



# The Great Journey by Adolfo Serra



VISUAL ARTS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Fri, March 12–  
Fri, November 12, 2021

## Venue

Former Residence of the  
Ambassadors of Spain, 2801 16th St  
NW, Washington, DC 20009

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## Admission

Free

## Credits

Presented by the Cultural Office of  
the Embassy of Spain in  
Washington, D.C. Image courtesy of  
Adolfo Serra.

Spanish illustrator Adolfo Serra explores the concept of the First Circumnavigation of the World in this second intervention on the windows of the Former Residence of the Ambassadors of Spain in Washington, D.C.

In his work, Serra explores the concept of the First Circumnavigation of the World, on the occasion of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish Magellan-Elcano expedition:

When photography did not exist, the only way to document reality was through drawing. We cannot even imagine what it must have been reaching distant lands and meeting strange animals or giant plants for the first time. Magallanes and Elcano were the first to “travel and discover all the roundness of the world” between 1519 and 1522. A new world in this world. More than fourteen thousand four hundred sixty leagues, a long journey around the world, always sailing from east to west. A nautical feat that showed the sphericity of the Earth and marked a milestone in the Age of Geographical Discovery.

Together with Magallanes and Elcano, I want to highlight the words of Antonio Pigafetta, official chronicler of the expedition. In his notebooks the “surprise of the encounter” is reflected: geographical accidents, new bays and straits, unknown towns, other human beings. But also something



else: descriptions of new animal and plant species that, until then, only existed in the minds of the most imaginative.

For example, near the Cape Verde archipelago, off the coast of West Africa, in Pigafetta's diary we can read comments like this: "there are flying fish, and other fish packed in such large quantities that they seemed to form an island in the sea."

My goal with this illustration project is to transform the windows of the cultural center in Washington, D.C. on a stand to celebrate the fifth centenary of the first circumnavigation of the Earth around the world, taking Pigafetta's annotations as a reference. The windows become a living notebook, a set of screens showing some of those dreamed, real and invented fauna sprouts encountered by navigators encountered: the birds of paradise, the guanaco, the Magellanic penguins, the fox of Patagonia... At a time when the screen has become the basic support for the transmission of information, and mobility is limited, this project uses the power of illustration to evoke that "surprise of the encounter."

## ABOUT ADOLFO SERRA

Adolfo Serra studied Advertising and Public Relations, but soon returned to his childhood's passion: drawing, taking up pencils and watercolors at the Escuela de Arte 10 in Madrid. Since then, his table has been filled with colors, papers and textures. For Serra, illustrating is deciding, telling, observing...

His illustrations have been featured at the *Bologna Children's Book Fair* (Italy), *Bratislava Biennial of Illustration* (Slovakia), *Sharjah Children's Book Fair* (United Arab Emirates), *Ibero-American Illustration Catalog* (Mexico), *CJ Picture Book Awards* (Korea), *Mostra Internazionale d'Illustrazione per l'Infanzia Sàrmede* (Italy) or *China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair* (China). He also won an artist residency in the Royal Spanish Academy in Rome for the project *Bomarzo*.

In 2020 the book *Memory of the Snow* by Julio Llamazares and Adolfo Serra, published by Nórdica Libros won the First Prize for the Best Edited Book 2020 granted by the Ministry of Culture of Spain. Part of Serra's professional activity is dedicated to the development of workshops and laboratories related to illustrating and drawing, both for children and adults.