

with a new Foreword by
Pablo a Través de la Pieza



General Franco, Paella and Me

*A Memoir by
Professor Brian Therupiece*

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General Franco, Paella and Me

A Memoir by
Professor Brian Thrupiece





General Franco with Professor Thrupiece c1964.

FOREWORD

by Internationally-renowned paella designer Pablo a Través de la Pieza

As an internationally-renowned paella designer, I know a thing or two about colour and texture,¹

In this respect I am well placed to evaluate and to comment critically on the aesthetics of other non-food-based but still essentially *ingredient*-driven creations of which watercolours are perhaps a prime example. As paella maestro Plato de Marisco rightly observed, "*it takes a lifetime of study to create the perfect paella*", by which he meant to develop the "*nose*" to seek out the finest elements, the skill to assemble them and the *conocimiento* [nose] to place them before the public in a manner likely to convince them that €45 for a shared medium platter is a reasonable ask. In short, the palette offered to internationally-renowned designer of food is not wholly dissimilar to that available to the late Professor Thrupiece ² as he sought to capture the many shifting moods of the Iberian landscape. For this reason - As an internationally-renowned paella designer - I am supremely well-qualified to write this new foreword.

What is certain beyond peradventure is that, when it comes to Professor Thrupiece's personal qualities, his was a hand blessed with finesse, capable of enchanting, stimulating and exciting everything and everyone it touched. In no case is this more true than in that of his 1964 visit to the Costa del Sol, facilitated by [and briefly shared with] the Generalissimo himself. Others have written more insightfully and at great length of the relationship between the great man and the General [admiring/despising, opportunistic/purposive, malign/benign] so I will confine myself to that of which I know: the Professor shared with the General a genuine love of country, an ability to tap into the people's zeitgeist and a €45 medium platter.

¹ Though not, apparently, flavour

² Professor Thrupiece's existential status remains more uncertain than this bold statement would imply. "*Of course he's still with us. Enrique feels him every day*" [pers com, Mrs Amanda J Threadbone]

From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

'Completed a watercolour of the Balcon de Europa which I had worked up from sketches. I walk there every morning from Buriana in the hope of working off last night's paella which, though designed for two, fell mainly to me to consume, GF being too full of conversation and bluster to eat properly - he is no trencherman and no "artista con un tenedor" either. My Apple watch says I hit my 700 points target but since I haven't had a decent evacuation since I arrived I think it's the water!, I still feel lethargic and overweight.

The canvass has come off reasonably well though I feel in retrospect I shouldn't have included the fat ugly couple in the foreground. Somehow they detract from the spirituality of the church and her vile purple smock unbalances the tonal palette.

Yesterday I found a shop selling Marvel beach towels though I failed to buy one thinking I would go back today. Bugged if I could find it again. Dammit!'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

Woke up in great hope, but still can't "go". I even tried drinking bottled water but it hasn't made the difference. Perhaps it's the Iberian crisps. They are delicious and very moreish quite unlike the bland and papery things we get at home - little blue salt bag or no. Perhaps they are - as my mother would have said - far too "binding". I will try to keep to just the two packets today.

Walked along the coast and set up my easel before realising I was in the wrong spot. Though it was perfect aesthetically, the sun was shining directly on my developing bald spot and I had omitted to pack the Factor 30 I generally keep with me at all times.

Sketched the view quickly and completed the painting back in my Air B&B before heading out for yet another session with GF. He's obsessed with the succession and thinks he might have made a mistake. Apparently young Juann Carlos has a thing for BBC Breakfast Time presenters and he's worried there might be ramifications. GF told him that no-one "messes with esa mujer and gets away "Scott-free". Only time will tell.'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

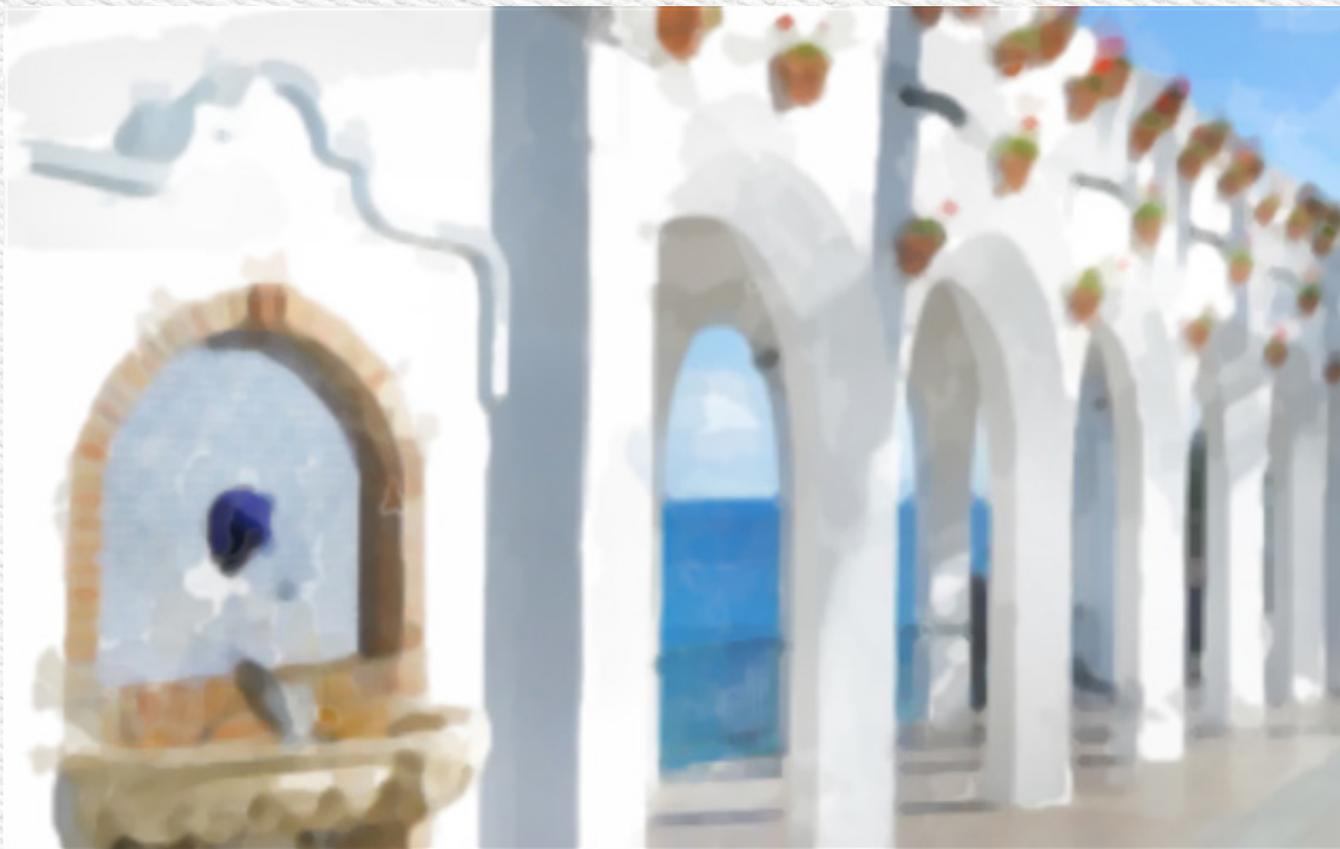
'Played around with cerulean blue for this one and am feeling quite pleased. It has a night time feel about it which is remarkable given that I painted it at mid-day. Must check my light meter. I know it's art not photography, but old habits die hard.

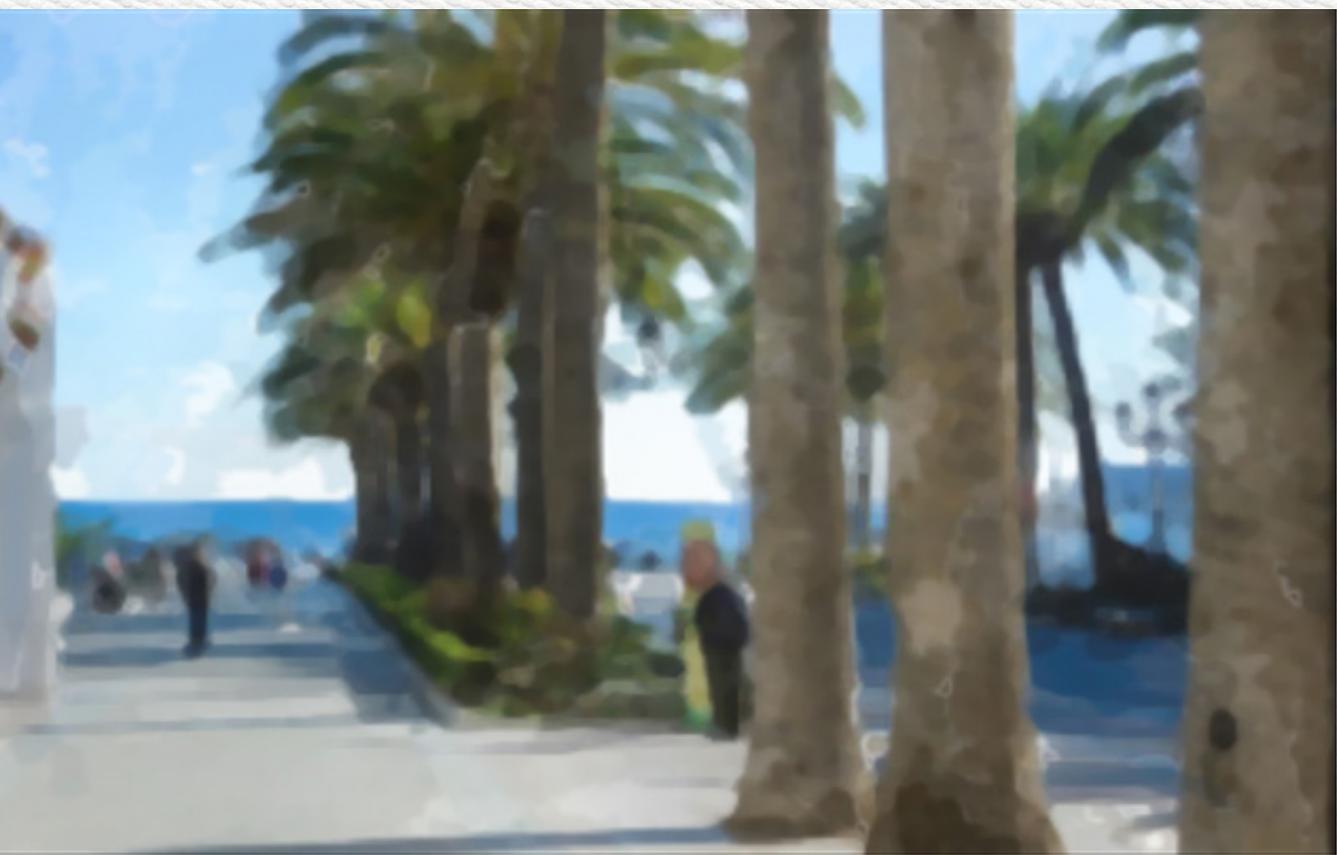
Speaking of hard, I had another difficult time en el baño and think I might have strained a muscle. [Given it may well be that the mussels are the problem that is linguistically facile to say the least]. Pleased to discover the TV in the Air B&B has Netflixs and wish I'd discovered sooner. I can't tell you how tedious Midsomer Murders is dubbed into Spanish. Worse than it is in English believe it or not. ["Él es un raro Troy "] Cutting down on the crisps doesn't seem to be working though it might be too early to say.

Experimenting with a sable 4mm and quite pleased with the results... I think I might try a bigger canvass tomorrow provided I find "a road through" tonight - otherwise sitting for too long will be inimical to the sustained creativity a bigger production requires.'

Overleaf: the larger canvass referred to here. Evidently the Professor succeeded in completing it in good order though whether the anticipated necessary conditions were met we may never know.







From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

'Went out in search of a farmacia in the hope that they might have some jarabe de higos and I would know how to ask for it without embarrassment . The very nice lady - who unaccountably spoke only Swedish - tried her best, but I ended up buying deodorant [ball not aerosol]. Goodness knows how. Anyway I smell a whole lot better and now have something pleasant to spray around the bathroom if and when "it" finally arrives.

Took the opportunity to do a quick sketch of the thoroughfare at Balcon and worked it up later back in the apartment. Scene a little spoiled by the washing that the locals trail across the street [you'd think you were in Naples, though the gussets are smaller here]. Someone calimed that they were sun-shades though I wasn't convinced.

Anyway you'd never get away with it in Batcombe. My grandmother would be turning in her grave, hanging out your smalls for the world and his wife to see. [Won't get away with a phrase like that in 57 year's time so better make the most of it now!]

GF is proving to be a bit of a pain in the arse... speaking of which ... no, false alarm'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

*'Crept into the crypt, would like to have crapped, but just crept out again. In truth I went into the local church hoping for inspiration but saw this near the entrance and frankly it petrified me. Would love to have said it gave me the sh*ts but no such luck... It's definitely lodged.*

Been here almost a week now and am enjoying the local colour. These Anadalusians certainly know how to live life.. Bought a massive manchego and ate a decent chunk for lunch whilst on the hoof. Hope it doesn't add to my woes [at least it's not Edam] though cheese can be a vary variable experience digestion-wise.

As I worked up the Jesus and Mary sketch I was struck by how splendid and regal the Catholics make them look - a far cry from the image presented to us at primary school in Batcombe. They'd have you believe Mary looked like the woman helping the rag-and-bone man give out the donkey-stones [I think she might have played her in the 1957 Christmas Pageant]. Can't see this Mary on her hands and knees flashing the flagstones. Not sure I've captured the glory somehow but it's hard to concentrate when there's nothing doing in the needful arena.'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

'Yes, I know I have done a scene like this several times before, but the stubborn and ancient cussedness of the rocks continues to intrigue. Speaking of stubborn rocks ... still waiting for an outcome.

This delightful beach has a small house built into the rockface and I was intrigued enough to descend the 33,000 steps to get to it. [GF says it was just to up the anti re the Apple Watch and make sure I hit the fitness app target but I like to think there was an element of intellectual curiosity to it. Disappointed not to find a hermit living in the house [I was probably thinking of the folly at Piddletrethide which I entered once as a boy only to discover a solitary man standing inside and comforting himself with the latest copy of Health and Efficiency]. Instead I found two rather lovely ladies dressed as mermaids on a photoshoot with an over-eagre photographer who was asking them to bend in ways I suspect mermaids were not designed to bend. Great spot for a proposal if I ever get round to it.

Re-climbed the stairs and 12 hours later began the present canvas . Pleased with the result overall but finding the mountains hard to capture. Perhaps I need a 8mm stipple.'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

'During my time here I have attended many splendid events, though sadly far too many in the company of GF and his antsy little sidekick. Imagine my delight then to be invited by a young man I met in a tapas bar [the boquerones were magnificent, the carcamusa indifferent and the patatas bravas pitiful] to his wedding which was to take place the very next day high in the hills above Buriana at a location so secret that many, even in his close family, remained completely ignorant as to its whereabouts.

Indeed it turned out that the secret had been so well kept that the best man was never informed and so it fell to yours truly to do the needful. The food proved well worth a nibble as did one of the delectable bridesmaids and I think it is fair to say that, as the sun began to sink, the upright fortitude for which the academic Dorsetian is well-renowned was properly in evidence.'

The watercolour I offered in return was painted from memory and may, on reflection, assume more of the aspect of a self-portrait than I had originally intended. Still it was well enough received and I was assured that, rather like my good self, it would be well hung. No sign of GF today - perhaps I will manage to avoid him and have it off instead.'



From the Professor's Iberian Diary June 1964:

'Broke bread with the young Juann Carlos last night. He seemed very interested in British TV and asked me if I knew anyone who could get him an "in" at Braodcasting House Kept mentioning the likes of Frank Bough, Russell Grant, Francis Wilson and the Green Goddess though I suspect he was beating about the bush a bit and had another in mind. Speaking of bushes ... Saw a beauty near the beach yesterday. Very luxuriant and full of Mediterranean promise.. Tried to get a sniff but the wind was in the wrong direstion.

I was persuaded - much against my better judgement - to undertake a quick sketch of Juann Carlos which he wanted me to take back to England and give to a certain lady. GF suggested I humour him - "Es un bribón joven, pero a veces tiene que acabar con su fin."¹

Anyway the day was not entirely wasted. I decided to try the chicken kebabs and, four hours later, magic happened. Perhaps they were a trifle under-cooked but they did the trick. I've been going since 6am - with the power to add. What a relief... Marvellous... Viva Espagna, Generalissimo or not.

¹ *He's a young scamp but he has to get his lend al way sometimes*



Biographical Note

by

Aman Yuensis

Professor Thrupiece made regular and frequent trips to Spain and the Spanish Islands and accounts of many of these have found their way into academic theses, research monographs, biographical case studies and books intended for more general public consumption. In particular his visit to Ibiza has come under close scrutiny and is the subject of a definitive study [see Imin Clubbe-Lande's Professor Thrupiece: The Ibiza Years, *International Journal of Culinary Bio-ethics Special Supplement* 2017]. [Available online at: https://1c68b3e5-3d0d-4d45-8cde-cedd19b75168.filesusr.com/ugd/a9210a_df076cc4ed64442e9bc9b18d870655f2.pdf]

As is the case with all of the Professor's foreign visits, some mystery surrounds the purpose of his Iberian excursions. Doubtless for pleasure as well as professional fulfilment [he was never far from a pen or a painting brush], his manifold connections to the underworld of intelligence gathering as well as his more overt overures in the diplomatic arena have led, understandably, to speculation concerning their "real" purpose. In many instances, we will simply never know.

The Spanish encounters are nevertheless a special case. Though he was undoubtedly particularly fond of Spain [he went so far as to learn flamenco and reached Grade 1 on the classical guitar, but never mastered the language] the regularity of his visits, as well as the unusually [even for him] high level of contact, suggests that he was not always in the country for his own reasons or at his own bequest. Rather, recently released papers suggest, he was part of a UK initiative better to understand and assess the potential threats posed by Franco's

Spain to general Western security. Indeed we now know that his publicly-voiced admiration for the work of paella maestro Plato de Marisco was nothing more than a front: a pretext for gaining access to, and ultimately the confidence of, Plato de Marisco's number one fan: the Generalissimo himself. Only in this way can we explain the numerous visits to, exchanges with and apparent sympathy for a man whose political ideals [not to mention taste in uniforms] were so unlike his own. True they shared a genuine interest in orthopaedic shoes and both had magnificent historic collections [including, in Franco's case, one worn by Celia Johnson in *Lloyd George Knew My Father*]; it is also a fact that both enjoyed the company of handsome women [though neither to the extent of Franco's protege Juann Carlos] ¹

Be that as it may, from a murky picture is emerging a clearer narrative: when the Professor was in Spain, he was, as his chauffeur Conduce mi Coche put it "*up to something*".

Finally it may be worth spoiling what has been for many years a very good story, but one based entirely on a misunderstanding. It is famously said that when the Professor was with the dying dictator in his final days, Franco, hearing the noise of large crowds gathered outside the Royal Palace of El Pardo in Madrid, asked what they were doing. Professor Thrupiece allegedly said "*They are coming to say goodbye*", to which the General replied "*Why, where are they going?*" It is indeed a good story. However, a transcription of the conversation held in the Franco Museum, Cerne Abbas, suggests the conversation actually went as follows:

PT: "General, I am afraid I have to go"

GF: [weakly] "Why where are you going?"

PT: "To Plato de Marisco 's for a €45 medium platter"

¹ See Selina Scott *King Juan Carlos Knew My Pussy*, Threadbone Celebrity Snaps 2012

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