

# STOA

GALERÍA DE ARTE ART GALLERY



THE HOUSE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE

Conchi Álvarez



DETAIL OF MARBLE PLAQUE ON DOORWAY

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THE DECISION OF MAKING THE TOWN CENTRE OF ESTEPONA ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ANDALUCÍA HAS BECOME AN OBSESSION IN MY ROLE AS MAYOR.

It involves a complex action that includes the renovation of all the town centre's streets, the opening of new spaces and squares, the constant embellishment based on plants, trees, sculptures, fountains, murals or other ornamental elements, the restoration of houses of Andalusian layout and façade, the public use of municipal buildings destining them mainly to Museums or Art Collections and the exhibition of our rich Archaeological Heritage. And this, without overlooking the preservation of our parks and gardens, always ready to be visited, and the maintenance of our beaches in a perfect state throughout the 12 months of the year.

The first results of this project are being seen for a few months already. It is worth highlighting, above any other consideration, that it has been the resident involvement and collaboration what is allowing this project to be developing itself rapidly and efficiently.

The benefits of all these actions must be for the whole town, and not only for the central zone. The neighbourhoods and outlying areas would see how in them develop a good number of embellishment works.

And, among these works, is being developed with brilliance a "route of murals". In a very short time Estepona will count among its singularities, and will be known and recognized as well, for offering to our neighbours and our visitors, an interesting route of murals, precisely on those neighborhoods and continuously forgotten by the municipal initiatives.

Tres Banderas, a neighbourhood full of good people, enters today, in its own right, as part of those places that will be visited by thousands of people to may be delighted with one of the murals of such route.

The mural that Conchi Álvarez has conceived is harmoniously full of colour and shape. Its characters are reminiscent of neighbours with names and surnames of the neighbourhood. They look at us while we watch them; they listen to us while we speak to them. It is a real scene, a daily one, it oozes tenderness. It is a building full of good people, in a good people's neighbourhood. And I believe that Conchi chose precisely this place to paint her mural for this reason, also, very near of where almost a decade ago she created an Art Gallery, Stoa, on which parade regularly exhibitions of extremely high artistic level.

Estepona is full of good people. Estepona is a city of good and hard-working people, eager to receive an opportunity to show and prove one and the other. Conchi Álvarez deciding to baptize the mural she has recently finished in Tres Banderas, as “La casa de la Buena Gente” (“The House of Good People”) is a great success, although it puts her in the hard situation of finding such an adequate name as this for the following murals that are waiting for her to put her art on them.

My gratitude, as Mayor, neighbour, friend and enthusiast of her painting, to Conchi Álvarez for such brilliant work that adds light and quality to a brilliant project in a year that must be brilliant for Estepona. This 2013 is called to be the year of recovery.

José María García Urbano  
Mayor of the Town Hall of Estepona



## **MURAL “THE HOUSE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE”**

### ***LIST OF CREDITS:***

**Artist:** Conchi Alvarez

**Topic:** visual trick simulating the architecture of the building with people leaning out their windows, balconies and in the front door of the building

**Base:** 80 m2 wall

**Technique:** Acrylic completely applied with paintbrush on two coats of acrylic binder and two coats of undiluted gesso.

**Chronology:** October 2012-January 2013

**Signature and date:** on the shirt of the girl figure on the second floor "C. Alvarez 2013 "

**Location:** Tres Banderas District in Estepona (Malaga)

### ***BACKGROUND***

This project began on September 8, 2012 when the Mayor of Estepona, José M<sup>a</sup> Garcia Urbano, suggested I painted a mural for the city. Precisely this occurred during the inauguration of the first of all the series of murals which, along with other actions, intend to put the city on the world circuit of Art. I didn't doubt it, even though I had never painted one before, it was a huge personal challenge as I suffer some vertigo. After accepting the commission, José Maria asked me to choose walls. After walking around most of the town, I selected three very different walls quite distant from each other. We visited the three, along with the mayor's team, and the chosen wall was the one located in Tres Banderas.

### ***LOCATION***

The chosen wall is in a building that is part of a series of blocks known as “Tres Banderas”. It is a humble area, a traditional fisherman's area, but overlooking the sea from above. Its neighbors are friendly people, very sociable and with enviable civil education. The choice could not be more correct. The Town Hall was responsible of requesting the approval of the residents and the installation of the scaffold, while I devoted the time to study and investigate how to prepare the wall and the type of paints to use.

### ***STUDY TECHNIQUE***

Since this was my first mural, I did some research on the subject. Previously it was necessary to determine the type of paint to use.

The first option was to use encaustic paints. In New York I met Pedro Cuni, Professor of Fine Art at The Cooper Union in NYC and painter of murals who uses this technique. It is a lasting technique, as many of the Pompeian paintings that were believed to be painted with the fresco technique, in fact, after investigations by the family Cuni, happen to be in encaustic, but the fact that these paintings were always indoors, made me reject this technique.

The next and final option was to choose the acrylic paintings. The acrylic technique has changed considerably and the quality obtained by some brands is really satisfactory. It has been several years that

I have been working with this technique on different sized boards, with very good results. The Mexican muralism of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, became the paradigm to follow. They all went through the frame of mind of choosing painting techniques for mural out in the open, and they all refused to use oil and fresco, precisely because of the poor development to external exposure, until they decided the use of acrylic.

Once selected the acrylic option, my second worry was the preparation of the base, the wall. To do so, I asked for advice from several technicians in the area and finally decided to use the services of the technicians of the brand of painting, which I have been using from the beginning of my work in this technique. They are based in Holland, so there were many emails and some phone calls to the technical department in order to have all the information, step by step, on how to prepare the wall. It is interesting to note that they were so professional that they even studied the weather of Estepona and considered the location, near the sea, of the wall.

### ***WALL PREPARATION***

The products arrived from Holland and on 18th and 19th of October the wall was cleaned thoroughly, mechanically removing layers of paint and lime gathered for years. With the wall cleaned, but with notable chips and irregularities, the wall had to have the most vulnerable areas covered with the latest generation mix, of quick dry. On this clean and ready wall, the surface was covered with two layers of Acrylic Binder and on these, two layers of Gesso undiluted. On the 22nd the wall was faultless to start to start to dirty it with colors.

### ***THE TOPIC***

From the first moment that the wall at Tres Banderas was chosen, I knew I wanted to paint a trompe l'oeil. It is a word of French origin, "trompe l'oeil" meaning "trap for the eye," delusion to the eyes. Using the trompe l'oeil came to mind by the very site and access to the building: up the hill from José Luis Díez Street (how curious: I lived in the Aquarium Building several years) and then, turning to the left, one finds himself with this wall, so playing with the sight seemed correct. The topic was very clear: good people looking out their windows and balconies and receiving visitors in the front door of the building. The composition also came to simulate that the painting is included in the building.

I've only done a preliminary sketch of 80 x 60 cm. in the same acrylic used for the mural, on canvas. The comparison between the sketch and the finished mural highlights something very characteristic of my work: work "alla prima", with clear ideas from the beginning, but in this case I enriched the final work with some significant changes: I added two figures in the doorway of the entrance to the building, one of them being one of the main character of the whole work, the child dressed in red; I took the figure of the teenager in the first balcony, and took him to the second balcony, and in its place I have painted a little girl sitting on a stool with her grandfather. The figure of the grandfather is the only character known and identifiable to neighbors: John, the beloved shoe maker who lives in the building. Immediately, from the first day that I raised this issue, he became the undisputed main character: "But look ... it's John, the shoemaker!, And it is just like him!" There was no shortage of candidates to pose for new characters, but they quickly realized that in the figure of John, there was a bit of them all, he was a model, not the portrait of a specific person. Indeed, the presence of John means that each and every one of the neighbors, not only from the block, but throughout the neighborhood, have been abducted by the paint, and are part of the art world.

At the top part of the painting I changed the female figure of the right window because it did not seem very appropriate to paint a young woman cleaning the window, as it would force me to put an adult man cleaning something as well, and then the message could become an unwanted defense of cleaning. And why? Because the ultimate meaning behind this work is the joy of life despite the circumstances, the certainty that everyone

has a good side and that a better side can prevail over the bad side, which we all have. Each day we write our history, each day we can start over, each day we can see life in colors, with light, with "good vibes", focusing everything with a very Spanish spirit, that we can eat the world if we wish to. A spirit, of the House of the Good People, which is expressed in the universal language of hospitality, of welcome, of good neighborliness. Because their characters, the new neighbors in the neighborhood, are now part of it, providing an added joy (joy is the word repeated by the people who stopped to chat with me while I was painting) and a lot of intense color. And that is why this work is interactive, inviting anyone who wants to get close to take a picture "clinging to the railing of the entrance ramp" or "lean back in it," and therefore, immortalize oneself in a work of art which is open and inviting to all who wants to be part of it.

### ***CARRYING OUT OF THE PAINTING***

The painting of the mural lasted about three months. The days have been intense and exhausting. All painting was executed with brushes, the same ones that I use in my work, of very inferior size, on canvas. Therefore we have before us a true painting ... huge. Generally, in order to paint a work of art of this size, you set out a squared sketch and the wall before hand and change everything to scale with a lot more detail. Not here. The fact of having the "floors" of the mural on the same heights that the floors on the building made unnecessary the gridding. Measuring over the ground and thinking about the figures and vegetation in life-size helped. Only architectural lines were drawn first. The figures and the remainder of the composition were drawn without a previous drawing, directly with the brush and paint. I had very little help with pictures, normally I worked with my memory.

Somewhat tempestuous was the theme of the vanishing point, a point of infinite that the painter chooses and where all the lines converge. Choosing a single vanishing point for all the work was inadequate for the multiple viewpoints presented by the mural and at different heights, to make matters worse. The study of the great frescoes of the History of Painting, was of tremendous help. Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was decisive. For this reason the figures are independent of the architectural lines, to try to reconcile the view from two hundred meters, and on the sides, with only five and up front.

Vertigo ... well, part was left behind on the way. As predicted by the construction workers who helped me in the preparation of the wall, "you get used to it". And it's true, although it didn't disappear, it has improved. Its existence has made me paint the mural on the contrary of how it should have been done: it was done from the bottom up rather than from top to bottom.

The best part of this project was how I interacted with people. For the neighborhood and the multiple people who daily pass in front of the mural, the painting has become part of their everyday life, another act of their every day moves, like going to buy bread or to the grocery store, pick up shoes at the shoemakers or leave the car in the garage around the corner. A new silent activity that for many has meant respect and value toward the work of art to begin with, as a work of many hours and in this case also a great physical effort. But it also impressed them the dedication that has led to the final work and the complexity of its implementation.

And for me, what has it meant? Well, these “good people” have captured me, they have captured part of my soul and a part of me will always be there. I've been extremely happy doing this work and I felt protected and loved by wonderful people who did not know what good people they are ... and now my work will remind them every day, encouraging them to continue to take out all that good humanity. It's funny, they play the lottery or soccer pools not knowing that they have already won.

**Conchi Álvarez**



Location of mural



The wall before the mural (10-01-2012)

Next page: **THE HOUSE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE (OUTLINE)** Acrylic on panel. 80 x 60 cm



Deep cleaning (11-17 and 18-2012)



Application of cement  
(10-18 and 19-2012)



Aplication of two layers of Acrylic binder (10-20-2012)



Aplication of two layers of Gesso (10-21-2012)



Wall ready to paint (10-21-2012)



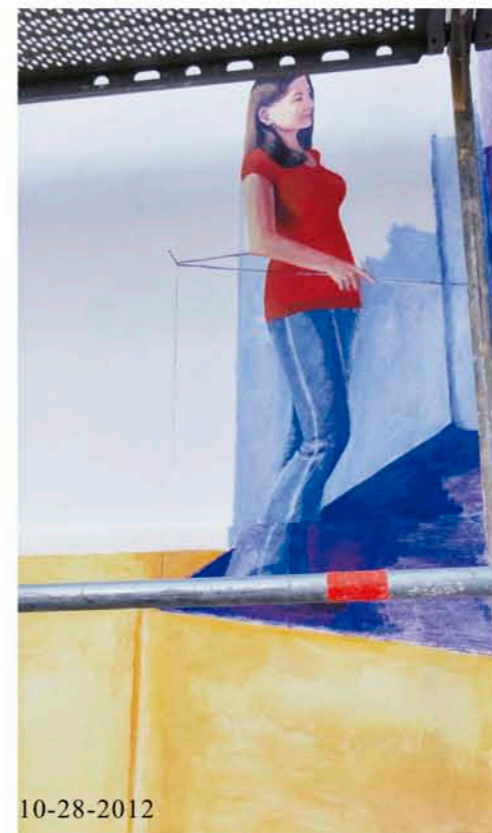
Splash of colour (10-22-12)



10-23-2012



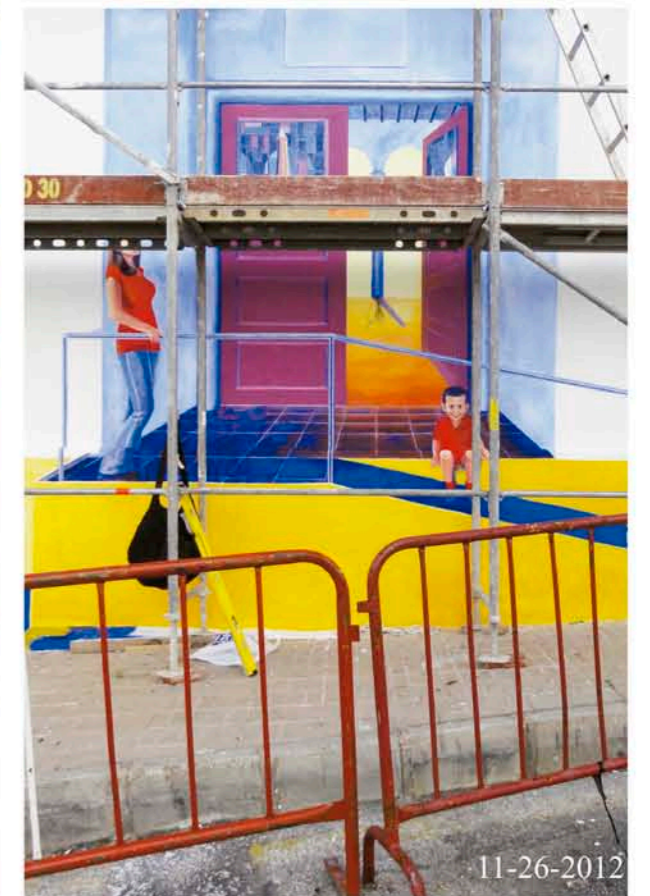
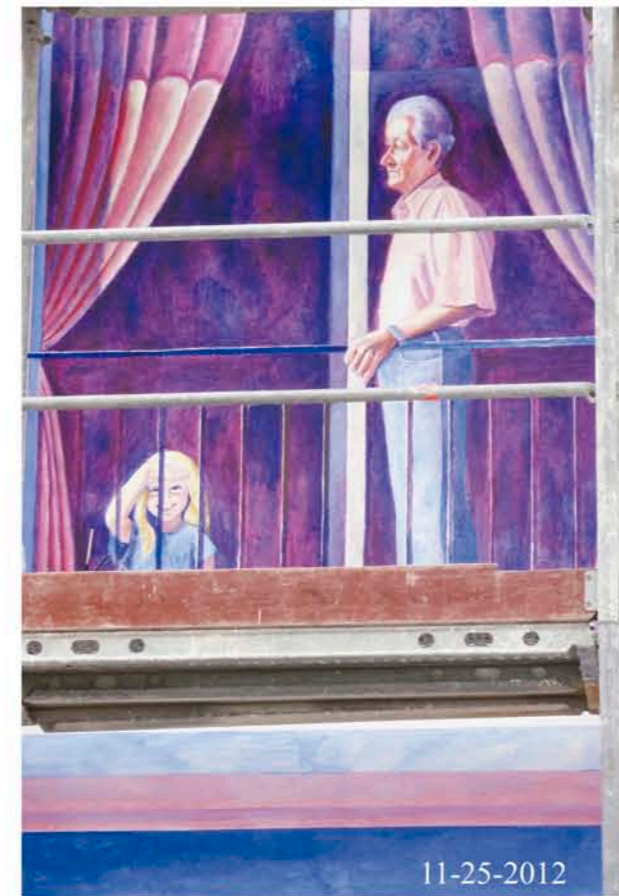
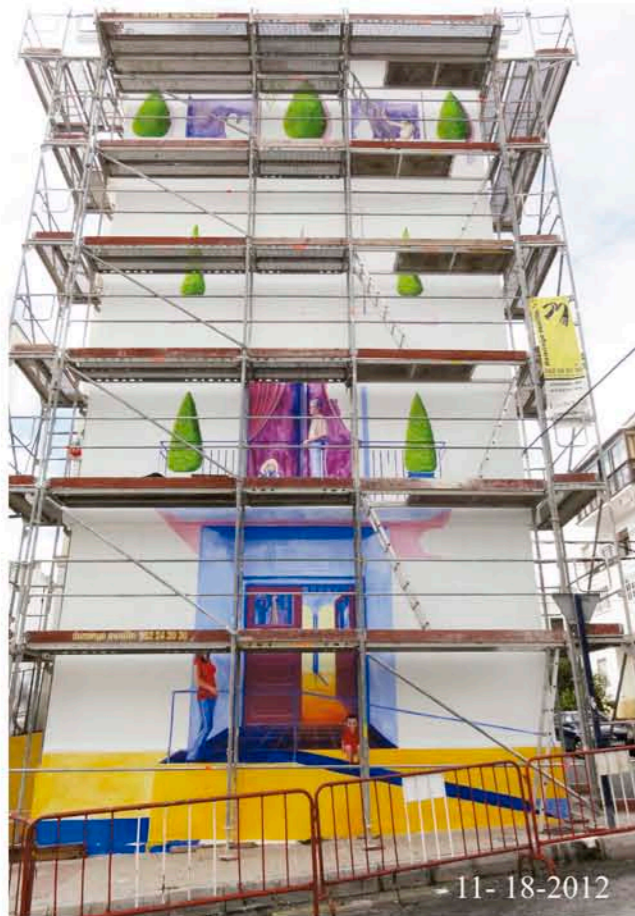
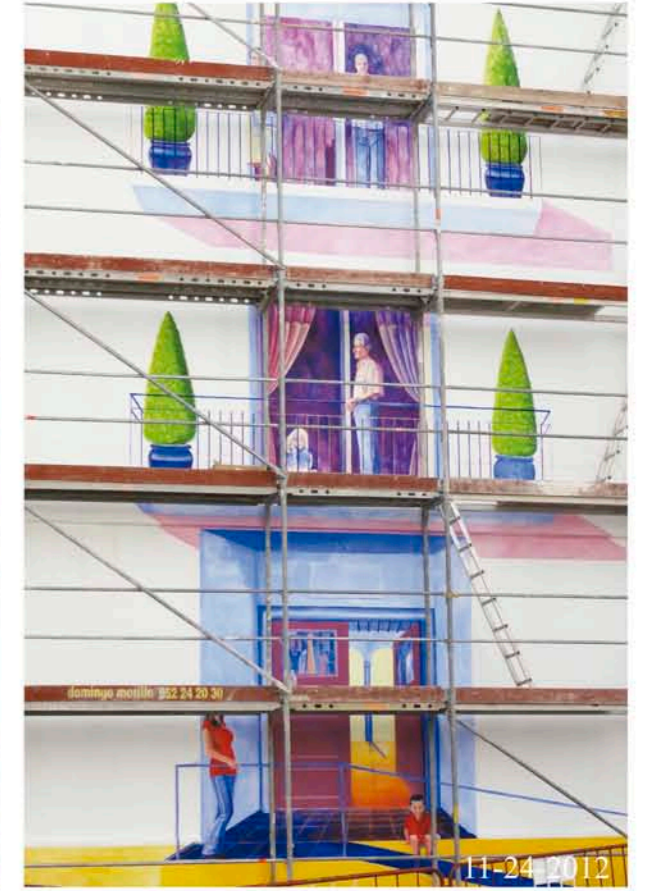
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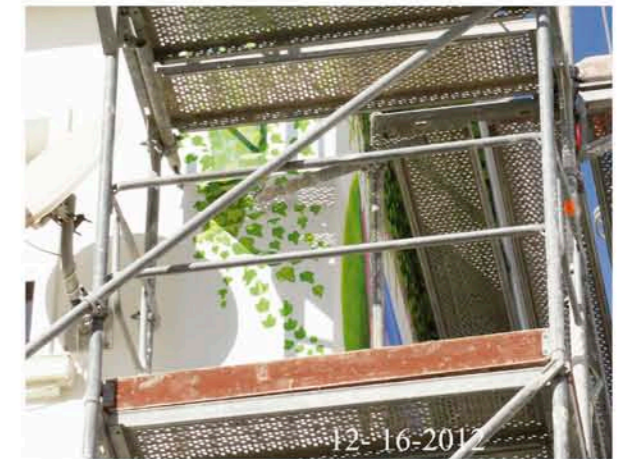
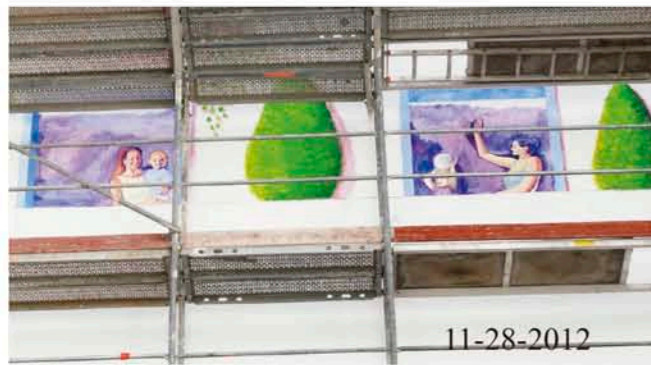


10-29-2012





THE HOUSE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE Acrylic on wall. 80 square metres





01-05-2013



01-11-2013

Scaffolding removal (01-15-2013)



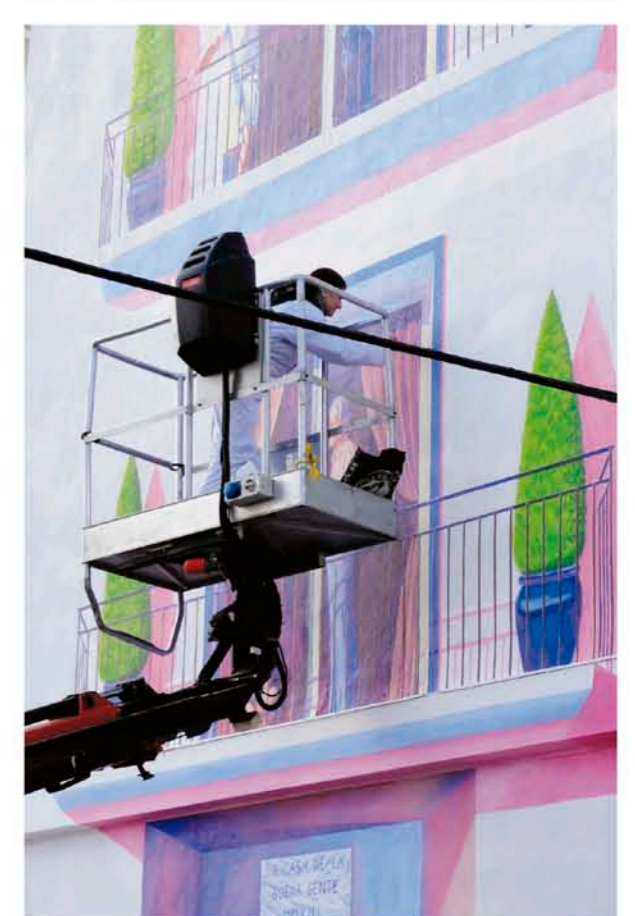
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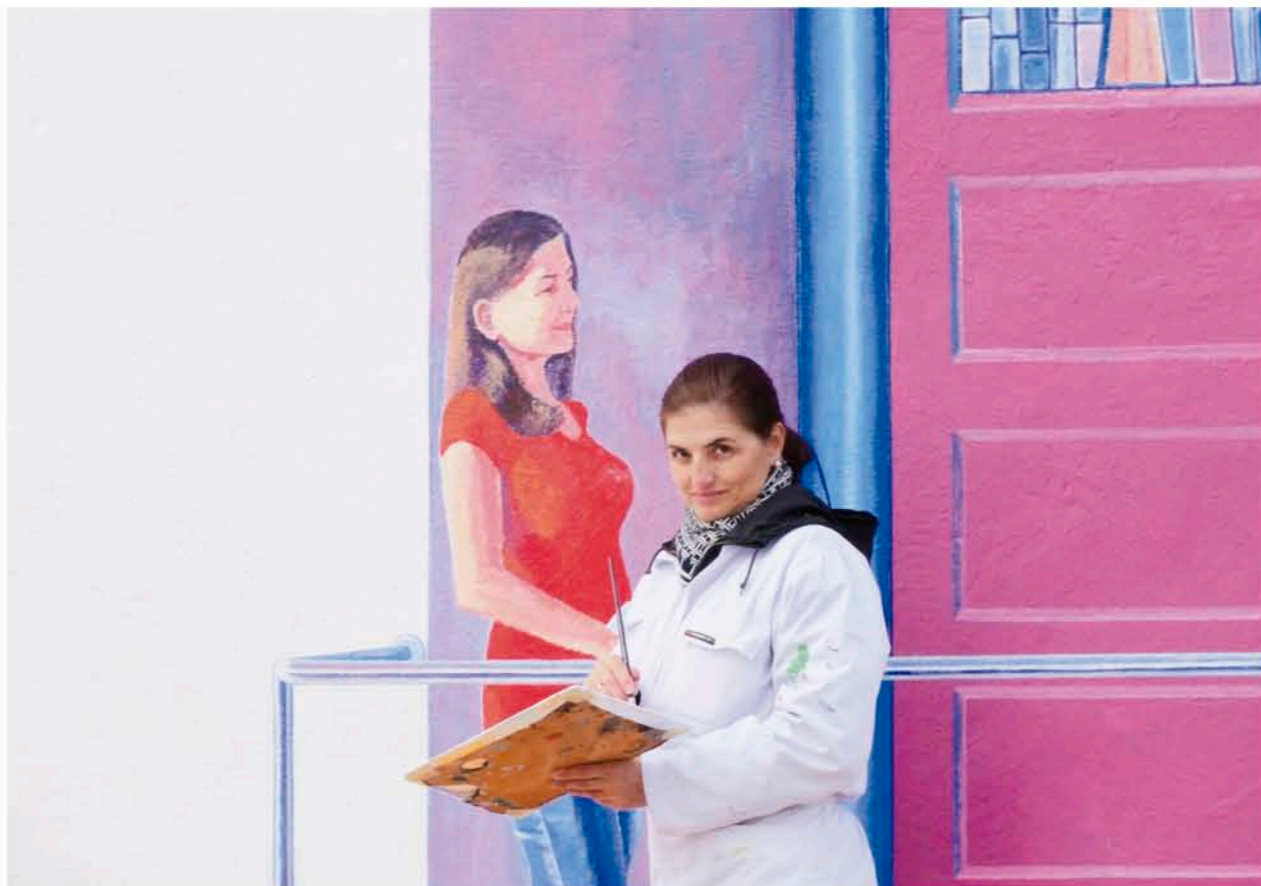


Touching up from the platform (01-22-2013)



01-14-2013



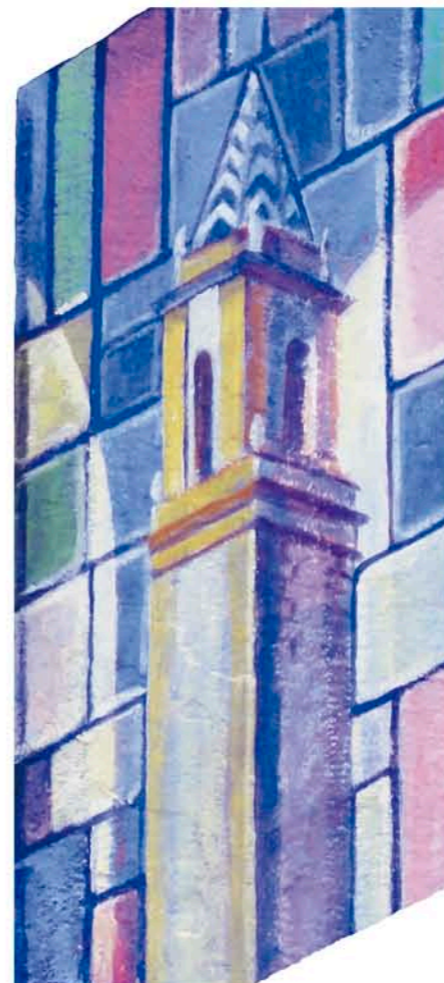
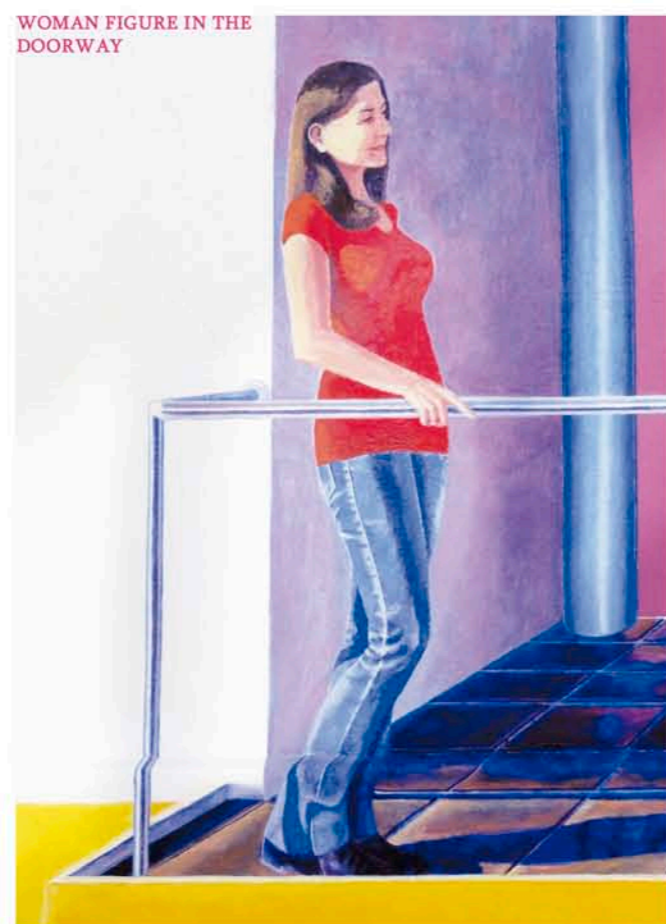


Conchi painting (01-21-2013)

Mural finished (01-26-2013)



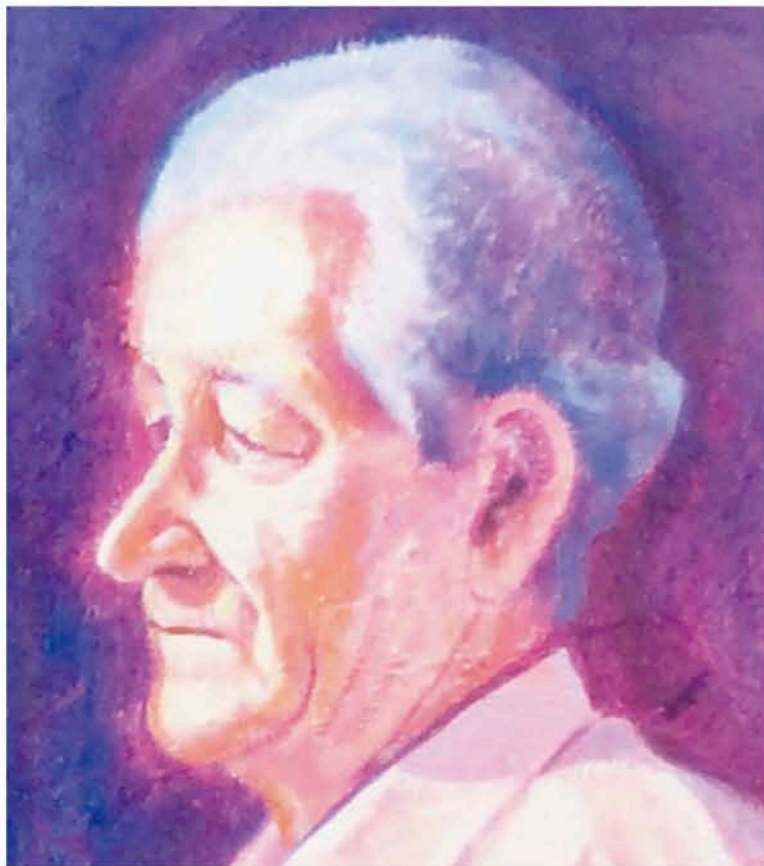
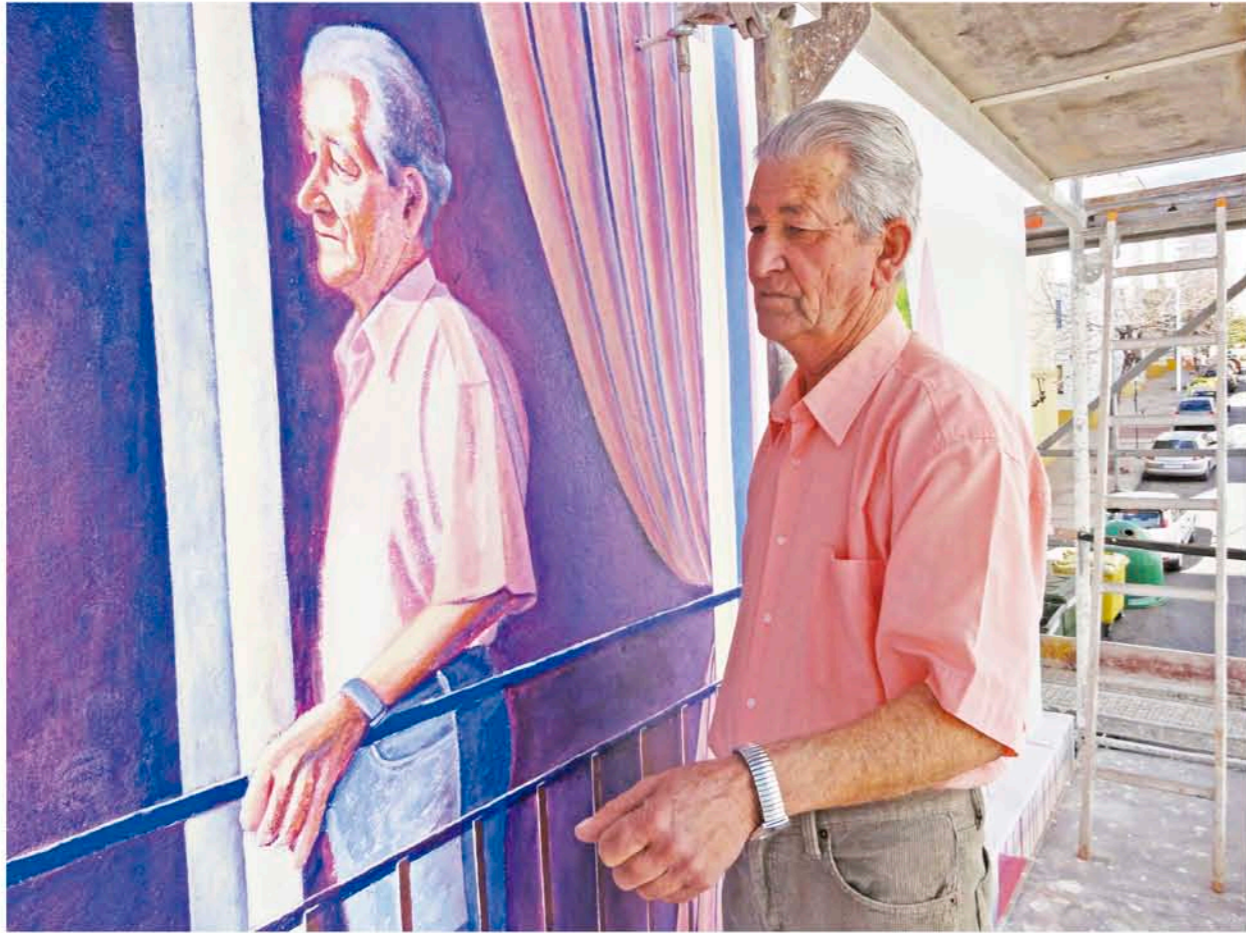
WOMAN FIGURE IN THE  
DOORWAY



STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF THE MAIN DOOR

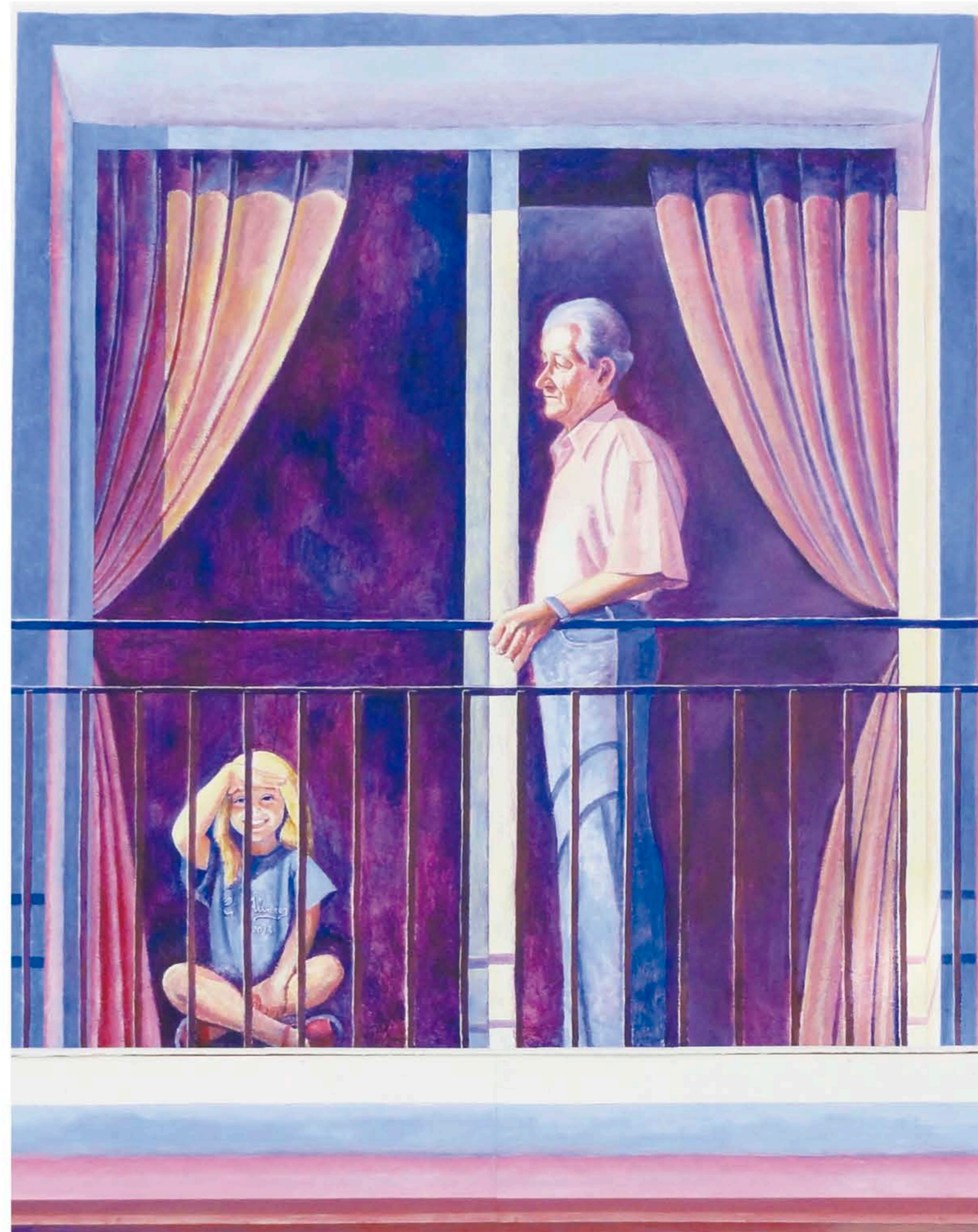
THE DOORWAY

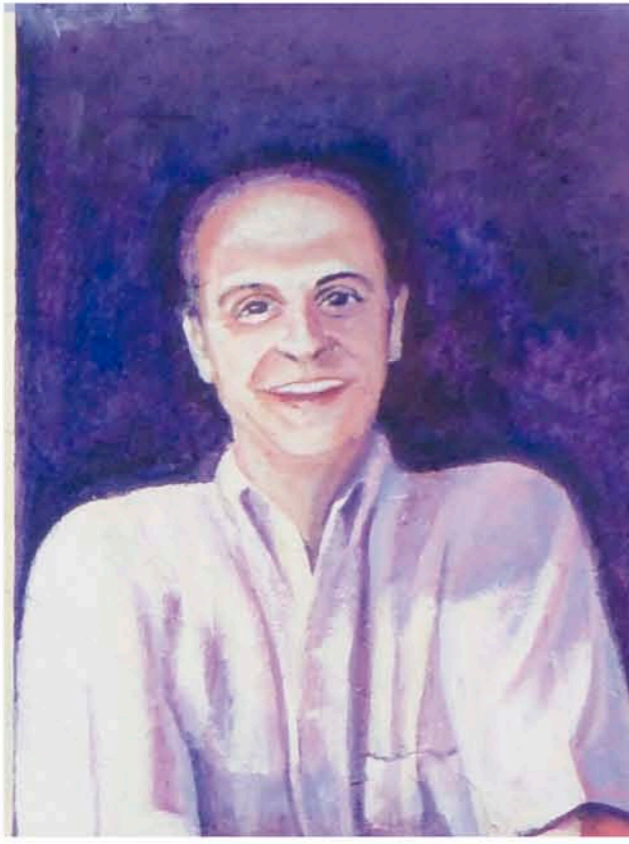




JUAN and Juan

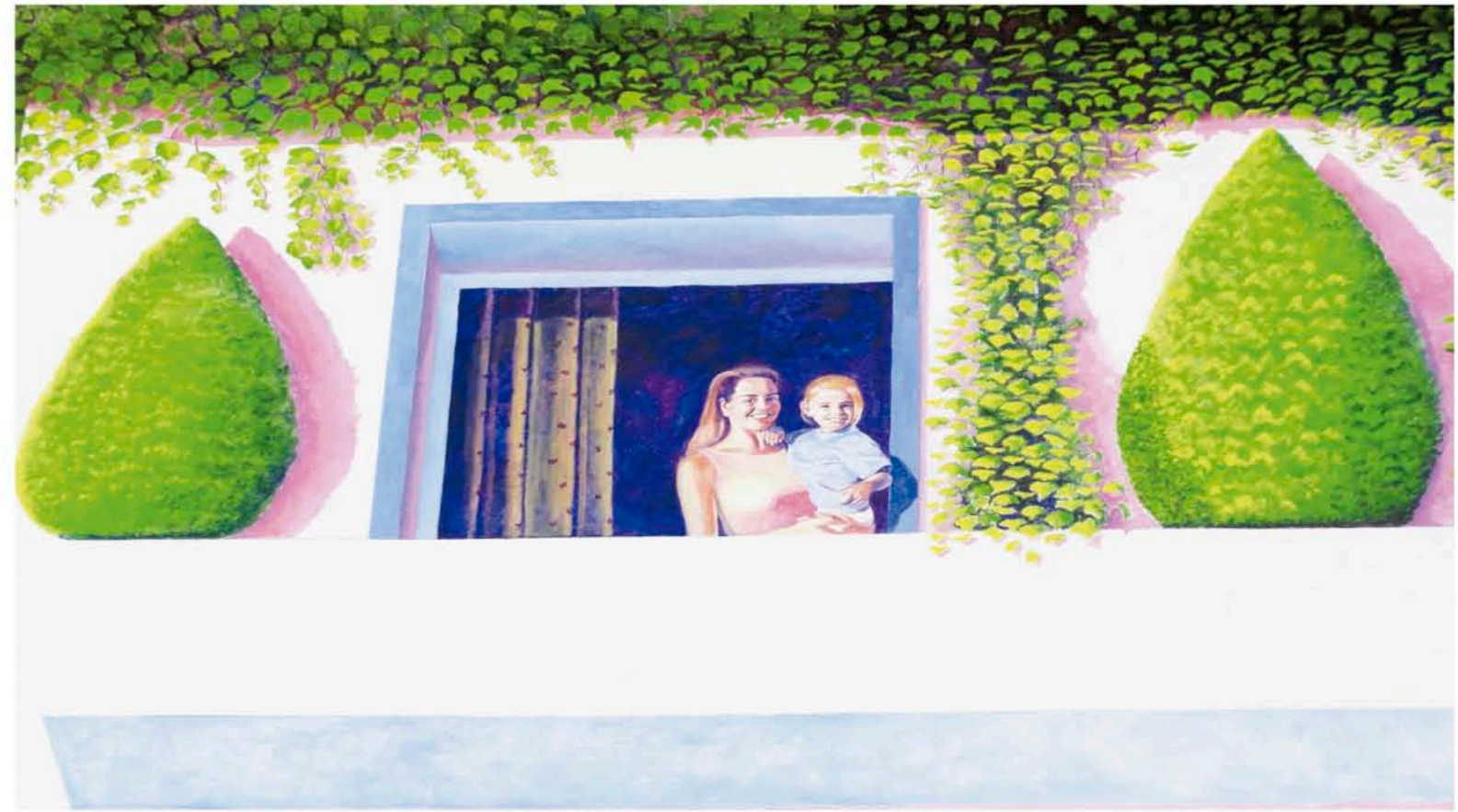
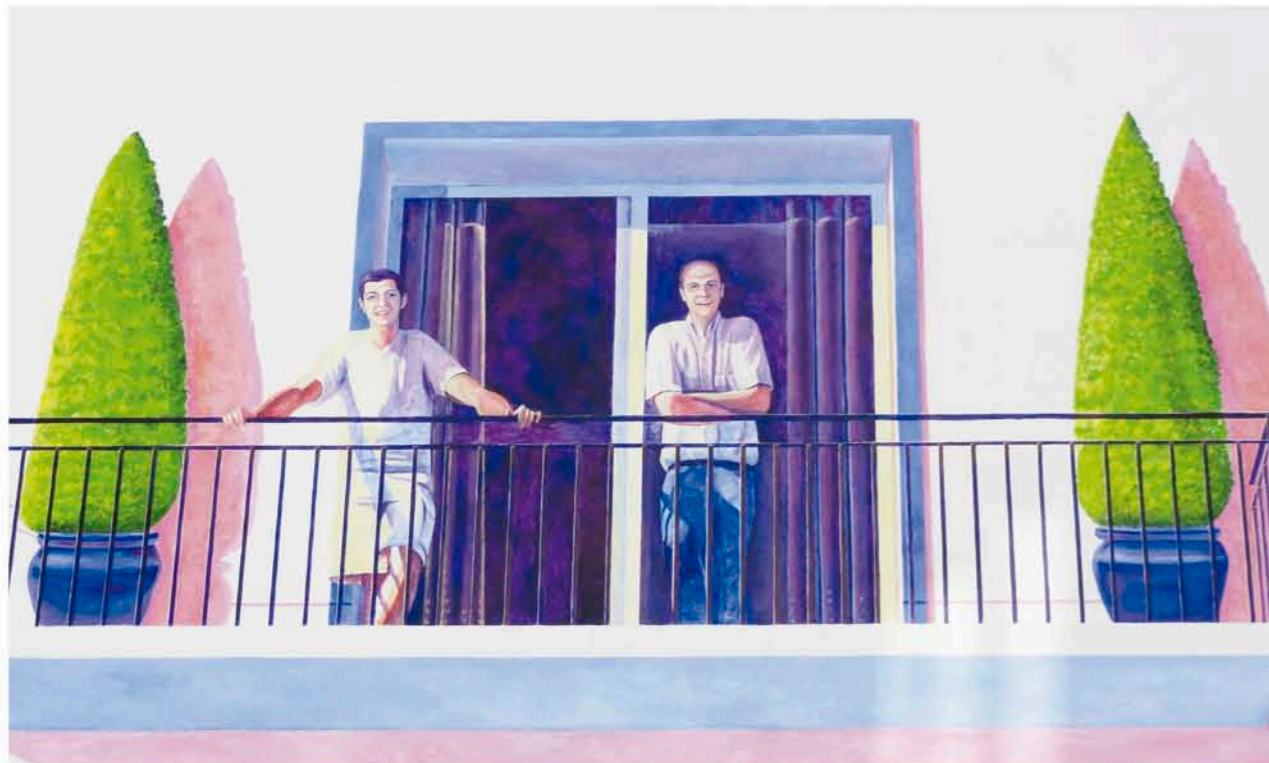
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FIRST FLOOR BALCONY



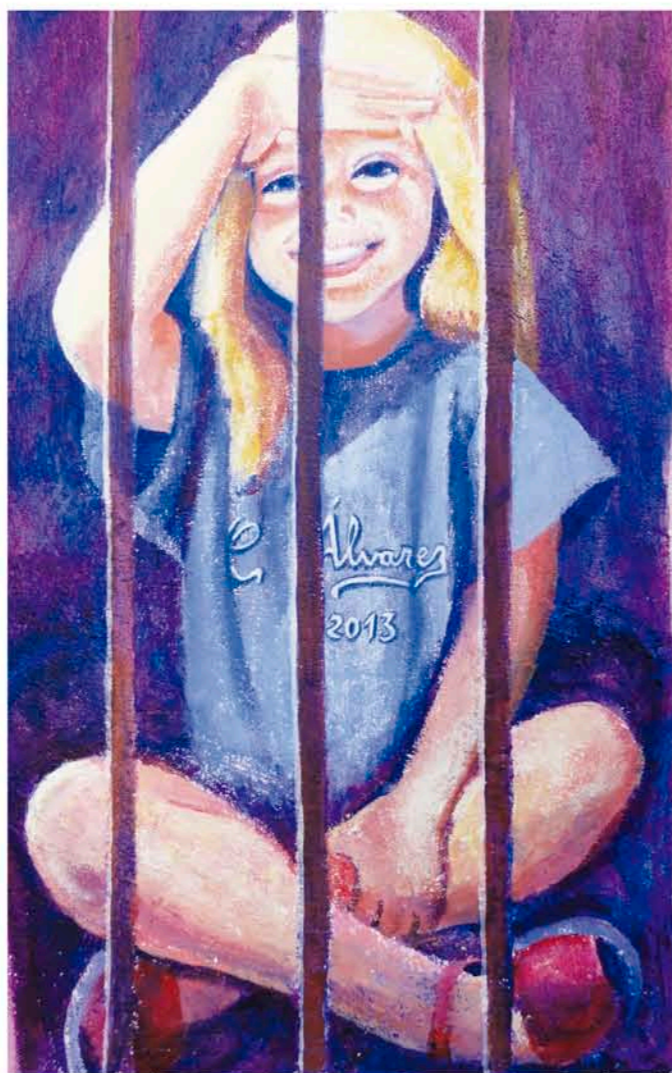


FATHER AND SON

Next page: **WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE WINDOWS**



## THE CHILDREN



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