



OTZAN

A selection of special projects from the gallery CarrerasMugica

June – July 2016

The Galería Elba Benítez is pleased to announce the coming exhibition of artists from the Basque Country, organized in conjunction with the gallery CarrerasMugica and opening on June 9, 2016, at 20 h.

OTZAN. A selection of special projects from the gallery CarrerasMugica, is the second segment of an exhibition series organized by CarrerasMugica and funded by the proceeds of the Arte y Mecenazgo Award, which the gallery was awarded in 2015. The earlier exhibition, entitled *Múltiples Mundos*, consisted of a selection of works from the Galería Elba Benítez's program and was hosted by CarrerasMugica in Bilbao in September 2015.

OTZAN will offer a representative sampling of the diversity of artistic languages currently in use among the selected artists: Elena Aitzkoa, Lorea Alfaro, Zigor Barayazarra, Josu Bilbao, June Crespo, Raúl Domínguez, Oier Iruretagoiena and Jon Otamendi.

ON THE EXHIBITION

One of the most pressing issues affecting contemporary art galleries today is the question of how to introduce promising new artists into our rosters and programming. A gallery takes on a commitment to exhibit the artists it represents every two, three or four years; and if it has been running for a certain length of time then it normally has a broad stable of artists, which means that its programming can become a closed circle with the subsequent risk of becoming stale and losing the vital connection with the young artists who are gradually joining the contemporary art scene. The formula we have employed at CarrerasMugica to resolve this dilemma is to set aside a specific space in our gallery, which we call our "Hall", exclusively to host site-specific projects created by young artists. These projects are programmed alongside our usual list of exhibitions in the gallery's main space, called "Nave". The intervention projects fulfil a certain set of criteria: 1) to be created expressly for the specific space of our "Hall"; 2) the format and technique are left to the artist's discretion; 3) the project should lend a particular emphasis to more experimental aspects.

When the Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo awarded us its prize in 2015 in the Art Gallery category we decided to put the prize money toward another issue that also concerns us, which is to say *inter-gallery collaboration*. We firmly believe that it is essential for galleries to pool efforts to promote artists and to foster collecting; and we believe that, generally speaking, galleries do not spend enough time or energy in looking for synergies by means of working closely together. For this reason, we invited our good friend Elba Benítez to organise an exhibition in our space with works by artists on her gallery's roster. The exhibition was called *Multiple Worlds* (Múltiples Mundos) and ran from 17 September through 14 November 2015 coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the opening of Galería Elba Benítez in Madrid. And now *OTZAN. A selection of special projects from the gallery CarrerasMugica* is the return show in this mutual collaboration. In this case, following Elba Benítez's suggestion, we have focused on our youngest artists, the ones CarrerasMugica showcases with interventions in our "Hall". The Basque word *otzan* could be roughly translated into English as *gentle, docile, pacific, open, honest and direct*. It is often used to describe noble and submissive animals, but also people and communities. After that, all interpretations are valid.

CarrerasMugica

Galería Elba Benítez would like to thank CarrerasMugica for having instigated this innovative inter-gallery exchange, and also for its steadfast commitment with all aspects of contemporary art; we also extend our gratitude to Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo for its dedication to our sector; and above all else, we wish to thank all the artists who have taken part in the exhibition.

Project made in collaboration with the gallery CarrerasMugica, Bilbao, Arte y Mecenazgo Award 2015, powered by Obra Social "la Caixa".



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Elena Aitzkoa (Apodaca, Álava, 1984)

Elena Aitzkoa works with the processes of sculpture and poetry, sometimes expanding her field of action into the realm of performance and video, and frequently using drawing and painting as tools. Her practice combines an ongoing process of formal experimentation, both in the studio and writing, with specific moments of contact with a particular environs or public. On these occasions, she engages directly with people, employing a hybrid, invented and prejudice-free technique to establish the closest contact possible.

Her sculptural output, the core focus of her practice in recent years, strives to embrace heterogeneity within one single body and to enable the coexistence of different bodies in the same space. She works directly with the physical world, at all times connected with her surrounding environs in order to reactivate materials and life experiences. To a certain degree, her practice is a defence of trial and error as a method to arrive at an experiential form that gives account of its make-up and its possible meanings. Above all, she is interested in how things are made as a step prior to understanding their desire, their poetic potential and their fate.

Lorea Alfaro (Estella, Navarra, 1982)

For her projects involving interventions in public spaces, Lorea Alfaro combines photography, video, painting and sculpture without distinction. The groundbase for her work are objects and amateur processes culled from popular culture which she transmutes into situations in which they can no longer be understood; situations that require the same mechanisms that led to these processes in the first place, using materials anyone can identify with.

Her latest project makes use of textiles as a medium to bring to life the result of a series of prior works such as *Deux Negresses*, *Ele*, *Telón Thug Life*, *Paretara* and *Paretara Bi*, which have to do with a sensation of extensiveness, surfaces and skin. The superimposition of different layers, each with their own individual structure, applied over certain forms (a tunnel, a notice board, a curtain, a corridor in a gallery...) adds extra levels of complexity, imbuing them with newfound values, new ways of presenting themselves and of engaging with the other.

Zigor Barayazarra (Bilbao, Vizcaya, 1976)

In his practice, Zigor Barayazarra constructs meanings yet doesn't entirely fill them. His motivation and creative approach is underpinned by a need to react and interact with reality, influenced by his interest in art's capacity to redefine the mechanisms that fabricate meaning, and its ability to show us our degree of subordination to them.

Through a process of plastic experimentation he seeks to underscore the meeting points between disciplines, in such a way that the focus is lent to the relationship between the different juxtaposed symbols. Materials, processes and discourses redefine the mechanisms that give meaning to an object, subjectivising spaces, transcending boundaries and expanding models, and in consequence proposing a becoming of new meanings.

Josu Bilbao (Bermeo, Vizcaya, 1978)

The artist says: "Artistry, ventilation shaft, a widening to be able to live here and now and not have to swallow the whole convention. Sculptural processes as access to the unbreakable link between the worlds of thought-speech and matter-energy that remains beneath. The voice because of poetry, poetry just because. // The West, literate, destroys all before it. Orderly, correctly, properly, like that, oh yeah, well done. // We say *asàska* to express a certain kind of relief, like an emotional fulfilment or an emptying. And we say it through a hole. What are languages made of? How can a body that has been broken speak? Colonized sculpture, lap, mother's being saves u. All or none. // Calling to the ultimate act of power and knowledge. Fall down, tower."

June Crespo (Pamplona, 1982)

June Crespo's art practice is predicated on the experimental use of the reproduction of the image and how to exploit it within the field of graphic art and sculptural installation. She addresses sculpture from an all-encompassing optic, producing objects that are often situated on the boundaries of assemblage and collage.

In a process half-way between the *objet trouvé* and the logic of the *bricoleur* indebted to Lévi-Strauss, Crespo's works emanate from an affective and associative engagement with materials she has previously collected or made without any specific end purpose. The elements she surrounds herself with are activated by a combinatory method of chance meetings and fleeting arrangements. And it is precisely in this process where the specificity of the materials is subordinated to new interrelations and varying forms of disassociation and appropriation.

Raúl Domínguez (Baracaldo, Vizcaya, 1984)

Raúl Domínguez uses manifold technical resources and graphic registers in his drawings based on an accumulation of brushstrokes, blotches and stains, which he uses to set in place a relationship between the prints and forms of landscape and the very act of drawing. Placing himself on the limits of figuration, his drawings acquire a texture that coalesces the near and the far on the same plane. Each work is instigated by an image, situating points, lines and stains on the support in a highly personal technique rooted in his engagement with the theme, which can be intuited as it advances.

Thematically speaking, his work deploys a paradoxical landscape that interlaces the urban fabric, outlying residual areas and a parcel of nature that does not find a place for itself. The stories that take place here infuse the scene and leave a strange, yet familiar sensation. They are images of spaces in which life experiences are inseparable from the other elements of the landscape, at times situating peripheral, dreamlike or insignificant events at the centre of the narrative. The place is thus depicted as a process, in opposition to the toponymy and the name.

The works are presented directly on the wall, often unframed, to ensure more direct access to their material reality.

Oier Iruretagoiena (Rentería, Gipúzcoa, 1988)

Oier Iruretagoiena operates on the crossroads between sculpture, sound and the written word, with a special emphasis on their interrelations. He is particularly concerned with the ambiguity and unease generated by the conflict between different co-existing qualities, for instance, an attraction which is at once threatening, tenderness that is repulsive, the familiar which is uncanny and so on. His latest works include objects, mural texts and sound installations, among others.

Cabezas II comprises two pieces taken from the shape of the human head, hanging iconoclastically from hooks on a wall. It forms part of the artist's ongoing exploration of Basque myths, beliefs and customs. His incursions into various places of interest following ethnographic readings have given rise to an archive of tales, customs and chronicles of historic events that cut across each other to produce many possible interpretations. Some of these contents are, for example, the custom of placing your head in a hole made especially for it, repeatedly carrying a heavy object from one place to another, arbitrarily blowing up rocks with dynamite, the belief that distant caves are somehow interconnected, etc. His interest in these beliefs and customs was aroused by their capacity to symbolically domesticate and explain the environment.¹ The images evoked by these contents were the starting point for building a group of sculptures that invite new readings. Different motifs taken from the archive were mixed, cut up, reconstructed and assembled during the process, in search of new, unexpected results.

Jon Otamendi (Guecho, Vizcaya, 1978)

Otamendi carries out micro-actions on and against architecture and city planning. His interest lies in obstructing the images we project onto them and returning them to their material condition.

A strangely static body, the unstable form of water and a falling camera are minimal actions that endeavour to instigate a different operational regime.

Estasis, the video presented here, was recorded at the ARTIUM Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo in Vitoria. During the museum's normal opening hours the artist positioned himself motionless in specific places, following some rule or guideline removed from the standard uses of this kind of space. *Estasis* is the result of recovering what the CCTV cameras recorded that day.

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