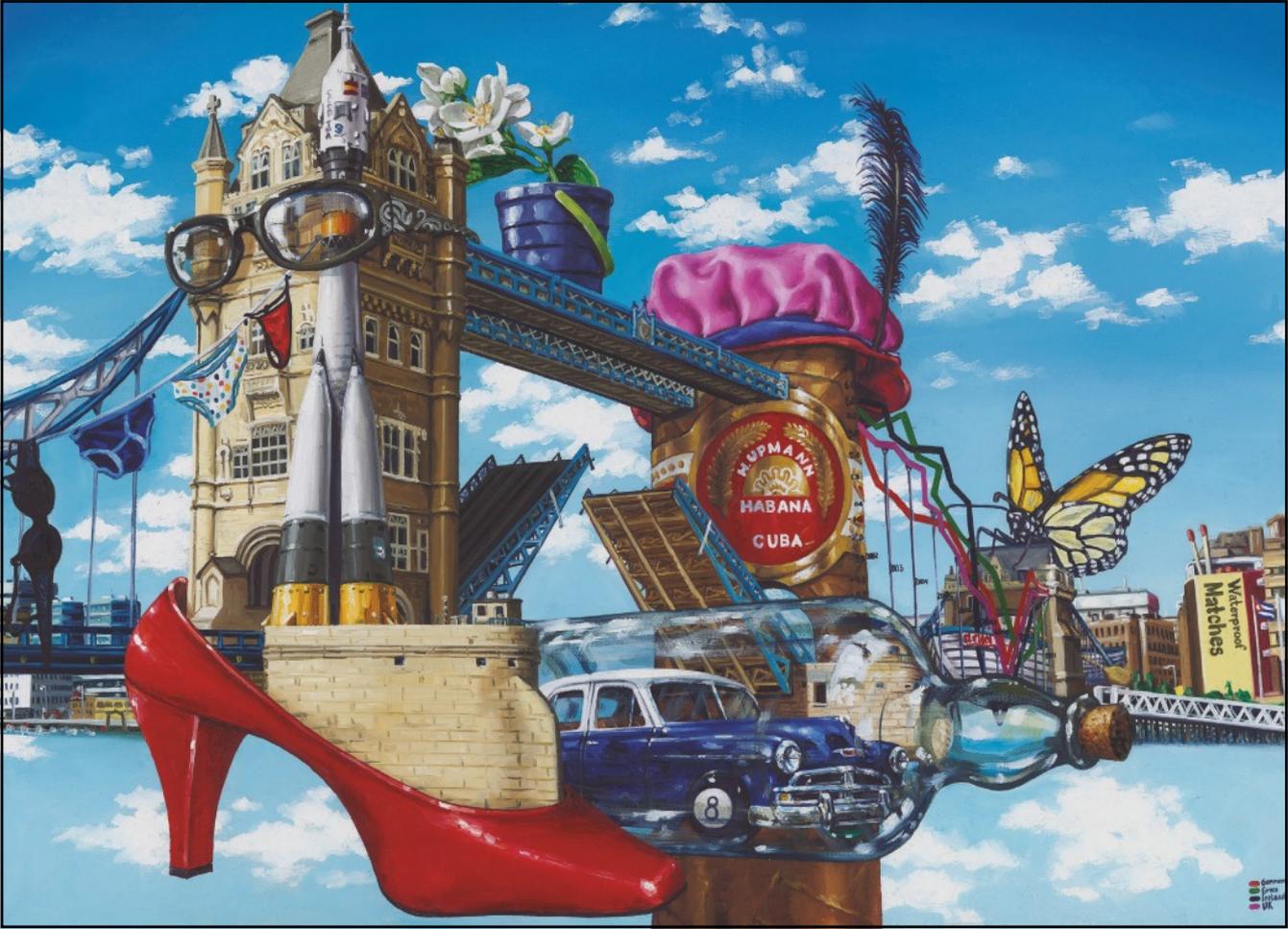
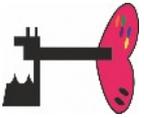


Alberto Martinez
Red Shoe



Alberto Martinez - Red Shoe



A red shoe forms the focal point of this painting which was mostly inspired by a famous children's poem entitled 'Los Zapaticos de Rosa' which means 'The Pink Shoes'. It centres on a young girl named Pilar from a wealthy family who gives her shoes to a poor, sick child she encounters on a beach. Alberto, who grew up in Cuba, wondered what Pilar would be doing now she is a grown woman, and so came the existence of the more adult 'Red Shoe'. The poem itself is known for its strong moral undertone that explores the divide between rich and poor, a theme which Alberto continues to reference in this painting. For example, wealth and the freedom it can bring is represented by the H. Upmann cigar we see forming one of the pillars of Tower Bridge.



Upmann, a German banker, loved Cuban cigars so much he moved there in 1844 and set up as both a banker and cigar manufacturer. Ironically, his banks closed in the early 1920's, but his cigar business flourished. It is said that JFK ordered an aid to purchase 1200 Cuban cigars the day before he declared a trade embargo with Cuba, after which it became illegal for Americans to buy cigars from the island. This embargo is again referenced by the vintage Chevrolet in the bottle, as Cubans were unable to purchase American cars after 1962. Additionally, the 'car in the bottle' also references prohibition and Cuba's links with the organised crime of 'Bootleggers' (rum runners). Continuing with his theme of wealth and money, the falling European economies are accurately graphed reflecting the economic crisis which began in 2002.



The Soyuz Rocket depicted as part of the left-hand tower reflects the closeness between the former Soviet Union and Cuba post-Revolution. However the two missiles that are present in the foreground represent the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 watched through the eyes of the world as demonstrated by a pair of sunglasses wrapped around the tower.

Alberto's painting also pays many tongue and cheek references to the idea of Cubans wanting to leave their island. Tower Bridge represents a 'gateway' for those who would like to reach London, and the Chevrolet car, in this context, is representative of their travels. Hidden underneath the economic graph, is a rowing boat which continues with this idea and is adorned with the artist's signature 'El Flaco' (the skinny one). Bringing the two nations together is a busker's cap sitting on top of the Upmann cigar similar to that which might have been worn by Londoners in times past. Finally, and in true Alberto fashion, some of the items in the painting are present simply for fun! The butterfly, underwear and pot plant, invite you to concoct your own idea of what they mean. Not to mention that upon closer examination, Tower Bridge is in fact floating in the sky!

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