

MH

Kayla Aminpour

## ***Mateo Herrera***

This album is a visual narrative exploration of the Spanish Civil War seen through the imagined life of Mateo Herrera, a fictional Republican soldier. His story is based on the real experiences of men who fought in one of the most brutal conflicts of the 20th century.

Told through artifacts (an ID card, diary entries, a propaganda poster, hand-drawn trench sketches) this visual representation humanizes a war that's usually only talked about in terms of politics and factions. Instead of describing the facts or dates, this photo album immerses the viewer in the personal world of a soldier: a carpenter from Seville brought into war not by politics, but by duty and circumstance.

I chose to tell history through one man rather than focusing on famous names or battles. Mateo's voice allowed me to look deeply into the humanity behind a major political conflict: how ideology, fear, and hope shaped individuals brought into the civil war. The diary entries written in Spanish and translated follow his emotional journey from uncertainty to adaptedness. They are not meant to be large speeches, but important pieces of daily life. His last entry, which trails off mid-sentence, reflects the thousands of lives lost left unfinished.

Each page is drawn from real historical artifacts. The “¡No pasarán!” poster was inspired by real Republican propaganda used to defend Madrid. The charcoal sketches represent the silence of the trenches and the boredom and terror soldiers felt. Additionally, the handwriting and paper textures were chosen to mirror the time period and make the viewer feel more tied to the war.

This album also reflects how memory survived war. Mateo may be fictional, but his story is built from reality. The Spanish Civil War was not just the political struggles between fascism and republicanism, it was personal. By giving a voice to one forgotten soldier, this project honors the countless others whose names we will never know, but still changed history.

Mateo Herrera,  
born Sept 28,  
1902, carpenter  
and Republican  
soldier from  
Seville.

Fought in  
madrid and  
Ebro during  
the Spanish  
civil war.



First entry  
in mateo  
Herreras war  
diary.

written the  
night he left  
home to join  
the republican  
militia.

21 de julio de 1936

Querido diario,

Hoy he salido de Sevilla con solo lo que cabía en mi mochila. Mama lloró, me apretó como si supiera que no iba a volver.

No sé qué va a venir después, solo sé que no quiero los fascistas ganen.

Esta noche duermo con otras siete personas en el piso de un edificio abandonado.

Mateo

July 21 1936

Dear Diary,

Today I left Seville with only what fit into my backpack.

Mama cried. She squeezed me like she knew I wouldn't be coming back.

I don't know what will come next. I just know I don't want the fasists to win.

Tonight I'm sleeping with seven other people on the floor of an abandoned building.

Mateo

republican  
propaganda  
poster carried  
by mateo

"They shall not  
pass!" : a  
message used  
to inspire  
fighters.

# ¡NO PASARÁN!



DEFIENDE LA LIBERTAD.  
DEFIENDE EL PUEBLO.

Two sketches  
by mateo  
showing  
life in the  
trenches.

cramped and  
full of  
waiting.



maleo's final  
diary entry

22 de febrero, 1938

Quisido diario,

El mundo está helado otra vez. Nadie duerme bien. Tuví un solo sangre anache. Yo di mi cobija.

Escuchamos bombardeos más cerca hoy. No dicen que nos maten. Aún no me reconozco al carpintero que solía ser.

Esta mañana escribí mi nombre en la pared de la trinchera, por si esto termina mal.

El cielo se está poniendo roja otra vez. Oso que es hora de —

Dear Diary,

February 22, 1938

The ground is frozen again. No one is sleeping well. Javier coughed up blood last night. I gave him my blanket.  
We heard the bombs closer

today. They told us to stay strong. I look at myself and don't recognize the carpenter I used to be.

This morning I wrote my name on the trench wall in case

this ends bad.

The sky is turning red again.  
I guess it's time to —

unfinished  
like so many  
lives in the  
war.

22 de febrero, 1938

Querido diario,

El duelo está nublado otra vez, nadie duerme bien. Javier tosió sangre anoche. Ya di mi cobija.

Escuchamos bombardeos más cerca hoy. nos dicen que nos mantengamos fuertes. me miro y no reconozco al carpintero que solía ser.

esta mañana escribí mi nombre en la pared de la trinchera, por si esto termina mal.

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