Translucent Skin

Works from the Iberdrola Collection



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IBERDROLA

Foreword

Ignacio S. Galán 007
President and CEO Iberdrola

The Other Side of the Skin

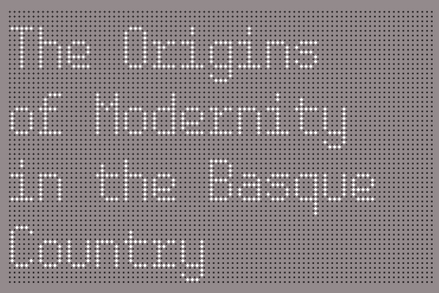
Javier González de Durana 009
Curator of the exhibition *Translucent Skin*

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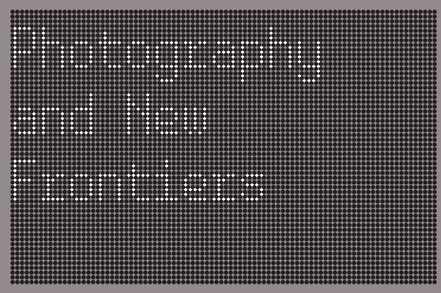
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Foreword | **Ignacio S. Galán**

I am very pleased to present this exhibition with a selection of works from the Iberdrola Collection, brought together in a single place for the first time with the aim of sharing a major part of our artistic heritage with our visitors.

Iberdrola's commitment to art is a key part of our patronage efforts, with a view to carrying them out in a sustainable manner by supporting initiatives that conserve the heritage of the past while promoting modern forms of expression.

The Iberdrola Collection has grown in recent years and incorporated new works, many of them from the cultural environment in which we carry out our activities, thus reflecting our close links with the societies where we are present. To mark our expansion and the move into our new head office, the Collection has been extended along three different thematic lines, all closely linked to the history of our company: First, the Basque school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which symbolises our roots; second, a group of Spanish art works from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, which illustrates the period in which we consolidated the leadership of our company in Spain in the energy field; and finally, an international photography section as a reflection of the company's global expansion over the last decade.

Torre Iberdrola is the ideal framework for this exhibition, as a building that is already an architectural benchmark for the new Bilbao. I would like to congratulate the curator of the exhibition, Javier González de Durana, for the work done, and particularly for his interpretation of the works and the building as a whole. This has led him to create a selection and a distribution of works in a space that revolves around the highly suggestive idea of "translucent skin".



The Other Side of the Skin | **Javier González de Durana**

The world of business and the world of art have generally gone hand in hand. It is not necessary to resort to Hans Holbein or Quentin de Metsys to see that this is true; we can simply recall the many Gothic tablets with which the commissioner-merchants represented themselves in a mixture of worldly pride and spiritual fervour. Not all entrepreneurs or enterprises collect art, since it is not their purpose or mission, but without a dynamic business fabric that generates collective and personal gain, there cannot be an art market that allows collecting to emerge and evolve.

Before art collection began as a corporate practice, some entrepreneurs were private collectors. In either case the motivations are the same: sensibility (oriented toward art), taste (focused on a specific type of art: antique, modern, painting, sculpture…) and financial capacity (aimed at acquiring the best pieces opportunity will allow). These premises are what define the criteria, field of action and strategy of collecting art, whether shaped in a context of individual privacy or corporate consensus.

It is generally thought that corporate as opposed to personal art collection is merely a matter of strategic diversification of assets. But works of art in private collections are also helpful in times of pressing personal need. It is neither an anomaly nor a betrayal, but rather a solution and, at the same time, a heartbreak – in other words, life itself; when all is said and done, collecting is a way of living life passionately with its losses, gains, achievements and frustrations. One cannot always collect what one desires, but it is always desire that leads collectors to continuously enhance and expand their collections.

Here, the greatest difference lies in the consequence of this desire: whereas personal collections tend to be confined to private domestic spaces, corporate collecting, in a certain sense, seeks to socialise its results. Iberdrola is a good example of this.

The Iberdrola Collection: Evolution and Development

All art collections have their particularities. Even collections, whether public or private, that have taken shape around widely adopted fashions or tastes have characteristics that are unique to a single collection and absent from all others. After all, collections are created by people and people have experiences, knowledge, information, opportunities, developments and tastes that cannot possibly coincide in their entirely. There may be some overlap but never full alignment; it is also logical for people who collect the art of their time to bear witness – wittingly or otherwise – to the spirit of the period. The House of Alba or the House of Medina Sidonia owned paintings by the same artists and with the same themes as the collections of the Spanish Royal Family: during the last quarter of the eighteenth century it was not unusual for them to seek a commission by Goya or Paret. The same thing occurs today with Tàpies or Oteiza, the main difference being which Tàpies or Goya the collector is able to acquire.

The Iberdrola Collection has its own unique characteristics, which, moreover, are linked to the corporation's history. Iberdrola was founded in the early twentieth century in Bilbao as a Basque company. Dating from that time are a group of paintings associated with the outset of artistic modernity in the Basque Country, a period set in motion in 1875 with the abolition of a large part of the fueros or special privileges granted to the Basque region, thus leading to the unification of the Spanish market. Spanish life and customs, *Costumbrismo*, features heavily in these paintings, as does the spirit of regeneration in the wake of the 1898 political and social crisis.

A second group of works dates to the 1950s, when the companies that now make up Iberdrola were clear leaders in the domestic market. As a result, the collection's interest turned to Spanish artists seeking to renew the artistic languages and who began to gain visibility in 1957. Informalism, Pop Art, geometry, matter... acquired prominence at the same rate as Spain's social and economic modernisation.

Lastly, a third group of works took shape in the early twenty-first century as the company grew into a global corporation with activities located around the world. Opening the collection up to international artists, this expansion was unique in that it was dedicated exclusively to photography in much the same way as the previous two sections, with a few exceptions, concentrated on painting.

Although the three chapters were born at different times in the company's history, all of them have subsequently been enriched with new pieces – some quite recently. This is a clear sign that the collection is alive and well, far from ending the search for its particular concept of perfection, that utopian yearning that lies in the soul of every art collector.

The Tower: Glass Skin, Transparent Light

Translucent Skin highlights two assets of the Iberdrola Corporation: the tower or skyscraper designed by César Pelli, focusing attention on the glass skin that projects the occupant's view outward to the surrounding landscape, to the exterior; and the artwork collected over time, which turns the viewer inward, to the interior. A discourse has thus been created around skin and translucency (surface and light, sheathing and permeability, covering and transparency). In addition to the actual artwork, this concept has, to a great extent, determined the arrangement of the exhibition space.

Transparency in architecture makes it easier to perceive different places simultaneously and affords a wider spatial organisation in which the manifestly clear becomes clearly imprecise. Minimalist proposals like César Pelli's (under the formal, albeit not constructive, influence of the early Rationalists) impact the building's surface by using reflective materials and playing with light through membranes, screens and filters, all of which add versatility to the transparency, translucency and opacity of the surface. By doing so, they create an architecture that delivers shadow-free light, abstractions in stone or glass, vertical and horizontal prisms covered in translucent sheets or transparent mesh that affects the texture of the surface and the smoothness of its skin.

Bearing in mind this important constructive aspect, the space has been organised to accentuate the value of both the architecture and the art, keeping the two in separate environments so they do not compete, inviting the visitor to observe and enjoy them independently. A dark, microperforated mesh curtain suspended from the metal ceiling separates the two environments/spaces.

The itinerary of the first environment/space and hugging the glass facade, emphasizes the importance of the architectural skin as a diaphanous transparent enclosure, while putting the visitor in direct contact with the landscape and the changes caused by natural light. This itinerary is absolutely linear and predictable from the start. The crystalline skin, penetrable with the eye, is one of the landmarks of modern architecture: the solid, load-bearing façade wall with limited openings is replaced with a thin glass epidermis, which, like a sheer lightweight dress, simply marks the boundary between the interior and exterior. Mies van der Rohe recalled his fascination with glass: 'I discovered, working with glass models, that the important thing is the play of reflections, and not so much the effect of light and shadow as in ordinary buildings.'

The itinerary of second environment/space focuses the visitor's attention on the works of art. It is interior and therefore uses artificial light that does not change as the hours pass. The itinerary winds its way through the exhibition space, prompting an encounter/discovery with the works of art.

Most of the Iberdrola Collection consists of paintings and photographs, in other words, canvases and paper impregnated or emulsified with pigments, rendering images whose lasting and transcendent value makes them works of art. It is a type of art that endeavours to bring awareness and meaning to the observer, shedding light on matters of human life which, without artistic mediation, would often be difficult to understand. In a certain sense, it is a kind of art that makes reality translucent to its observers, projecting clarity in its interior.

Some of the works in the collection also speak of human skin and other sheathings: for Francisco Iturrino, his luminous women in the sun; for Francesca Woodman, the body that vaporises into the skin of another architecture; for Robert Mapplethorpe, the hands that speak of the artist's life; for others, including Prudencio Irazabal, sediments of pigment on canvas which seep colour between their layers.

Translucent Skin, therefore, speaks of the Iberdrola Corporation, its historical development, its present architectural headquarters (which plays with the poetry of 'fog and evanescence', as Jean Nouvel would say) and of its way of collecting illuminating objects of art.

Chapter 1: The Origins of Modernity in the Basque Country

Although some of the pieces date back further, we can safely say that this section begins in 1884 with Adolfo Guiard and ends in 1929 with José María Ucelay. Between those dates were nearly three generations of modern artists. If Guiard brought the language of Impressionism from Paris to Spain – when most painters turned to Roman academicism for their education – Ucelay represented the most genuine fascination with non-abstract European avant-garde artists.

The pioneer generation – which educated the tastes of a bourgeoisie made prosperous by mining, steelmaking and shipbuilding, and which believed unquestioningly in Ramiro de Maeztu's preachings that economic vigour would bring about artistic apotheosis – included Regoyos, Guinea, Guiard, Losada, Zuloaga and Iturrino. Their spirit of '98 was bolstered by dejection-proof willpower and a deep conviction in the civic qualities of artistic education.

Their followers were frustrated in seeing the unfulfilled promises of the previous generation. Thus, the second wave of modern Basque artists (Maeztu, Larroque, the Arrúe brothers, the Zubiaurre brothers, Tellaeche, Echevarría and Arteta) voiced a post-'98 lament and a call for self-organisation in the early years of the twentieth century. In any event, their most radical creative moments did not go beyond Post-Impressionism and a much attenuated Cubist simplification.

In this selection the third generation is represented solely by Ucelay; Ramiro Arrúe fits in only very collaterally. Of the artists who, starting in 1920, were influenced by Surrealism, the Metaphysical painters, simultaneism, Soviet experimentation and other movements, Ucelay leaves a splendid testimony of his time, with nods to Giorgio de Chirico and accents of Federico García Lorca.

The return to *Costumbrista* iconography and the persistence of stylistic norms developed in the early twentieth century continued for several decades in the Basque context, as if in a closed inbred universe, distanced from the pictorial revolutions happening around the world.

Interval I: Oteiza 1957

The reconnection with modernity came at the hand of Basque artist Jorge Oteiza, who left for Latin America in 1935; after immersing himself in constructivist elaborations and spatial theories, in the late 1940s he returned to Spain. In the 1950s he developed a complex sculptural programme covering diverse aspects, all concentrated between 1957 and 1959. His work with emptying the sphere dates precisely to 1957, thus introducing to the Iberdrola Collection Spanish art which embraces the post-war avant-garde.

Chapter 2: Spanish Art since 1957

Also from 1957, in another realm of modernism, is the work of Antonio López. From a rural perspective, López painted the city lights amongst which he would immerse himself shortly afterward. The selection of paintings and sculptures from the Iberdrola Collection presented here begins with this crucial year for Spanish art, a year which saw the advent of such groups as El Paso, Parpalló (1956) and Equipo 57.

From this moment, an influx of influences including Informalism, new surface materials, Pop Art and geometric forms enriched Spanish art, giving shape to the most fertile production of the last two decades of the Franco dictatorship. This period also signaled the end of the artistic avant-gardes as ideologies, to go on to become pure formal innovation or visual narrative.

Political freedoms and the end of creative orthodoxy led to a wide spectrum of concepts, including new post-expressionist abstraction, complex-free figuration, sculptures without pedestals, the invention of personal languages, and the regurgitation of earlier discoveries. Some of these threads weave through decades: Rueda, Chillida and Ferrer are united in their search to lend their peculiar depth to order; Campano, Sicilia and Irazabal use chromatic transparency as their leitmotiv; López, García and Pérez Villalta are connected in their urban visions; Tàpies and Barceló share a taste for eloquently textured surfaces; Tàpies and Equipo Crónica share their corrosive and humoristic political criticism.

Interval II: Oteiza 1958

Half a century after Oteiza announced that he was finished with sculpture – or that it was finished with him – his work continued to be an example to future generations, not so much in terms of form but rather how artists related to materials, the image and the ideas that reside in the material.

Chapter 3: Photography and New Frontiers

It took time for photography to be accepted in museums as a natural art form. Until the 1960s it was considered visual documentation, not art. This concept changed substantially in the seventies, owing largely to a shift in nineteenth-century museological ideas and to artist-photographers whose work demonstrated a close dialogue and equal standing with other artistic creations of their time. This not only includes photographs but other pieces that had formerly been made for purely utilitarian purposes (advertising, propaganda, journalism, personal memories…).

As part of the normalisation of the photographic image, the work and teachings of the Bechers played a decisive role in the 1970s. Their teaching activities proved highly influential among their students, some of whom are represented in this exhibition – including Ruff, Höfer, Struth and Hütte. Significant works by these artists show their indebtedness to their mentors. In another sense, Richter used photography as an objective in itself, as well as a tool for his painting.

Building on the success of all of these artists, photography appropriated the traditional genres of painting, largely abandoned over the course of the twentieth century. Advances in technology made it easy to handle a wide range of effects, and produce high-resolution images in large format, strengthening the parallels with painting and 'great art'. Many artists poured their creativity into this area of imagery (Collins, Tillmans, Maisel, Doherty, Lambri, Ortiz, Zubero, Custance and others).

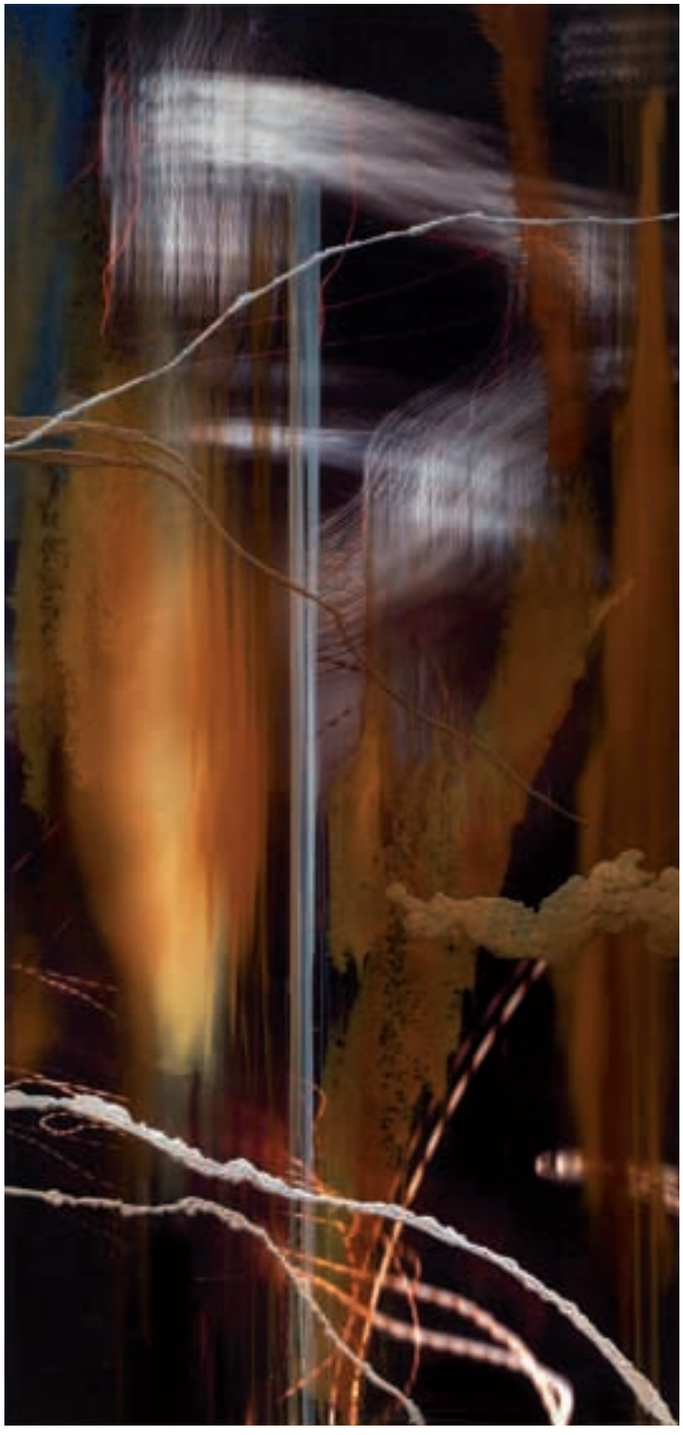
In the United States a role similar to that of the Bechers, as an exponent of a different style, was played by Mapplethorpe. His imprint was more diffused, and although not immediately identifiable in the work of Woodman, Orozco or Muniz, every American photographer recognises him as a forebear. Twombly played a role parallel to Richter's in Europe by separating himself from painting to address the same themes (his impossible flowers) but from the immediacy of the camera.

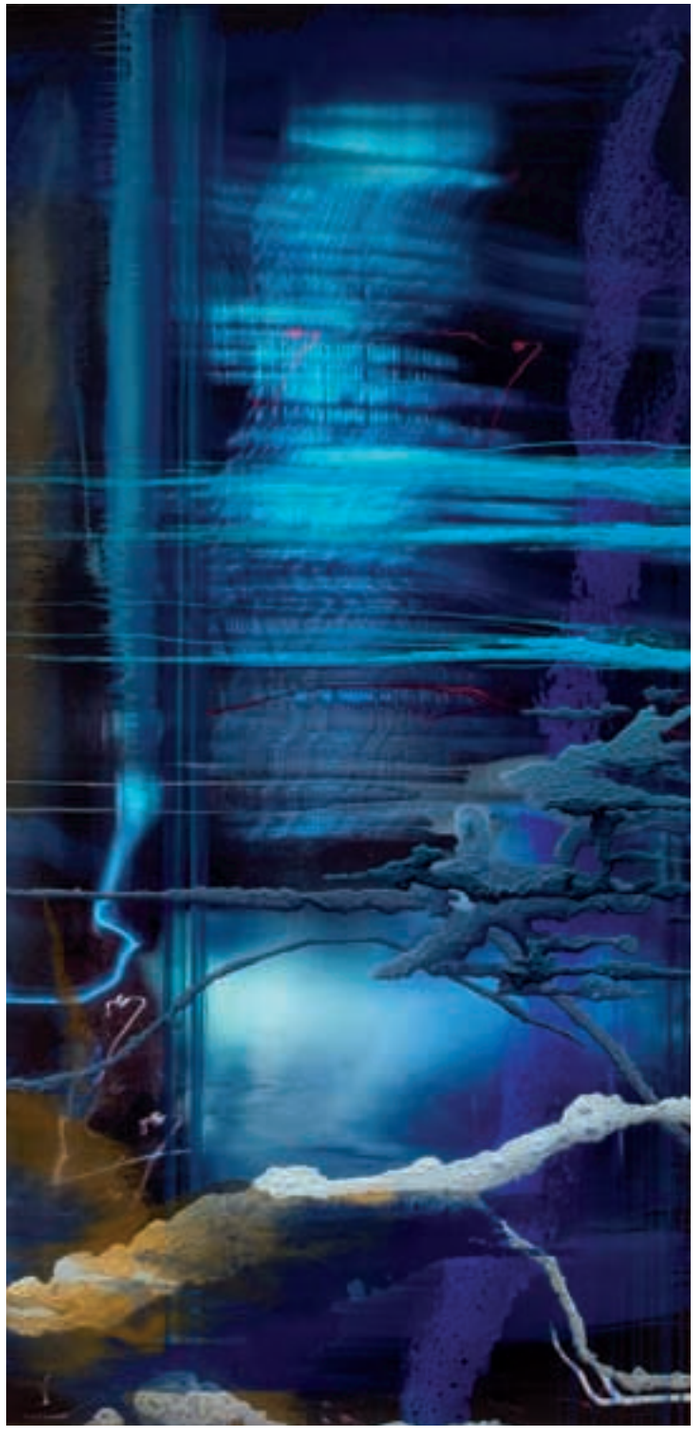
As part of the photography section, the Iberdrola Collection also includes two brilliant artists whose deeply personal work makes them unique: Sugimoto's almost religious gaze captures a seemingly immutable sea, and Hatoum, who watches her own feet in movement, forced to drag the boots of an invisible persecutor in one of her street performances.

Preface: The Lobby

Dario Urzay

Pasaje nocturno (I) y *(II)* [Night-time Passage (1) and (2)], 2011
Mixed media on Dibond, 380 x 180 cm each







It is not usual in recent times for Darío Urzay to title his works using words that represent recognizable elements. He prefers the abstraction of file numbers or coordinates. For a kind of non-realistic painting like his, it is in the artist's interest not to suggest allusions that compel a particular interpretation by using words in the title. It is well known that abstract artists have a penchant for numbering their works or leaving them *untitled* so as not to facilitate an interpretation based on textual allusions, thus allowing the viewer to freely and unconditionally approach and interpret the work.

In these two cases Urzay decided to break from his norm, putting titles on both works that evoke specific places; the mention of 'night-time passages' suggests transit and darkness, pathways and shadows. Regardless, the paintings give off light. Behind the surface of polished transparency lie layers of luminosity amongst splashes of colour, staging daydreams of the subconscious. The ochre painting alludes to earthy warm caverns of the interior, and the blue painting, the depth of cold chasms.

As visitors enter the Iberdrola Tower, they see the two symmetric panels on either side of the central hallway leading to the elevators. These two works were directly commissioned from the artist by Iberdrola. The scale, theme and position are grandiose.

Jesus Mari Lazkano



Natura imaginis, 2010-11
Oil on canvas, 1600 x 600 cm





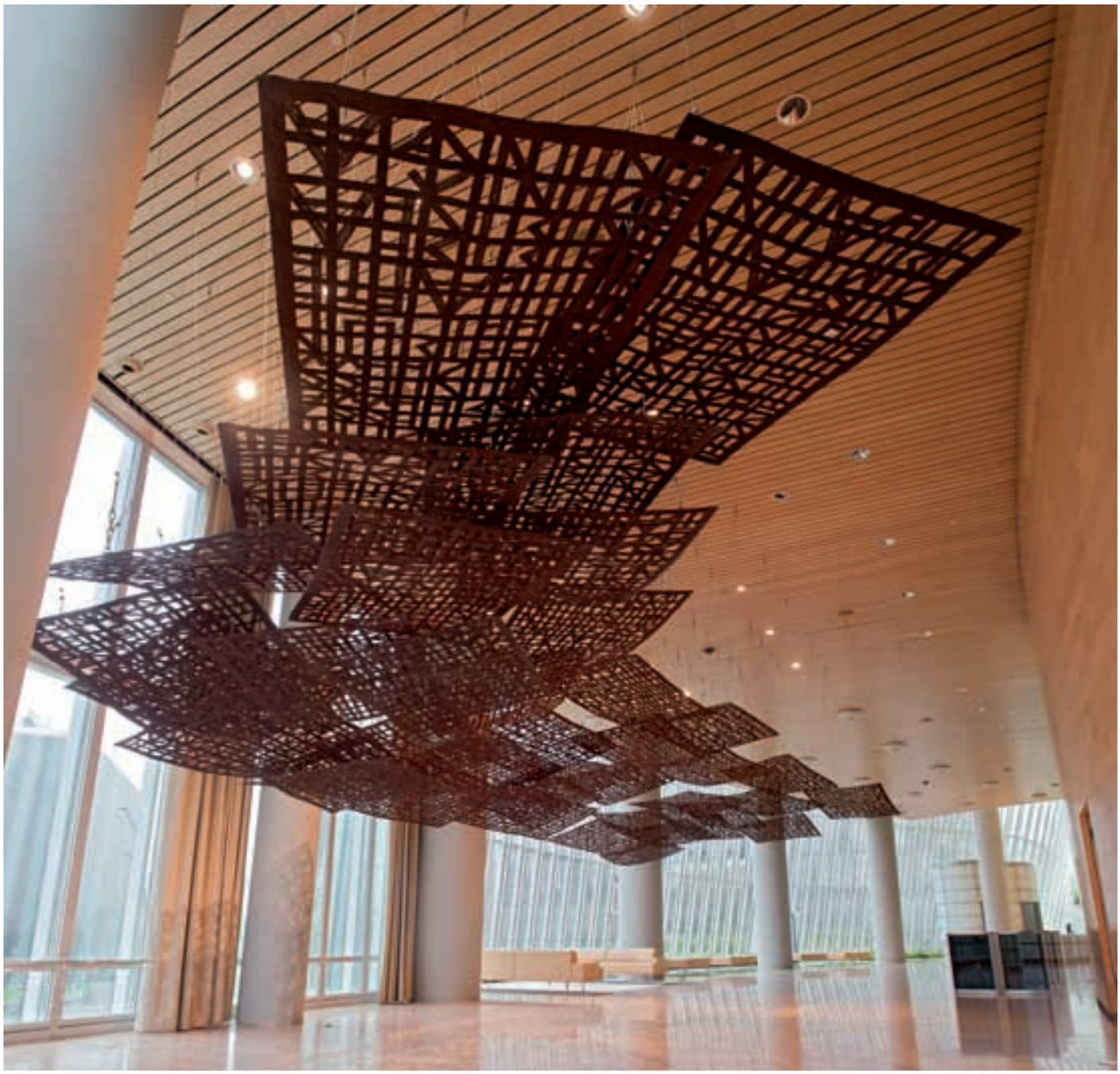
From the post-industrial landscapes of his origins to the pantheistic immersion in nature today, Jesus Mari Lazkano's evolution has passed through a good number of phases and places (Rome, Urdaibai, New York…). In each of them he has created eloquent witnesses to his splendid gift as a painter with a particular vision of the world and its realities, whether natural or made by the human hand. This vision permeates Lazkano's entire oeuvre, becoming a powerful sign of personal identity.

While maintaining the dialogue between architecture (artifice) and landscape (nature), the presence of the latter – considered in its state unimpacted by human activity – had already gained presence and strength in his most recent exhibitions. In this colossal work commissioned by Iberdrola the command of nature as an image is absolute (undiminished by the presence of Philippe Starck's citrus squeezer), and coincides with the corporation's commitment to respect the basic sources of energy – forest and river, wood and water.

Surrounded by an image of such magnitude, contemplation of this painting immerses the observer in the fictitious representation of the natural world. There is no *trompe-l'oeil* or dialogue with the vegetation outside the building visible through the glass walls. This is a painting with the resolve of a mural, a work that transcends the boundaries of architecture.

Cristina Iglesias

Cúpula inclinada suspendida [Suspended Inclined Dome] *(Rendez-vous with Rama)*, 2011
Braided wrought iron, various dimensions



This monumental piece by Cristina Iglesias encompasses the sculptural, the literary and the architectural. Located at the end of the corridor on the right-hand side of the Iberdrola Tower lobby, it changes the perception of the space conceived by César Pelli by being suspended midway between ceiling and floor. Like a thick cloud charged with meaning (unrecognizable at first glance), the sculpture has a dynamic flow. The thirty-nine sheets of latticed wire are arranged with apparent informality; they do not actually touch each other, but are superimposed at various points with no particular comprehensible order. Instead, they are like a collective living organism, made up of individual beings, searching for the most comfortable place for itself and its members. The most suitable similes would be a flock of birds or a school of fish.

The logic of the architecture is interrupted by this physical presence which breaks the rules imposed by walls, columns and glass. However, the architecture, specifically the light that emanates from the ceiling, reveals the literary component of the piece. Letter by letter, the words from Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendez-vous with Rama* are projected through the lattice onto the floor. The writing can be sensed more than actually read, as the script is difficult to decipher, but the poetry that goes into making it visible inspires the viewer to make an effort. The actual words can be read on a panel nearby. In any event, knowing that we are before a literary document, a woven narrative, the floating layers are like the pages of an open book, a book that shelters and protects us, gathers and welcomes us. Under its shadow, we are given the opportunity to understand the indecipherable.



Txomin Badiola

Si la memoria no me traiciona 3 (Entelequia) [If Memory Serves 3 (Entelechy)], 2009-10
Wood and galvanised plate construction on printed metal, 300 x 240 x 65 cm




za sin reposo un
gua compuesta de
o por el cuerpo un
lo por el corazoh

Txomin Badiola's work usually offers opportunities for intrigue. His sculptures and photographs have a forceful formal presence, revealing all they really are without folds or concealment; however, the story they tell reveals certain aspects which remain open and unresolved (or at least that is the impression they give). They encourage a speculative discourse and, consequently, the formulation of questions on a wide range of topics: the metanarrative, the constructive, the dialogue of images, the dialectic of opposites or different things, etc. The secretive nature of these constructions leads not to silence but to reflection and the need to open a door to meaning (some kind of meaning since there can be many) that makes them what they want to be.

A black and white surface embraces patches – like printing proofs – together with fragments of text, including two in greater relief, which lend the piece its title. Anchored onto the surface, three bars of aluminium support a wooden structure that hovers over the background image and dominates the front. The three bars are equally spaced and perfectly parallel. However, the wooden structure they push outward does not correspond to an apparently understandable logic, although its perfect construction and finish show a decided will to be the way it is. The only point at which the printed and the cantilevered parts seem to coincide is the wooden base that balances the piece on the floor.

José Ramón Amondarain



Stella Richter, 2008
Oil on canvas, 230 x 300 cm





Painting or, more specifically, the vision of painting and the truth or lies it shows us, is a subject close to José Ramón Amondarain's heart. Realist painting is an artifice that tries to communicate things that are not what they seem to be but which we tend to accept in good faith as if they were, and are delighted if the ruse is sufficiently believable. Amondarain likes to explore paradoxes based on this kind of self-deception, the oldest of which would be the picture within a picture and, of course, the *trompe-l'oeil*. He does not restrict himself to these ruses; he also examines the history of the artistically elaborated image and turns it on its head. For example, the photographic self-portrait of a famous artist which Amondarain reproduces exactly the same in oil makes us doubt what we are seeing: Is it the photograph or is it a painting? Is it by the well-known artist or it is Amondarain's? And if it is the latter, what part of it is his and what part is hers?

Amondarain's work on the making of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* proposed taking a step beyond the completion of Picasso's painting (or at least the completion imposed by the 1937 Paris Exhibition, where the work was presented). It meant that Amondarain had to put himself inside the head of the Málaga-born artist to imagine what the famous painting would have been like had the artist had a few more days to work on it, considering the constant changes Picasso made in so few days and the fact that *Guernica* was one of his most celebrated contributions to art history.

This piece in the Iberdrola Collection shows a corner (museum or art gallery?) in which the walls and floor display works of contemporary art. Among them is a piece (a small oil painting that simulates a blurred photograph of a person's face) in which the artist Gerhard Richter contemplates Frank Stella's abstract drunkenness of intertwined colours.

Asier Mendizabal

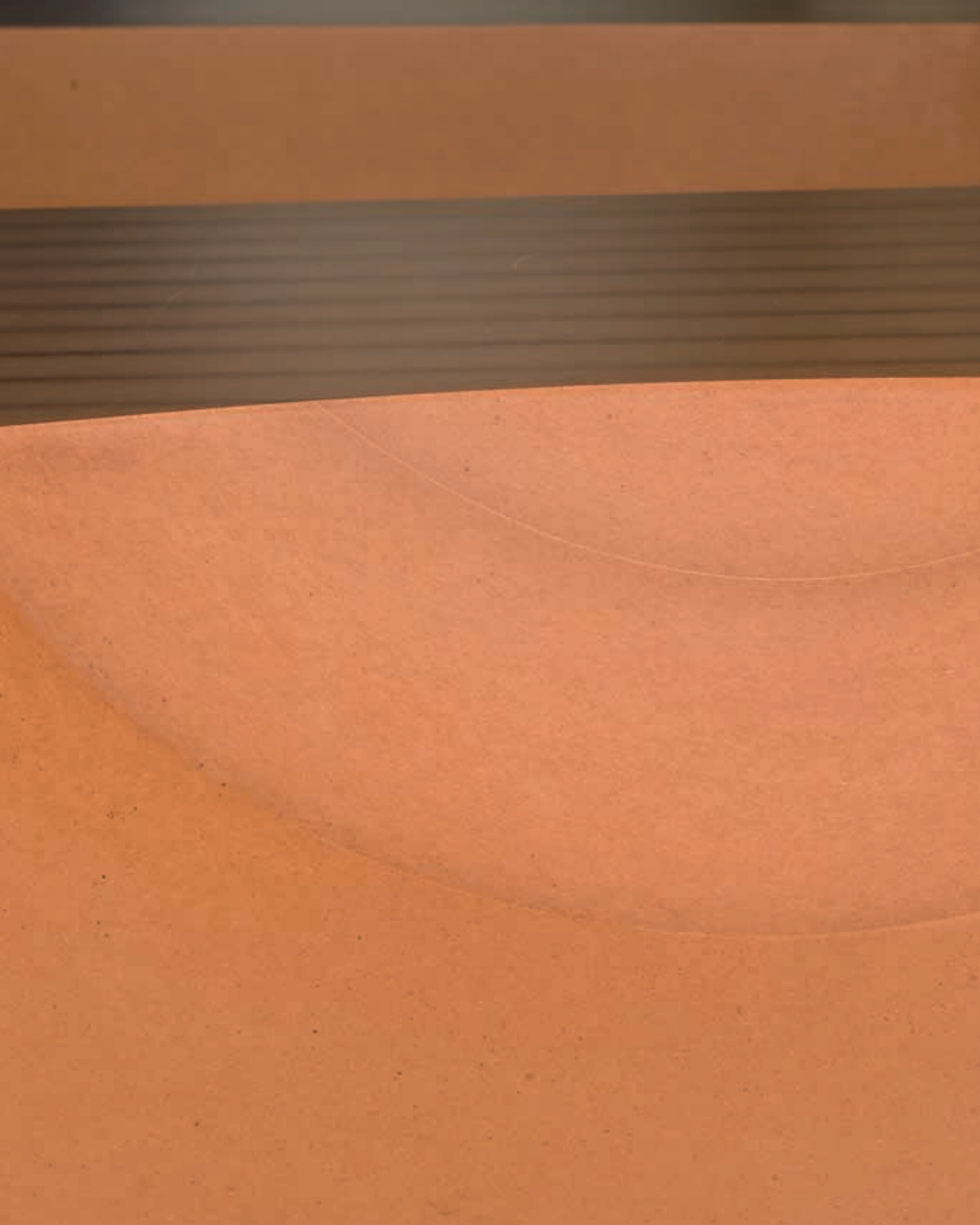


Hard Edge # 2 and *Hard Edge # 3,* 2010
Medium-density fibreboard and varnish, 366 x 40 x 40 cm



The work of Asier Mendizabal is created in the realm of deliberate ambiguity. His objects and constructions do not allude to what they are or what they might be used for, though their presence always reveals that their positioning is not the product of chance or indifference; the distortion they provoke speaks clearly of their intention to interfere with that space, to operate somewhere between making space (their own) and undoing space (something else's).

This pair of structures could as easily be eroded beams from an ancestral architecture (in the most modern of buildings and made from an equally modern material, MDF), as simple benches for resting one's feet. However, the erosion in particular places indicates that this is not a distillation of an architecture or a piece of furniture. What we see is something that imposes its own presence with a hidden logic that invites itself to be revealed. Pieces of minimalist root, once alive, now worn down or changed – based on perfect prisms and salient edges – to yield other forms and sensations, subtly creating curved recesses and spaces around the perimeter, not the interior. Such subtractions – of material from an element that understands perfectly what it was at its origin – activate and energise these powerful horizontal structures, the edges of which are no longer so clear. This erosion of the wood is reminiscent of the formalism in sculptures created by Néstor Basterretxea in the 1970s, in particular his *Cosmogonía vasca (Idittu…)* [Basque Cosmogony (Idittu…)], showing a link to the robust local tradition of sculpture.



Ibon Aranberri



Prolongación vernácula [Vernacular Prolongation], 2014
Polyester resin, fibreglass, wood, glass, paper, 86 x 288 x 180 cm



Javier Pérez

Olivo II [Olive Tree II], 2014
Ink and graphite on paper, 141 x 79 cm



450 x 270 x 270 cm.

Resina poliéster

transparente

teñida de rojo

a partir del

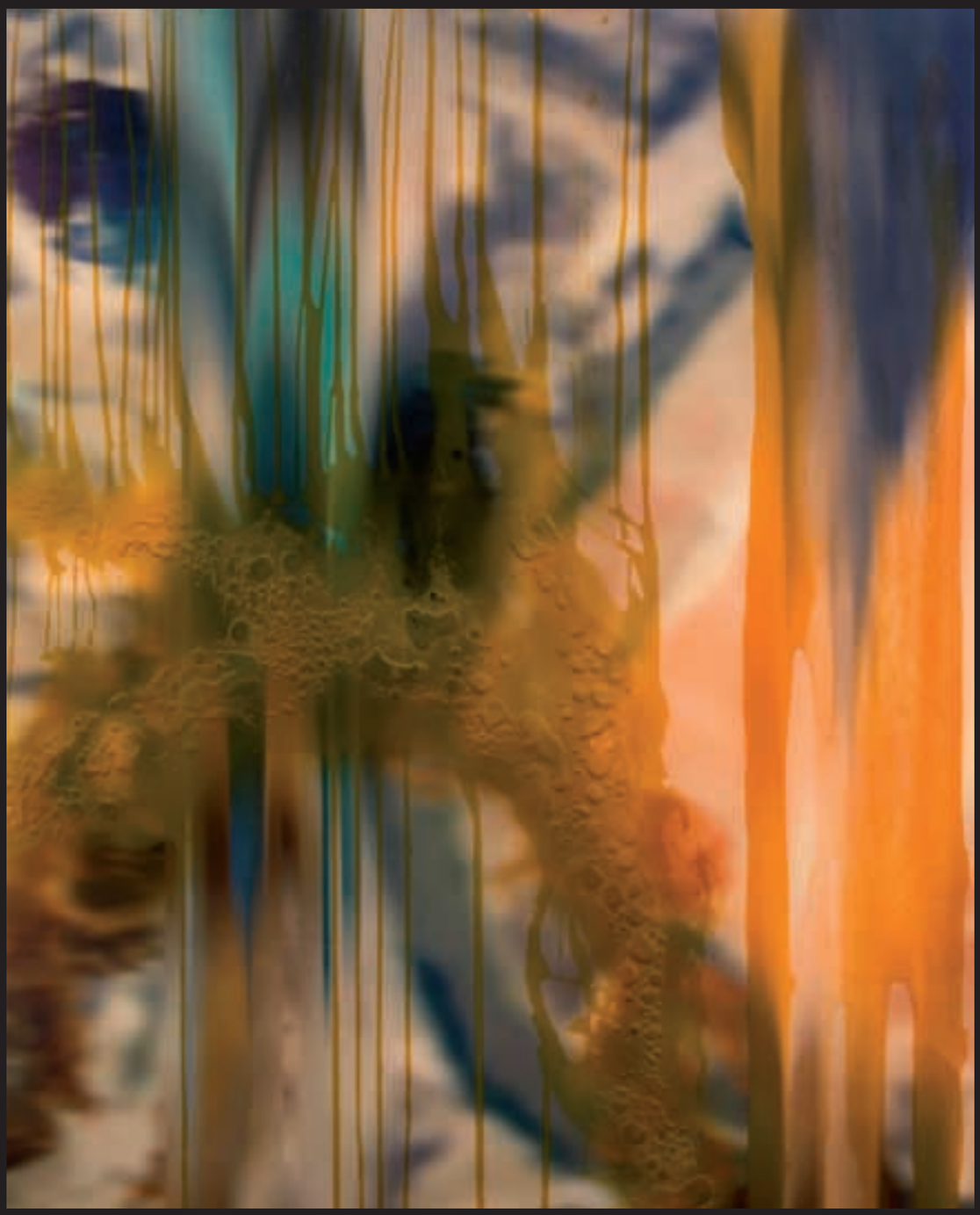
molde de

un olivo

real de

700 años

Darío Urzay
D88L0869, 2006
Mixed media on wood, 150 x 122 cm



Asier Mendizabal
Figures and Prefigurations (Divers, A. Rodchenko), 2009
Cut-out from offset print, 90 x 64 cm



The Origins of Modernity in the Baroque Culture

Adolfo Guiard

Costureras en el parque [Seamstresses in the Park], ca 1884-85
Oil on canvas, 33 x 24.5 cm





After several years living in Paris, during which time Adolfo Guiard carried out a realist exploration of industrial suburbs and derelict factory sites, he created a series of paintings of women in gardens talking with one another or sewing at the edge of ponds. His personal style matured with this work, reaching its full potential two years later when, back in Bilbao, he produced paintings for the Sociedad Bilbaína. The artist focused his interest on women busy with their needles, threads and cloth, quietly engrossed in their task, bathed in a dim light that filters through the branches of the tree under which they work. He also painted other women talking amongst themselves in restaurants and cafés under ochre-coloured electric light.

These first incursions into Impressionism for Basque art, made with the immediate proximity of Edgar Degas, exude a sensibility that not only took pleasure in women, but – one might say – was in itself feminine. The calmness of the gestures, the concentration on work, the thoughtful hands, the silence in company and the whispered words in contact with orderly nature motivated Guiard's eye in his final years in Paris, an interest he transferred to his paintings in tones of ochre and green.

Anselmo Guinea

Playa de Bakio [Bakio Beach], 1881
Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 84.2 cm

Recolección de la manzana [Apple Harvest], 1893
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 107.5 cm

El alguacil [The Bailiff], 1884
Oil on canvas, 145 x 200 cm







This painting was a unique effort for Guinea. The artist was aware that it had significant meaning and, to a certain extent, represented a daring step in his resolute march toward adopting more modern pictorial languages than the ones which had brought him local fame the decade before.

Nonetheless, his immersion in pointillism, although somewhat radical in this work, was not the result of trusting in the visual virtues of the division of colour to better capture the atmosphere of light in a given scene, but of the willful application of a procedure. With works like this, Guinea seemed to want to show those who reproached his academic origins that he too could be modern if he put his mind to it.

Despite the charming scene, fine composition of the three figures, and attractive colours, the lack of sincerity surfaces in various places, especially in the faces of the people, in particular the girl in the foreground. The artist used different brushstrokes for her face than in the rest of the painting, resulting in a taut smoothness that contradicts the dotted thick construction of the rest. The girl's face looks unequal, as if it were tacked on. Apparently, Guinea felt that pointillism worked well for nature but not for defining people.

Regardless, the image also shows the influence of Japanese prints and of Guiard's drawing and his use of blue, both of which provide this *Costumbrista* scene with a delicate and affected harmony, absent of all anecdotes.

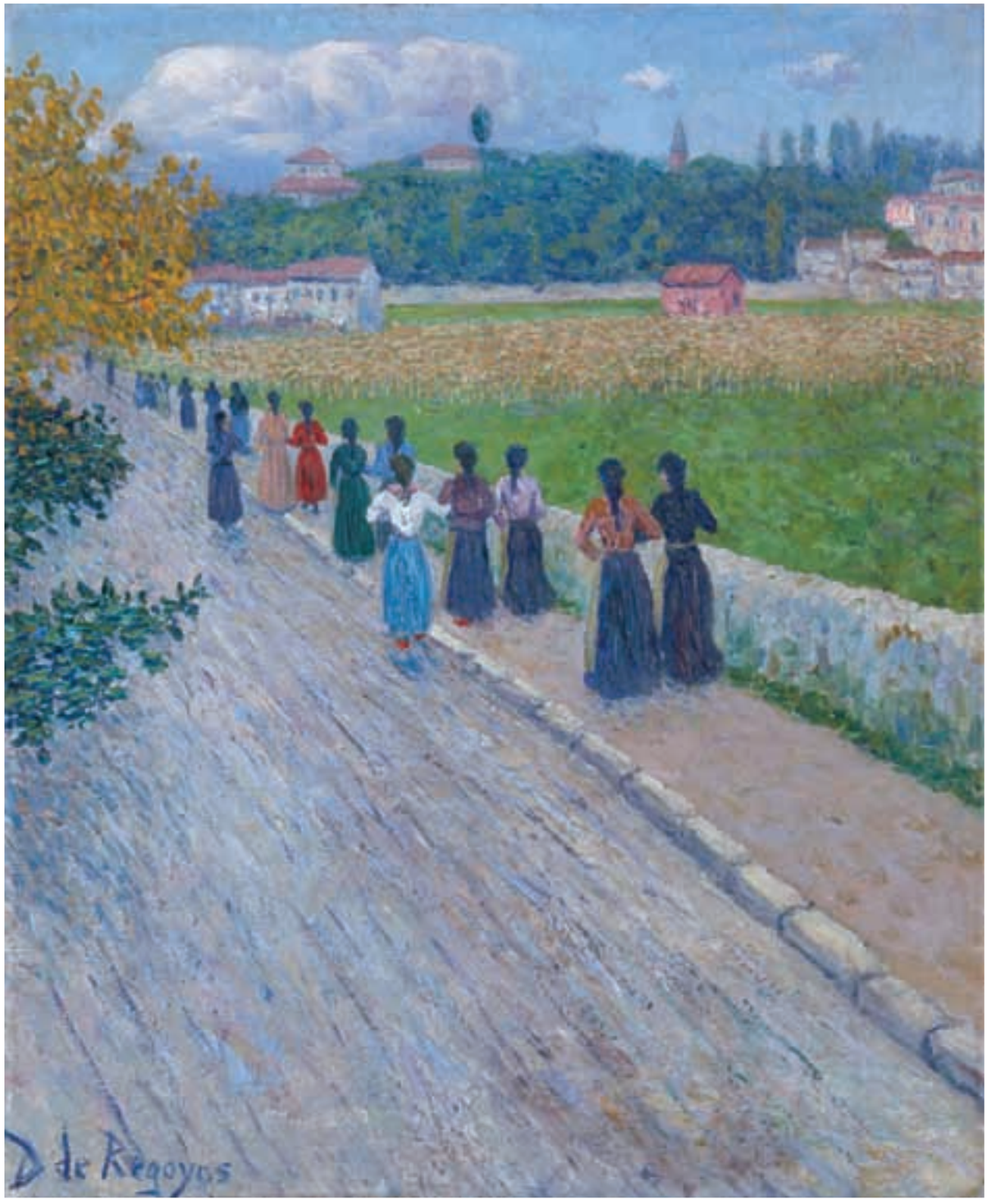


Darío de Regoyos

Salida de la fábrica [Leaving the Factory], 1902
Oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm

056 *Paisaje rural* [Rural Landscape], 1881
Oil on canvas, 45.1 x 54 cm




D de Regoyos



In his travels through the lands and towns of Spain, Regoyos took an interest in all types of popular scenes, from the darkest traditions in need of enlightenment, to the most festive – a society which, in spite of everything, enjoyed life in both rural and more industrial environments. This work depicts a group of women leaving a factory – which does not even appear in the painting – as they stroll into town along a road that runs through planted fields. The building was, in actuality, a match factory once located in Irún.

Women and work was a subject that attracted many artists of the day. In the case of Guinea, to bear witness to a traditional activity; for Guiard, to show how a domestic chore was taken to a space of collective leisure; and for Regoyos, a document of the massive incorporation of women into labour outside the home.

The painting is composed of a powerful line that crosses the image diagonally, lending greater protagonism to the road in the foreground. Regoyos' attention to these women, who walk in groups of two or three, demonstrates their incorporation into the workforce in a world in which a balance still exists between the static past and the changing present. In spite of the everyday restrictions (the narrow pavement between the low-lying wall and the kerb), it was still possible to walk in an orderly fashion without being run over.

Ignacio Zuloaga

Muchacho castellano [Castilian Boy], ca 1907-11
Oil on canvas, 76.4 x 66.3 cm





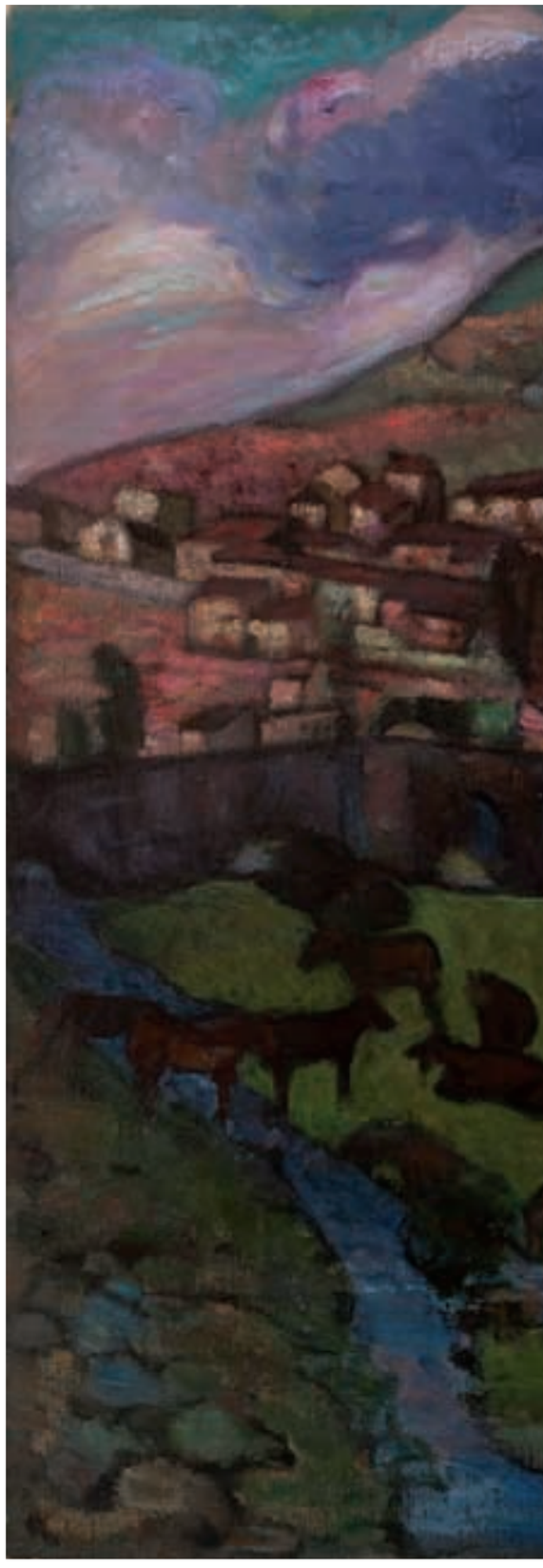
In the panorama of lands and people of Castile regarded by writers and painters of the Generation of 98 with a feeling of admiration and fear – admiration for its past, fear for its present – Zuloaga sought a synthesis of pride and poverty, grandiosity and misery, sickness and dignity, the individual and his landscape. Zuloaga would sometimes add staging notes to his compositions, which enhanced the natural theatricality of what he observed, and brought his visions closer to a narrative that wavered between alarmist and psychological.

The portrait of the Castilian boy is one of the few paintings by the Eibar-born artist unusual in its contained literary perspective: no anecdotes, pompous gestures or grandiloquent settings. Quite the contrary: moderation in the boy's attitude and gaze, subdued colours, gentle landscape in evening light… But something disturbing and animal-like can be seen in the face of this young man dressed in dignified poverty: the hard brow, bovine nose, large ears and thick lips lend a sense of inbreeding and contained violence.

In any case, the boy looks at us calmly and serenely, waiting for something that might come with nightfall, already announced by the pink and blue clouds.

Juan Echevarría

Paisaje de Pampliega [Pampliega Landscape], 1910
Oil on canvas, 89 x 116 cm







After leaving the prosperous family business and spending five years in the Parisian Montmartre alongside Paco Durrio and the artistic bohème, Juan Echevarría returned to Spain infused with the pictorial teachings of Paul Gauguin and the chromatic notes of Fauvism. One of his first destinations was Pampliega. Northern Castile was an area frequented by Leopoldo Gutiérrez Abascal, Adolfo Guiard, Miguel de Unamuno, Darío de Regoyos and other *excursionists* in search of landscapes, people and art – the spirit and essence of a land which they saw as decaying and decadent. With their example these four artists influenced Echevarría's thoughts and work; it is no wonder, therefore, that he went to Pampliega. This rugged Castilian town, its hilltop church dominating the landscape, a cluster of houses scattered at its feet, surrounded by fertile nature and under a tumultuous sky, provided a clear vision for painters of the Generation of 98 (Zuloaga, Regoyos, Iturrino, Maeztu…): a wild land, deified and humanised even without the presence of people.

The influence of Gauguin can be seen in the colour and brushstroke, in the river banks where the animals graze and in the symbolic pureness of the flowing water in the river. The houses are lit by sunlight that filters through the flustered atmosphere in contrast with the dark shady areas.

Manuel Losada

Bilbaínas en el Arenal [Bilbao Ladies at Arenal], ca 1910-15
Oil on canvas, 90 x 91 cm





Bilbao's industrial heyday in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the many physical and social changes it brought about, evoked powerful feelings of nostalgia from the deepest recesses of the spirit of some of the city's residents. They yearned for a bygone Bilbao, for the discrete town of merchants their parents and grandparents once knew but never themselves – or which perhaps they only saw as children. It was a place they had heard about in stories as if a paradise lost. Some writers managed to perfectly capture these sentiments: José de Orueta's recollections from Bilbao, Miguel de Unamuno's stories of his youth (and accounts of peace in wartime), Emiliano Arriaga's efforts to compile and preserve a Bilbao lexicon at the threshold of oblivion, Óscar Rochelt's plays… All of these, among others, were very clear manifestations of the nostalgic harkening back to a time that was fading or gone forever.

Losada played a similar role with painting. His scenes of nineteenth-century Bilbao, which he obviously never knew, depicted streets with ladies and gents strolling in pre-Isabelline attire, pre-railroad horse-drawn carriages, and memorable festivities; his paintings brought back monuments and scenery that no longer existed, playing with the concept of a bygone golden era.

Curiously, in the same way that Unamuno, Orueta and the other writers practised modern literature, Losada painted with a new language, influenced both by Post-Impressionism and by a reexamination of Spanish historical painting, but which recreated a better world: a modern style to visualise an old Bilbao.

Here Bilbao is a city as old as the language of Spanish fans – paradigm of the communication used by these two ladies. The first woman, her left arm and hand awkwardly posed, holds an open fan, saying to the woman behind her: 'Do come and tell'.

Francisco Iturcino



Tres amigas [Three friends], 1918
Oil on canvas, 105.2 x 117.5 cm





In the last years of his life, Iturrino found two personal subjects that crowned the interesting trajectory of his career up to that point: the gardens at the Concepción estate in Málaga and nude bodies of women lying in the sun. In both cases Iturrino started out with a concrete reality (lush garden and female body) and constructed fantastic images. These nude women, in small or larger groups, had their roots in Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), and Henri Matisse's *La danse* (1909).

The women are the central focus, occupying virtually the painting's entire foreground. However, they stand out not so much for their nudity, but for the amplitude of their gestures, forming a highly dynamic composition. The nudity is not manifestly erotic, neither heterosexual nor lesbian, but has a naturalness as obvious as the flowers and grass that envelops them. The unreality of this scene manages to blend with its naturalness with no paradox whatsoever. The gestures and glances belong to a conversation among friends talking about everyday topics.

Like the flowers beside them, the skin of these women is illuminated by the sunlight, but their bodies cast no shadows. The pink, ochre and blue brushstrokes create an anatomy that choreographs the graceful look of innocence and joy. The more Fauvian brushstrokes occupy everything around them, the flowers and the grass.

Julián de Tellaeche

Arrantzale [Fisherman], ca 1917
Oil on paperboard, 73 x 84 cm

076 *Maternidad* [Maternity], ca 1917
Oil on paperboard mounted on board, 50 x 50 cm







Despite all appearances, Zuloaga's Castilian boy and this Basque fisherman by Tellaeche are not as dissimilar as one might think. This *arrantzale* might seem more pleasant and likeable, perhaps because of the size of his body, but both paintings arouse the same type of curiosity: popular characters without a story, groups of people whose stories are secret yet real. The sentiments in Miguel de Unamuno's book *Por tierras de Portugal y España* [Around Portugal and Spain] (1911) do not differ greatly; in fact, in this book the philosopher put forward the idea of the intrahistorical perspective.

The fisherman's brutish face is not so different from the face of the Castilian youth; although the boy's face is young and tanned and the fisherman's, rosy-cheeked and aged, both are flushed; the blood perceptible through the skin is a metaphor of a past and a life hidden but thriving. This fisherman was for the construction of a pictorial Basque regionalism the same as Zuloaga's boy was for Castilian regionalism: the face of its most anonymous and forgotten people, a plea for dignity, and regard for their labour or resilience in the face of adversity.

There is no expressionist intention in Tellaeche, although expressionism did make him appreciate realistic and highly accentuated facial features, in which we can detect character, particularism and picturesqueness, squaring nicely with Pío Baroja novels. The tackle and poles in the background lend the scene more of an unreal than a seafaring air, a sense of fiction made of pieces of reality. The painting contains a dedication to 'Q. de Torre, gran artista y gran amigo' (Q. de Torre, great artist and friend) of the Basque Artists Association of Bilbao.

José Arcüe

Friso [Frieze], 1919
Oil on canvas, 44 x 1638 cm in five pieces















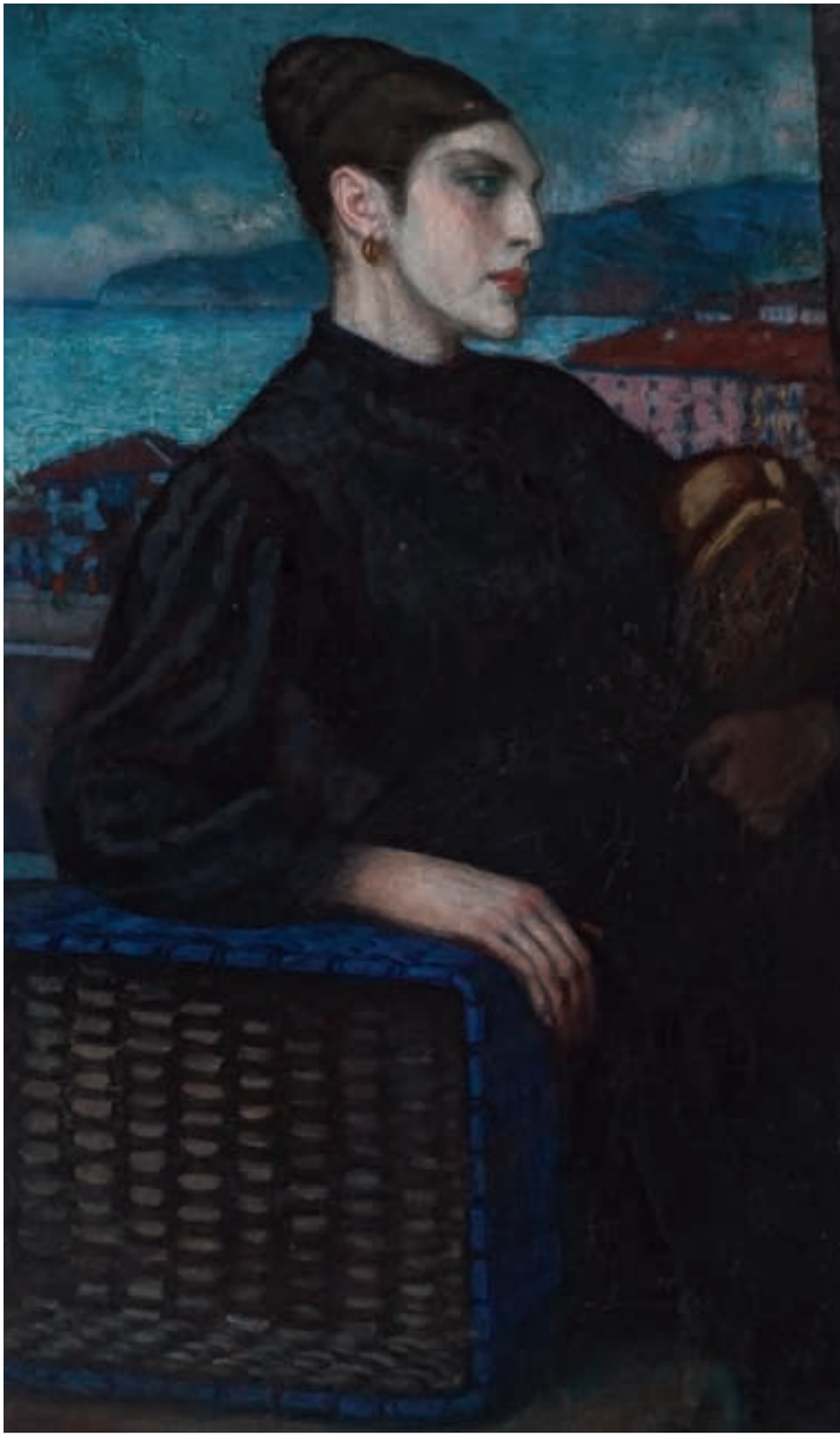
The iconographic world of José Arrúe demonstrated like none other the boundaries between rural and urban life at a time when the two were rapidly spilling over in both directions. This contributed to images of villagers awestruck at modern industrial cities and young gentleman in cars subjected to the pranks of country folk, all in an innocently sarcastic tone, never intended to hurt or humiliate. In any event, for whoever was on the receiving end, teasing was the fitting punishment for brutality or arrogance. Arrúe's humour is crisp and clean; it takes out the sting and almost always serves to reveal moral virtues.

Relegated by many to the category of amusing caricature, Arrúe's work has yet to be analysed with the detail it deserves. We should not forget that lurking behind the smiles brought about by his scenes was the iron fist of *El Coitao*, the magazine that Arrúe himself published in 1908 together with three or four friends. A slap in the face of local prudishness, *El Coitao* was based on a farmer who moves to the city and tells blatant obvious truths that both shock and wound.

Arrúe's main artistic qualities come together in this large frieze, commissioned to decorate a room in Bilbao's Club Naútico, on the first floor of the Arriaga Theatre. This work was done in the second decade of the twentieth century at the height of the artist's career.

Alberto Arcúe

Pareja en el puerto [Couple at the Harbour], ca 1918
Oil on canvas, 57.5 x 67.5 cm





Gustavo de Maeztu

Garrochistas y toros (Paisaje rural con torre almenada. Ciudad Rodrigo) [Picadors and Bulls (Rural Landscape with Crenellated Tower. Ciudad Rodrigo)], 1926. Oil on board, 100 x 80 cm



Gustavo de Maeztu, much like Echevarría (whose *Pampliega* bears similarities to this painting), was a painter instilled in the thinking of the Generation of 98, particularly the writings of the Basque authors Unamuno, Baroja and his own brother, Ramiro. He himself was a writer, although instead of archetypes and transcendences, he concentrated on everyday characters and situations through the prism of sarcasm and irony.

Maeztu was highly skilled in staging and composition. While these qualities took a different direction in Zuloaga's work, Maeztu displayed a characteristic iconographic repertory that combined popular subjects, history, landscape and architectural monumentality, all of which are seen in this painting of Ciudad Rodrigo. Salamanca attracted a number of Basques, not only the Dean of the University, but also such artists as Iturrino, Larroque and others.

At the apex of the triangular composition is the tower – in fact, the Castle of Henry II of Trastámara – and at the base of the canvas, a string of bulls and horsemen. In the middle are houses lit up by sunlight not strong enough to reach the foreground. The verticality of the composition lends it an air somewhere between battle-hardened and spiritual. The cascade of slightly geometrical constructions finds its natural counterpoint in the leafy tree in the upper right angle. The scene captures one of the most popular traditions in the town: picadors, a detail that could not have escaped a bullfighting aficionado like Maeztu.



Ángel Larroque



La siega [The Harvest], ca 1930-31
Oil on canvas, 161 x 262 cm





After a spectacular start in Paris, at the early age of 21, Larroque worked in a number of different areas, to a large extent confirming the great hopes of his contemporaries. His experiences left their greatest fruits in the first two decades of the twentieth century: the view of the world by people on the fringes, the harsh realism of post-1898 Castile left to oblivion, elegant portraits of the children of Bilbao merchants, solemn contributions to Basque *Costumbrismo*, and, in short, the masterful imprint – the excellent qualities of his trade – left in different thematic areas.

In the 1920s his star slowly faded as he began to dedicate part of his workday to teaching. However, this painting, commissioned at the end of that period by a grain-producing company, shows us a painter interested in the mystery of the demeanour and faces of his characters. This would later be seen in a series of Basque fishermen painted in classically solemn positions which Larroque began a little later during the time of the Spanish Republic.

The scene is realistic – the Peñafiel Castle and the wheat fields of Castile – but it is somewhat idealised as if more a memory than something actually witnessed. The characters, straining under the toil of the harvest and a hot midday sun, seem to be steeped in melancholic thoughts, turned inward, intimately absent from the reality around them.

Valentín de Zubiaurre

094 *Arrantzales* [Fishermen], ca 1956
Oil on canvas, 48.5 x 61 cm

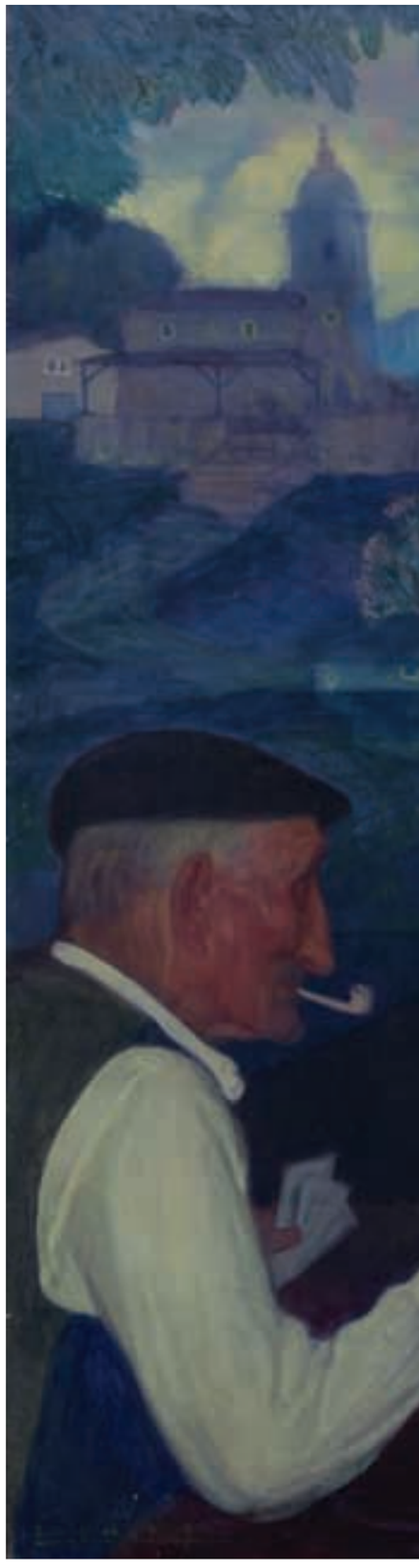


Anciana con cesto de manzanas [Old Woman with Basket of Apples], ca 1950
Oil on canvas, 47 x 66.6 cm



Ramón de Zubiaurre

Partida de mus [Game of Mus], ca 1957
Oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm





Ramiro Arrúe



Paisaje de San Juan de Luz [Landscape of Saint-Jean-de-Luz], 1955
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm



Aurelio Arteta

Idilio en el puerto [Romance at the Port], 1930
Oil on canvas, 78 x 62 cm



Comparing the two *romances at the port* by Arteta and Ucelay is the perfect way to see the differences between the two pictorial generations. One was born around 1880 and the other around 1900, maturing under the influence of Gauguin, Cézanne and Van Gogh and left behind by latter avant-gardes. Both paintings, however, were made around 1930, and it is precisely this synchrony that reveals the changes that took place in little time in the art produced in the Basque Country.

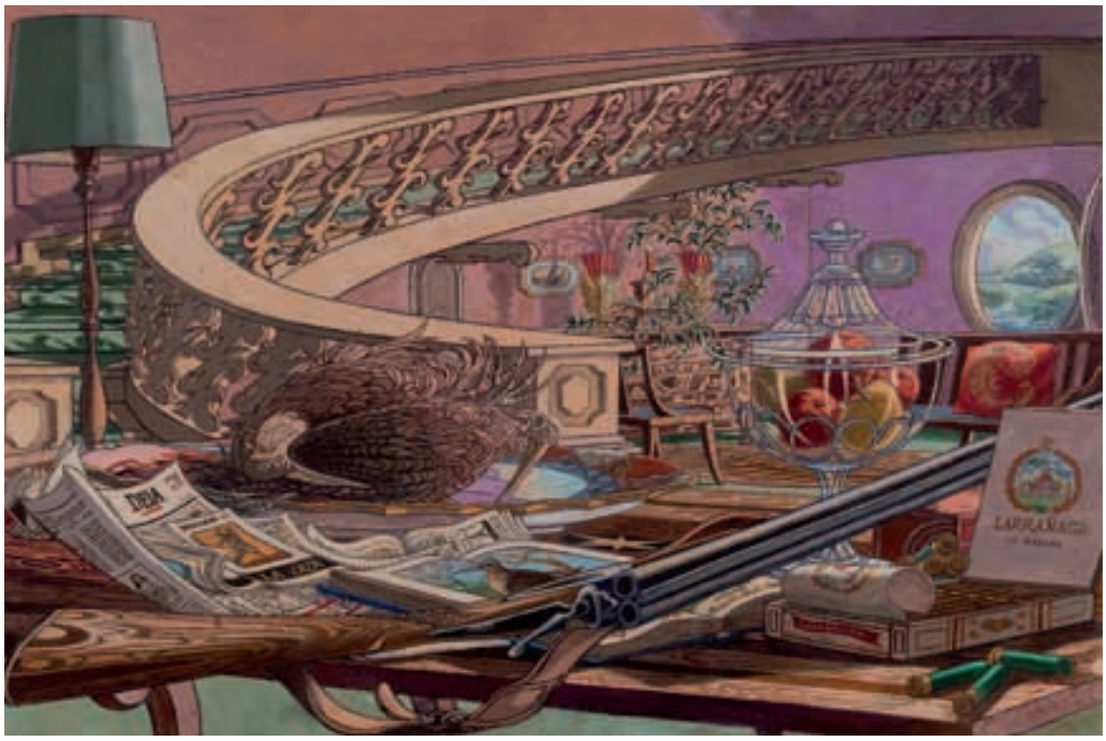
At the time, Arteta had reached another summit in the particular evolution of his style: a Post Impressionism with textures of mural painting, together with a formal purification of the reality seen by the artist, to which he introduced scenes of emotional and reserved lyricism. All of this was within a prolongation of Basque *Costumbrismo* leaning toward popular themes. This sea port, exempt of horizon, is the setting for a romantic relationship in which the man is active – with his arms, legs and words – and the woman passive, absorbed in the words he whispers in her ear. The view is oriented toward the town, whose buildings are fragmented in the background – as are the boats. The sea lacks importance, barely present in the stillness of the port waters.



José María Uclay

Idilio en el puerto [Romance at the Port], ca 1929-30
Oil on canvas, 140 x 146 cm

104 *Bodegón* [Still Life], 1978
Oil on canvas, 55 x 80 cm







This painting also depicts a young couple at a port, but the circumstances and style are completely different. The dock, lighthouse and adjacent building feel metaphysical and unreal. There is no attachment to reality, but rather a suggestion, a dreamlike simplification, of a situation amid silence and solitude. The clouds, blown along by the south wind, characteristic of Ucelay from an early age, introduce a natural disorder in a seascape of blue serenity. There is no invocation of localisms; the setting and the people lack a specific geography, although both this and Arteta's painting are set in Bermeo and the mouth of the river at Gernika.

Here the role of the couple is the opposite of that in the Arteta painting. The active partner is the woman; she holds onto the man, while he grasps his hands behind his back. There is an air of melancholy about them. The woman is sitting, facing inland, while the man remains standing gazing out into the horizon above a sailboat heading to port. The light is ghostly, lunar, its presence above the clouds casting long shadows from the bodies.

Arteta dressed his subjects in austere neutral clothing – obvious in the case of the woman, who is fully covered – and only the man's beret adds a popular accent. Ucelay's couple wears modern clothing with no ambiguities. The flower on the woman's shoulder adds to the air of freshness and naturalness inspired by the low-necked sleeveless blouse and short skirt.

Darío de Regoyos
Orilla de río [River Bank], ca 1885
Oil on board, 21 x 27 cm



Anselmo Guinea
Boceto para vidrieras en Ibaigane [Sketch for Stained-glass Windows in Ibaigane], ca 1900
Watercolour on paper, 20 x 45 cm approx.



Gustavo de Maeztu
Paisaje al anochecer [Landscape at Nightfall], ca 1910
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm



Aurelio Arteta
Salida de misa [Leaving Mass], ca 1910
Oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm





Manuel Losada
Llegada de 'La Paloma' [Arrival of 'The Dove'], ca 1915
Oil on canvas, 63 x 55.5 cm

Ricardo Baroja
Pájaros emigrantes [Emigrant Birds], 1943
Oil on board, 35 x 51 cm



Valentín de Zubiaurre
Joven con cesto de manzanas [Young Woman with Basket of Apples], ca 1940-50
Oil on canvas, 75 x 60 cm



Ramón de Zubiaurre
Ezpatadantza [Sword Dance], ca 1950
Oil on canvas, 43 x 58 cm



José María Ucelay
Paisaje [Landscape], 1977
Oil on canvas, 50 x 100 cm



Antonio López

Bodegón de las afueras [Still Life], 1957
Oil on canvas, 50 x 60.5 cm





Among the personal artistic worlds that emerged in 1950s Spain, one of the most intimate and unique artists of his generation was Antonio López. The reasons are many, but perhaps the most outstanding was his perseverant figurative style when – to a greater or lesser degree – the predominate tendency in modern art that decade was sliding toward abstraction.

Today we consider the 'restraining order' to keep away from recognisable reality as just another aspect of modernity and no longer as its only possible expression. The platitudes and ideologies of the day – not exactly aesthetic – asserted that the figurative representation was an impediment that needed to move in the 'right' direction, if not a regressive and reactionary practice. With the end of ideological absolutisms and indisputable truths we have come to realise that artistic modernity was expressed in many ways. And Antonio López's was one of them.

In this rural still life, viewed from the outskirts of a city whose night lights can be seen in the horizon, López places a bouquet of flowers, the framed portrait of a woman, a bowl of fruit and a playing card on a surface adjoining a whitewashed house. The 'normality' of the scene, however, has a dreamlike quality, a memory about to vanish in a vibration or tremor that seems to come from the distant city. A few years later the artist would enter the city to paint its streets and buildings.

The section on 'Modern Basque Artists' wraps up with a still life by José María Ucelay painted two decades after López's. The contrasts are interesting: one is interior, the other exterior; one is opulent, the other discrete; one is baroque, crisp and exuberant, the other delves into a vague intimist realism; one looks through a window at the arcaded waterfront, the other at the flickering city lights; the newspaper in one gives a sense of fleeting, the photograph of the woman in the other, a feeling of permanent absence. Both have elements that combine chance, game, strategy and fortune: Ucelay with a hunting rifle and López with a playing card.



Jorge Oteiza

Conjunción dinámica de dos pares de elementos curvos y livianos
[Conjunction of Two Pairs of Lightweight Curved Elements], 1957-74
Steel, 35 x 52 x 35 cm

One of a series of five pieces. Replica made in 1974
of the original 1957 sculpture



Caja vacía / Conclusión experimental N.º 1 (A) [Empty Box. Experimental Conclusion No. 1 (A)], 1958
Blued steel plate, 34 x 27 x 27 cm, unique piece





Jorge Oteiza left for Argentina in 1935, returned to Spain in 1948 and – in his own words – was left without sculptures in 1959, after an extraordinary aesthetic evolution. His presence and work in Latin America put him in direct contact with artistic concepts which, based on constructivist tendencies, both Bauhaus and Suprematism, had attained a notable uniqueness that Oteiza interiorised with conviction. These tendencies and developments were unknown in Spain in the 1930s and completely unfathomable in the forties. When Oteiza left, many of the artists featured in the section on 'Modern Basque Artists', close to him geographically and chronologically, continued to practice art based on pre-avant-garde language and local themes. When he returned, the same style that had appeared decades earlier, and would still last for many years, continued to be impoverished.

His return and the example of his work were therefore a qualitative leap forward. Concentrated in his person was the development that should have taken place in three generations, moving from figuration to abstraction and from visual interest to conceptual investigation. In fact, rather than evolution, there was collapse. Oteiza did not evolve from his earlier Basque colleagues, but reinvented himself in another place and with other ideas. In any event, his artistic activism at the end of the 1940s in Bilbao was an intergenerational bridge that led to more universal approaches in the artistic exercise. The original of this piece was one of the sculptures presented at the 4th Biennial in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1957. The set of pieces won Oteiza the prize for the best foreign sculptor.

At the verge of being left without sculptures, Oteiza produced a series of metaphysical boxes, this one being the most significant in the series. In this piece we can clearly see that the emptiness enclosed inside the box is the sculpture the artist was after. The six-sided open walls act as a boundary, a skin or constructive crust, containing the spatial energy within. From sculpture that occupied space, Oteiza went on to creating constructions that generated space, vacating the sculpture.

The gradual reduction of these limits toward a basic and elementary place-defining architecture – no longer emptiness vacated of sculpture – soon led Oteiza to a dead-end road, with further evolution no longer possible. By pure logic, the next step was either to go backward or cease the material artistic practice. He opted for the latter, although continued his activism, with vigorous and fruitful artistic reflection, in the way of books, teaching and numerous writings.

In the 1950s, a period dominated by informalism and abstract Expressionism, the geometry and conceptualism of Oteiza foretold the future. The other sculpture by Oteiza in this exhibition can be considered somewhat informalist. It is a kind of space drawn with curved lines that lack an identifiable order. The piece discussed here, on the other hand, is totally constructive, with right angles and inclinations that impose a recognisable order. If when Oteiza returned from Latin America in 1948 he was a bridge that fuelled a stagnant past, eleven years later he became a beacon to a fertile future.



Antonio Saura

Ariza III, 1963
Oil on canvas, 162 x 130 cm

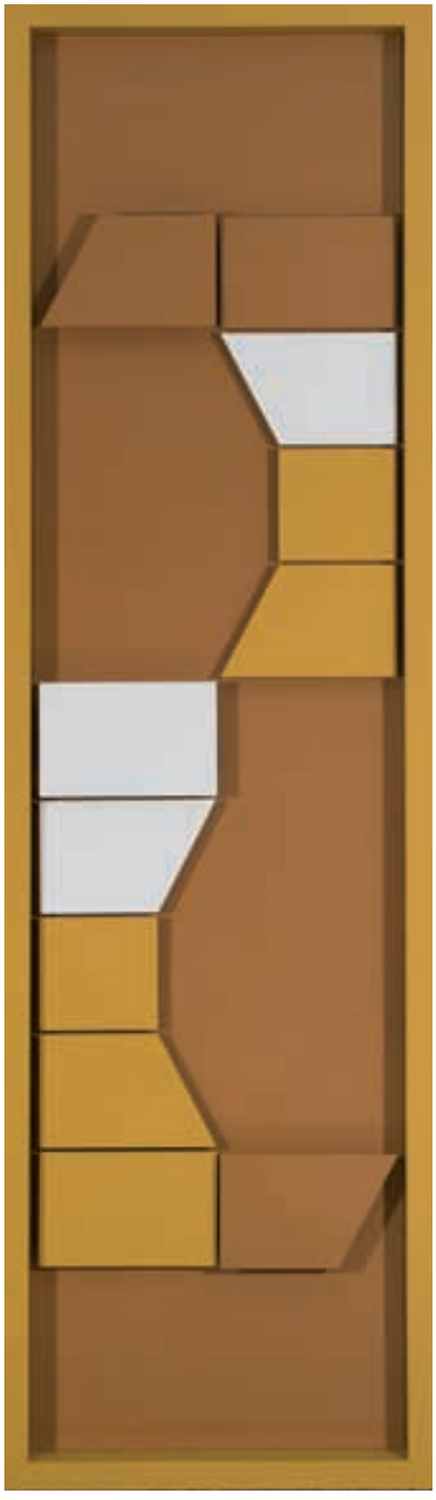


This ‘person’ has all of the characteristics typical of the pictorial work by Antonio Saura. It belongs to the period in which Saura painted portraits of different historical figures, in particular King Philip II, depicting the ruler with hysterical and monstrous features. It was understood that the ‘portraits’ were not meant to represent the people in the physical sense, but rather to capture and interpret political figures. Similarly, we understand that in this painting, what we are seeing is the shadow or echo of a moving presence, somewhat murky and evanescent, as a demonstration of the impossibility of truly knowing the subject, the human rather than the animal.

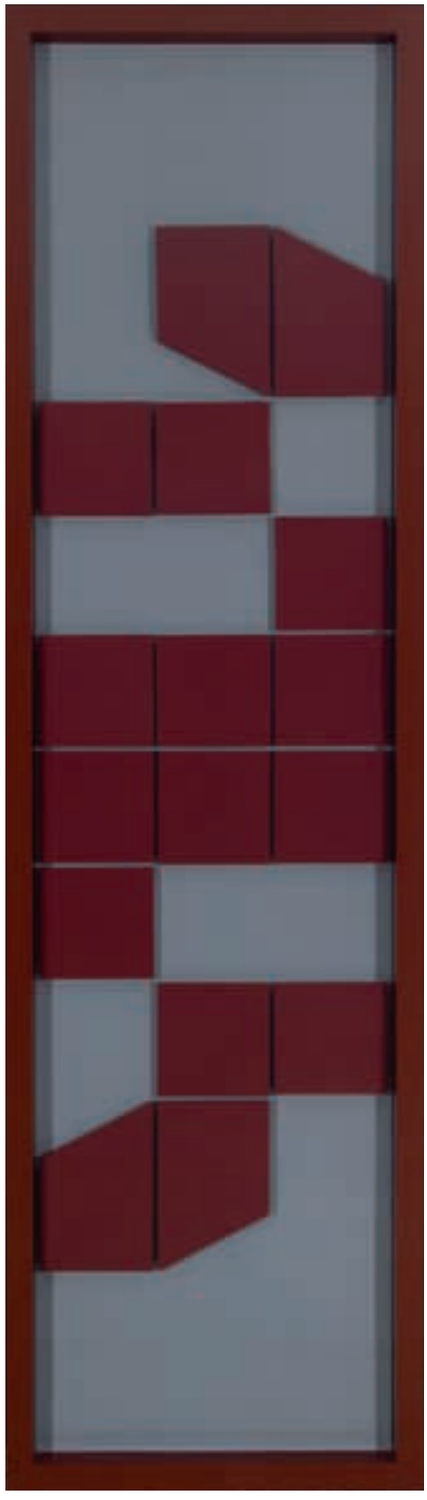
This painting is made with the gestures and brushstrokes of Action Painting, without slipping into abstraction (more in line, therefore, with Willem de Kooning’s women than Jackson Pollock’s fantasy). Saura produces his work without resorting to the tricks of the trade, placing himself squarely in front of the canvas and using only basic materials (support, colour and brush). He refrains from tearing or altering the canvas, disdains using materials outside the conventional, refuses to mix colour with grainy materials or otherwise, never lets his oils drip or splash from his brush…; in a certain sense Saura is a traditional painter with a very modern aesthetic approach.

Not far from this phantasmagorical representation, we can detect waves of surrealist influence, not so much in theme – a mere excuse – as in approach. Through unpremeditated gestuality the creator’s subconscious is released with every brushstroke, the result of a spontaneous unrationalised impulse. In no way does this mean that the canvases were not previously decided and rationally meditated. Saura combined the empty spaces of the canvas with spaces filled with colour, generally monochromatic. Although seemingly improvised, the canvases were protocolised with the rigour of intimate rituals.

Gerardo Rueda



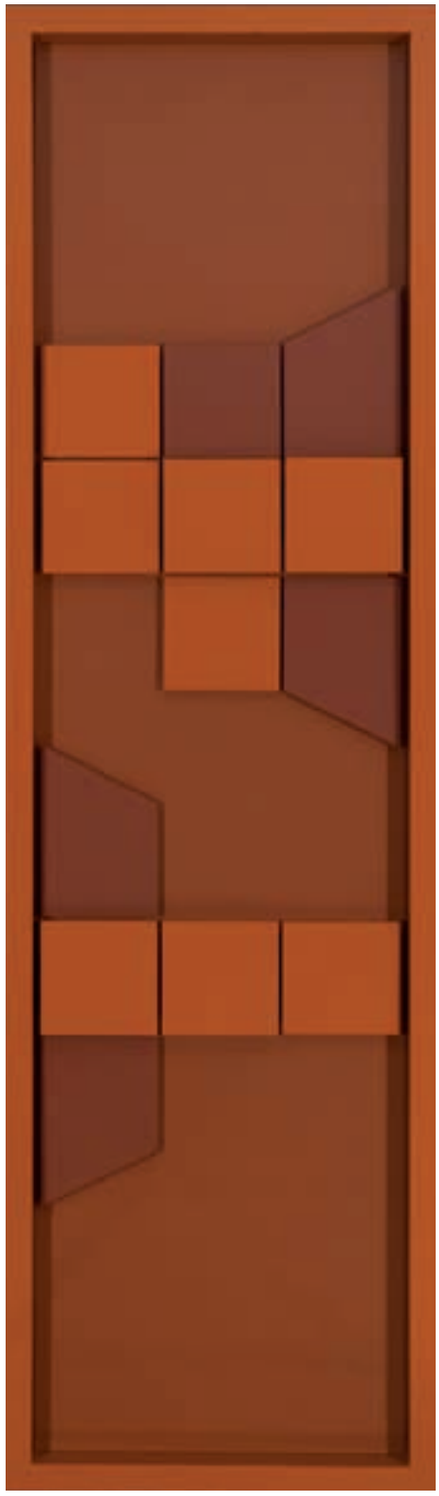




La luz (I a VI) [Light (I to VI)], 1972
Paint and metal on wood, 240 x 66 cm in six pieces









This work by Gerardo Rueda was commissioned by Hidroeléctrica Española – now Iberdrola – for its central offices on Calle Claudio Coello in Madrid, designed by Miguel Oriol in the late 1960s. Each of these six panels was located on a different floor of the building; in other words, they were not meant to be seen simultaneously, although now they are displayed together as a single polyptych.

When Rueda received commissions of this type, he was always concerned with understanding the nature of the request so that he could express a connection to the place the work would occupy or to the people who would enjoy it. In this case, the very title, *Light*, was a direct link the electricity generating company.

In a solidly vertical format, Rueda created six coloured boxes on which he placed very simple geometric pieces (squares, rectangles and trapezoids), painted in two or three harmonious colours. When the boxes refract the surrounding light they transmit a chromatic force in orderly movement. Rueda, who began in the late 1940s painting urban landscapes with a Cubist and constructive orientation, experienced a very coherent evolution which brought him closer to minimalism and certain aspects of Arte Povera, keeping with the times. He elaborated a rigourous system of work based on extreme opposites: discipline and freedom, geometry and subjectivity, reason and lyricism, order and ornament.

Equipo Crónica



Roturas I [Ruptures I], 1974
Acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 148.5 x 179 cm





The work of Equipo Crónica was filled with nods to Spanish history, painting and the 1960s and seventies, the age in which the members of the group lived. This work, a strange mixture of Pop Art, geometry and Informalism, consists of an illustration of a high-ranking dignitary from the Spanish Golden Age, which has been ripped into several pieces. If we mentally reconstruct the image, we see a figure from the Spanish Hapsburg court dressed in customary attire against a background of purely comic-book sunbeams and clouds. In one of the pieces we also see a pair of scissors, a tool the historical figure may have been holding.

In light of the apparently torn image, the allusion to scissors might make sense, if we assume that they were used to cut out the geometric shape, which in turn, contains the torn pieces. Thus, the hand-torn image of the person haphazardly occupies the space which he himself cut out with the scissors. This type of irregular geometry, in turn, irregularly occupies the paintings by Equipo Crónica Therefore, we have a painting inside a painting, and a torn shape inside a cut-out.

The constant references to historical Spanish painting and its leading proponents served as a leitmotif for Equipo Crónica, which used humour to criticise the politics of the Franco regime. Here history is shown as a mirror of a fixed image shattered into pieces and kept within the angular boundaries of an enclosed space, but whose chromatic background is ultimately the same both inside and outside this historical-pictorial frame.

Manuel Hernández Mompó



Gente jugando en el campo [People Playing in the Fields], 1977
Oil on canvas, 130 x 105 cm



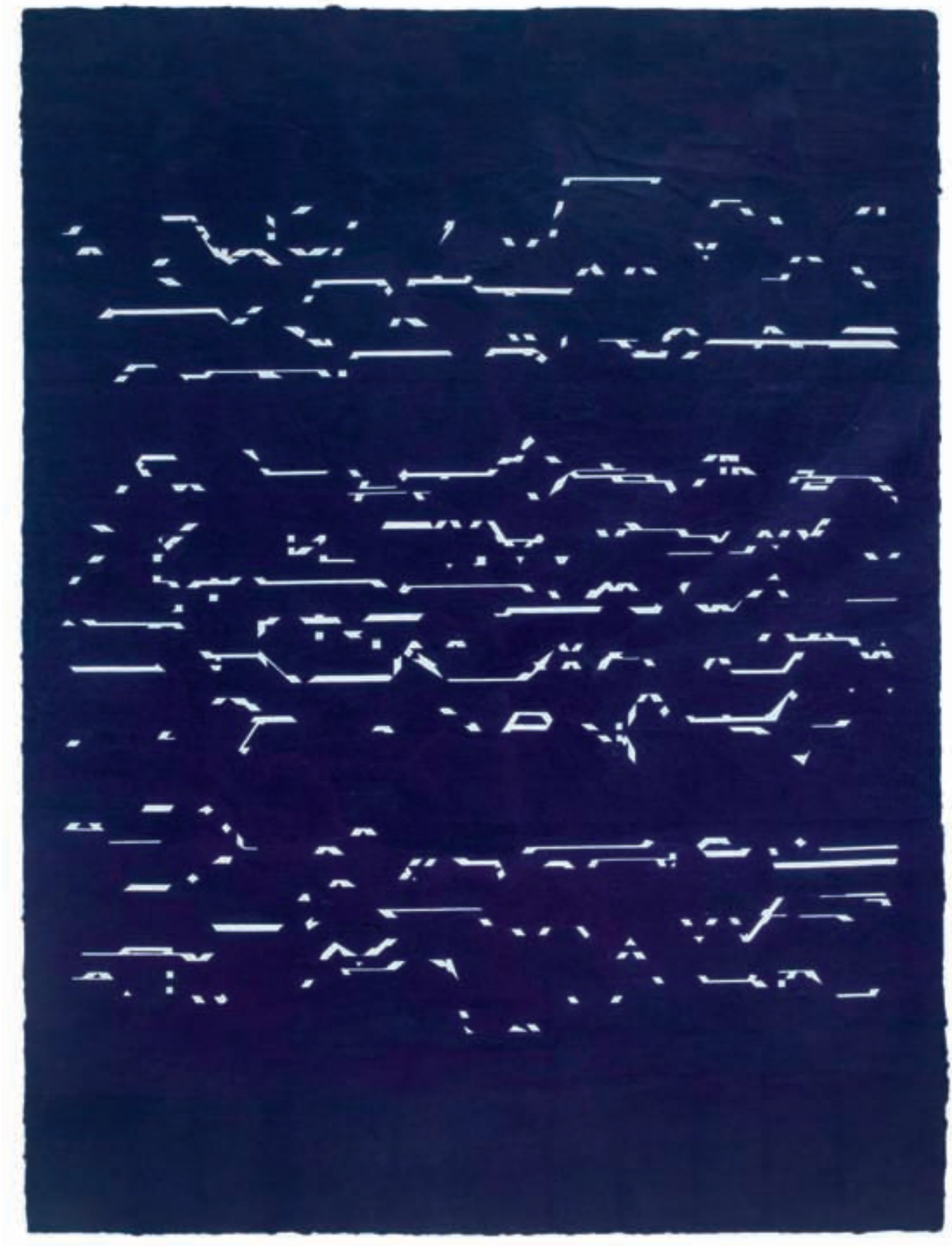
In a Spain where the political circumstances led to dark and dramatic interpretations of reality, it was logical for the role of art to be seen as the aesthetic translation of the specific events that characterised this reality in their social, economic and ideological aspects. This explains why a good part of the painting that emerged in this country in the 1940s, fifties and sixties was oriented to private and intimate worlds – eschewing all references to the shared exterior – and to a more or less controlled critical manifestation of the context. It is not a coincidence that it was with the advent of abstraction – due to its capacity to shirk direct and unequivocal interpretations – that critical, hypothetical or real allusions to the regime grew. Added to this was a tendency toward sombre colours, given to black and grey, thus strengthening the connection to the Spanish pictorial tradition.

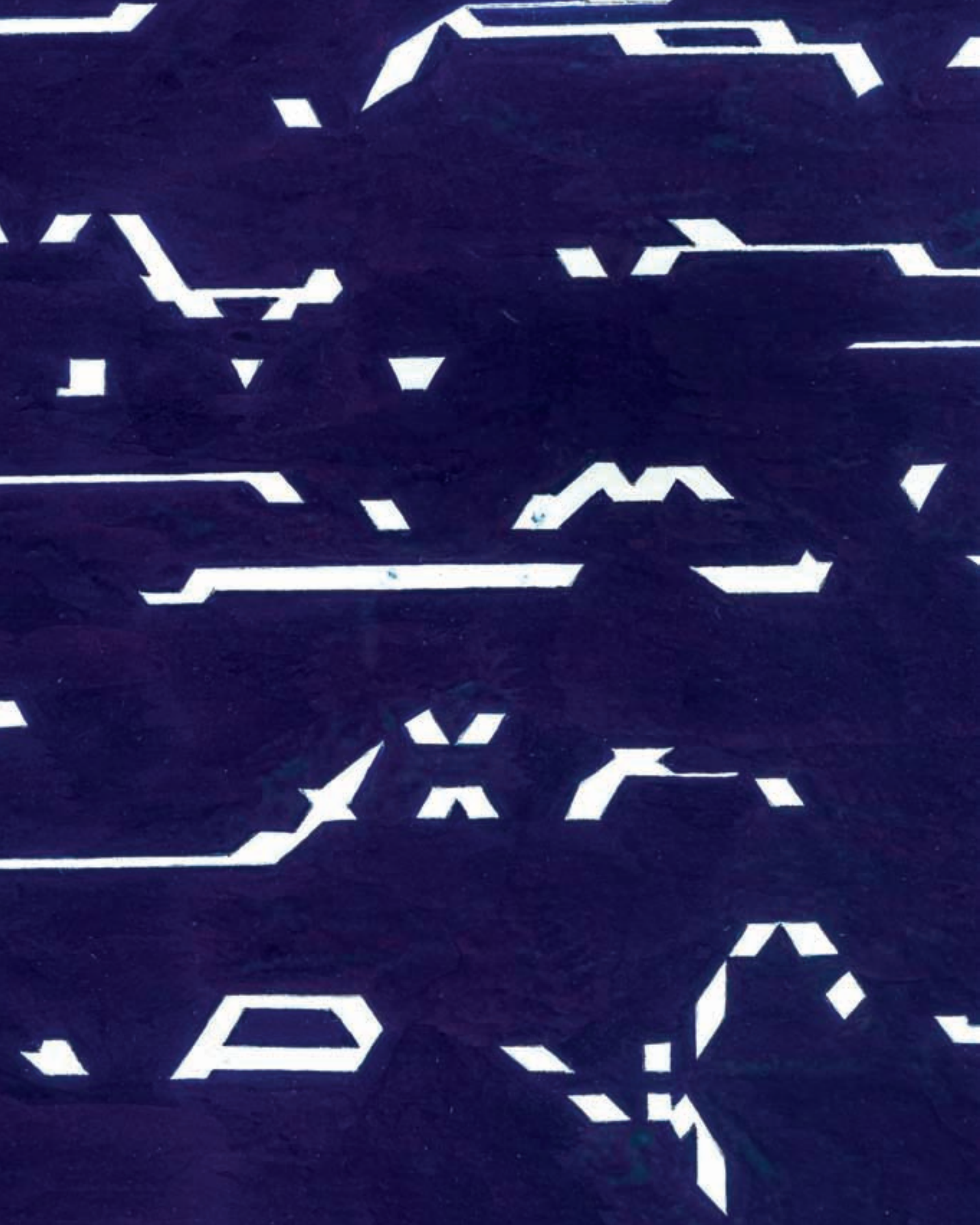
While from the same generation and set of creative ideas as his fellow artists, Manuel Hernández Mompó's paintings took a very different direction. The use of generic white splashed with bright, vibrant colours seemed to suggest a gentler, kinder world filled with warmth and light. This too was part of the pictorial tradition, although in Mompó's case, Valencia, where this artist was from. The very title of this painting announces a playful, collective and wholesome occasion.



Pablo Palazuelo

Segundo cantoral III [Second Hymnbook III], 1978
Gouache and pencil on paper, 78.7 x 58 cm





In this work by Pablo Palazuelo – as in most of this artist's work and the works we describe as abstract – the real object is energy, not the representation of something real that we can understand. It is an energy expressed through vibrations, radiations and lines of force, through languages ranging from visceral and expressive to constructive and geometric; the materials used to achieve it are countless. Palazuelo saw matter as energy, and his goal as a painter and sculptor was to express the internal rhythms of matter in plastic form, considering geometry as a measurement of the material.

In this small but exquisite work, Palazuelo combines two of his greatest passions – mathematics and music – two things that express the same with different outcomes. There is something like writing here, though impenetrable at first glance, and also something map-like: forms of kinetic energy arranged on a plane of integrated forces.

The idea of the hymnbook refers to music. This work suggests sheet music with notes that signify a gesture, a tone, a timbre… a kind of energy converted to sound but visible here. Over an entirely blue background, the symbols dance in orderly lines without making it clear whether they are negative voids or positive figures attached to the background.

César Manrique

Epicentro [Epicenter], 1979
Mixed media on canvas, 89 x 116 cm





Antoni Tàpies



Vuit Creus [Eight Crosses], 1981
Painting and embossing on paper and canvas, 51 x 66 cm



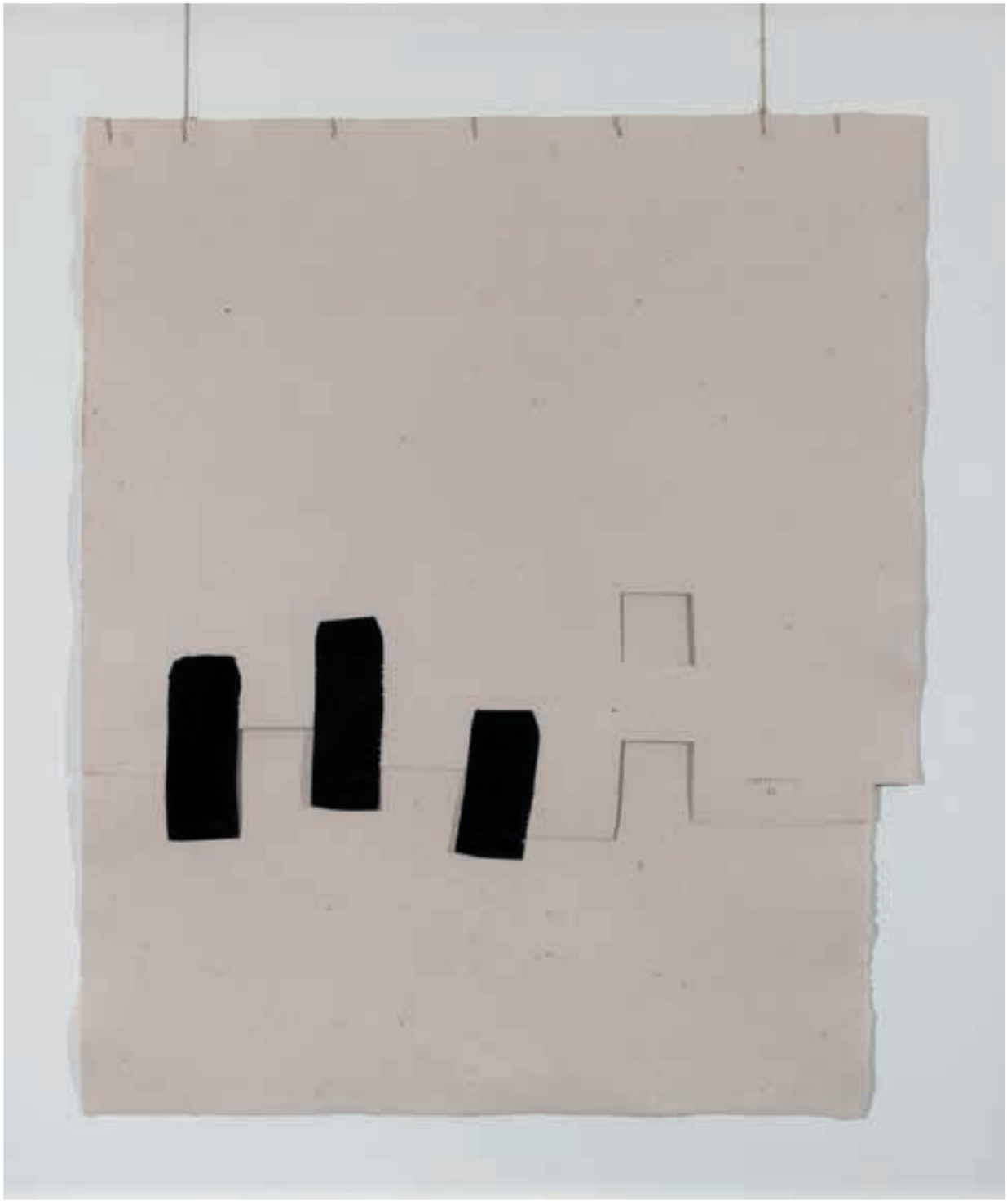
Pello Irazu

Sweet Dreams (Chambers), 1990
Wood and paint construction, 209.5 x 166.5 x 6.5 cm

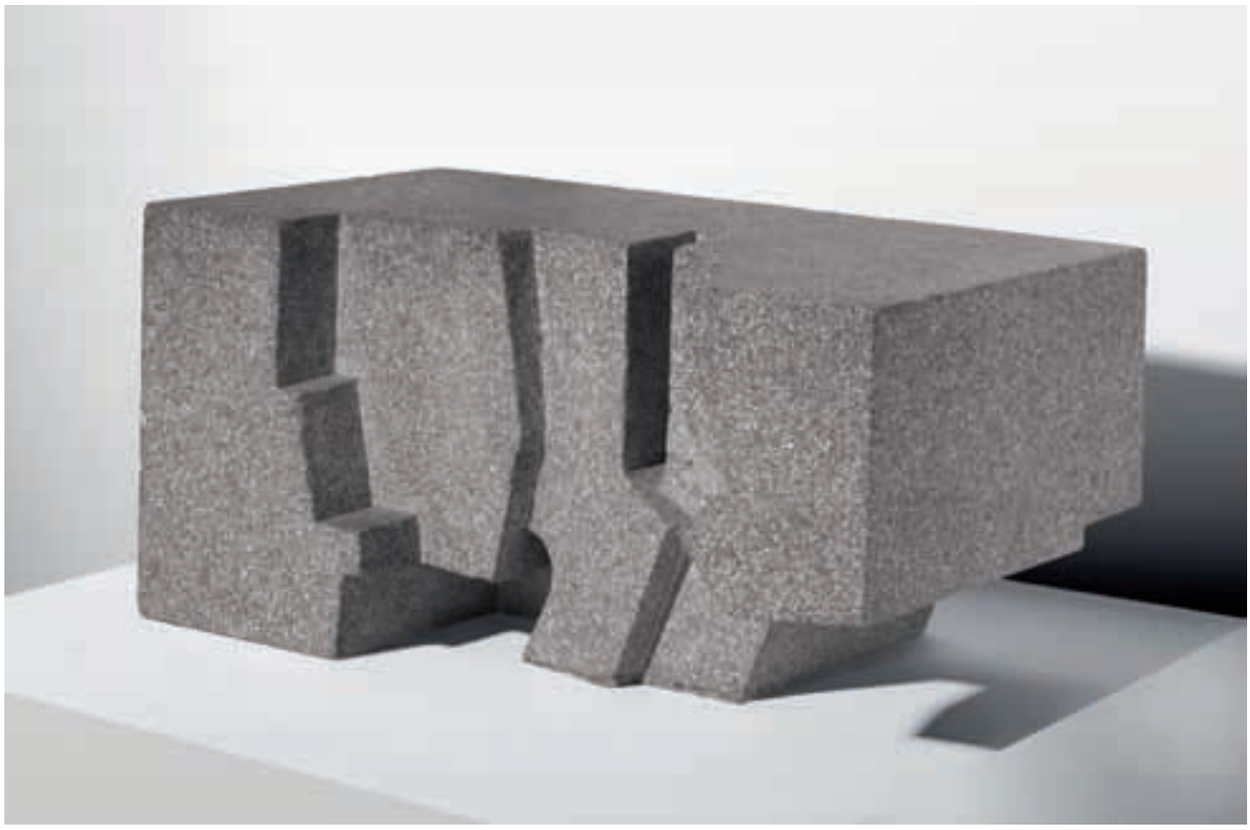


Eduardo Chillida

Gravitación [Gravitation], 1993
Ink and collage on paper, 89 x 75 cm



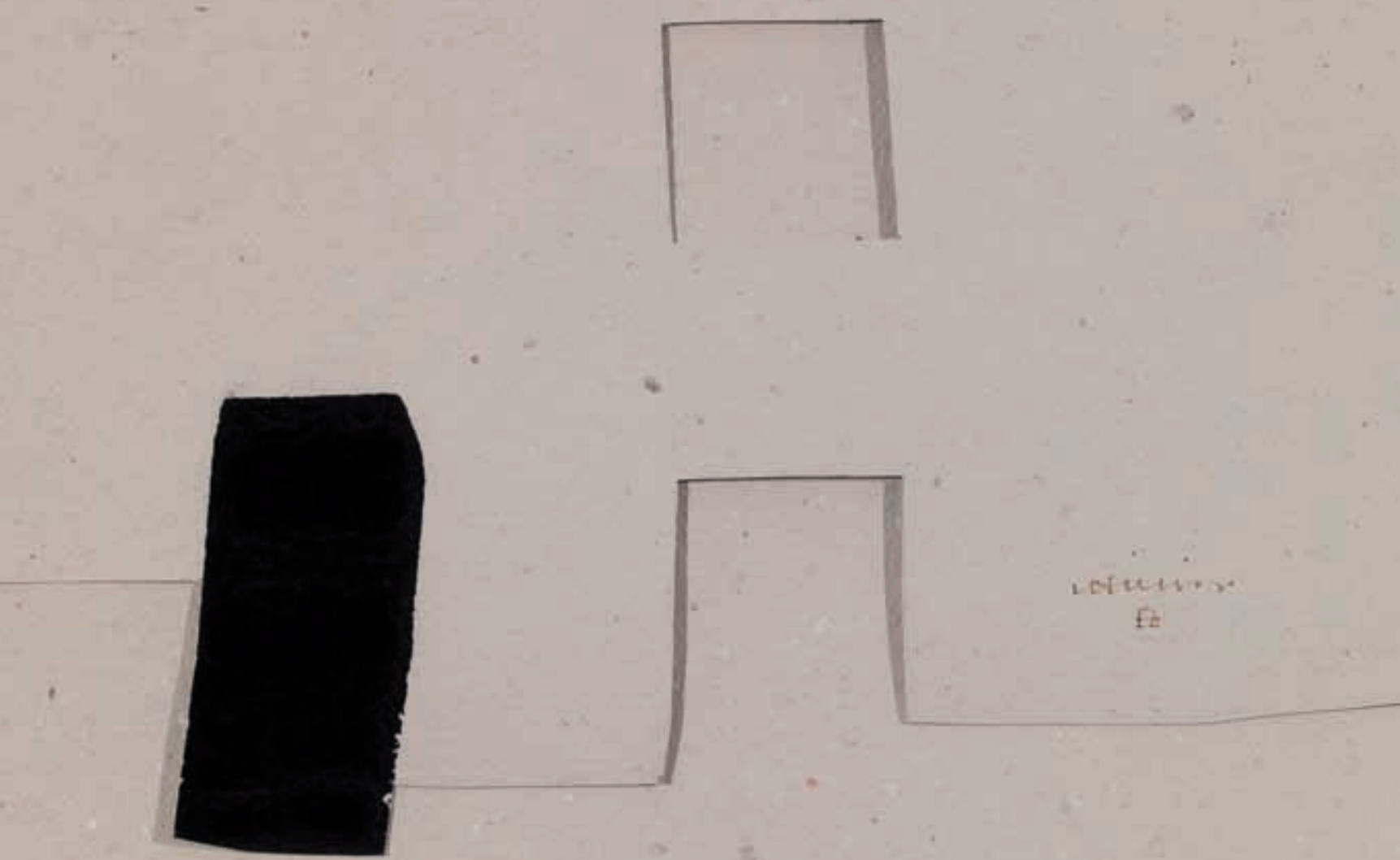
Utsune [Emptiness], 1966-68
Granite, 40 x 83.8 x 46



Eduardo Chillida used to refer to the profoundness of air. But another type of profoundness is beneath the skin, one that allows us to sense or envisage the material, not the air, in other words, the profoundness enclosed behind the thinness of its sheath. The paper-skin, tattooed or impregnated, perforated or punched, reveals another more distant casing, beyond the fine lines of the cut edges, one gravitating above the other, insinuating a minimum profoundness that poses a question: what other skin – pelt, hide… – is hidden behind the last one we can see?

This sculptural relief on paper, charged with interior energy, carries a halo of spirituality as it levitates, a mystical struggle against gravity in which we perceive silent sonority.

Not given to rhetoric, Chillida's works are formulated using basic materials which are nonetheless deeply eloquent. In this case, two pieces of paper, one on top of the other, sewn at the top and suspended from fine string; the first piece of paper has irregular edges and three rectangular black marks not parallel to one another. Beside them are two small square windows through which we can see the other piece of paper underneath. We know nothing about the other piece of paper except what the windows reveal (but we know that it is there). The skin that has been manipulated, therefore, is the piece in front, but the paper behind it reveals the thin density and profoundness of the emptiness in between. Occupied in black and empty in white; three visible and two invisible; more or less horizontal and more or less vertical; lacking right angles, creating a minimal and discreet dance.



Juan Uslé

Balanza mora [Moorish Scale], 1995
Acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 198 x 111.8 cm



Juan Genovés

Secuencias 100 [Sequences 100], 2000
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 230 cm



Miquel Barceló



Des oursins à marée basse [Sea Urchins at Low Tide], 2001
Mixed media on canvas, 235 x 375 cm





Miquel Barceló's interest in rough textures loaded with material prompted him to turn his attention to the seabed as the perfect place to find this type of irregularities and pasty dense deposits, formed by time, waves and aquatic flora and fauna. Filled with the significance of nature, he found them attractive to bring to the canvas. The seabeds exposed during low tide reveal the sedimentation of materials (mud, sand, sea weed…) washed in and out over the ages. Every time the tide goes out, the materials are stirred and pushed here and there, back and forth, leaving a different orography.

Barceló, who has so often interpreted sea life in his ceramic sculptures (let us recall the chapel in the Cathedral in Palma de Mallorca), turns his attention here to his habitat and to the traces left by the now invisible fauna – and flora. This painting is abstract, steeped in matter and virtually monochromatic, but it can also be said that it is enormously realistic, even though it focuses on a micro-landscape to which we pay little attention owing to its precariousness and transitory nature.

Used to contemplating with pleasure and delight the marvellous surface of the sea, we assume that its momentary absence on the shore leaves nothing interesting. However, in that water-laden earth, Barceló discovered the skin of a primeval home levelled every six hours, the crust of a strange planet on the ocean floor created by the action of the waves.

Eduardo Arroyo

La guerra de los mundos [The War of the Worlds], 2002
Oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm



Miguel Navarro

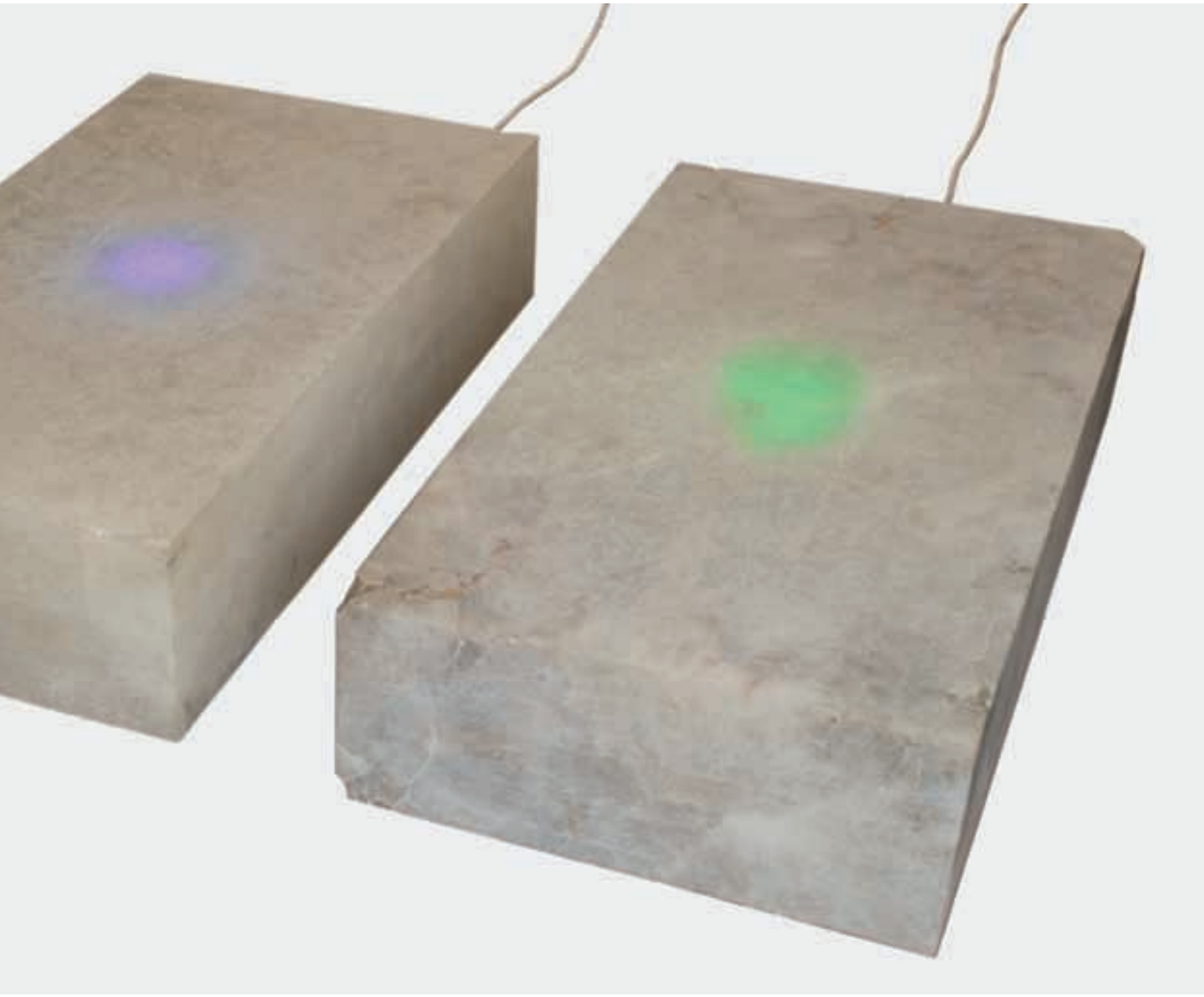
Esfinge (Homenaje a Chillida) [Sphinx (Homage to Chillida)], 2002
Bronze with steel texture, 98 x 41 x 44 cm



Jaume Plensa



Hizketa (Conversación) [Hizketa (Conversation)], 2003
Alabaster, nylon and lights, 20 x 50 x 90 cm



Miguel Ángel Campano

Untitled (MAC 1296), 2003
Oil on canvas, 144 x 100 cm



Prudencio Irazabal

Sin título # 2S4 [Untitled # 2S4], 2005
Acrylic on canvas, 175 x 175 cm



The origins of Prudencio Irazabal's paintings today have a lot to do with skin. Maurice Denis once said that a picture, before being a battle horse or a nude woman, was essentially a flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain order. We can therefore agree that painting is a skin made of pigments and thickeners that cover a canvas or piece of wood; to this we should add that we observe the skin perpendicularly and full frontal. The answer to the question of what is behind the painting, if not a horse or a woman, is generally to say that what we see is a visual thought, an abstraction that can be contemplated.

But in a daring turn of the screw, Irazabal decided to find out literally what was behind a painting if indeed it was a simple skin, more or less thick, of chromatic sedimentation. His idea was to produce a series of paintings in which he would show the strata of coloured oil deposits after cutting the painting lengthwise and studying the incision, or rather what the cut left in view, in much the same way as an archaeologist looks at layers of earth deposited in the past or a surgeon at the flesh laid open by the scalpel.

This approach to what is behind the painting required the artist to create a work that we could not see because it was cut from top to bottom and from front to back. But we did know how it had been constructed: through layers of colour. In paintings such as this, Irazabal applies layer upon layer, skin over skin, in paper-thin, translucent applications so that the colour comes from back to front, searching for our eyes, almost as if a breathable substance.



José María Sicilia

Eclipse # 1, 2006
Wax and oil on wood, 185 x 157 cm



José Manuel Broto

La vida de las piedras [The Life of Rocks], 2006
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm



Erlea Maneros Zabala



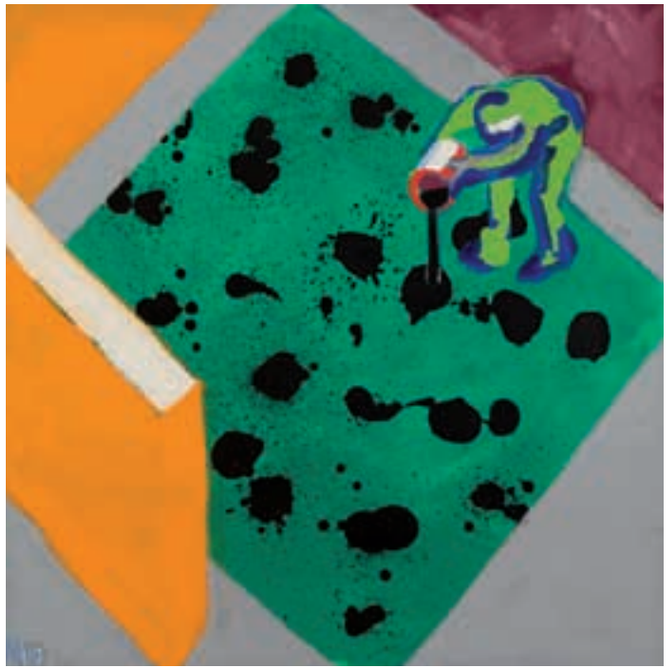
Exercises on Abstraction (Series I) and *(Series II)*, 2009
India ink on offset paper, 91.5 x 61 cm each

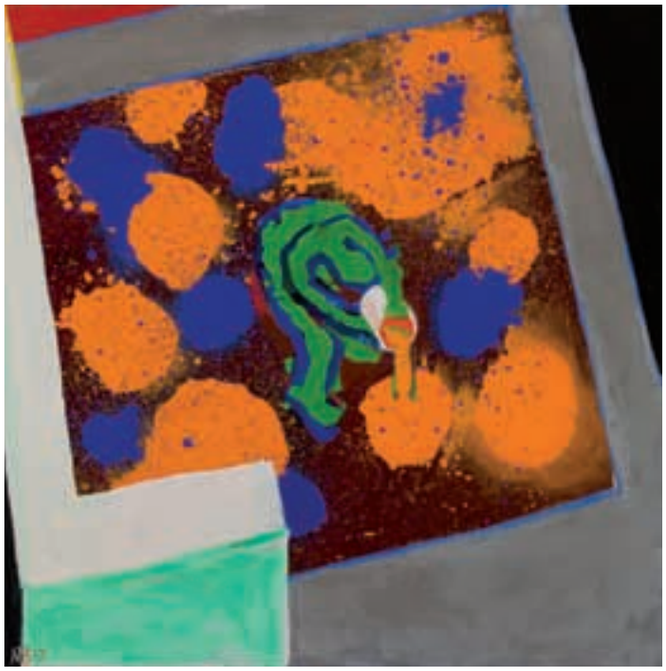


Juan Navarro Baldeweg

Pintor en el estudio [Painter in the Studio], 2009
Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm in four pieces





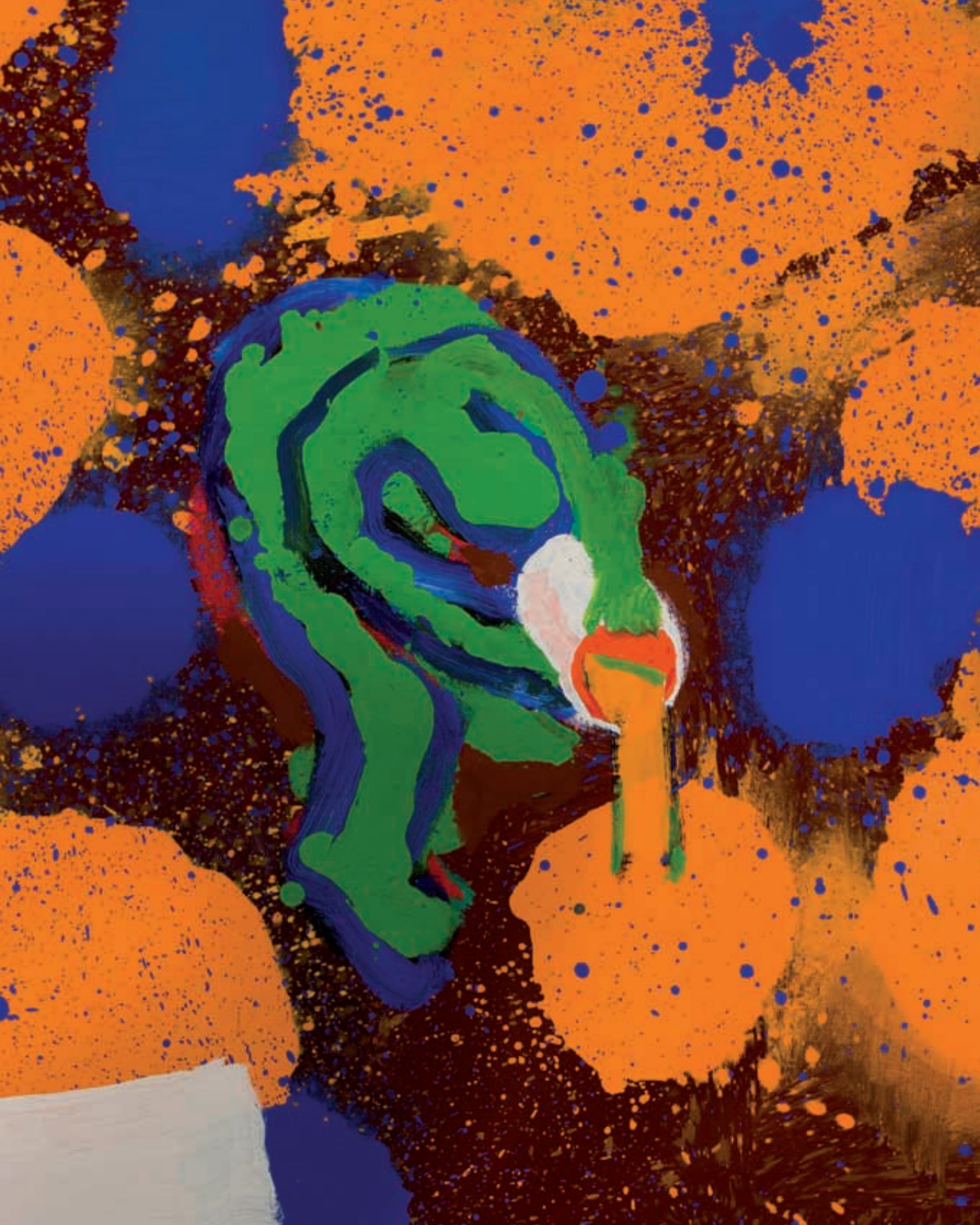




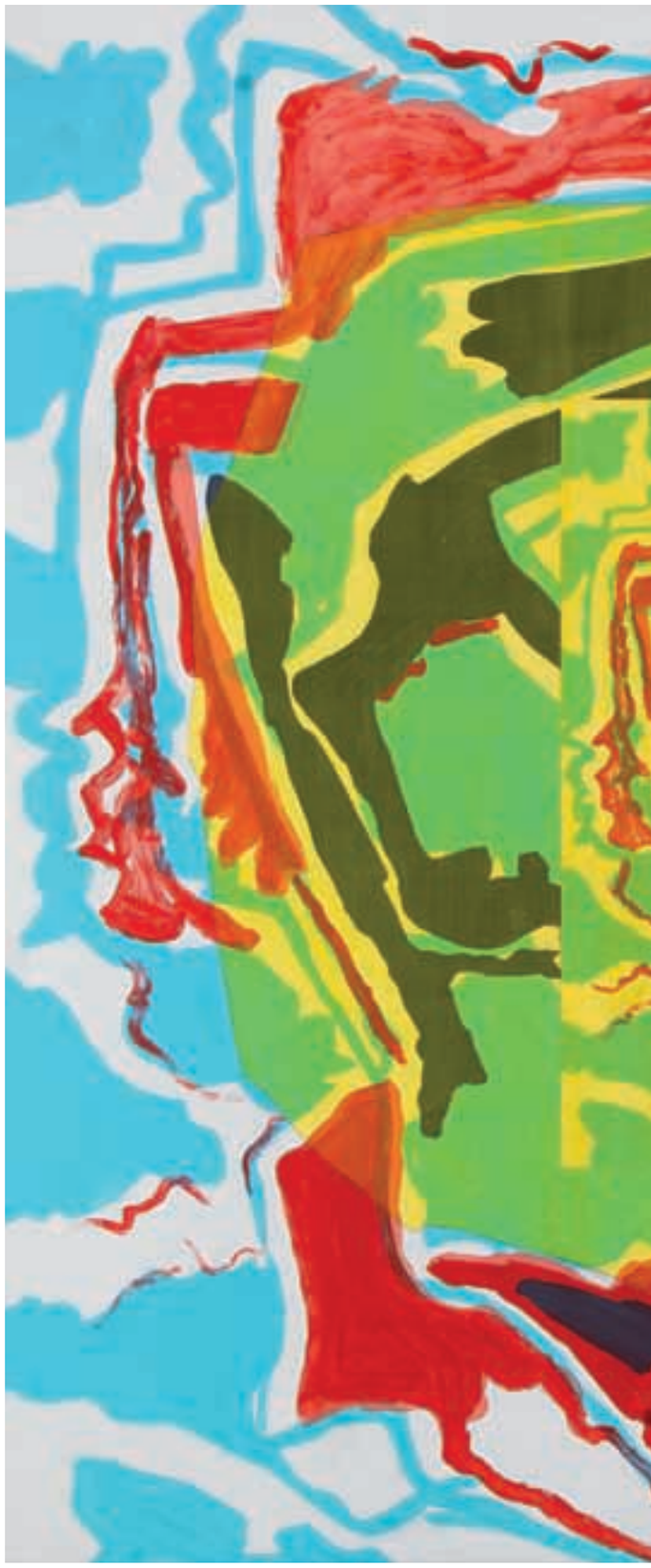
The painter and architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg creates in this polyptych a work in which he links his two areas of work, painting and architecture, achieving a highly dynamic piece with a limited number of very simple elements. Painted in an axonometric perspective – downward and diagonal – he repeats the same theme while varying the elements: a schematic person pours a can of paint onto a square on the floor of a room; the room is also square and the roof has been removed to see the action. The painting by the subject does not cover the entire floor and neither the painting nor the floor can be seen in their entirety: both the angle and the walls of the room conceal small parts of the floor and the painting. The point of observation is from outside and from a certain distance from the room, which allows fragments of the top of the walls to invade the square where the painter is painted.

The variations are not only the perspective, but more importantly, the colour of the elements (walls, floor, poured paint, the person…), which change in every situation. However, the painter is always doing the same thing: dripping his paint in the style of abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock.

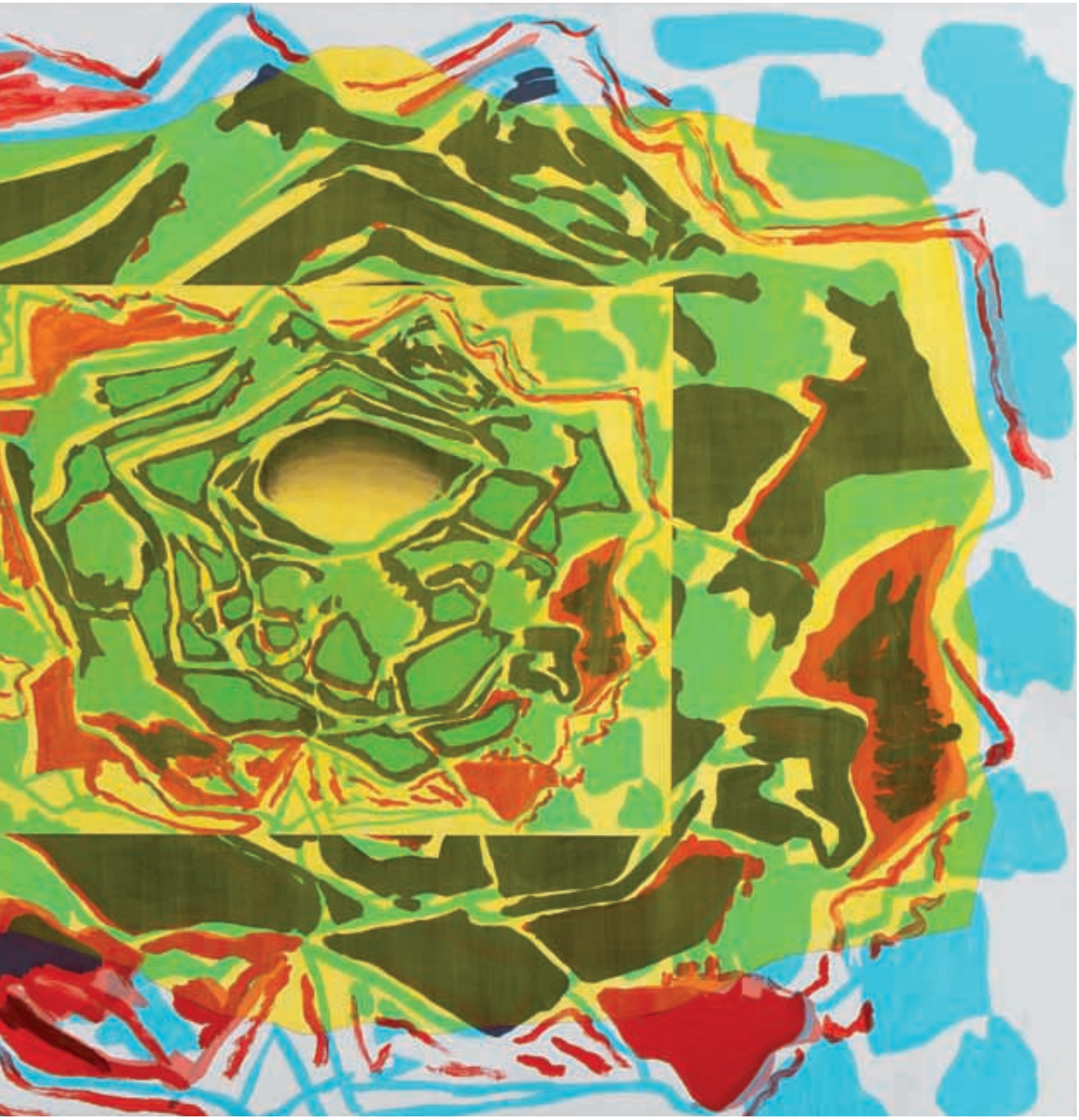
Here we have an intelligent use of two classic subjects: ‘the painting within the painting’ and ‘the artist in his studio’, although in this case it might be better described as ‘the painting within the artist’s studio within the painting’.

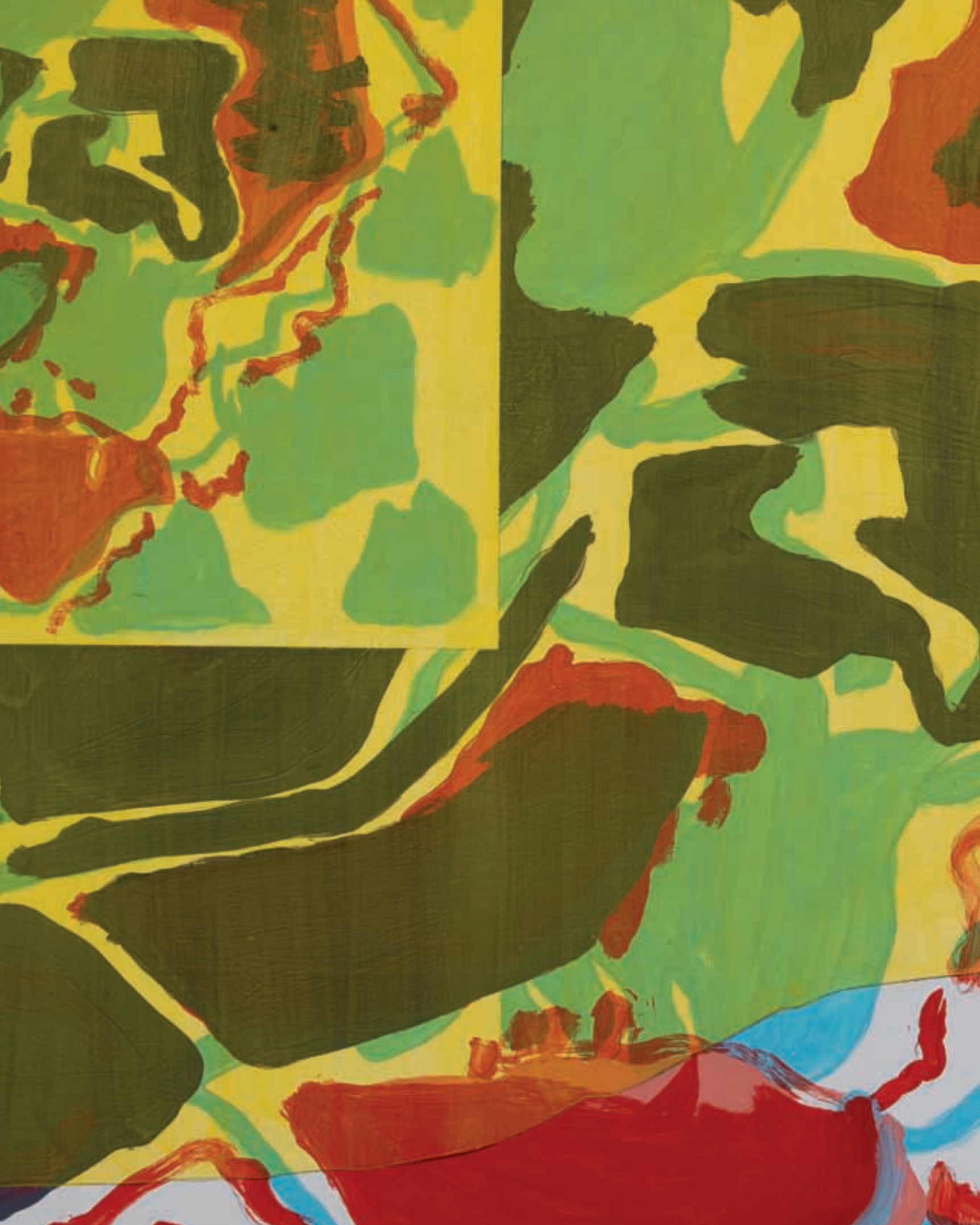


Luis Gordillo



Luz artificial [Artificial Light], 2010
Acrylic on collage and canvas, 116 x 160 cm





In this painting Luis Gordillo blends stylistic elements from the three pictorial origins he pieced together to construct a significant part of his oeuvre: pop colour, the coexistence of abstraction and figuration, and automatism. His origins in the late 1950s and early sixties were openly abstract expressionist, highly gestural and dramatically reduced to black and white; in this origin, we should see a first step toward a type of automatic drawing which he began to practice in the seventies. A short time later, the discovery of American Pop Art won him over to figuration and vibrant colours; after a transitory period in this area, he went back to abstraction, although he himself denies being an abstract painter. At that time these lines of work blended together to create a style seen as highly personal.

In this 'artificial light' we find a perfect synthesis of Gordillo's style: chromatic vibration, gestural automatism in some of the brushstrokes and splashes of colour, and abstraction. So where is the figurative? We are talking about *light*, an immaterial element par excellence, invisible, but which allows us to see; therefore, we are talking about what illuminates not about what is illuminated. We are also talking about 'artificiality', that is, intentionally elaborated construction backed by reason. The outcome is a pulsating explosion of disjointed shapes and colours, as if just emerging from the explosion produced by the hole in the perfect rectangle in the middle of the painting: order from which vagueness emanates. A painting that speaks of the imaginative artifice of looking at what is not through overlapping layers (whether real or not) of colour on the canvas.

Guillermo Pérez Villalta



Babel, 2010
Tempera on wood, diameter 120 cm





Architecture has always been a recurring theme in Guillermo Pérez Villalta's work; therefore, it is with good reason that his first studies, before dedicating himself to painting, were of this nature. Whether in the form of fantastic constructions, vertiginous terraces, interiors with miraculously balanced vaults or chequerboard floors, the architectural and the urban, from a perspective of Borgesian literature, define a good part of th artist's work. Hence, the idea of Babel, and everything that alludes to the foundational myths of Western culture, attracted him. The use of a tondo as a form-support for the painting highlights the classicist intention.

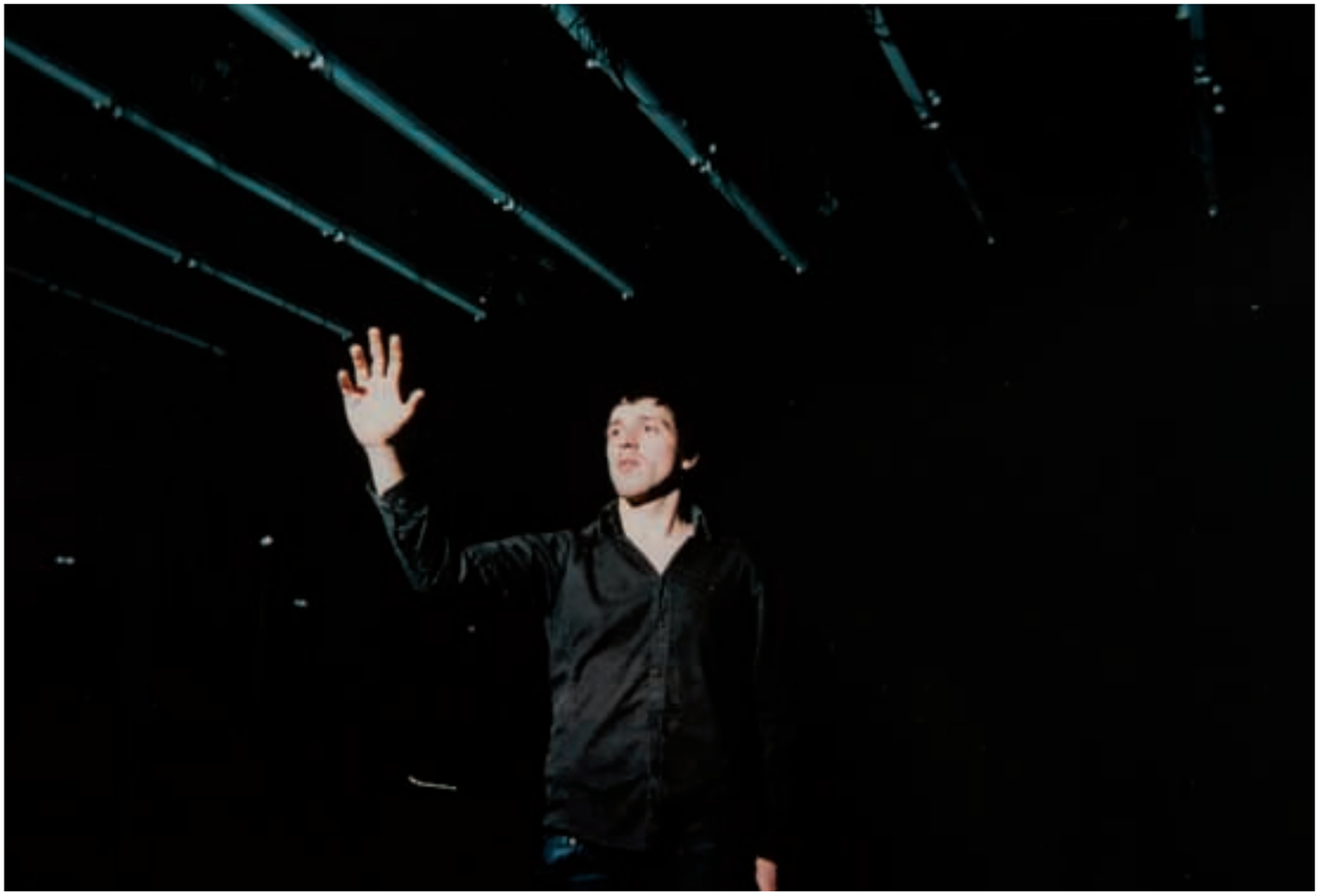
The utopian tower rises at the seashore beside a jumbled group of odd-shaped houses – a direct allusion to the different languages his construction gave rise to. The tower is surrounded by scaffolding in the shape of an aqueduct leading from nowhere to nowhere else and apparently under construction or abandoned.

The orderly, cold, angular work of men contrasts with the tree, radiant in the light of the setting sun, its organically twisted trunk alluding to the dialectics of artifice and nature. Both creations, the work of the men of the sea and that of the gods of the earth, are united by the clear crisp horizon.

Sergio Prego



Permutaciones Bug [Permutations Bug], 2010
Video, 3’ 11”





Jorge Oteiza
Personaje [Personage], ca 1953
Bronze, 59 x 18 x 11 cm



Pablo Serrano
Untitled, 1963
Multiple-disciplinary intervention at the access to the Aldeadávila Dam in Salamanca. Granite









Gerardo Rueda
Pintura roja [Red Painting], 1964
Oil on canvas, 97 x 130 cm

Gerardo Rueda
Untitled, 1972
Tapestry, 108 x 465 cm



Eduardo Arroyo
Chambre natale à Blenheim Palace [Birthplace bedroom at Blenheim Palace], 1969
Oil on canvas, 70 x 70 cm

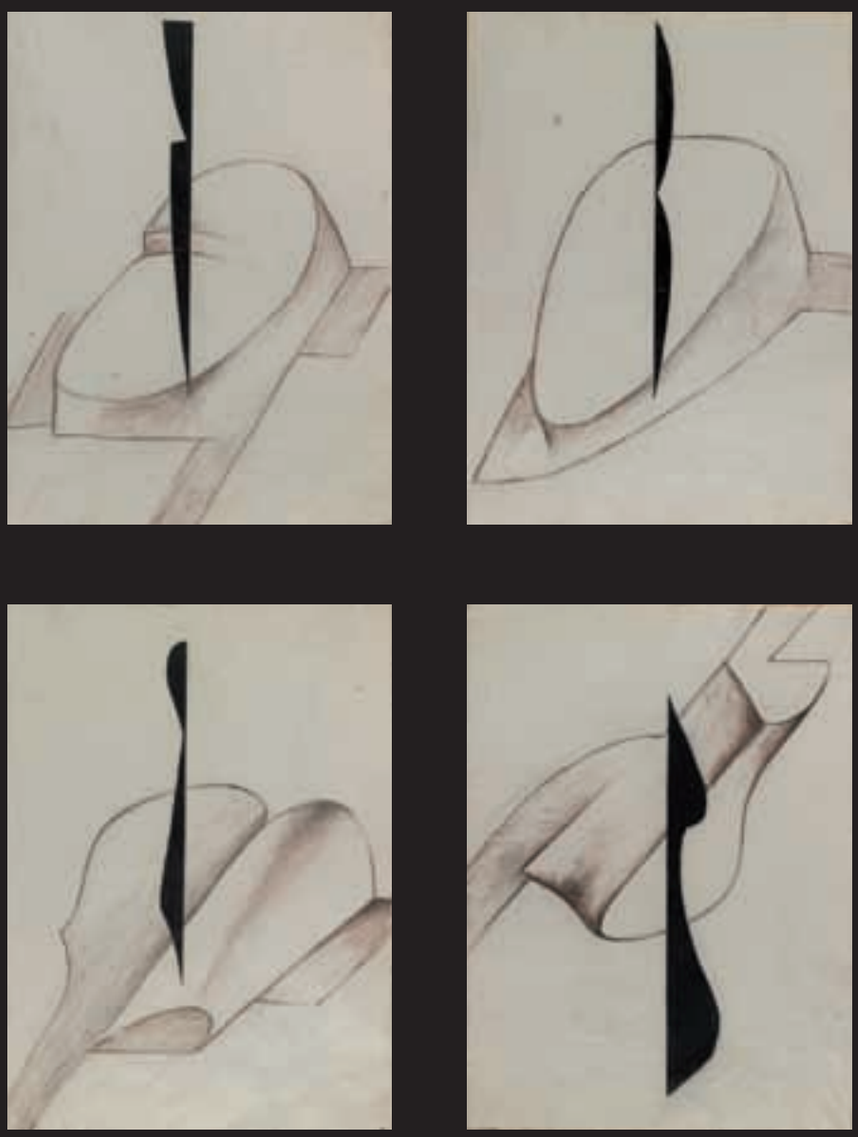


José Manuel Broto
De puntillas [On Tiptoes], 1981
Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm





Pepe Espaliú
Santo con sueño de perfil (PE-0037, 0038, 0040 and 0041-D) [Profile of Sleepy Saint], 1988
Conté pencil on paper, 51 x 38 cm each, four pieces

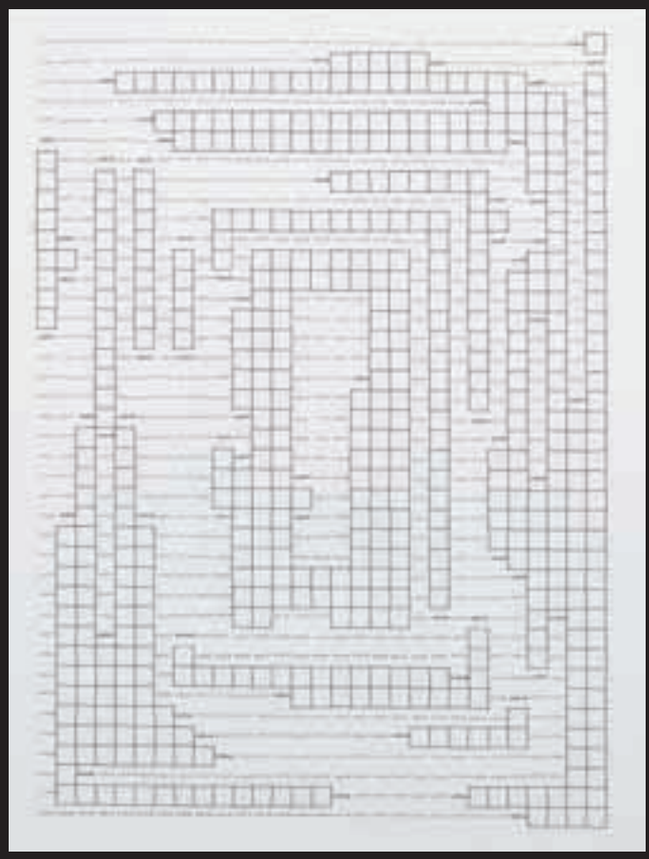


Elena Asins
Canons 49, 1989
Print on paper, 143 x 210 cm



Esther Ferrer
Untitled, Números primos (I y II) [Prime Numbers (I and II)], a series begun in the 1970s and continuing to the present day
Mixed media, 78 x 53 cm





Jordi Teixidor
Untitled, 1990
Oil on canvas, 190 x 350 cm





Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa
Jeune drapeau avec bouton [Young Flag with Pimple], 1992
Collage and acrylic on canvas, 130 x 130 cm

José María Yturralde
Díptico Posludio [Postlude Diptych], 1998-2002 (two pieces)
Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm each piece





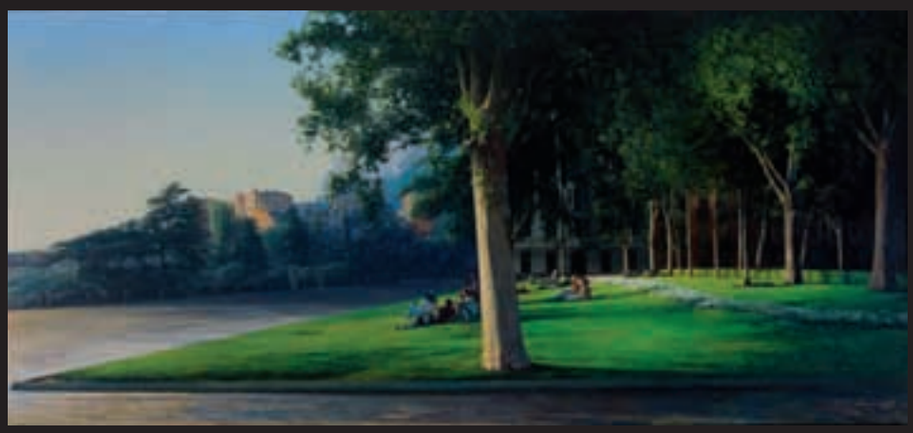


María Moreno
Jardín de poniente [West Garden], 2000
Oil on canvas mounted on board, 119 x 102 cm

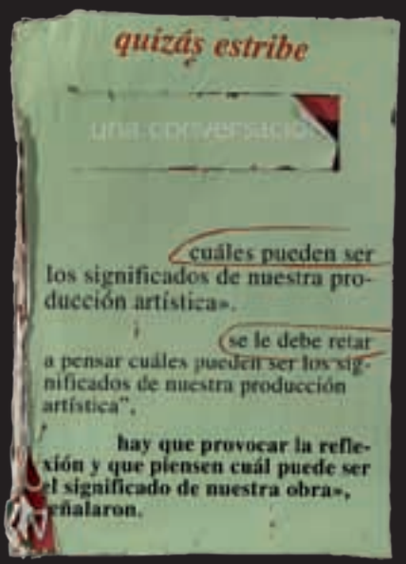
Alwin van der Linde
Jardines de Aranjuez [Aranjuez Gardens], ca 2002
Oil on canvas mounted on board, 122 x 160 cm

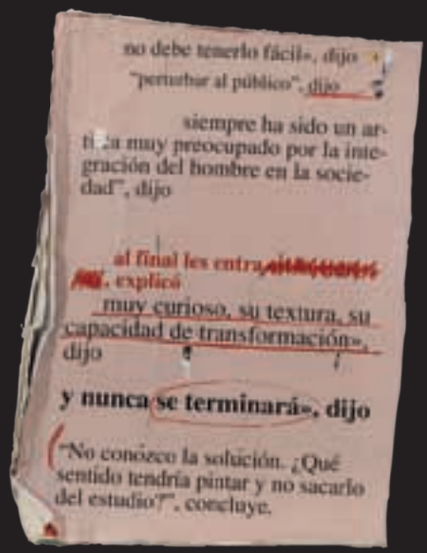


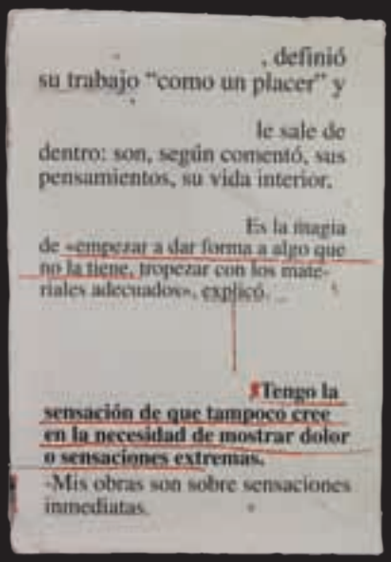
Clara Gangutia
Junio [June], ca 2003-05
Oil and watercolour on canvas, 75 x 102 cm

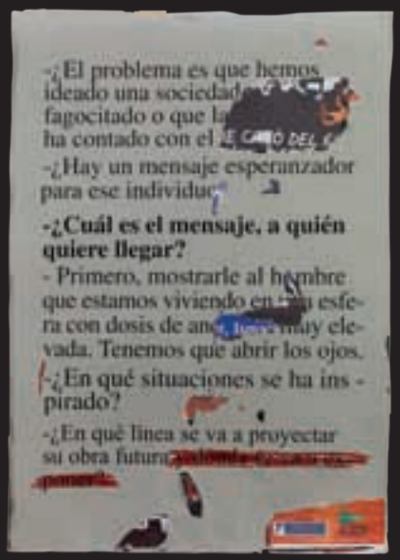


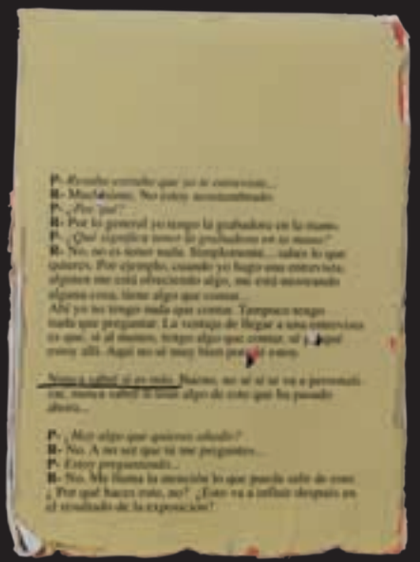
Guillermo Paneque
Untitled (*Algunas preguntas a un periodista)*
[Questions for a Reporter], ca 2012
Mixed media, posters with paint, graphite, India ink and vinyl (five pieces), 135 x 97 cm each













José María Sicilia
Eclipse # 2, 2006
Wax and oil on wood, 185 x 157 cm

Manolo Valdés
Dama con abanico [Woman with Fan], 2007
Mixed media on canvas, 200 x 150 cm



Pello Irazu
Umbral doble I [Double Threshold I], 2008
Paint on photographic support, 125.5 x 165.4 cm



Soledad Sevilla
Ocaso 2 [Sunset 2], 2009
Pigment on reinforced paper, 115 x 159 cm





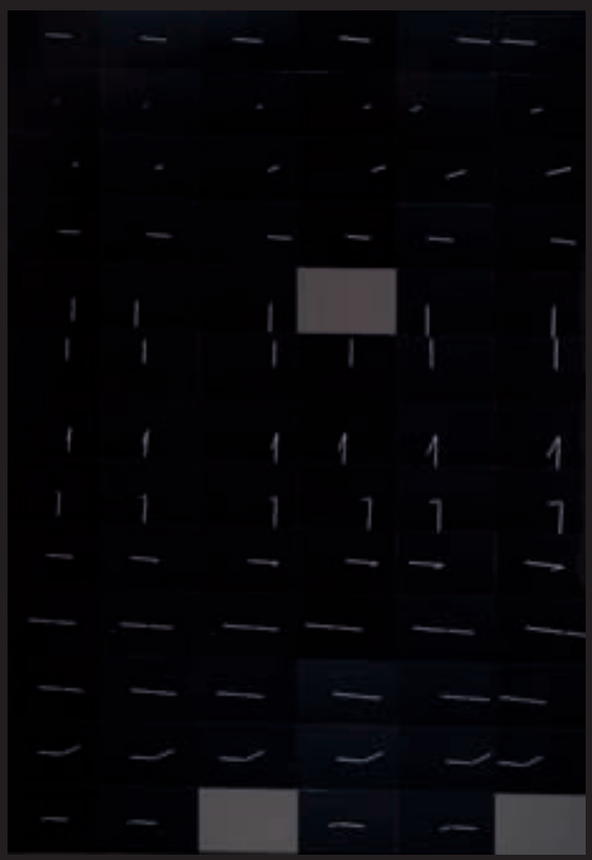
Ángela de la Cruz
Squashed, 2010
Oil on canvas, 123 x 123 cm

Guillermo Pérez Villalta
Naturaleza muerta [Still Life], 2010
Tempera on wood, 45 x 50 cm



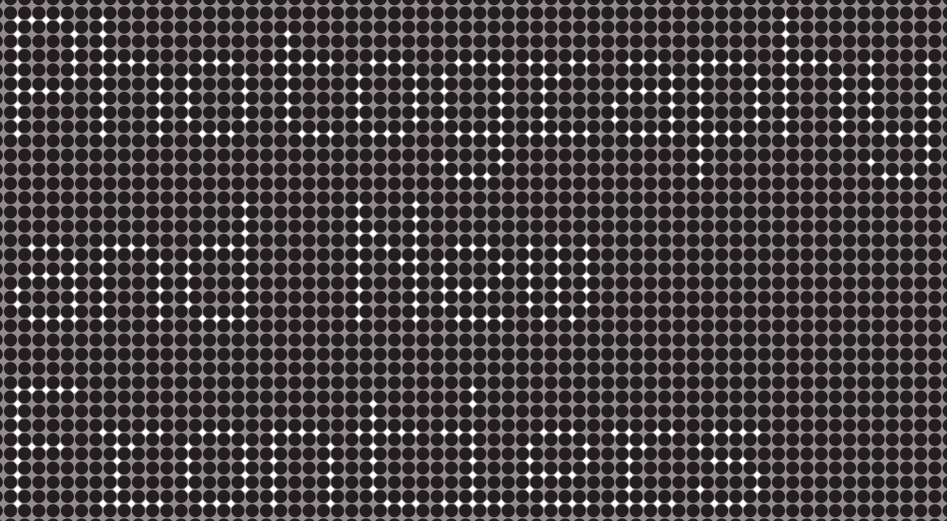
Sergio Prego
Secuencia Bug A1 [Bug Sequence A1] / *Secuencia miembro/tronco A1* [Limb/Trunk Sequence A1] / *Secuencia Bug A2* [Bug Sequence A2] / *Secuencia miembro/tronco A2* [Limb/Trunk Sequence A2], 2010
Photographs (75 / 78 / 77 / 75) on paper





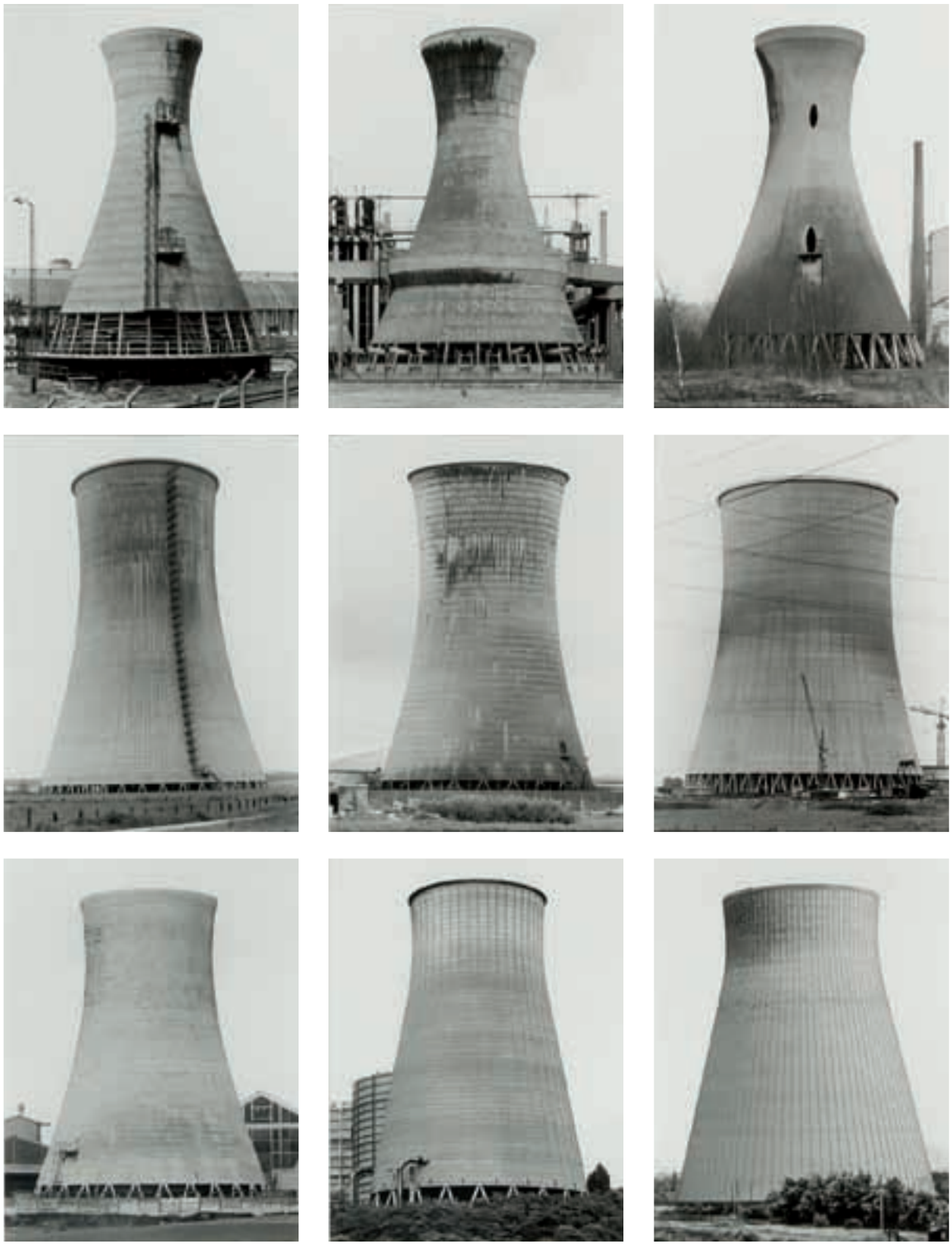






Bernd & Hilla Becher

Tours de refroidissement [Refridgeration Towers], 1972
Photographs, 95.5 x 77 cm





The systematic way in which the Bechers photographed and arranged different types of structures in Germany during the 1950s, sixties and seventies has something of entomological classification, state of reality and analysis of the differences of sameness. Their work tried to look directly at the tools of production of a country that considered itself industrial and which based its importance on this condition.

Like systematic scientists who visit significant places or look for individual animal species, placing them side by side to detect the common features and determine what behavioural patterns define them as geography or living beings, the Bechers photographed chimneys, water tanks, refrigeration towers, gas meters, mineshaft headframes, grain silos, blast furnaces and traditional houses with half-timber beams, always photographed full-frontal, somewhat raised and at the same height and distance. More than the architectural aspect, the sculptural presence of the elements is highlighted. With these registers, the couple created a detailed inventory, which, from the constructive and utilitarian perspective, provided a clear image of Germany, but in which the Germans were absent.

Despite the coldness, neutrality, routine arrangement and absence of colour, these compositions are reminiscent of the contemporary world of Pop Art: repetition and serialisation with minor variations on the same theme. Although the subjects for this German couple were very different from those of pop artists, they coincided in composition and form.

Francesca Woodman

Space 2, 1976
Photograph, 13.7 x 13.3 cm



The untimely death of Francesca Woodman at the age of twenty-two prevents us from knowing the evolution this interesting photographer may have experinced had she shown her work publicly during her short and tormented lifetime. Her photographs were taken with a similar intention as the person who writes down her thoughts in a diary, except that Woodman used images instead of words. Family conditions and heartbreak led her to produce a set of photographs in which her body, generally naked (the representation of innocence) and enclosed in a ramshackle room (metaphor for an interior breakdown – the artist ended up committing suicide) shows transformations based on a game of concealment and exhibition captured only by the eye of the camera.

Woodman's photographs contain meanings that can be interpreted from the dialectic of opposites: decrepit house versus young body, display versus hide, natural versus artifice…. In spite of the seemingly impenetrable nature of her photographs, they have a clear narrative desire, like isolated moments in a story between Gothic horror and psychoanalytical essay.

In this image a girl holds pieces of wallpaper, dark irregular teguments, hiding her face and her sex, her body camouflaged with the peeling wall against which she stands. The appearance is phantasmagorical and evanescent, like a representation of the passing of time. Solitude, fragility, abandonment and the representation of self also form part of the intentions of a creative world that has evident connections with the body art of her time.



Cindy Sherman



Untitled # 71, 1980
Photograph, 61 x 50.8 cm



Robert Mapplethorpe

Lowell Smith, 1981
Photograph, 51 x 41 cm

218 *Lucinda's Hands,* 1985
Photograph, 51 x 41 cm







The human body was unquestionably a subject of vital interest to Robert Mapplethorpe. Of the many aspects of the body, the photographer focused primarily on two – the form and the skin; skin as a covering of the form and skin as a sexual organ which, beyond specific areas, covers the entire body. Based on deeply planted classicist roots, Mapplethorpe observed the body, generally the male body, with the attention of the curious anthropologist and the closeness of an enamoured sculptor.

Mapplethorpe was particularly attracted to black men with Michelangelo-like musculature, converting his skin into a field of glistening lights, a perfect place for desire. The conjunction of sculptural poses with a polished tension of the epidermis resulted in extraordinarily powerful images. Bodies in neutral spaces, without connotations, only form and cover, gesture and smoothness, a language of pureness for skin no longer translucent but luminous from its darkest depths.

In this photograph, an exception, the artist concentrates on a very specific part of the body: two hands and a forearm, grasping the corner of a white board. The fingers and muscles take on a peculiar localised roughness, and generate smaller spaces than would a torso. Veins and joints describe a human typography.

Gerhard Richter

2.5.89-7.5.89, 1991
Six photographs, 34.9 x 50.8 cm each

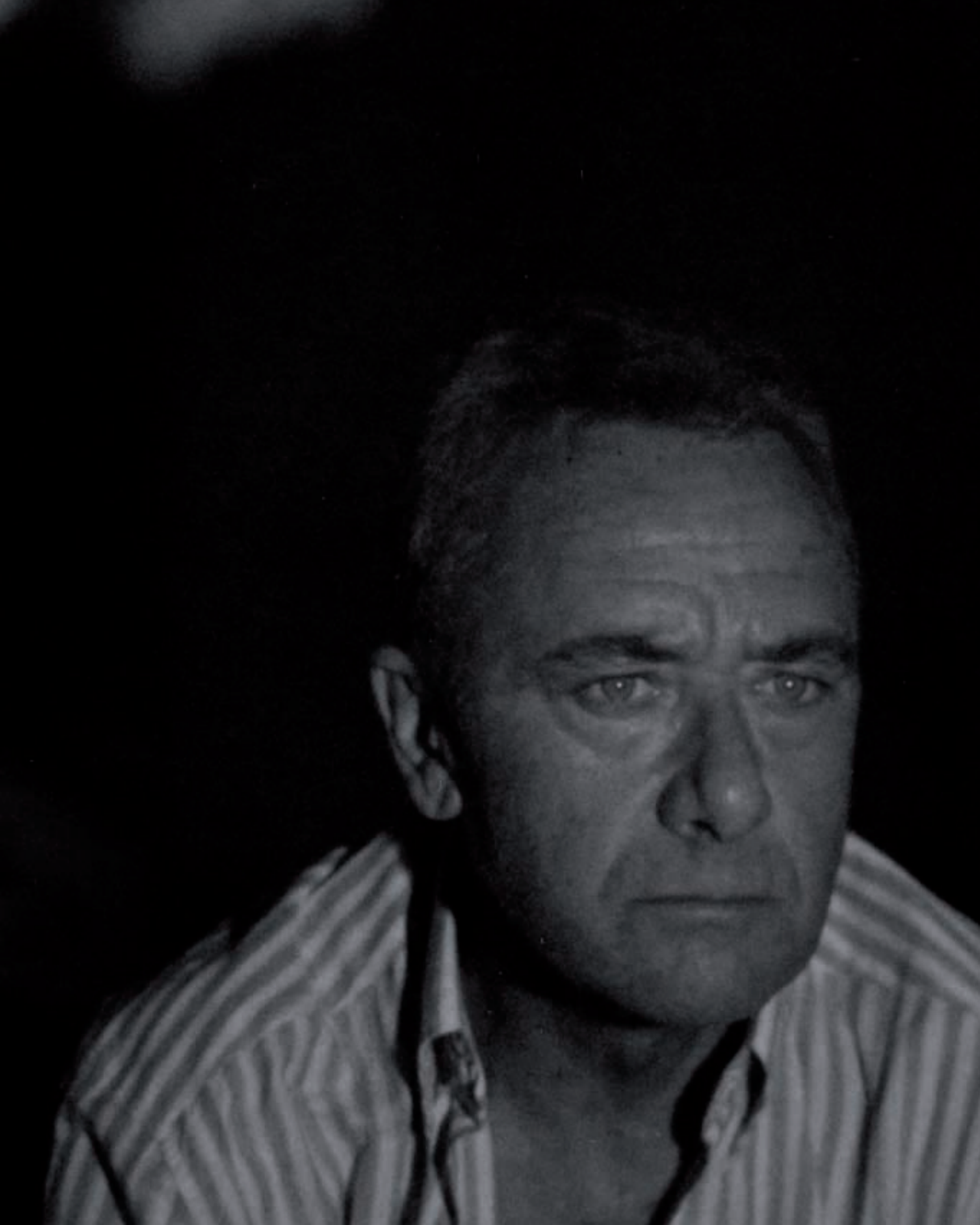


Richter is a painter who makes extensive use of photographs. Sometimes he uses them to create a painting and other times to directly paint over the photographic image. He takes photographs for the purpose of photography, never as a reference for painting, and later discovers that some of them can be used to make a painting. The idea of using images taken with a camera – sometimes blurry and initially not very attractive – originated in the 1960s at the beginning of his career. Using photographs as a base and painting over them with oils is a practice he began to develop in 1989. He generally uses colour photographs, not always taken by himself – sometimes he uses photographs by friends and family; when not completely hidden beneath a layer of paint, these small photographs are of landscapes, buildings or people in typical everyday situations, in other words, photographs like the ones all of us have in our homes and photo albums.

It is less common for this artist to produce black-and-white photographs with no pictorial intervention, such the work shown here, made the year he began to paint over emulsion photographic paper.

The scene takes place inside room, with all six images shot from the same angle. The space is inundated with shadows – larger or smaller – and one, two or three men move around the room performing ambiguous actions.

The moving figures are blurred which, together with the sinister presence that dominates the space, conveys a feeling of anxiety and oppression. The presentation of the six images together suggests a story, and the absence of paint determines that it is precisely the action of the figures and the arrangement of the images, like a polyptych, that the artist considered his creation. Both the room and the men recall Francis Bacon's paintings of caged figures and Francisco de Goya's madhouse yards.



Gabriel Orozco

226 *Broken Sidewalk, Maunalco, Mexico,* 1992
Photograph, 35.2 x 48 cm



Ladrillo en varillas [Wires Holding Bricks], 1993
Photograph, 35.1 x 47 cm



Erosion and time are two of the cornerstones of Gabriel Orozco's work. In his constant nomadism, Orozco says he belongs to no place in particular and that wherever he is, he is in the right place to appropriate any element he can find and then photograph and transform it with an unexpected interpretation. Everything can mean something, even the most trivial and irrelevant-looking objects – a rubbish bin, a crack in the kerb, a streetlight or a pile of objects at a flea market.

Orozco is interested in the traces of time left on objects, whether natural (like stones worn smooth by water, which he then carves) or artificial (like concrete chipped away by pounding and later 'embellished' with colour). The commonplace, movement and memory intertwine to transcend what we might consider uninspiring before Orozco shows it to us and makes us see it through his eyes. The identification of the object that captures his attention is related to its morphological oddity, as in this photograph.

In the image of the kerb, we can see the coexistence of several layers of concrete and stone, and on top of these, a layer of paint. Texture, volume and colour suggest a sculptural vision. Marks and wavy lines on these skins seem to speak of a workman-artist with a sophisticated predilection for precious details. Human action in the deliberate primary execution and human action in the fortuitous final formalisation.



Thomas Ruff

Nacht 5 III [Night 5 III], 1993
Photograph, 190 x 190 cm





Much like the colleagues of his generation, Thomas Ruff, another disciple of the Bechers, maintains some of the premises of his teachers but changes others or adds innovative variations. After his series of portraits of young Germans in the format of passport photographs brought him international acclaim – and which, in a certain sense built on the series of 'professionals' made by August Sander in the 1920s, only this time with anonymous characters – Ruff broadened his interests to include night-time imaging, starry skies, Internet pornography, chromatic abstraction, rationalist architecture presented in blurred images, landscapes…

Many of Ruff's images are more manipulated than actually executed by the artist. Using magazines, books and, most importantly, the Internet, he makes the humdrum relevant and significant by altering these appropriated materials; the changes are generally minimal, barely perceptible, but with enough thrust to convert them into something else.

His images of mundane buildings in soulless locations taken with night vision cameras, like the print shown here, make use of the green colour and mysterious desolate setting to give the disconcerting idea that something terrible could happen at any moment and that it will be observed and recorded by an unidentifiable eye that does not rest.

Hiroshi Sugimoto

Celtic Sea, Boscastle, 1994
Photograph, 50.3 x 63.7 cm



This photograph is part of Hiroshi Sugimoto's seascape series, arguably his best-known series of images. In all of them the line of the horizon – either clear because of the clean air or blurry because of the fog rising from the sea – splits the pictures in half. All shot at a downward angle, the pictures are taken from different places around the planet, showing the infinite variability of three natural elements: the sea, the sky and the horizon where the two meet.

The work is radically minimalist, in black-and-white, with an exceptional timelessness, captured in scenes that have enjoyed the same simplicity for perhaps millions of years. If Axel Hütte, looking inland toward the mountains and intricate forests, conveys the impression of unaltered nature in its rocky roughness in spite of changes caused by vegetation, Sugimoto does so by aiming his camera in the opposite direction, where none of this exists, only changes in the atmosphere, natural light (solar or lunar) and gentle waves on the ocean's surface.

Extreme photographs of nature are shot with a high-definition lens and the positive image is only enlarged to twice the size, achieving a sharp image that reveals details unseen by the human eye, the subtle differences in things that seem the same. This ancestral home, air and water, reminds us that is where our origins lie and that contemplating it give us a sense of security and calm.

Thomas Struth



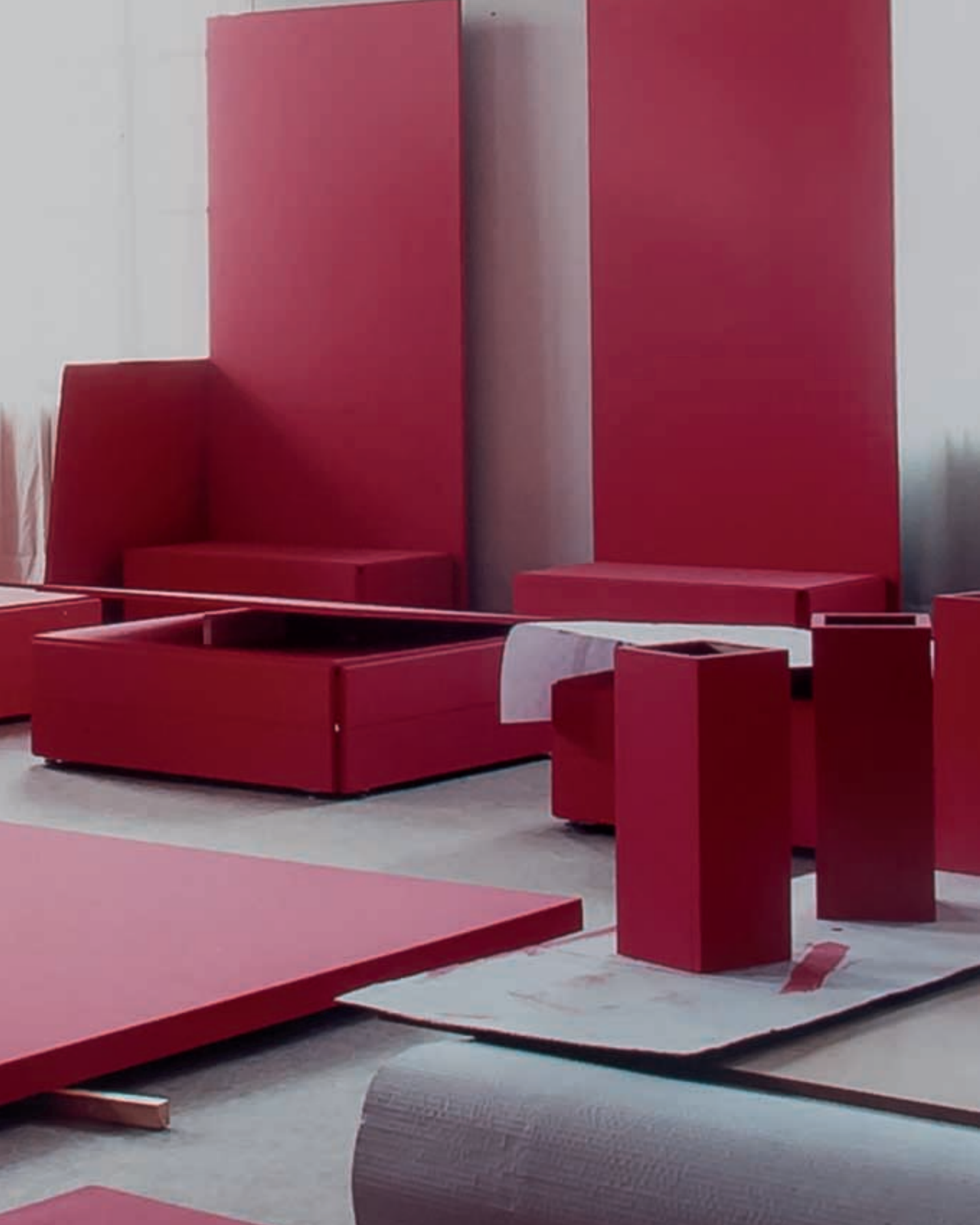
Jiangxi Zhong Lu, Shanghai, 1996
Photograph, 123 x 144 cm



Candida Höfer

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden I, 1999
Photograph, 120 x 120 cm





The Bechers created a ‘school’ and, as a result, generated disciples. They were exceptional teachers and some of their followers have been brilliant. Candida Höfer is a good example. She has systemised and compiled another type of architectures and spaces, but has done so with the same determination to inventory, with the same coldness and similar personal silence to let the place speak for itself. There are no people in her images either, but rather the traces of their actions or, better said, the places where the traces can be preserved or represented. The actions that interest Höfer are those that take place in noble spaces of culture: museums, libraries, archives, theatres… But not just any space of this type – places in which the magnificence of the staging runs parallel to the excellence of the objectives. In contrast with her teachers’ exteriors, Höfer prefers interiors.

With the same insistence, searching for symmetrical composition and taken from a low perspective – or at least it seems low because of the monumentality of most of the spaces she photographs – Höfer follows the same path as the Bechers, bringing colour and magnificence, but dispensing with fragmented composition.

Axel Hütte

Island Fog, 2002
Photograph, 117.8 x 147.3 cm



Axel Hütte is yet another disciple, within the Iberdrola Collection, of Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts. In his case, we also see the insistence on a theme, nature, a subject so closely tied to the pictorial tradition that at first it may seem of little interest to today's photographer. However, he has managed to imbue it with the romantic and mysterious connotation characteristic of early nineteenth-century German painters like Caspar Friedrich, renewing the language of landscape. As a photographer, Hütte deals with reality, setting aside the idealisation of the imagination.

His contact with nature usually takes place in seemingly untouched virgin spaces, even though he knows that all landscapes are a cultural interpretation and therefore something that is intellectually collaborated and never completely pure. Hütte travels to remote jungles and mountains, uninhabited islands shrouded in mist and deep gorges – in short, anywhere that looks like it has never before been touched by man. From these places come landscapes that seem ancient, prehistoric, emerging from primitive darkness. He is interested in their tellurian nature, not their exoticism.

A small part of his photographic world looks at the horizons of modern cities, but only at the artificial illumination of night-time. The rest is forgotten.

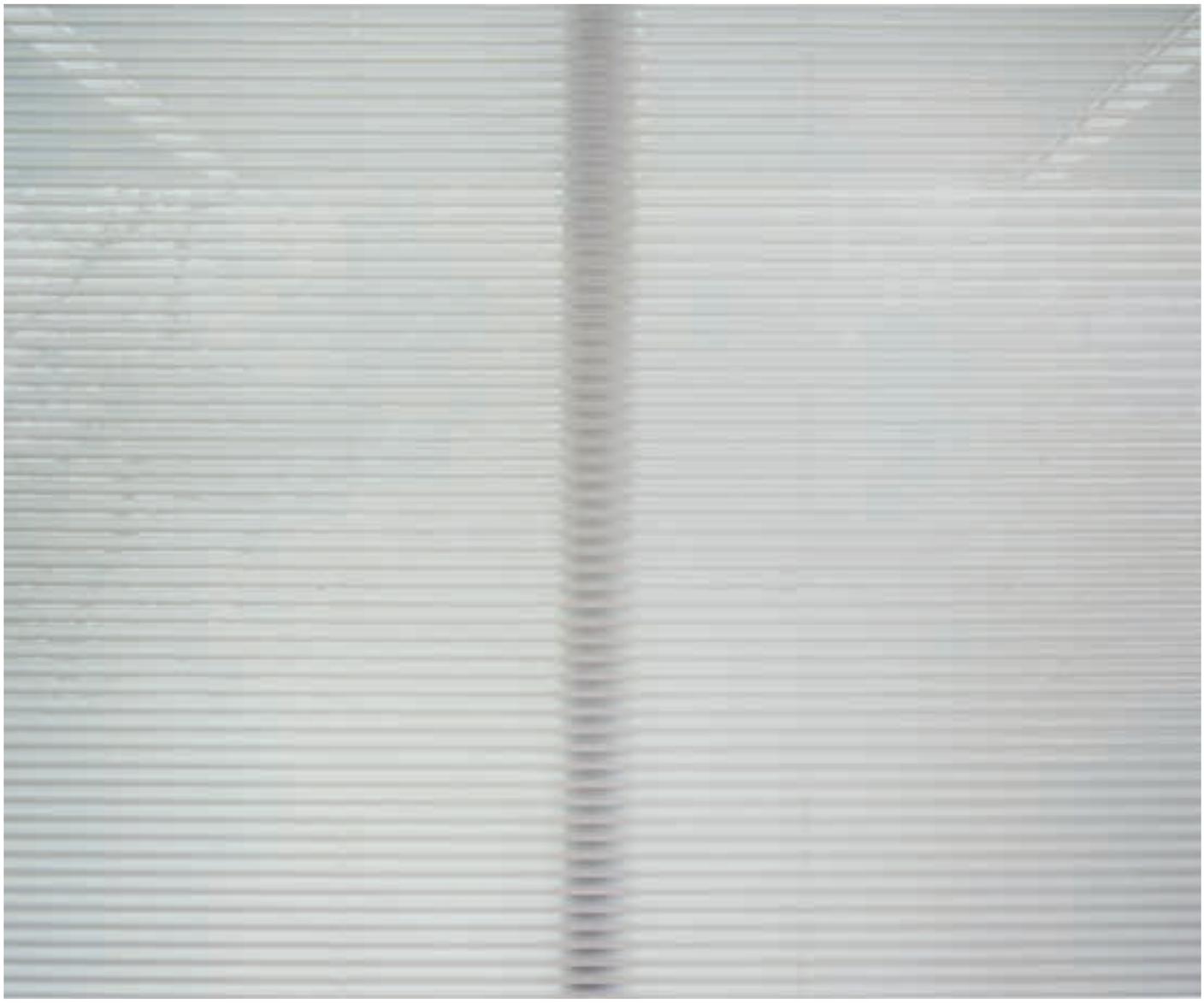


Luisa Lambri

248 *Untitled (Strathmore Apartments # 45),* 2002
Photograph, 110 x 130 cm



Untitled (Strathmore Apartments # 20), 2002
Photograph, 110 x 130 cm



The subtle variability of light is the raw material with which Luisa Lambri works. It is all light for Lambri, and little more. Her series of photographs in front of windows, through which she captures the outside light by opening or closing window shutters at different angles, or tilting the slats of Venetian blinds, are a wonder of photographic minimalism. Much the same can be said about a good part of the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto and Aitor Ortiz.

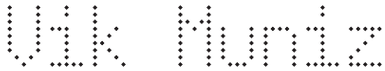
Lambri's work is better understood when seen in series rather than single photographs, although every picture reveals her interest in capturing the elusive daylight. Her series show the extraordinary richness and eloquence the photographer captures using so few elements. The shutters and Venetian blinds are used like the scales of a mutant skin to control light and shadows by making small changes which, nonetheless, bring about large contrasts. On rare occasions we are offered a glimpse through these membranes of the outdoor world, but generally it is only light.

The interior architecture is depersonalised – even though Lambri does photograph interiors designed by renowned architects. The space disappears to give way to elegant abstractions, in much the same sense as the 'spatialist' paintings by Lucio Fontana. A space that disappears by constantly changing the sunlight/darkness, making it different at every moment, achieving maximum neutrality by extracting the most significant elements that might inhabit the space.

David Maisel

Terminal Mirage 18, 2004
Photographic print, 122 x 122 cm

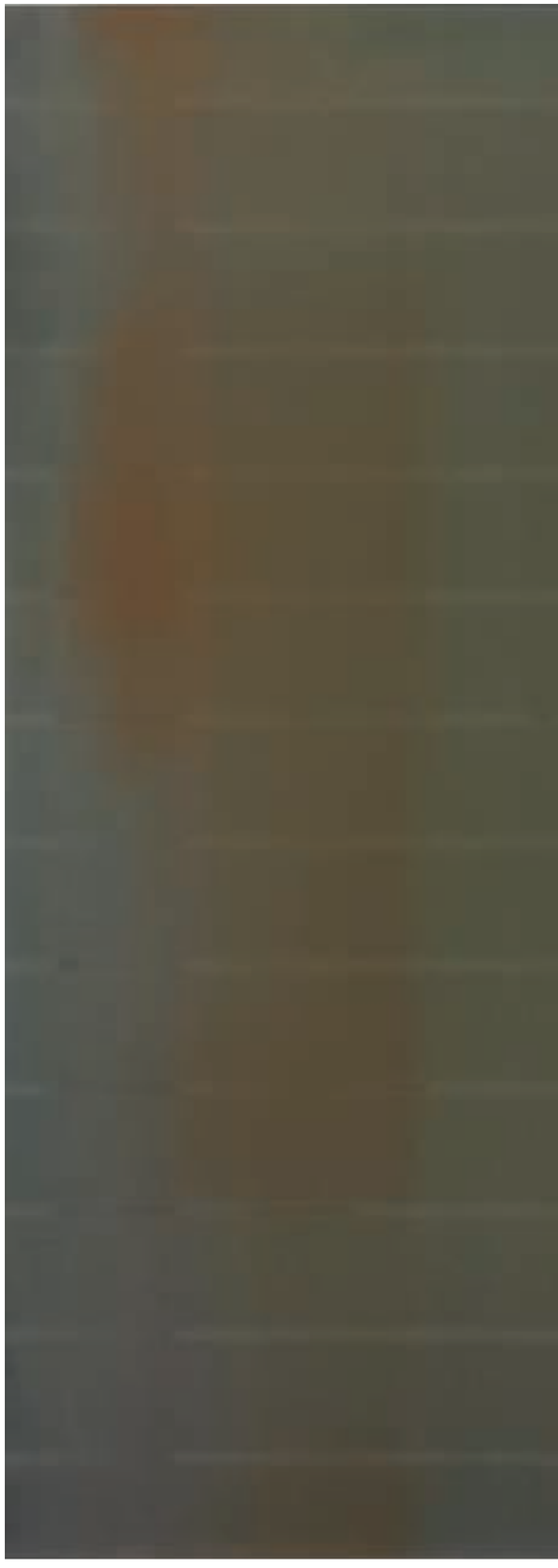




Young Girl Sewing, After Vilhelm Hammershøi, 2006
Chromogenic print on aluminium, 109.2 x 101.6 cm



Wolfgang Tillmans



8704-23, 2007
Print on Forex, 180 x 240 cm



Gerardo Custance



Somosierra. Comunidad de Madrid [Somosierra, Madrid], 2008
Mineral ink on cotton paper, 150 x 100 cm



Cy Twombly





Angels' Trumpets. Gaeta, 2008
Photographs, 43.2 x 27.9 cm each





The sculptures Twombly created in his early career are much lesser known than the paintings he produced over six decades. And the public is even less familiar with the photographs taken in his later years. That is what makes this triptych from the Iberdrola Collection so special.

The subject of flowers, however, was not new to the artist. In the winter of 1973-74 he produced two series of *Natural History* collages and lithographs based on mushrooms and trees, although he was mostly interested in the leaves of the trees. Later he became interested in the shape of the lotus flower. With his characteristically instinctive and barely formalised language, he took all of these interests to his paintings. Twombly did not try to be a botanist, but rather a painter who distilled his work from the memory of something else, this time, plants. Sometimes it seems that his coloristic splotches and scribbles try not to evoke the shape the flower, the visible part, but rather its fragrance, the invisible unrepeatable part.

These pictures of angel's trumpets were taken with the same apparent abandon with which Twombly handled the paintbrush – without focusing or framing the subject. The interest seems to centre not on the flower itself, but on one or more of its attributes. Photograph ed in the dark of night, when the flowers release a fragrance that attracts bats (which play a main role in their pollination), they evoke an intoxicating and somewhat hypnotic state that blurs the vision. The highly toxic alkaloids can be fatal when ingested, but the flower is still used in shamanic rituals, linking this work to Twombly's paintings of mushrooms.



Willie Doherty



Out of Body (II) – Haunted, 2010
Colour print, 134 x 106.5 cm

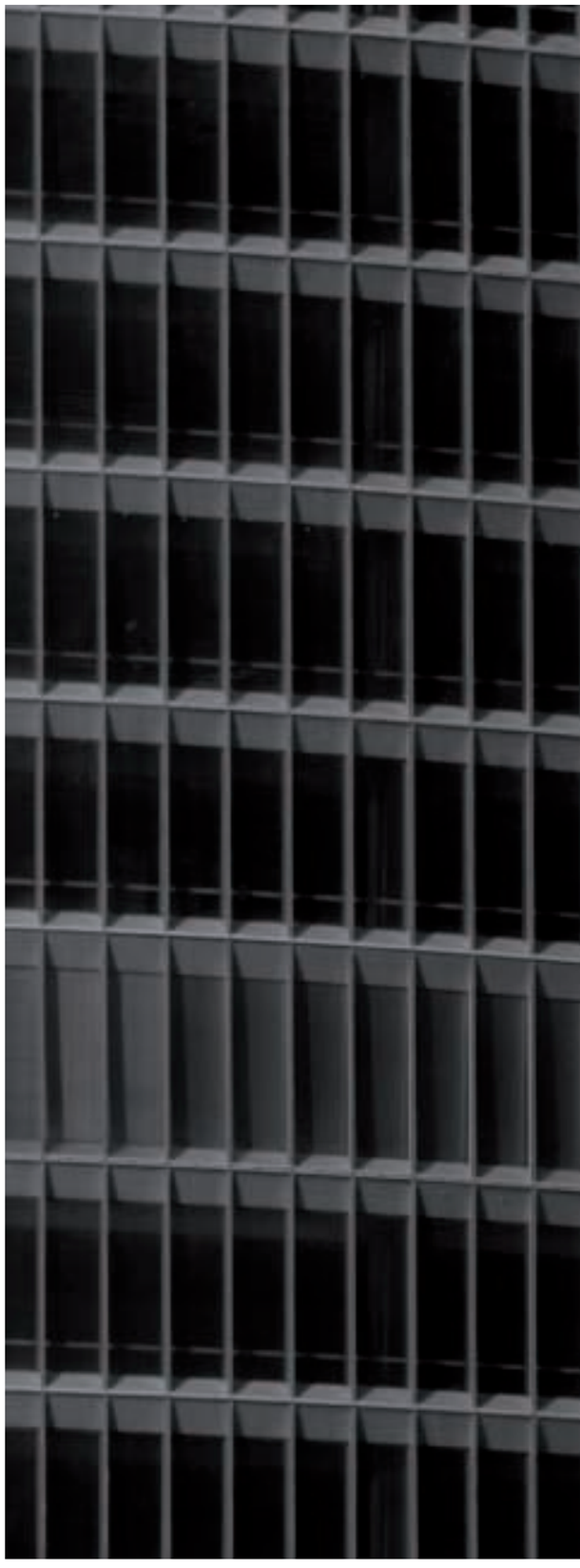


Hannah Collins

The Fragile Feast, Lighthouse, Galicia, 2011
Photographic print, 130 x 130 cm



Aitor Ortiz



Torre Iberdrola 003, 2011
Direct printing on aluminium, 138 x 180 cm





Although Aitor Ortiz was never a student of the Bechers, he could well have been judging by his work. Since early in his career, Ortiz's work has focused, almost obsessively, on architecture. His are the structures of buildings that, when finished, are subsumed beneath layers of walls and ornamentation meant to embellish what to him is already beautiful in its own right.

The power of reinforced concrete, with its slightly rough texture, infinitely repeating vertical columns, horizontal slabs and greyness, has all the poetry needed to draw out images that could illustrate a story whose plot takes place in a city halfway between science fiction and Jorge Luis Borges or Italo Calvino. The construction of buildings, ports or infrastructure of any type is a process that involves a certain speed and which hides what is being accomplished until it is completely finished. Ortiz takes advantage of those transitory stages in construction which disappear or change when the next stage is reached, to trap a beauty that is ephemeral and incomprehensible yet real.

This time the skin is what interested the photographer in this picture. The contrast between two translucent skins: the skin of the Iberdrola Tower and the skin of the Deusto University library. The order and glazed regularity of the library harmonise with the gentle curves of the two buildings, converging at a point in which they blend together.

Begoña Zubero

E-42 Serie PCI n.º 3 [E-42 Series PCI no. 3], 2013
Print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper 310 gsm, 150 x 215 x 10 cm



Begoña Zubero's career has taken her to different places that reveal the many interests that have attracted her camera. Her long journey has included the poetry of abandoned places and objects, the monumentality of forgotten or abandoned buildings of political power in the former Soviet states, and abstract experimentation based on lights and spherical transparencies.

Her recent residence in Rome has uncovered a classicist component of the eye of an artist who was already used to urban photography (Bilbao, Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow…). The set of images taken at the Palazzo della Civiltà show a taste for powerfully simple compositions. In this photograph, taken in one of the corridors of the Palazzo, Zubero casts an unexpected – but very Roman – glance at the city. With a full frontal symmetrical perspective, the image follows a series of pillars and vaults that lead to an exterior arch. Beyond the arch itself, Rome appears hybrid and distant, the lower horizon occupied by villas scattered amongst the gardens and woods (the Rome imbedded in the collective memory, not the monumental and recognisable city, but the one we envisage and sense from images and films), and the upper horizon crowned by the wall of present-day, dry, massive and uninspiring buildings. The architectural setting is reminiscent of Fra Angelico and Piero de la Francesca

The prominent feature is the sky: grandiose, spectacular, luminous. The symmetry is slightly broken by the diagonal shadows cast by sunlit columns. The small puddle formed by the rainwater is a mirror that partially reflects the columns. The monumental, the eternal and the fragmentary: in other words, Rome.



José Manuel Ballester



Nocturno Bilbao 1 [Night-time Bilbao], 2013
Digital print on Hahnemühle Baryta paper, 86 x 180 cm





The city contemplated by José Manuel Ballester has an interior order and light. This zoning is clear: in the foreground, the green expanse of gardens crisscrossed by paths for walking and relaxing; in the middle, the orderly grid of streets that channel the energy and heartbeat of the city; and in the upper part, the wild nature of mountains submerged in the night. The light is different in each area: precise and disperse on the grass, cold and orderly along the closest streets, becoming warm and disperse in the more distant neighbourhoods, and finally an absolute lack of light in the background.

On a clear day like this the city looks like an active disciplined organism. Up close it appears rational and strict but in the distance, it seems exciting and unpredictable. The city conveys life force and clear ideas, but also the dark uncertainty of an invisible horizon. The night that settles over the city, however, is a blanket of protection, not at all threatening. The city has trust in its order and its light.

The series of photographs of Bilbao taken by Ballester from the heights of the Iberdrola Tower reveals a city unknown before the building was erected. We can now see from a new location and a new perspective what we once knew at street level. The city is the same but feels different. In this way, we can see another face of a city which – like all cities animated with an inner life force – has infinite faces.

Mona Hatoum
Performance Still, 1985-95
Gelatin silver print mounted on aluminium, 76.5 x 110.2 cm



José Manuel Ballester
Barrio de colores. Berlín
[Neighbourhood of Colours. Berlin], 2004
Photograph, Fuji Crystal Archive paper, 67 x 150 cm



Bohnchang Koo
White # 6, 2005
Photograph, 130 x 167 cm



Bohnchang Koo
Group of Soaps 3, 2009
Photograph, 159 x 99 cm





Ixone Sádaba
'Leviathan' Series, 2008
Photograph, 125 x 80 cm

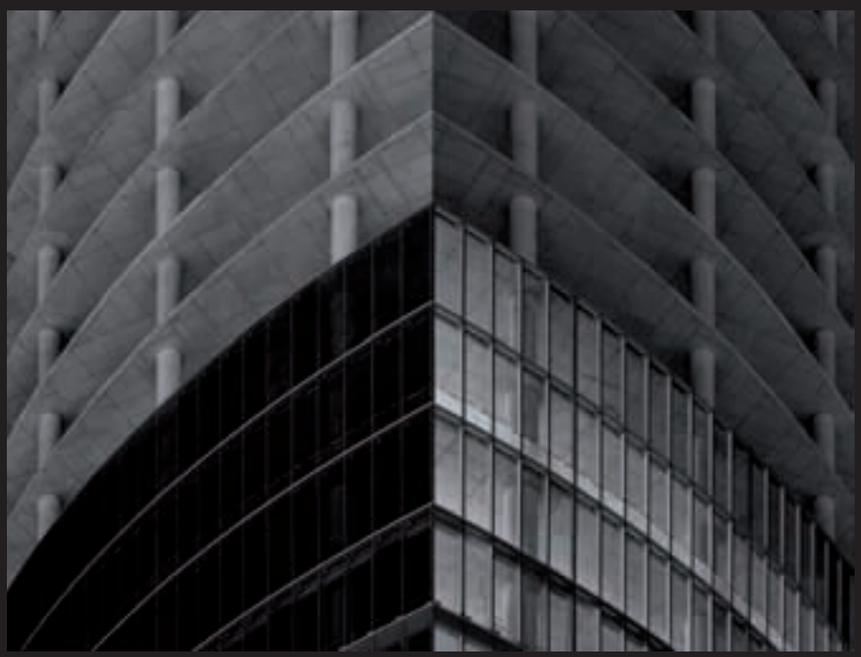
Ixone Sádaba
'Leviathan' Series, 2008
Photograph, 125 x 180 cm



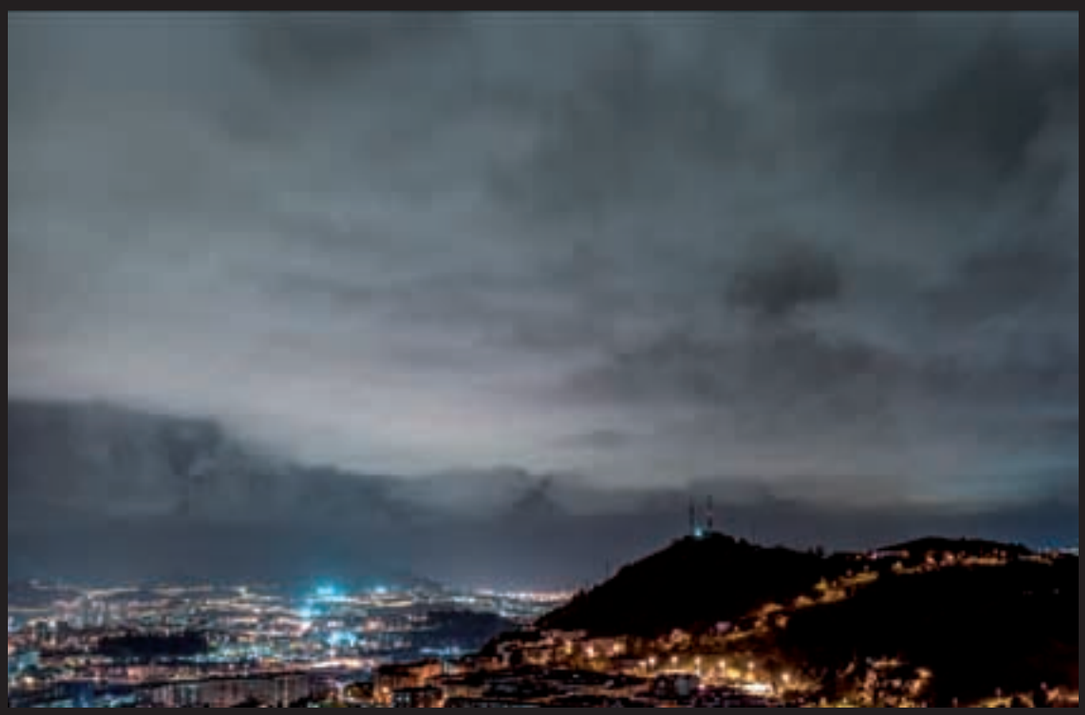
Aitor Ortiz
Torre 001 [Tower 001], 2011
Direct print on aluminium, 143 x 190 cm



Aitor Ortiz
Torre 002 [Tower 002], 2011
Direct print on aluminium, 143 x 190 cm



José Manuel Ballester
Nocturno Bilbao 2 [Night-time Bilbao], 2013
Digital print on Hahnemühle Baryta paper, 86 x 180 cm



Javier González de Durana (Bilbao, 1951)

Lecturer in Contemporary History at the University of the Basque Country since 1986. Member of the board of trustees at the Museum of Fine Arts of Bilbao (1986-2002). Director of the Rekalde gallery in Bilbao (1992-2002). Member of the board of directors for the Guggenheim Bilbao Consortium (1992-1998). Procurement advisor for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1993-1997). Director of ARTIUM Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz (2002-2008). Art director of TEA, Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Santa Cruz de Tenerife (2008-2011). Managing director of Fundación Cristóbal Balenciaga Fundazioa, Getaria (2011-2014). Board member of Fundación Ortega Muñoz. Corresponding Academician of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid, since 1995. Member of the Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País since 2013. Corresponding Academician of the Real Academia Canaria de Bellas Artes de San Miguel Arcángel, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, since 2013.

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