

MARÍA LUISA RUILOBA

1945 – 2018

María Luisa is one of our two posthumous contributors, presented here and in her first contribution by her husband, Nick Manning.

María Luisa was born in Puebla, Mexico, and I was born in England. We met in April 1976, on a train between Paris and Calais. At the time, I was working in Dubai as an engineer in an American oilfield supply company and I was on holiday in France, while she was on her way to London to study English for a few months. We married in Mexico City in March 1977, and almost immediately my work as an engineer took us back to Dubai, enjoying our honeymoon on the way. Within a few months, we moved from Dubai to Oman for two years, and then went to live in Mexico in 1979.



María Luisa started painting – or rather, *a* painting – after her father passed away in 1974, so, apart from being something she really wanted to do, it may have been partly therapeutic, which different kinds of art often are for many people, of course. I think she only ever did that one painting before we met, and she didn't quite complete it (I – or our meeting and marriage – was probably responsible for that). Her sister, Elena, gave the painting its final touches, and I think it still hangs in the house of one of the members of her family in Mexico. During the 23 years we lived in Mexico, María Luisa did some decorative work in French paste, and experimented with different art techniques and materials: sangria, charcoal, pastel, acrylic and oil, but her painting – and drawing – didn't really develop much until our move to Spain in 2003, twenty-six years after we married.

In 2000, María Luisa was diagnosed with cancer and had to have an emergency operation. She'd always wanted to spend some time in Spain, where her parents were from, and our move there was spurred by that wish and by her health scare. Shortly after getting settled in Marbella, María Luisa started modelling small figures out of French paste again, often working together with a close friend who modelled figures out of clay. After her friend passed away, María Luisa started taking art lessons in the local municipal art centre where she made a new group of friends with similar interests, and a new world opened up for her.

After the operation in Mexico, we were told that she was clear of cancer, and it seemed so for years, but in 2015, twelve years after our move to Spain, she was diagnosed with cancer again, the resurgence of her earlier cancer, now spreading to other parts of her body. She was hospitalized for some days, and for much of the rest of her life she was dependent on medication and a wheelchair. She continued painting as much as she could, but towards the end she found it too tiring and had to give up. María Luisa left us early in the morning of November 2nd, 2018, a day celebrated each year in Mexico as the Day of the Dead. We were with her at the end, all of us – Alex and Liz, her children, Juan Carlos, her son-in-law, Juan Carlos Jr. and Pamela, her grandchildren, and myself. I miss her, but I still have a part of her with me, her paintings.