

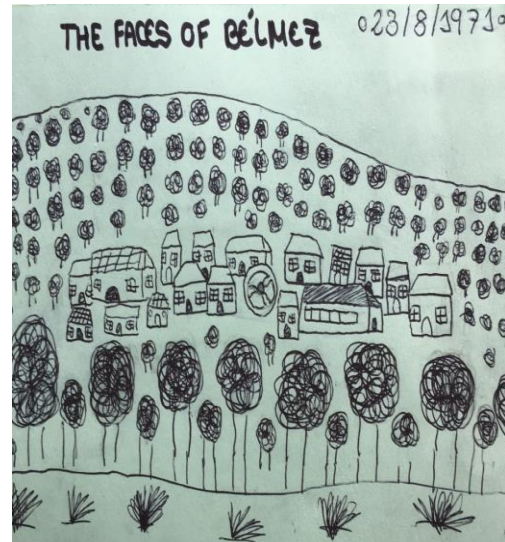
The Faces of Bélmez



Baeza / Spain

THE FACES OF BÉLMEZ

It was the 23rd of August, 1971 in a little town of the province of Jaén, located in the heart of Mágina Mountain and surrounded by olive, almond and pine trees. The men were working in the fields. In the houses the women were doing their chores. In number 5, Real street, one of those women, called María Gómez Cámara, was preparing lunch



over the hot coals of her fireplace. She was waiting for her son, who usually came back home at midday for his meal. As she was stirring the soup with a big spoon, she noticed a dark stain on the floor, just in front of the fireplace.



“What a strange thing! What is it? That stain has never been there.”

In a state of alarm, she discovered the stain had the shape of a human face.

“I can’t believe it! It looks like a man’s face. I can see the lines of the eyes. Oh, my God! What is this? I will talk to Miguel when he comes home.”

Miguel, who had spent the morning with his flock, arrived one hour later.

“My dear, follow me”, María ordered him.

“What happens, mum? You are scaring me.”

“Look at that stain on the floor. I am frightened. Can’t you see? It is a face. It is a human face. There you can see the eyes, and there is the mouth...”

“Oh, dear. I can’t believe it”.

Little by little, the stain became more precise and Maria and her son could even see that it was the face of a man with wide eyes and a big moustache.

“Let’s wait till tomorrow. If the face remains there, we will think about what to do.”

They didn’t have much sleep that night. María, still in bed, hoped the image would disappear during the night. When she woke up the next morning, she ran to the kitchen and, in a state of shock, discovered that the face could still be seen on the floor. Her son had already left home for work, so María called her neighbours.



“Neighbours! Come, please, come. My house is haunted!!!”

The few neighbours that lived in that area came to help María.

“Come into my kitchen. There is a strange face on the floor.”

“A face on the floor?”

“Yesterday I saw it and I thought it was a dream, but it is still there now”.

As it usually happens in small villages, the news spread like gunpowder. All the inhabitants wanted to see this strange phenomenon and curious people started to come to Bélmez to look at the amazing image.

“Mum, we can’t open our door to everyone. You are exhausted”.

“I can’t continue with this situation. We have people waiting to come in from sunrise to sunset. We must make that face disappear.”

Miguel listened to his mother’s pleading and he decided to go further. Therefore, he prepared different tools and started to chip the kitchen floor in order to erase the face. Once it was chipped all over, he put a layer of cement on top of it. Their surprise was huge when, after three days, the face appeared again, right in the same place.



“I told you it would not be easy. There is something horrible about that face. It must be an evil thing. I am scared”, María said.

She could breathe something supernatural in that kitchen. During the following days, more and more faces appeared on the floor, and they started to spread all over. The faces had already become something so usual in that house that the family finally got used to them.

The popularity of the faces of Bélmez grew so much that experts in psychology from all over the world came to study the phenomenon. None of

them found a logical explanation for it. With time these experts decided to dig under María's kitchen floor. To their surprise, they found a huge number of human bones and historians discovered that in that same place there had been a cemetery in the 12th century. In conclusion, people started to believe that those people who had been buried there needed to communicate with the outside world and their spirits were responsible of drawing those faces on the floor.

In that period the authorities tried to conceal the issue. Different newspapers of the age published the story and spoke of it as a fraud.

Police officers came to Bélmez to try and silence this issue, but the faces were always there and it seemed as if they had their own life.



The mystery has continued so far. In 2004 María died. After her death, there were some years when the faces weakened and almost vanished. People commented that María's own energy was the source of those images.



The truth is that many of these faces can still be seen at number 5, María Gómez Street. The Council changed the name of the street as a remembrance of María. Nobody knows how long the faces of Bélmez will remain in this humble house. Nobody knows if one day they will disappear the same way they came. Thanks to them, Mágina Mountain can now be called Magic Mountain.



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