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



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.

Café Viralata – craft beer, delicious sandwiches, and live music

Jay (Dominican) and Selvi (Italian) are a music-loving couple who decided to put their passion for art and craft beer to good use: in June 2018, they opened Café Viralata in Lavapiés.

While it may be a new bar (with killer decor), it has nothing to do with the wave of pricey hipster joints that has flooded the neighborhood in recent years. No, señor, this place has some very simple raisons d'etre: **good music, good food, and good vibes** at more-than-reasonable prices.

The facade piques the interest of passersby with some sassy paintings of doggos (thanks to @ramon_amoros_ilustrador) and a blackboard announcing the bar's upcoming events (more on that later).



Once inside, we start with what’s important: beer! You’ve got everything **from your classic Estrella Galicia to impressive local IPAs.** They’ve been working closely with the local brewer community, specifically the guys at Abeerzing, to learn more about “el mundo cervecero.” So the beer list is constantly growing and changing.

Café Viralata is also the first bar in Madrid to serve Beertag, a brand new beer from La Rioja brewed by Slezia Albino, one of Jay’s oldest friends in Madrid from film school.



As for wine, they of course offer Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Verdejo, and Albariño, but they also recommend wines from Madrid, Alicante, Catalunya, Portugal, and Italy, and **their "tinto de verano" is actually made with an Australian wine**. As Jay says, if you're a purist, you've really gotta keep an open mind here.

Once you've got your drink, you'll probably want something to snack on (if you give a mouse a cookie…). Café Viralata goes way beyond your typical tortilla and olives.

Get started with appetizers like the hummus plate and the avocado toast, and if you're looking for something more substantial, go for one of their sandwiches, **which are made with love on fresh sourdough bread** from the folks at bakery Madre Hizo Pan.

A house favorite is "La Piernotta," a Dominican-Italian version of the typical Dominican "*sandwich de pierna*" with *porchetta* (Italian, roasted, oven-baked pork) with smoked *scamorza* cheese, green peppers, and red onions.

And yes, **they also have fabulous vegetarian and vegan options.**

Lastly, if you have a sweet tooth like me, you can't leave without trying the homemade tiramisu, lovingly crafted by @lacucinadicarlo (who also provide their pastrami).





Once you've got your food and drink sorted, head to the back of the bar to check out what makes this place truly special: an intimate venue, complete with a piano (that Selvi's mom sent them from Italy!), guitars, a projector, two rows of chairs (I said intimate!), and lots of vinyl records to thumb through.

This space offers anything from **live acoustic concerts** to independent film screenings, theater, micro-theater, poetry readings, spoken word, stand-up comedy, magic shows…



It just doesn’t get much better than that.

Oh, and if you’re wondering what “viralata” means, this is what Jay had to say about it:

> *In the Dominican Republic, and also in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil, a ‘VIRALATA’ is what a stray dog and/or any animal or person of mixed race is called. ‘VIRAR’ means ‘TO TURN’ and ‘LATA’ means ‘CAN’, a reference to the way that strays ‘turn cans’ while searching for food; in our café, though, we’re strippin’ away any negative aspect that surviving and struggling through life may have in our modern society. The struggle is real and it makes us better people! So turn cans, dear viralatas, turn those freakin’ cans!*

Me apunto.

PS: Stay tuned for Café Viralata's grand opening party…

Info

- **Instagram** & **Facebook**
- **Address:** Calle Olivar, 17
- **Metro:** Tirso de Molina, Antón Martín, or Lavapiés
- **Phone:** +34 912 96 88 26

Living Room Concerts – Weekend "Planazo" in Madrid

In Madrid there are hundreds, if not thousands of things to do on any given weekend. Doing a quick Google search for live music, for example, will show you multiple Top Ten lists of the most well-known spots. However, you won't find a live music venue more intimate than that of **Living Room Concerts**. It's just like it sounds: concerts held in people's living rooms and you're invited.



Born in, yes, a living room, it was Nichole Hastings' idea to bring emerging and little known artists and their original music into the spotlight. In nomadic spirit, **LRC** moves around Madrid to different pre-approved flats in all barrios spreading new independent music around the city to as many guests as the particular living room (and guest list) can hold.



LRC has even put down roots in one fixed location in Malasaña, a cultural community center called **el Salón del Artista**. On arrival, be prepared to be ushered in with a warm welcome from the owner of the flat and then find a seat so you can comfortably listen to the original music and stories behind the songs from, often bilingual, artists.



Once inside, it’s easy to see that the diverse crowd has arrived expecting to meet new people and listen to original music that they couldn’t hear anywhere else.



During any given concert you could hear independent Spanish artists singing in English or a multicultural group singing in some combination of languages. Because of this, the concerts feel inclusive and not limited to any particular group or musical taste.



If you're in Madrid alone or with friends, LRC will sit you within feet of an independent artist and among members of the Living Room Concerts' community in Madrid.

Info

- **Follow** LRC on **Facebook** & **Instagram**
- **To attend,** the reservations work on the honor system but you do have to sign up through their **Facebook** page or their **MeetUp.com** page.
- **Price:** The event has a very reasonable cover which can

be turned into a “cover + open bar” for 3 euros more. Towards the end of the concert you can make a donation which goes right to the artists you’ve just met.

- **Links to artists** who’ve recently performed: [Taiacore], [BeMyFiasco], [David Roma]

By Caitlin Mackenzie

Tapapiés: a guide to everyone’s favorite food and culture festival in Lavapiés

It’s that time of year again. The air is turning chilly, the leaves are starting to change, and the millennial obsession with all things autumn is taking over social media. But here in Madrid, there’s a whole different reason to be excited. With October comes [Tapapiés], **the annual festival that inundates the streets of the [Lavapiés neighborhood] with delicious food, cheap drinks, and live music**.

For 11 days at the end of October (this year’s 7th edition lasts from October 19–29), dozens of restaurants and bars in Lavapiés offer a very special deal. Each one develops their own **signature tapa**, and offers it to the public for just **€1.50**. For an extra euro, you can also get a *botellín* (a 250 ml bottle of beer) to wash it down. The **[event]** is sponsored by Barcelona’s Estrella Damm, and at most places you can choose between a regular beer or Damm Lemon (beer and lemon soda).



A bar advertises its participation in Tapapiés with the festival's official poster.

Lavapiés is known for its incredible cultural diversity, with large immigrant populations from all over Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Central Asia. As a result, it's full of **international eateries** offering everything from **Senegalese *thieboudienne*** to Syrian sweets. A good number of these establishments participate in **Tapapiés**, which means that in one night you can practically eat your way around the world, just by exploring the neighborhood's sloping streets.



The delicious “Crepioca” tapa from Saboor Tapioca

In other words, **this festival is every adventurous foodie’s dream come true**. There are various strategies for tackling the overwhelming amount of options (**122 tapas in total**) and chaotic crowds. You can simply wander around, dropping into whatever bars you come across and trying your luck. Each one usually advertises a photograph of their tapa with a huge poster out front, so you’ll know more or less what to expect. Don’t forget to stop by **Mercado de San Fernando** and Mercado Antón Martín, where several vendors also participate.



A tray of tapas at Toscanaccio Italian bakery: marinated eggplant, walnuts, goat cheese, and sun-dried tomato pesto on spelt bread

If you're (A) a picky/allergy-prone eater or (B) determined to try as many different tapas as possible, you might want to consider a more organized strategy. Ask for a brochure at any of the participating places—you'll get **a pocket-sized booklet that contains a list of every single tapa being offered**, as well as a color photograph and a detailed ingredients list for each. They're all plotted on a numbered map, so you can plan out your ideal route. Be warned, though: it's hard to stick to a set plan when there are so many tempting options around every corner.



Dishing out the special tapa at Maloka Bar Brasileiro: yuca in a coconut milk sauce with peanut pesto

My advice? Grab a group of friends who aren't afraid to elbow their way through some crowds and try as many new things as possible. This is not an activity for those who would rather settle in at a cozy restaurant for a relaxed dinner.

Expect to eat standing up while balancing a beer in one hand a a tapa in the other, and shouting at each other just to be heard. **It's messy, it's crazy, it's loud—and it's totally worth it.** The frenetic and colorful spirit of the neighborhood is never more alive than on a night of **Tapapiés**.



“Carrillada melosa” from Maldito Querer: braised beef cheeks in a sauce of caramelized onion, garlic, herbs, and Pedro Ximénez reduction

To complete the experience, it’s essential to attend one of the **various outdoor performances** by local musicians, dancers, and entertainers that take place throughout the event. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons and evenings, you can catch live music and shows at nine different designated spots (a full schedule is included in the brochure). There’s also the simultaneous **Chollopiés** festival, which **spotlights the neighborhood’s local businesses** by offering **special discounts** on certain products.



Maybe you live in Lavapiés and want to get to know your *barrio* better. Maybe you've never been and want to see what all the hype is about. Or maybe you're just hungry, thirsty, and low on cash. Whatever the case, **Tapapiés** is bound to become one of your favorite events in Madrid. If you go into it with **the right mindset, a healthy appetite, and a handful of coins**, I guarantee that come next October, there'll only be one thing on your mind. Who needs pumpkin spice lattes, anyway?

Info

- **Facebook**
- **Website**
- **Instagram**

Check out our roundup of Tapapiés' offerings last year!

Mercado de Diseño, Hello Spring

This weekend, April 2nd and 3rd, Mercado de Diseño invites all foodies, music lovers, and everyone in between to come out to Matadero to welcome the change of season with Hello Spring! Artists such as Belop, Penny Necklace and Iseo will be there performing at different times throughout the afternoon. So grab your friends and go enjoy the sun, cocktails, live music, and street food!

Beer Festival in Palacio Vistalegre!

With an array of brews, this Beer Festival in Palacio Vistalegre February 25-26 and March 3-6 will blow you away! Designed to be family friendly and accompanied by live music, a global variety of meat and a playground for the kids, this festival is open to all. All people and all ale from Irish reds to Belgian blondes, Mexican pales and more. Though limited, admission is free and all children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult and abstain from consuming alcohol, other options will be available.

The festival is open from 7:30pm – 12am on Thursdays and Fridays, 12pm – 5pm on Saturdays and 12pm – 10pm on Sundays.

Located in Palacio Vistalegre Arena on Calle Matilde Hernández, the nearest metro station is Vistalegre

Like their Facebook page

Americana Music Jam at The Toast!

This Sunday, sit back and unwind at The Toast Cafe as you listen to the folkloric sounds of Americana, Bluegrass, Blues, Country, and Rock n' Roll. Enjoy free live entertainment and a cozy atmosphere at one of Madrid's cutest cafes. (A perfect way to relax before the week begins!)