

# SYMPATICO

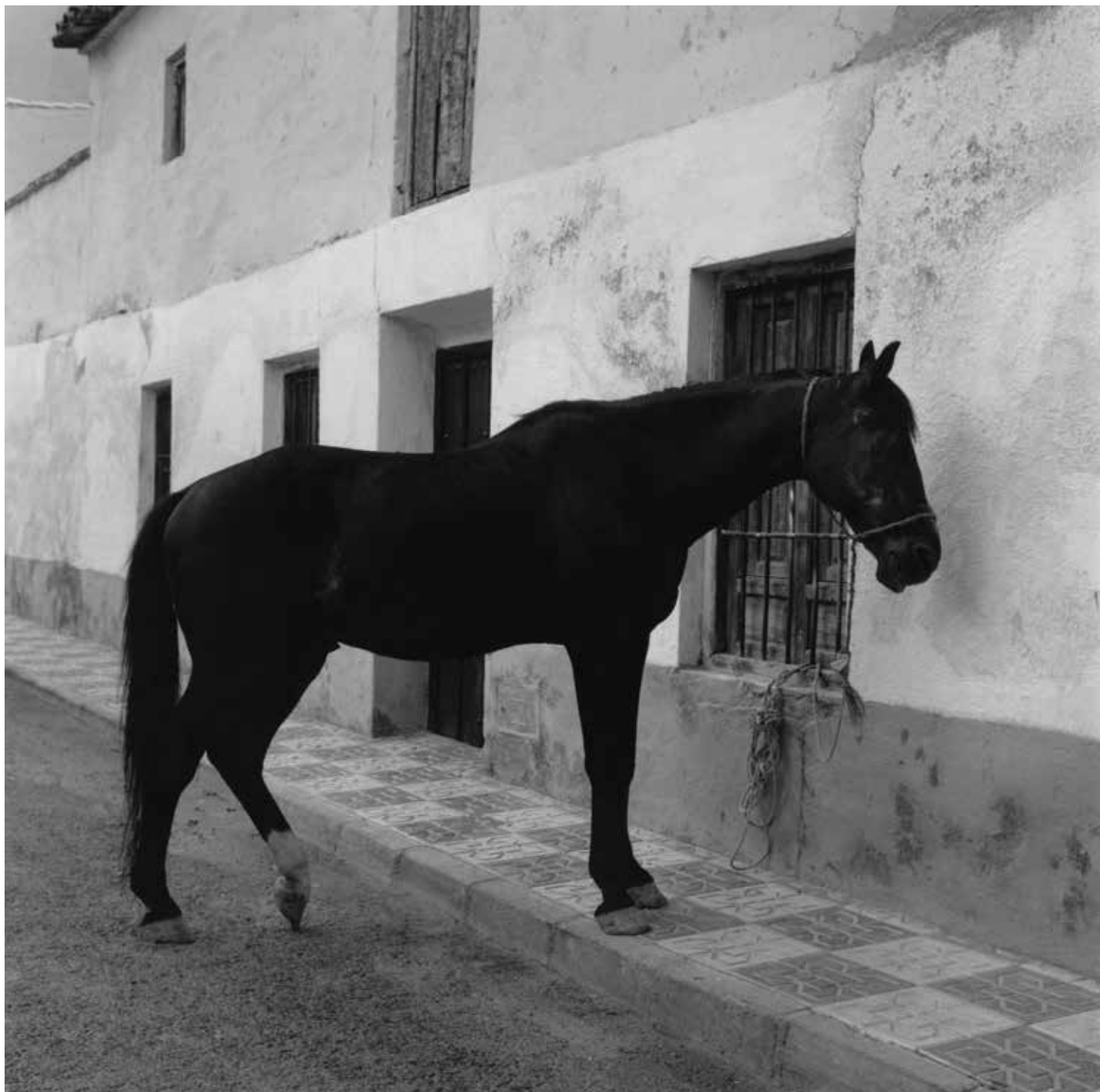
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Whether it was through reading the work of García Lorca or walking the streets of Fuente Vaqueros, **Adrian Ensor** came to make a body of work that speaks of authenticity and a quiet melancholy. Elizabeth McClair Roberts reports.

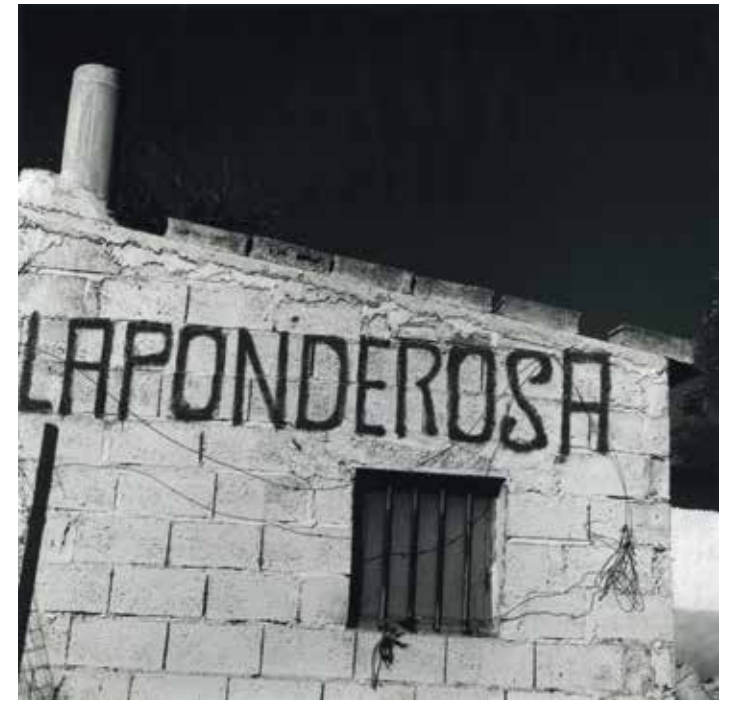
One of the most important things I have learnt over the years is that history plays a vital role in what we do and how we think about the world. When we read about the past, we can discover all kind of things and people that interest or inspire us. Photographer and printer Adrian Ensor

has long understood this and has frequently travelled and photographed having had his imagination sparked by reading or hearing about a person or place. When he came across Ian Gibson's biography of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, he knew he had to discover more about the man and the landscape that inspired him. 'I went to Fuente Vaqueros near Granada, where

Lorca grew up. It was late September and I was astounded by the light there – it was absolutely beautiful,' he tells me. 'I knew I had to come back and photograph.'  
In fact, it wasn't García Lorca's writing that initially inspired Adrian, it was his life. He knew about Lorca's left-wing politics and murder by Franco's soldiers, but it was when he began reading Lorca's poetry that >



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He realised what a happy childhood Lorca must have had in the beautiful, verdant landscape of southern Spain. 'Lorca talked about how everything went from gold to green – and that wonderful line where he says, "Isn't that so, poplar, master of the breeze". I saw that for myself; this valley is so irrigated by the moors and it's so fertile. When I read these lines, I realised that I was "sympatico" with him.'

It's interesting to observe that just as Lorca attempted to write about Andalusian culture without falling back on the clichéd or the picturesque, this is exactly what Adrian has done with his imagery. His depictions are intimate, mysterious and melancholy.

This summer, Adrian is exhibiting the work at the Centro de Estudios Lorquianos in Fuente Vaqueros from 3 June to the end of December. I spoke with him via Zoom on the day the exhibition opened. On the screen, I see him sitting outside in the sun at a table with a glass of red wine. I hear the murmur of people chatting in the background – the opening of the show has clearly gone down well.

'We've had the mayor here and several government dignitaries, and a lot of local people too,' he says. 'The exhibition might go on tour because they are keen to promote the area.' He seems relaxed and delighted with the result of what must have been a lot of work, and he is also openly emotional about what all this has meant to him. 'I've had the happiest time of my life wandering around this beautiful place taking photographs.'

It is moving to see how much this project has affected a man who has been in the business of printing and photographing for over 50 years, with a highly successful darkroom in central London. During his career, his reputation as a printer has become renowned and he has won many awards for his work. As a gifted photographer, he has shown at the Photographers' Gallery in London, and his photographs of London are part of the Eric Frank collection, which was recently gifted to Tate Britain.

Adrian is known for printing his own work, characterised by darkness and deep shadows that create a cinematic feel to the images. In the Andalusian work, this enhances the sense of intimacy and mystery that are inherent in the images. 'I always track the light and maybe I interpret it in a melancholy way,' he says. 'It's just how I see things. There must be a melancholic side of me – I don't see it in myself, but I see it in my work. Lorca was quite melancholic in his work too.'



*'There comes a point in your life when you harvest all your work.'*

The exhibition now being shown would not have existed were it not for Adrian deciding to make a book of the work just for himself. 'There comes a point in your life when you harvest all your work, and when I made that book, I realised I had an exhibition – the images came together off the pages,' he says.

Adrian doesn't describe himself as a perfectionist, but there are aspects of this in the way he approaches his work.

'We brought all the prints down here in March to have them framed, but I wasn't totally happy with about five of them, so I printed them again and I'm happy now. I'm a printer and I always know what I want from a negative – I'm my best client in the world for me. The printing side is really important.'

But as I see him on the screen, sitting in the Spanish sunlight, I feel there are perhaps other things that are even more

important to him. This hasn't been a commercial project or something to enhance his reputation – it goes much deeper than that. 'I hope the townspeople will love the work,' he says. His connection with the place and the community is palpable – and Federico García Lorca is always there in the background.

**To find out more about Adrian Ensor's work and the exhibition, visit [adrianensor.com](http://adrianensor.com).**