeles and it is already open to the public. It runs from Wed 26th to March 1st and a general ticket will set you back 15 euros. There is a student discount available though which will cost you 12 euros.

3. [Urvanity](#)



Next up, I would recommend [Urvanity](#) which takes place at COAM. If you like your art to be a little out there, brighter and more unusual, then Urvanity is the one for you. I went to Urvanity for the first time just last year and I quite enjoyed it. The art there is bursting with colour and a lot of the art was very political. There were lots of messages about the excesses of capitalism, feminism, the costs of war, and concerns about the environment.

Urvanity doesn't pull its punches and that social consciousness often carries over into the art talks that they have every day throughout the fair. These talks are FREE and completely open (unlike at most of the other fairs where you have to reserve in advance) and they discuss challenges and concerns facing the contemporary art world and today's artists. Urvanity also takes art to the streets by sponsoring major street art projects throughout the city which you can find on their website under Art Walls. Urvanity is only open to the public from Friday 28th to Sunday March 1st. A one day ticket costs 10 euros while a 3 day *abono* costs 25 euros.

4. [Hybrid](#)



The other big alternative art fair is [Hybrid](#). Hybrid is the cool kids art fair. It takes place in a swanky hotel in Malasaña, the art is set up in rooms on multiple floors and it boasts a ton of musical guests and a cool hang out/party space as well. Hybrid welcomes the more provocative works. If you're looking for art that's more experimental and if you want to get real up close and personal with the artists, then you would probably love Hybrid. Hybrid takes place at the Hotel Petit Palace and is open to visits from Friday February 28th to Sunday March 1st. A one day ticket will cost 9 euros while the 3 day *abono* is just 14 euros. You can save a euro if you buy your ticket online.

5. [Salon de Arte Moderno](#)



[Image source](#)

Now if you want to get off the beaten path and head to an art fair that's a little bit less well known, head down to Salamanca for the [Salon de Arte Moderno](#). This art fair takes place at a nondescript building at Calle Velazquez, 12 which is actually where Drawing Room was held the first year I attended it. SAM is open from February 24th to March 1st. If you want some help navigating the artworks on display, you can sign up for one of their twice daily guided tours. There is also a fantastic gastronomic component to SAM where selected restaurants in the Salamanca neighbourhood like Amazonico or El Perro y La Galleta have a special, art-inspired dish just for the duration of the fair. SAM is free! You just need to sign up for an invitation on their website.

6. [Just Mad](#)



[Just Mad](#) is another pretty big fair which has a little bit of everything. I would particularly recommend it for fans of sculpture as I saw quite a few sculptural pieces there last year. It takes place at Palacio Neptuno just off the Triangle of Art. For me, Just Mad was the most impersonal art fair that I went to. I feel that it is garnered more towards art buyers and collectors instead of just the casual viewer but there are a lot of great pieces so if you're happy to let the art speak for itself and you don't necessarily want to meet a lot of artists, don't let me dissuade you. And of course, you can have wonderful, enlightening conversations with the gallery representatives as well. There are also guided tours you can sign up for on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. General entrance tickets cost 13 euros while the reduced tickets (for students) are just 7!

7. [ARCO](#)



And the last one is the elephant in the room, the big Kahuna, the mother of all art fairs in Madrid, [ARCO](#). I have never been to ARCO, although I want to, but I'm sure it's a tremendous experience and something you need at least half a day to visit. There are discussions and meetings between Spanish and international museums. It takes place at IFEMA and is open to the public from midday on Friday until Sunday 1st. General entrance on Friday and Saturday is 40 euros while it's 30 on Sunday. Students meanwhile pay only 20 euros any day!

Hope you enjoy [Madrid Art Week!](#)

Whoo, we made it to the end of the list! If you read all of this, I salute you and I hope you have a wonderful weekend, discovering new artists and talking to them about their work. Don't be shy! Remember, artists *want* their work to be seen and I have honestly never come across an artist who wasn't happy and excited to talk about their pieces with me. Art is for everyone, including the non-industry casuals like you perhaps and me. Enjoy! But be sure to pace yourself and wash your

hands.

**Most images are from [Esmadrid.com](https://www.esmadrid.com), Madrid's official tourism website. Feature image is from [@artmadridferia](https://www.instagram.com/artmadridferia)*

By Kristen Wiltshire (IG: @makidocious)

When she's not at a museum or the movies, Kristen can usually be found trying to make headway in her giant pile of books or her miles long Netflix queue. She also runs [Madrid Art and Culture](https://www.facebook.com/MadridArtandCulture), a Facebook group dedicated to Madrid's myriad cultural offerings.

Also check out:

[Art lover's guide to Madrid: 7 resources to keep you up to date](#)

Madrid Artist Showcase: Diego Salas, Creative Audiovisual

Director

Madrid, a hub of creative talent, is the home to artists working across disciplines, wielding various forms of expression. Local artist Diego Salas is the architect behind *Synesthesia*, a series of recorded visual productions in which he creates an immersive projected environment for Madrid's community of performing artists to use as a stage. Diego is proud of this project which has granted him the opportunity to collaborate with respected artists.



As an active member of Madrid's international community, Diego has designed [the Brotha CJ and the Othahood cover for their 2018 album *Everybody Eats*](#). The animation from this album cover was brought to life when it was rendered on the stage behind this group as they performed at Las Fiestas de San Isidro.



Additionally, Diego has acted in and produced [relatable web series](#) and short films.



His artistic capacity is not limited to grassroots creative projects. I have collaborated with Diego myself to build visually appealing infographics and corporate content for my clients, and he has also crafted logos and branding campaigns for companies in Madrid and beyond.

Several prints, visual designs and other creative works made by Diego will be presented to the public at [VeraArt](#)'s upcoming art show, curated by Maegan Gardner [at VeraContent on February 7th](#). Those in attendance can bear witness to local dancer [Daphne Binioris](#) dancing in synchrony with visual projections controlled by Diego in real-time in a postmodern performance. This will be followed by a performance by [Brotha CJ](#).

Diego hails from Lima, Peru. Like many of us, he has been in the trenches as a teacher and became fond of his adopted home of Madrid, navigating bureaucracy to establish roots here. He is deeply familiar with the process of starting a new life in a foreign country and just recently he celebrated his 14-year anniversary in this city.



Diego opened up about the challenges that he has faced as a freelance artist.

There's a romanticized image of an artist who is always inspired. People don't see the hours or the process behind the scenes, sharing work on social media and building a community with other artists with a similar vision. These less glamorous parts of the process require constant attention.

As we sat for the interview, Diego gave me a sneak peek of the new pieces he will present at VeraArt's upcoming event and talked about his creative process. Diego's lived experiences play a role in some of his pieces where he depicts the emotional aesthetic components of memories in surreal animations. His visuals are often inspired by music and nature. Stimulation from music evokes colorful mental images that Diego quickly recreates onscreen.

Diego had this to say about the volatility of creating art under capitalism:

You will inevitably encounter negative feedback. Don't let imposter syndrome and the other haters and failed projects discourage you. Failure is part of the process and you can learn from it.

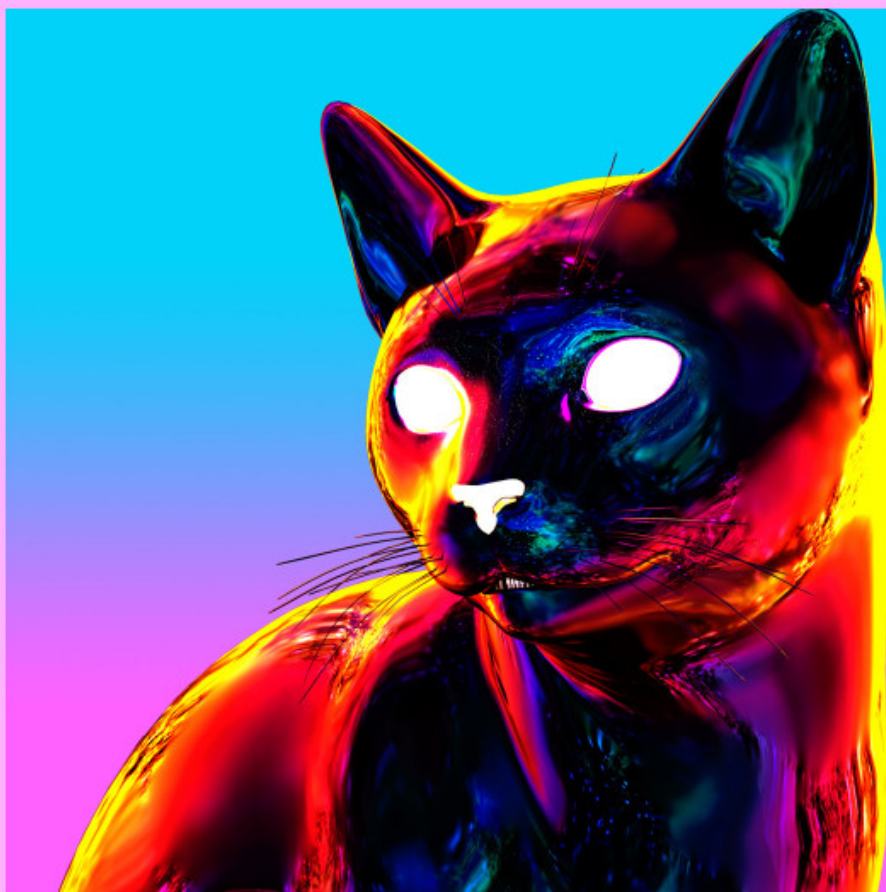
Diego's advice to aspiring artists is:

Don't stop creating. Passion projects that are non-lucrative are valid forms of expression. Don't feel obligated to profit from your art or gain visibility and acclaim immediately, it happens with time and dedication.

Upcoming art show in Madrid

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5€ UNLIMITED DRINKS

7:30PM

Be sure to catch Diego at VeraArt's event on February 7th in Madrid. Here's all the event details and make sure to sign up [here on Eventbrite](#).

Diego Salas, Madrid-based

audiovisual artist

▪ [Instagram](#) | [Website](#)

**All photos by [James Stiles of Labl Foto](#).*

Mad Improv – shows and courses of the unexpected

If you've ever ventured to Lavapiés on a Thursday night you may well have felt the vibrant pulse of English language entertainment beating to its own rhythm at [La Escalera de Jacob](#). The long-established indy theatre hosts [MAD Improv](#) – Madrid's go-to group for all things improv in English. The group offers up their [weekly show](#) (now in its third season) to audiences of native and non-native English speakers alike, as reflected in the multiple reviews on their [Trip Advisor page](#). They're now the 44th highest-rated show in all of Madrid, no less.



Their show formats include MAD About You, an improvised chat show complete with improvised interviews with audience members and an improvised house band, and MAD Monologues where fresh stand up material from comics on the local stand up scene inspires the mad improv that follows. But coming to see a MAD Improv show on a Thursday night is, for some, just the beginning of a deeper and ever-surprising journey into doing improvisation themselves.

Improv training



MAD
IMPROV



IMPROV IS THE 'LIFE HACK'
THAT WE ALL NEED.
NOW MORE THAN EVER.

- BEN SERIO, MAD IMPROVISER



That's because MAD Improv, which began life in 2014, run [courses and workshops](#). This month their flagship Green Course for beginners and near-beginners starts for the 7th time, as well as their Blue Course, specially designed for those with existing improv training, such as their own Green Course.



[Steve Loader](#), one of the founding members of MAD Improv, is the teacher of their beginners course. He describes the experience as:

Witnessing a brilliant whirlwind of personal discoveries and magic Eureka moments as participants grasp the basics of improv and run with them. The feedback we get from our alumni is proof that not only anyone can learn improv but also that improv turns out to be much more than just a type of performance, but something that feeds into everyday life.

One student from their last Green Course, Carlos, put it like this:

It's such a good environment, Steve is so enthusiastic and patient that we are all relaxed and lose our shyness and inhibitions. It's more than educational, it's therapeutic. I've received a training in spontaneity and I love it!

Flexing creative muscles



As committing to regular participation on a course isn't for everyone, every Sunday at [Espacio en Blanco](#) the MAD Improvisers offer their weekly [MAD Improv Gym](#), an open drop-in session for anyone who wants to try their hand at improv. The Gym also attracts a group of regulars and is always followed by post-improv drinks. According to Steve:

Between 10 and 20 people come every week to our Gym. It's always formed the foundation of our community. We love offering the sessions.



Steve has been a Madrid resident for 6 years and also runs [courses in clown](#), physical theatre and [scripted theatre](#). In fact, the MAD Improv community acts not only as a meeting point for anyone interested in improv in English, but also as a skills hub for the wider English-speaking arts community.

So, maybe 2020 is the year to find your own creative beat with some mad improv of your own.

MAD Improv

- [Website, Facebook & IG: @mad_improv](#)
- [Show listings](#)
- [TripAdvisor](#)

Art lover's guide to Madrid: 7 resources to keep you up to date

Happy 2020! Perhaps you're one of the many people who have made various resolutions to start the year afresh and become a better version of yourself. Is one of your resolutions to increase your cultural knowledge and take full advantage of the art offered by this great city? Even if you're not the resolution type and you're just looking for some guidance in terms of where to find out more about art in Madrid, never fear! We're here to guide you to the relevant information.

1. [EsMadrid](#)



Now let's say you don't speak Spanish. In that case, your best choice to find information about art in English in Madrid is from the Art and Culture section of Madrid's official tourism website, [EsMadrid](#). In addition to English and Spanish, this site is available in 7 other languages, including Japanese and Russian. Now one of its great pluses is that it breaks down the various tourist passes available like the Paseo del Arte Pass which grants the holder one visit to the permanent collection of each of the city's main museums, the Prado, The Reina Sofia and the Thyssen-Bornemisza. This pass is great for visitors who are just in the city for a short while and who only want to dive into the big ticket sites but there are other passes which give you access to more museums for periods such as ten to fifteen days for the consummate art lover.

EsMadrid's great strength is the breadth of its scope – it covers cultural centres to exhibition halls to house museums and contains the most pertinent information at a glance, including the location, price, opening hours and best transport options. And if you want a great overview of Madrid's art offerings, be sure to take a gander at the Art in Madrid Guide PDF which is an unbeatable introduction to both the leading museums and their holdings as well as some of the lesser known but just as formative art centres like the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, just off of Sol.

2. [Time Out Madrid](#)



Now if you're looking for information that is a bit more curated, don't miss [Time Out Madrid](#). While the English version of their website is not quite as comprehensive as the Spanish one, there are still a number of articles, which are constantly updated, highlighting the most popular, current exhibitions, free art, street art and graffiti as well as the city's most celebrated paintings and museums.

Time Out is an incredibly well-known and versatile publication with branches all over the world and it has even recently launched a print magazine here in Madrid which releases monthly. You can often find the print magazine being given out for free at major metro stations just after release, or later, in trendy cafes, independent bookshops and some libraries. I would highly recommend grabbing a copy if you can because it goes into even more detail of certain expositions and features some recommendations and interviews which are exclusive to the magazine.

3. [Madrid Diferente](#)



Continuing on to Spanish-language recommendations, another favourite is [Madrid Diferente](#). Similar to Time Out Madrid, Madrid Diferente publishes a [weekly agenda](#) of things to do over the entire upcoming week, not just the weekend. Their picks are often eclectic and a little bit off the beaten path. I almost always discover some activity or event that I've never heard of before and that is only happening for just this weekend and that's why I try to check every Thursday because you don't want to miss out!

Madrid has so much to offer it can be overwhelming but here you have a streamlined list of options. Now, if you check their "Es Capital" section, you will be exposed to a host of activities and spaces that are intimate and rewarding like Madrid's smallest photo gallery or a self-guided tour of Madrid's most unusual, outdoor sculptures. And if you want to kill two birds with one stone, Madrid Diferente's writers have recently begun including suggestions for recommended restaurants or cafes near to the gallery or museum they're currently highlighting. A win win, in my book!

4. [Madrid Free](#)



Perhaps your number one New Year's resolution is to sort out your finances and you're afraid that this is all sounding very expensive. Well, did you know that there's a website dedicated

solely to free cultural activities in Madrid? It's called [Madrid Free](#) and it has a [dedicated section for Expositions](#) which is updated frequently. It also covers exhibitions from contemporary art galleries as well as the ones from museums and cultural centres like CentroCentro Cibeles and the Matadero. If you want even more up to the minute information on free activities, be sure to also follow them on Facebook if you have it because they update it often.

5. [Arte Informado](#)



So if you want the absolute, most comprehensive list of temporary art offerings in the city, look no further than [Arte Informado](#). This is basically a holy grail for art lovers as this website aims to serve almost every country in the Iberian-American space and includes a magazine, art courses and art prizes. However, even if you just want to know about art expositions, they compile those too with an incredible search engine that allows you to narrow down your choices by date, city or country and even specify the type of art.

At this very moment, if you search for exhibitions in Madrid, narrowing it down no further, it shows 19,787 exhibitions available. You can't deny – that's a lot of art. If that sounds like a bit much, Arte Informado also has a weekly newsletter which you can sign up for that delivers some of the most prominent exhibits right into your mailbox.

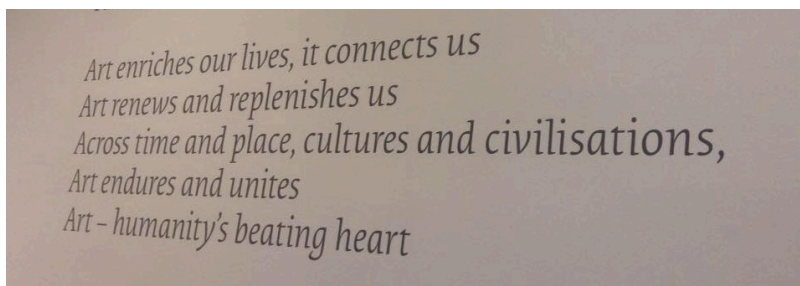
6. [Museo del Prado's Instagram](#)

account



If you want your Instagram experience to be more positive and enlightening, follow the [Museo del Prado's official account](#): @museoprado. Every weekday morning, they do an Instagram Live video highlighting either an art work or a room of the museum, which is then left up for the rest of the day so you can check it out when you can. Additionally, in their posts, they often share videos showing the mounting of exhibits as well as other day-to-day aspects of working and running a major museum. It's a fantastic, accessible way to flesh out your art history knowledge.

7. [Madrid Art and Culture Facebook group](#)



Finally if you'd like to get more of my insight into Madrid's cultural goings-on, feel free to join my Facebook group, [Madrid Art and Culture](#), which is meant to showcase the many different sides of this city, although it is quite heavy on art and film. I created it about a year and a half ago and

the group now has just over 1400 members with frequent posts about film festivals, art exhibits, plays and much more. Furthermore, as it's a Facebook group, all members are able to post about activities and events that interest them or that they are taking part in.

I hope I've given you the tools to hit the ground running this year when it comes to art. To a culturally enriching 2020!

By Kristen Wiltshire (IG: @makidocious)

When she's not at a museum or the movies, Kristen can usually be found trying to make headway in her giant pile of books or her miles long Netflix queue. She also runs [Madrid Art and Culture](#), a Facebook group dedicated to Madrid's myriad cultural offerings.

A look at the history and food of Aragón, Spain

Between the Spanish metropolises of Madrid and Barcelona, forgotten from Michelin-guided itineraries focused solely on the Basque Country, and otherwise seen as a pass-thru city, lies Zaragoza, the capital of Aragón. If you've seen *The Tudors*, maybe you remember Henry's first wife: the pious Catherine of Aragón, played by Irish actress Maria Doyle Kennedy. Perhaps that is all you've ever heard of Aragón, a region whose middle and southern depths were once described by a friend as "a nuclear wasteland."



View of Zaragoza from one of the towers of the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar

And yet, Aragón's southern capital, Teruel, is famous for its

cured ham, effortlessly produced in the dry, windy climate of Aragón. The “Lovers of Teruel” were supposedly Shakespeare’s inspiration for Romeo and Juliet, even. And there’s certainly no love lost by Spaniards for Aragón’s northern territory, cities like Huesca and Jaca, lush and green and gateways to the Pyrenees and affordable skiing.



Teruel ([image source](#))

For tourists or non-Spaniards unfamiliar with the Pyrenees valley, knowing little to nothing about the once-mighty kingdom of Aragón is not surprising. Similarly, feeling overlooked or forgotten is not a foreign sensation to the Aragonese, beset on every side by regions more famous for various reasons: Cataluña, Castilla y León, Navarra, Valencia, and, of course, Madrid. And yet, Aragón was once, arguably, one of the most important and powerful regions in Spain.

History of Aragón, Spain



Aragón, Spain | ©Jrpvaldi / Wikimedia Commons

In 1469, in the capital city of Valladolid (Castile and León), Ferdinand II of Aragón and Isabella I of Castile were married. Seventeen and eighteen, respectively, these two monarchs were known as the “Catholic Monarchs” (los Reyes Católicos) and, one falsified papal bull later, Isabella and Ferdinand went on to rule an Iberian peninsula many historians credit as being unified under their influence.

Americans, Barcelona tour guides, and other history buffs may also recognize them as being the monarchs that Christopher Columbus sought financial support from in his mission to colonize the Indies, originally, and whose trips and conquests would end up for the benefit of the Spanish crown. Or rather,

the Castilian crown, since it was Isabella who had provided the money, not Ferdinand and his Aragonese court.

The imbalance in the power of their kingdoms, Castile and León richer and more powerful, was heightened by the fact that both Castile and Aragón retained their respective autonomy despite Isabella and Ferdinand's marriage. So to amend an earlier, arguable statement, perhaps it is better said that Aragón was a *part* of the most powerful and important union in Spain.

Cuisine of Aragón, Spain



Zaragoza



Aragón's supporting role in the unification of Spain during the Middle Ages and relative present-day anonymity among the

Iberian regions notwithstanding, Aragón has maintained a proud culinary tradition.

Ham from Teruel



[Image credit](#)

Teruel is indeed known for its ham, dark and richly-colored with an unmistakable pork taste and, if cured long enough, jerky texture. In fact, Teruel hams were the first in Spain to be regulated by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA – *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación*), an office in Spain that ensures the regulation and controlled production of items originating from a certain region, giving them the coveted DOP seal (*denominación de origen protegida*). In the case of Teruel, for a cured ham leg to be considered a ham from Teruel, and to legally be marked with the eight-pointed star of Teruel and thus the DOP, the

pig must have been bred, raised, and then cured to certain specifications. This regulatory and strict adherence to established protocol applies to cheeses from DOP Castilla-La Mancha, wines from DOP La Rioja, and more.

Purple olives



[Image credit](#)

Aragón's purple olives are also known the peninsula over for their bitter, sharp taste. Small and round, colors ranging from dark purple to almost black, they're often sold in huge bags at supermarkets in Aragón. They're salty, dry, and, the more wrinkly the olive, the stronger the taste when it comes

to these olives (some even look like huge raisins).

Sweets



[Image credit](#)

Every Spaniard loves a good *dulce* during fiestas and the Aragonese are no exception. Popular during Pilares, Zaragoza's own festival in honor of its patron Our Lady of Pilar, are "frutas de Aragón" which, despite the word fruit in the name, are actually only fruit-flavored candies encased in chocolate. Soft and a bit like jelly bonbons, these candies are made in the traditional way by coating the candy in sugar and dipping in chocolate. Some confectioner's even use small diced orange pieces (with rind intact) for the orange ones.



[Image credit](#)

And no post-baptism party is complete in Aragón without another popular treat: trenza de Huesca. Especially the Trenza de Almudévar brand. Originating in the northern province of Huesca, this braided sweetbread is a cross between a danish and a flaky pastry, striped with cinnamon and coated in a thick sugar glaze. Its traditional flavors are cinnamon with raisin and nuts, however, orange-infused and chocolate trenzas are also popular varieties.

Roast Lamb



[Image credit](#)

Another delicacy Aragón is known for is its roast lamb, called “ternasco” or “paletilla.” Walking into the big, main central market in Zaragoza, an entire section of the butchers’ aisle is dedicated solely to lamb. They have any and every cut you might want, and several organs as well. A shock to some might be the sight of piled lamb heads at the meat counter of a grocery store in Zaragoza, but this is very standard here.

The key to the lamb roast is minimal working of the meat; allowed to come to room temperature, seasoned usually only with salt, garlic, perhaps some herbs of preference, and served with a side of well-salted potatoes. Or, in true Spanish fashion, letting the ingredients speak for themselves.

Culinary traditions of Aragón

Aragonese cuisine is, like its region, not well-known but still celebrated and valued within its borders. There is a fierce pride to the restaurants in Zaragoza, serving hearty,

uncomplicated dishes that are a marker of Aragón's food culture. Disregarding the new age and high-brow experimental cuisine restaurants to focus on the traditional spots that close on Sundays right beside them, one notes the richness of dishes which, on the surface, seem quite simple.

Take "migas," for example. Though translated to breadcrumbs, this dish is actually the fluffy inside of bread, crust removed, that's broken up and pan-fried in olive oil with chopped onions, garlic, red pepper, sausage, and many other ingredients according to taste. It requires no fancy cookware, radical ingredients, or incredible skill to make, and yet it remains flavorsome and capable of vast interpretation. Something as simple as varying the bread used can produce a wide variety of results, from especially crispy to more tender, to say nothing of the type of olive oil and accompanying sauté ingredients.



Plate of “migas” at the popular La Miguería restaurant in Zaragoza’s tapas bar district known as “El Tubo”



The plate of “migas” after being mashed up

Migas are all over Spain, and there is much contention over which region, exactly, is the originator, but green grapes, blood sausage, and a fried egg (for good measure) are decidedly Aragonese toppings to it.

Perhaps, if not blood sausage for your migas, you’d like “longaniza,” Aragón’s proprietary sausage. Unlike many Spanish sausages, longaniza is not made with pimentón (sweet paprika) but heavy on the pepper and, depending on the Aragonese producer, even hints of nutmeg or parsley make it in the mix. You might want this longaniza fried and topping not migas but “huevos rotos”, an uncomplicated and incredibly satisfying dish of thinly-sliced, fried potatoes with fried eggs whose

yolks have been broken. Equally common is eating huevos rotos with cured ham... from Teruel, if you're a real maña/o.

Aragón has a lengthier list of traditional dishes, but the markers of simplicity and heartiness pervade it. Overlooked and sorely underrated, Aragón and its three provinces have been able to preserve and cherish their culinary histories without great external influences that uniquely shape other culinary traditions. The largest changes to Aragonese cuisine comes from the cooks of the meal themselves, who on one day might decide to fry up migas with hojiblanco olive oil instead of arbequina, or flavor a candy with fig and chili pepper instead of cherry.

By Alegra N. Padrón

Alegra N. Padrón is a creative who loves to write about food, travel, and culture. Living between Spain and the US, she documents food and fun on Twitter @an_padron

You may also like:

- [iOstras! Spanish Food Phrases for Aspiring Natives](#)