

FROM HAND TO HAND: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN. WITH DORA GARCÍA

By Sonia Fernández Pan

From Hand to Hand: The Other Side of the Coin is the first in a second series of podcasts exploring the Banco de España's art collection. For this first conversation, I invited Dora García to discuss her piece ['Giving Hands, Receiving Hands'](#) (2025), a series of six tapestries made for the Collection Hall at the bank's head offices. The room itself was designed in the nineteenth century by architect Eduardo de Adaro and draws inspiration from the Alhambra Palace in Granada. We began by talking about García's first visit to this room, before refurbishment had begun and before the competition for art works was announced. Our conversation then wound its way through a series of situations before arriving at the murky relationship between money and art work. The imagery used in *Giving Hands, Receiving Hands* can also be seen in an earlier piece by the artist in the Banco de España collection, [Dismembered \(Hand with Coin\)](#). However, this hand had already appeared much earlier, in her project for Documenta 13 *Klaus Mich*, when it was associated with the act of stealing books – which cost money. The way coins pass from hand to hand – never truly belonging to any of them – makes me think of how Dora García's points of reference shift, constantly remodelling the connections between her projects and processes. However, the concept of the hyperlink is probably a much more fitting way of describing how she works and tells stories.

Although we actually handle less and less cash these days, we still use our hands for almost all the digital transactions we make. Yet it is money that enables the acts of giving and receiving to meld into a single gesture. And it is precisely this confusion – or rather, this ambiguity – that interests Dora García. Because exchange, even when it is intended to be altruistic, can easily lead to a sense of obligation, especially if no money is involved or if there are unspoken agreements at play. We rarely *give* something without expecting something in return, just as we rarely receive something without feeling pressured to give something back in the future. Debt drives capital, but it also shapes human relationships. According to the economist Adam Smith, what he called the Invisible Hand exercises a fair redistribution of wealth from rich to poor. In this theory, when people pursue their own interests, they always end up contributing to the common good. Dora García returns to Smith,

drawing a parallel with the false charity of Baudelaire's friend who gave a beggar a counterfeit coin. As García says about money in general, charity is also a sham. People give money to reaffirm their status and to continue legitimising social inequality. Nothing could be further from the common good.

There is also a practical purpose behind the six tapestries at *in 'Giving Hands, Receiving Hands'*. They help to improve the acoustics in the Collection Hall, damping potential echoes and reverberations. It strikes me that this conversation with Dora García might, in fact, turn this function on its head, by amplifying some of the less visible echoes and functions of money. García's voice brings resonance to coins and hands, Neo-Mudéjar imagery and depictions of stigmata, Philip K. Dick, Mallarmé, marriages, Simone de Beauvoir, the *Caritas Romana*, Adam Smith, Baudelaire and the economics of art. Iconic figures and words, like coins, are passed from hand to hand, their faces changing. Unlike coins, however, they are not always spent, instead taking on new meanings.

Sonia Fernández Pan is an (in)dependent curator,
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Podcast credits

Voice: Dora García

Concept and interview: Sonia Fernández Pan

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