

**PERROTIN**

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**Cristina BANBAN**

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# CRISTINA BANBAN

**CRISTINA BANBAN**  
IN **CHANEL**  
BY **ALFREDO PIOLA**

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# BANBAN

Starring Artist & Artworks  
CRISTINA BANBAN  
Image ALFREDO PIOLA  
Style SAM KNOLL  
Words MATTHIEU JACQUET

Cristina BanBan's striking portraits of naked women, recognizable through their strong features displayed on large formats, have been around the art world for more than a decade now, conveying strong feelings of power, sensuality, care and sisterhood. For this issue, the Spanish painter welcomes us into her New York studio, where she dives into her singular way of working on the canvas, and tells us more about her new series of works, *Lorquianas*, currently exhibited at Perrotin, in Paris.





“Care, tenderness, sensuality, eroticism, being powerful... all of these are part of the human experience, which is what I'm most interested in.”

- Cristina BanBan

CRISTINA BANBAN in conversation with MATTHIEU JACQUET

**For more than ten years now, you've been portraying female characters, very recognizable through their strong features, huge hands, elongated fingers, big eyes, as well as the amount of space they occupy in the frame. Since a lot of them are modeled from yourself, do you see your paintings as exaggerated self-portraits?**

Building these images all started with me trying to make a diary of what I was going through. I was using women as a way of canalizing my own experiences, and then they became a part of my practice. It's not a style, it's just my tool. I'm indeed very drawn to strong facial features and gestures. Exaggerating certain aspects of the body allows me to portray them more powerful and strong. The fact I know my features so well, from my nose to my lips and my eyes, brings me to copy it, even if I don't plan to. My characters become like a doppelgänger... They are all around me when I'm in the studio, looking at me. So now, having all these works out there in the world almost feels like an autobiography!

**Most of the time, the women you paint are standing up or lying down, relaxing, contemplating, not being actively engaged in any physical action. Does that come from studying figurative painting history from a very young age?**

Usually, these women's positions are not telling you as much because I don't want to write nor illustrate a story. If I were depicting a very specific action, like drinking a cup of tea, I would be making a story about a woman drinking, and I want to move away from that. The bodies are a starting point for the actual painting itself, and I then leave it open for the viewer to imagine what their story could be.

**You said your artistic process divides in two main moments. First, the calmer one, which is you drawing on paper, usually in the morning sitting down, working on a small scale. And then you painting on the canvas, which is a way more physical, visceral and emotional moment, as you move to a bigger scale, and also allow**

**accidents to happen. Is this duality still as present as it was when you started?**

Yes. Several dualities run my process: between line and color, background and foreground, and between drawing and painting... Some people say "either you draw or you paint", but I like to do both, and I really need these two sides, they're like a yin and yang. I think I'm a better draughtswoman than a painter because my understanding of painting comes from line work. But after adapting my sketches from paper to the canvas, I use painting to try to distort, confuse, sometimes even erase certain aspects of the body and then adding other parts. I think as the day goes and the coffee kicks in, I start working stronger and stronger, in a very passionate way.

**You grew up in Barcelona, started your artistic career in London, then moved to New York just before the pandemic. How has living there impacted your artistic practice?**

I moved to New York because in the London art scene, there was not much going on for me. I instantly felt that I needed a big change, and I thought living in New York, I would be more at the center of what was happening in the art world, and could be connected with all the painters. Retrospectively today, I think the city always pushes you forward in that imaginary race to be better and more ambitious. Seeing all these amazing talents in the streets, in the galleries, in the museums, inspires you to keep evolving.

**At Perrotin Paris, you're currently showing *Lorquianas*, your new painting series inspired by Spanish writer Federico García Lorca's works, which you showed previously at the museum of La Alhambra, in Granada. What struck you the most when diving into his practice?**

Thanks to the *Centro Federico García Lorca*, and organized by MEDIA NOCHEO, I was able to visit his houses in and around Granada, as well as discover his photographs and his drawings, which I had not known before, and they struck me deeply. Lorca's work is so vast! What I connected with the most is his sensitivity, the drama, the passion. His texts talk a lot about the role of women in society and how they define the rules, which is very relevant today. I portray women through their emotions and translating what it is to be a woman nowadays. So I ended up picking some images or some of his female figures, and then started drawing them very allegorically, in an organic way.

Next page: Ankle boots in black stretch leather and patent leather with pearl heel CHANEL  
CRISTINA BANBAN, *Untitled*, 2023. Oil and acrylic on linen, 228.8 x 88.9 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



"My painting process is a bit of a dance, or even a fight sometimes, as I tend to focus a bit more on certain areas after drawing the figures."

- Cristina BanBan



CRISTINA BANBAN, *Yerma*, 2025. Oil on linen, 243.8 x 213.4 cm.  
Photo ©John Berens. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



CRISTINA BANBAN, *Venus*, 2025.  
Oil on linen, 228.8 x 88.9 cm.  
Photo ©John Berens. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Long metal necklace, glass paste pearls & rhinestones Gold, pearly white & crystal.  
Rectangular sunglasses and metal, black leather and resin pearls fancy belt.  
Next page: Black wool and cashmere sweater dress embellished with white details, white  
strassed knit boots in black patent leather with gold heels, adorned with velvet bows CHANEL

Stylist Assistant DAVIEL CASTAÑEDA  
Hair Stylist TAKAO HAYASHI  
Make Up ANDREW COLVIN  
Producer KATHARINA SCHRAMM

"I'm a better draughtswoman than a painter because  
my understanding of painting comes from line work."

- Cristina BanBan

**This new series of paintings portrays some of the most diverse types of women that we've seen in your work so far. Some of them are older than usual, some are smaller, and they are also not as naked as usual, which differentiates them as well.**

In some of his plays, Lorca explores generational relationships, where mothers or grandmothers pass traditions on to the younger women in the family. For example, in one of my paintings, you can see two women sitting in a chair, inspired by *The House of Bernarda Alba*, in which grieving young sisters must remain inside the house with closed windows, dressed in black. I wanted to depict women rebelling against these rules, so they are wearing the black garment but appear naked, wearing heels, which serve as a symbol of strong female energy. In the past, I used the female body like a universal idea but as I needed to be more specific here, I used clothes to represent the characters and to tell their story.

**A few months ago, you said you were getting bored with your own process and you were taking a step back to come back to it in a fresher way. Did this new series help you with that?**

Every project is different for me and I like to change. But my work always relies on two things. One is the content, which can go from freely navigating my emotions and my mind, to moving somewhere to follow a strong, particular idea. The other is the aesthetics part. So nowadays, after portraying these Lorca women in a specific and realistic way, I think I want to be more free with my painting. Not having so much

constriction in terms of figuration and realize we can just use the figure as a starting point and go a little bit more abstract. But we'll see what happens in the studio, I never know.

**In your more recent works, it seems like the painting goes a bit more over the edges of the drawing. You let it drip more, and invade the other shapes and characters in a less contained way...**

It's a dance, and at moments, a fight, as I tend to focus more on certain areas after drawing the figures. Sometimes you can even see the characters' nails or eyelashes. Or maybe you can see the initial drawings crossing over, the faces mixing with the background... I use this strategy: focusing, and then erasing all the areas until I am happy with the result.

**Looking at your paintings, a certain sensuality exudes from seeing these naked bodies touching, but I feel like we get an even stronger sense of care, through the gestures and the way they are interacting with each other. Is this a reaction to the world we are living in?**

I feel like I'm in a therapy session! (laughs) Caring, tenderness, sensuality, eroticism, being powerful... all of these are part of the human experience, which is what I'm most interested in. If I translate that into my work, maybe that means the world needs more caring. When there's only one character, you can feel this idea of self-care, but when there are different women in the painting, you can also feel the importance of sisterhood and looking after each other. Thinking about that also comes to what painting represents to me. If it's an act that you do every day, it has to come with a way of healing oneself. Meditation, painting, and then seeing the result of tenderness and care... Perhaps that's all we need, after all.



"I was portraying women as a way of canalizing my own experiences, and then they became a part of my practice."

- Cristina BanBan



CRISTINA BANBAN, *Tres Hermanas*, 2025.  
Oil on linen, 243.8 x 213.4 cm.  
Photo ©John Berens. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Bag in silver mirror-effect leather and metal.  
► Trompe-l'oeil sweater in black and light beige cashmere, embellished with jeweled buttons CHANEL





Skirt in gold, black and navy blue fantasy tweed, embellished with braid and jeweled buttons, gold black tweed and grosgrain heeled slingbacks CHANEL