

Chechu Álava

The Hall of Mirrors

25.04.26 → 06.06.26

Press release

Chechu Álava
Virtual solitude, 2026
Oil on linen
80 x 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist
and Xippas



Xippas Paris

108 rue Vieille-du-Temple
75003 Paris, France

paris@xippas.com
xippas.com
+33 (0)1 40 27 05 55

📍 @xippasgalleries
📱 @xippasgalleriespage
📺 @xippas

Contact presse

Olga Ogorodova
press@xippas.com
+33 (0)1 40 27 05 55

Opening on Saturday, April 25th from 3 to 8 pm

How can one express feminist and social commitment through painting? How can one respond to everyday life while remaining so deeply rooted in art history and in dialogue with the masters of the past? These are the questions Chechu Álava poses, without imposing answers, in her second solo exhibition at Xippas Gallery in Paris.

With a style she has developed over nearly twenty years, a kind of dreamlike realism that the artist resists associating too closely with Romanticism or Symbolism, Chechu Álava has become mostly known for her depictions of women. While she has often explained that she could, for the sake of convenience, use her own form, these models also belong to timeless archetypes. Just like her new painting, *Dark Night*, the exhibition's centerpiece, which draws on the figure of Mary Magdalene and connects it to one of the artist's favorite works, *The Penitent Magdalene* by Juan Carreño de Miranda, exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts of Asturias, her native region, while also prompting reflection on this unjust fate. As some know, Mary of Magdala was an educated and cultured woman who was part of Christ's inner circle. The thirteenth apostle, some have even suggested... Advisor, priestess, perhaps healer, mistranslations and sexist interpretations have, over the centuries, transformed her into a witch, a prostitute, an infidel... Álava's own painting, with its immediate eroticism conveyed through delicate skin tones and alluring nudity, also resonates with a higher spirituality and a mystery into which the viewer may project their own interpretations or personal fantasies.

Other works, smaller in scale or in a vertical, phone-like format, reflect the artist's presence in relation to the world and to social media. Questioning the jarring proximity between makeup tutorials and images of children mutilated by various conflicts, she has seized upon this tragic reality and the time-consuming trivialities that sadly inhabit our daily lives. Through gracefully graduated tones, sometimes highlighted with gold or an almost fluorescent color, and her subtly blurred brushwork, she removes immediate narrative, making the original medium almost disappear. "I want these works," she explains, "to be paintings that speak about painting and remain connected to my practice." For Chechu Álava clearly situates herself within a pictorial tradition and lineage, ranging from Leonardo da Vinci to Giotto, from Francisco de Goya to Diego Velázquez, and of course to all the women artists she indirectly pays tribute to, such as Sofonisba Anguissola, María Blanchard, Artemisia Gentileschi, Marie Laurencin, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Alice Neel, and Suzanne Valadon. She recalls that when she arrived in Paris in 2001, at a time when painting was out of favor, the Louvre became her refuge. "I conceive my existence between art history and life, between the internet and museums," she adds. While her early work was imbued with Willem de Kooning-esque expressionism, her soft, almost creamy touch gradually emerged, accompanying her vision of sensuality. "Painting must be erotic, not in the image itself, but in the sensation it evokes," concludes Chechu Álava. She has sought to depict skin, breath, air... and has achieved the feat of making them physically felt. A form of mystery has imposed itself upon her, without intention, and she has embraced it... allowing painting to speak, with strength and empathy, of both individuality and the collective.

Marie Maertens

Chechu Álava was born in Piedras Blancas, Asturias (Spain) in 1973. She lives and works in Paris.

Chechu Álava has recently had solo exhibitions: in 2025 at Galerie Xippas (Geneva, Switzerland), at Megan Mulrooney Gallery (Los Angeles, USA) and at COB Gallery (London, UK), in 2023 at Galería Alegría (Barcelona, Spain), in 2022 at Galerie Xippas (Paris, France), at COB Gallery (London, UK) and in 2021 at BravinLee Programs (New York, USA).

In 2020, the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum in Madrid presented her solo exhibition 'Rebeldes', accompanied by the publication of a monograph.

Her work has also been exhibited at the Museu Fundacion Juan March (Palma de Mallorca), the Museo Lazaro Galdiano (Madrid), the Museo Barjola (Gijón, Spain), the Instituto Cervantes (Rome), the Museo de Bellas Artes de Castellón de la Plana (Castellón, Spain), the Carré de Baudouin (Paris) and the Cité des Arts (Paris).

Her work can be found in many important public collections : the Asturias Museum of Fine Arts, the Spanish Ministry of Culture, the Government of Asturias, the DKV Foundation, as well as private collections in various countries: Colombia, Mexico, Germany, Portugal, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, South Africa, China, South Korea and Spain.

In 2014, her work was selected by an international jury to be included in the catalogue '100 Painters of Tomorrow', published by Thames and Hudson.