

**FIGURED
FIGURATIONS
FIGURANTS**

**TO BE OR
(PERCHANCE)
TO DREAM**



IBERDROLA

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PRESENTATION

Ignacio S. Galán

It is a great pleasure for me to present *Figured, Figurations, Figurants*, a new exhibition installed on the 25th floor of Torre Iberdrola in Bilbao. This unique space sets the stage for the third show produced and inaugurated by Iberdrola's General Shareholders' Meeting, once again highlighting the company's commitment to art and culture.

Two years ago we presented *Entre chien et loup*, a selection of works from one of the most significant private collections of contemporary art in our country, owned by Bilbao art collectors Fernando Meana and Mariví Larrucea; last year we brought together for the first time a selection of works from the Iberdrola Collection (*Translucent Skin*). On this occasion, we decided to give prominence to public collections in the Basque Country. This exhibition features a selection of works acquired since the beginning of the twenty-first century by the leading Basque museums of modern and contemporary art: the Fine Arts Museum in Bilbao, the San Telmo Museum in San Sebastián, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Artium in Vitoria-Gasteiz and the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum in Getaria. Continuing with the work of previous years, the exhibition also includes artworks from the Meana Larrucea and Iberdrola collections.

We would like to call attention to the importance of public-private collaboration in the promotion and advancement of the arts, and of the multiplying effect of the two sectors working together in both directions: from the private to the public and from the public to the private.

The exhibition curator, Javier González de Durana, has done a brilliant job of selecting and organising the works around an interesting reflection on the figure of contemporary art – its presence, its dream state and its absence. I am sure that this narration will offer visitors a fascinating journey through the multifarious themes of the works on display.

I would like to thank Daniel Castillejo, Fernando Meana, Mariví Larrucea, Susana Soto, Javier Viar, Juan Ignacio Vidarte and Miren Vives, and the institutions they direct, for their extraordinary disposition and generosity with this project.

TO BE OR (PERCHANCE) TO DREAM

Javier González de Durana

This exhibition is built around the idea of bringing together a selection of works from the five most important contemporary and modern museums in the Basque Autonomous Community: the Fine Arts Museum in Bilbao, the San Telmo Museum in San Sebastián, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, ARTIUM in Vitoria-Gasteiz and the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum in Getaria. Within these collections, this exhibition features works dating from 1968 but acquired (either purchased, donated or on loan) by these museums beginning in 2001 (with a few exceptions). Two works from the Iberdrola Collection and four from an important private collection (Meana Larrucea) are also included at different points in the exhibition, thus creating a dialogue between private and public art collections. The work featured in the first exhibition organised at the Iberdrola Tower, *Entre Chien et Loup*, was drawn from the private Basque Meana Larrucea Collection; the second, *Translucent Skin*, was composed of works from the Iberdrola Collection. On this occasion, the purpose of the exhibition was to show works from public collections in the Basque Country.

Nineteen sixty-eight was chosen as the starting point in order to include a dress designed by Cristóbal Balenciaga for his 1967–1968 autumn-winter collection, the last in the couturier's fruitful career. The culmination of Balenciaga's career in fashion design marks the beginning of the timeframe established for the other artists. The year 2001 was chosen as the cut-off point for this exhibition; fourteen years have now passed since the dawn of the third millennium: seven bonanza years, followed by another seven marked by the financial crisis.

CURATORIAL CONCEPT

The abovementioned museums build their respective collections around different criteria. One, not yet twenty years old, focuses on masterpieces of international art from recent decades; a variety of pieces from this collection by Basque and Spanish artists have been selected for this exhibition. Another museum, a little younger than a century, collects international works dating from the Middle Ages – and even earlier – to the present. A third, which opened its doors in 2002, focuses primarily on art created more locally – Basque and Spanish – in recent years. However, the works on loan for this exhibition include pieces of art of great significance internationally, an area embraced by the museum. Another museum, also a hundred years old, is devoted to anthropology, history and the present day, without turning its back on art, though connected exclusively to the Basque panorama. Finally, the fifth museum, inaugurated in 2011, houses collections of clothing, more specifically, fashions created by a master of haute couture, as well as fashion images conceived by a modern-day photographer.

It is hard to find a common field of interest, a more or less harmonious area of action in these collections. They are guided by different criteria and objectives, and by different means for increasing their collections. In spite of these difficulties, the idea behind this exhibition was not to scrutinize works on an individual basis, in the way of a simple selection of *recent acquisitions*. On the contrary, in creating this exhibition a common thread was sought that would run throughout the exhibition.

Initially, the exhibit was conceived as an archaeological excavation through the museums' collections which would hypothetically shape the public's image of our society in centuries in the future. However, like any excavation of this type, the works would have been determined by the disarray of the area under study, by the position to which each work was relegated with the passing of time, the action of nature and subsequent interventions by other intermediaries. In other words, they would have come from the particular characteristics of each of the museums' collections, and therefore it would have been difficult to compare the works between one collection and another.

As a result, after closely examining the accessible works from the aforementioned museums, a settle the aeration composed of three chapters was chosen to illustrate that *being* and *dreaming* go hand in hand with the idea of the figure, its presence, its absence and its destiny; these chapters show: 1) representations of the body – whole or in part, heads, etc – like the figures of characters imaginable only in the realm of the symbolic; they *are* artistic because they have been dreamt by their creators; for them the environmental context is almost non-existent; the chapter on 'the figured' comprises this group of works; 2) powerfully expressive

environments, clothing and architectures where the human is unexpectedly absent, the suppositions of moments between silence and anxiety, where nobody is (not even Odysseus) and places verge on the *dreaming* of someone missing; this section brings together 'the figurations'; and 3) once again, human figures but unlike the first chapter, here they are highly contextualised by their environment, geographical surroundings, clothing or physical state... to the extent that they come to us not as the figures they *are*, but as *actors* that *dream* of a performance in which they play a minor role. But that does not make them any less tragic, comical, bucolic, impenetrable or pathetic; the 'figurants' belong to this chapter.

The subtitle of the exhibition, *To be or (perchance) to dream*, echoes the doubt in Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

... and by a sleep, to say we end
The Heart-ache, and the thousand Natural shocks
That Flesh is heir to—'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; to sleep;
To sleep! perchance to Dream!

But it also evokes Calderon's hopeful reflections of a Platonic Segismundo imprisoned in his cave:

... let us dream, soul, let us dream again;
but it must be with prudence and the knowledge
that we must awaken from this pleasure
when the pleasure's the greatest...¹

With these references, the constructed narration will inevitably have baroque and theatrical references, where existential perplexities become evident in a myriad of distorted physical and mental mirrors.

¹ *soñemos, alma, soñemos /otra vez; pero ha de ser / con atención y consejo / de que hemos de despertar / de este gusto al mejor tiempo...* (Segismundo in *La vida es sueño*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca.)

GALLERY OF WHISPERS OR THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION

Perhaps I am dreaming,
although I seem awake?
I do not dream, for I touch, I feel
and I believe what I have been
and what I am.

Segismundo in *Life is a Dream*, Pedro
Calderón de la Barca²

The work of **Bill Viola**, *Hall of Whispers*, both welcomes visitors to this exhibition and bids them farewell. Whereas other pieces in this space can be ignored by visitors – by simply turning their heads the other direction – this work by the North American video artist is unavoidable. In order to see the rest of the works on display or to leave the exhibition space, one must enter the dark interior where the drama that Viola speaks of is staged

The heads of ten people facing each other run the gauntlet of this room. They are ordinary people, people you might see in the lift of your block of flats or having a cup of coffee at the local cafe. However, their state is not what we would expect to find under normal circumstances: their mouths are gagged and their eyes closed; we are first led to think that someone wanted to silence their words, but on second thought, it might seem like a voluntary act. Their eyebrows show no signs of abuse from beyond their own bodies or against the will of these people whose images are neatly projected on the walls of this gloomy space.

In spite of the obstacle that renders their words unintelligible, the ten individuals try to talk and communicate with one another, but the only thing that comes from their mouths are mumbled words stifled by the cloth. Their words render a muted whisper, the space is immersed in incomprehensible speech.

The shocking thing about the situation is that although their words are made unintelligible by an apparently external imposition, their obscured vision is an assumed loss or self limitation. This contradiction between the causes for the verbal and visual confinement leads us to believe that it may all have been voluntarily. If we pay closer attention to the gags, nothing indicates that they were forcibly knotted around the people's heads, and nothing in their attitude suggests that they are uncomfortable or doing anything against their will. We don't know if their hands are tied behind their backs, so we wonder why they don't just pull the cloth gags from their mouths. They show no signs of physical despair. Nor do they seem to do anything to regain their vision and speech.

² ¿Que quizá soñando estoy, / aunque despierto me veo? / No sueño, pues toco y creo / lo que he sido y lo que soy.
(Segismundo from *La vida es sueño*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, verses 1532-1535.)

One interpretation suggests that everything – eyes, mouth, rigidity – is presented to us as one giant accepted loss. The individuals face each other, come together and try to speak, but something earlier, prior to any desire or intention, makes it impossible. Endowed with communication by their own nature, these people have engineered the means – interior and exterior – to dissolve this ability. Nonetheless, they try or pretend to try to tell us something, but the space fills with noise. Rage will not be long in coming.

Another interpretation would be that the subjects are asleep and their speech emanates from the unconscious, which is not submerged but ceases to put prohibitions on oral expression. The opposition between life and dreams. What can be touched and seen belongs to wakefulness, the state of knowledge that feels no doubt, where the strength of certainty is firmly grounded. What belongs to dreams? The impossible freedom of action, the coercive determinism of events, the dreamer's passiveness in what is happening, the border crossings of existence – the anteroom of the supernatural – and the image of death, in the face of which all human vanity crumbles; this is the patrimony of dreams.

THE FIGURED: ENIGMAS OF LIKENESS

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!

Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Act 2, Scene 2

This repeated naked god by **Juan José Aquerreta**, *Apolo barneliluratu* (*Heraklitoren hilobirako frisoa*) [*Apollo Lost in Thought (Frieze for Heraclitus' Tomb)*], each identical to the next, concentrating inward but revealing itself outward, is made of the same material as the surrounding area. There is no difference between the flesh and the neutral background on which the line is drawn. Indeed, it is so identical that it is only an outline, or four outlines that are exactly the same. Fashioned like a frieze for a monument, the repeated figure does not itself explain the poignancy of its presence, the total occupation of its own distinctive space. This Apollo, god of beauty, perfection, harmony and reasonable equilibrium – in addition to patron of the muses and, therefore, patron of art – may very well be talking to us – that is, Aquerreta may be talking to us – in the figurative language of the self absorbed nature of art. In other words, the kind of art that respects only its own conventions, lost in thought, absorbed in its changing grammatical obsessions, separating and forgetting reality and life. Hence, the useless formal repetition, the insistence on being only nothing more than its own perplexing body, with no surroundings or context, discernible only by a single line; a body which is no longer beautiful but rather dense and unwieldy.

With her untitled prints **Dora Salazar** creates a study of proportions in a *universal body* in movement in the style of Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*. Seen from the front and side, she moves the legs, arms and feet from right to left, up to down, or rotates the figure 360°, leaving enough empty space around the figure for it to perform a robotic or geometric dance. This is not the body of a specific individual but a figured body that wants to encompass all bodies, universalising the idea of a physique without personal attributes, with no more eloquence than the mobility of its limbs.

With Bill Viola we saw faces of people about whom we knew nothing, nor could make no assumptions other than their inability to communicate. In these faces

by **John Baldessari**, *Prima Facie (Third State)*, the artist himself has, on first glance, given them a certain human condition. In other words, Baldessari sees a person's face in a photograph (in a newspaper, magazine, on television...) and takes ownership based on his initial impression, assigning it a likely behavioural characteristic, later giving the face a colour that matches the character. Hence, red accompanies the face of a 'pitiless' woman; grey, the face of a 'disappointed' woman; pink, the face of a 'tricky' man; yellow, the face of a 'quizzical' person... In the end, the image of the face and the image of the descriptive word comprise a visual space in which both are equally important, each occupy fifty percent, left and right, as if our knowledge of people in general and of particular individuals were equal parts judgement and prejudice. What Baldessari does with certain features and the gestures they exude is to imagine a human feature, either virtue or deficiency, based on his own experience with people having similar physical features and attitudes; we might say that he improvises according to his own tendency to resolve matters quickly. The explicit force of the word – clear, centred, unambiguous and written in black on a white background – coexists in tension with the open, interpretable, chromatically diverse image, full of conjectural nuances. Here, the figure coexists with the figured, the apparent with the secretive, prompting us to compare our opinions with the artist's intuitive yet unreasoned assertion.

The image of evil, in both the history of art and the history of religion, has always been a figured image. The lesser evil usually has a very human aspect in representations. The animalisation of evil and vice, characterising it as a being endowed with zoomorphic attributes, set it apart from both the anthropological and human rationality. The satyr's frenzied sexual appetite – of which Diana and her nymphs were propitious victims – and the fact that it was a woodland creature, likened it to the goat, complete with hairy body, tail, hooves and horns, as photographed by **Robert Mapplethorpe's** *Satyr*, inspired by a baroque sculpture. The intense malignant expressivity of the face that captured the interest of the American photographer contrasts with the sluggishness of *Aquerreta's* *Apollos*. In any event, both artists use images of the past to figuratively refer to events from any era.

The heads by artists **John Davies**, *Flemish Head*, **Markus Lüpertz**, *Frauenkopf (Kopf meiner Mutter)* [*The Head of a Woman (The Head of my Mother)*], and **Manolo Valdés**, *Dama con abanico (Woman with Fan)* carry no connotations, unlike those of Baldessari and Mapplethorpe. But their textures are rich in detail, unlike the egalitarian monotony of *Viola*. The fleshy pigmented skin, bloodshot eyes and hieratic frontal view of the English artist's work so just an individual who leaves us to imagine why the artist considers this head. 'Flemish' and not Walloon or Saxon or Teuton or Breton, or simply a head fallen into the basket of a guillotine. The German artist's

expressionism, with a heavy mouth, nose and eyes on a sturdy *unguillotisable* neck, gives us the more than just a head; it includes part of the shoulders and the beginning of an arm, all of which lend the work great intensity. The Spanish artist also gives us a frontal view: a woman made from a variety of materials and pigments, much like a collage, offers a surface eloquent in nuances. Her face is divided in two equal parts, the right side in light, the left in shade; a fan adds the accent that fractures the compositional symmetry. In actuality, it has the same stiffness and silence as *Aquerreta's Apollos*. The pictorial surfaces speak more to us than the characters represented on them, or we might say that the characters speak to us through their surfaces.

Set against all of these nameless subjects, anonymous in their universality, in *The Hispanist (Nissa Torrents)* **R. B. Kitaj** presents us with a very specific person in her own particular space. Everything in this interior scene refers to the personality of the portrayed subject. Her facial features define her accurately, as do her clothing, her intertwining fingers, her forward-leaning posture, the warm look on her face... The combination is hers alone. The specification is so clear that even her name, Nissa Torrents, appears in the title of the work, following the generic noun *hispanist*. With Baldessari adjectives were supposedly first-glance calculations of characterisations of people whose names we do not know; Kitaj shows us the contrary: the person is identified by her exact name, and is characterised even before that by her condition/profession, now certain rather than conjectural. Baldessari found character defects; Kitaj assures us that the person is what she is. In spite of so much physical and nominal specification, the character has countless affections that reach much further, situating her spirit in the poetry and dream world. This is suggested by the two cats dangling overhead as if they were coat hangers, and by the ambiguous blue horizon; or the still life scene in which everyday objects lay beside the bust of a man – a plausible combination of the works by Davies and Lüpertz – that seems to lean backward, perched precariously on the edge of the table. The cats, the bust, the escape toward the blue distance... are part of the world that exists behind Nissa's diaphanous face, and which tell us figuratively about her spiritual side; in contrast, the armchair, the notebook and pencil and the flower vase belong to the person who speaks to us through her figure, her eyes and her objects.

Humberto Rivas, with his *Retratos de fin de siglo (Portraits from the Turn of the Century)*, also presents us with very personal individuals. Full body portraits on a 1:1 scale make his photographic representation look very much like the actual people did at the time their pictures were taken. However, the effort of representing the people using their real-life measurements contrasts with the chromatic restraint, featuring white, black and shades of grey. Like Kitaj, albeit without surnames, we

know their names: Brigitte, Loredana, Gabriela, Inge, Jeanne and Richard. Except for the only man, Richard, who shows off his physique in a bathing suit, the women in the rest of the portraits look like they were escorted from the street directly to the photographer's studio. They are dressed just as they were at that unforeseen moment, at least for them, when they were invited in to have their picture taken. While Nissa Torrents was contemplated in her peculiar detail-filled domestic universe, these other people are observed completely disconnected from their particular spaces. The neutral abstract place where they find themselves gives us no information about their personalities. Only their faces, unequivocal figures and clothing send us brief inconclusive signals for interpretation.

In his print *La rivoluzione siamo noi* (*We are the Revolution*), **Joseph Beuys** presents an image of himself in somewhat the same fashion as Rivas's ordinary subjects: front-facing, scale of 1:1, gaze aimed directly at the viewer, chromatic restraint... but at the same time the differences are striking. Instead of friends or the man in the street, the artist plays a central role; instead of stillness, a dynamic forward stride; instead of a personal name, a collective we, not just a simple we but a we that embodies a radical and violent act. Beuys presents himself as the epitome of we and allows himself a moment of catharsis in a time of drastic change toward a new era, a time of revolution. His forward stride toward the viewer seems to take its inspiration from the central figure in Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo's painting, *Il Quarto Stato* (*The Fourth Estate*) (1901), but what is visually collective in Volpedo's painting becomes individual in Beuys'; the title in Italian used the third person to address the collective singular (the 'fourth estate' is the proletariat masses), while Beuys portrays the first person plural (a rather majestic we); Volpedo does not say where the workers are so decisively heading, though he does insinuate that they are an intimidating force. Beuys, on the other hand, makes it explicitly clear: the revolution. One doubt hangs in the air: who are those we? He was surely not referring to men who wear hats and bags slung over the shoulders, or who walk with a purposeful stride. Instead, he was alluding to artists: when art thought it could be revolutionary and change the world – the smug egocentric time at the tail-end of an era that was born with the turn-of-the-century avant-garde, at the same time Pellizza da Volpedo was working on his painting. But instead of making the revolution, he managed to distance art from reality, absorbing itself in formalisms and procedures, and leaving all of us as stupefied as Aquerreta's *Apollós*. The vanity of human beings lies in their conviction to be free, sometimes feeling almost omnipotent, able to turn their lives around, reinvent and improve themselves. Therefore, our mistake is our perception of reality, a perception based on the enormous arrogance of not recognising our serious limitations.

The figures in **Carmen Calvo's** collages *El ruido de la lluvia lloró alto* (*The Noise of the Rain Cried Loudly*) and *Soledad final* (*Final Solitude*) offer us the opposite of what Rivas showed us. While Rivas gave us only the subjects' faces and clothing, here the faces are blacked out and the clothing uniform or conventional. The facial features are concealed behind layers of hair, rendering everyone the same, impossible for them to convey their personality. Carmen Calvo reuses old photographs of people in stances as unnatural as might be expected in a photographer's studio – a family portrait, a bride and groom on their wedding day – people who know that this will be the image their descendants will have of them in the future. Stiff and formal, to Carmen Calvo, their names and features have already been forgotten. The only thing left is the nameless trace of a past, primitive in its history and, in spite of formal appearances, is enveloped in a wild backdrop. We will recall how the barbarian was represented in the Renaissance, covered completely in hair, much like an ape. All of the formalisms and *depersonalisations* of the period cannot prevent total oblivion, not even when the artist uses surrealist notes (including titles), warning us that the subjects had an animalistic component, an interior fire, a passion that sometimes defied reason. It was as if rationality (the forms) insisted on domesticating the animality (the hair). The fire of man's animal passions, those connected with his flesh and sensuality, is put out when the road travelled forks into contrasting paths. One is the path of indescribable sensual beauty versus death and oblivion; the other, in a profuse use of antitheses, is the presence of the body and the absence of the face, the flat image and the material bandage, the antiquity of the photograph and the newness of its reconversion, the *carpe diem* and the disillusionment of the *mise-en-scène*, the exaggerated mirror of happiness and sadness.

Somewhat telluric and nocturnal, wild and sustained by ancestors, is the way in which **Vicente Ameztoy** envisaged his forebears in his oil painting *Untitled*, popularly known as *La familia* (*The Family*). In this case, the people are not unknown and forgotten, but close relatives, known by their nicknames, first names and surnames. So well-known, in fact, that after observing the photograph that committed them to posterity, Ameztoy created their real portrait as something that emanated from nature, a product of the earth, of the air, of the night and of time. Once again, people who have something better to represent them than heads: sheaves of grass, formal poses with a nod to pop art, *Magrittian* sky-blue silhouettes and a starry sky with three obscure ancestral individuals standing above them all. What for Carmen Calvo was zoomorphic, for Ameztoy is vegetable. The Guipuzcoa-born painter belonged to an already disenchanted world in which the notion of progress and evolutionary development, understood as an endless possibility, took on gloomy premonitions tinged with the darkness of the word *forebears*, the gap between

the all-knowing sky and the unpredictable ground. The supernatural rises from the ground like a sign and returns, lacking interpretation, to the magical geography of the clear sky. Prophecies and oracles or desires and impulses? Night or day? The perception of time is linked to an illusion of reality. The trio of nocturnal characters resembles the obscure reasoning of contrast and incomprehensibility much more than the unblemished pleasure of people sitting comfortably on stone steps watching time go by. The problem arises when the dynamics of the quotidian displace the calm and wound out thoughts. left to his own devices, without power or hope, the only thing that links the individual to life is the land itself and, in an infinite game of metonymies, family, history in the primitive sense of an encounter with origins, and the legacy, normally lost but always recoverable, of blood.

Tetsuo, Bound to Fail is the video by **Sergio Prego** that connects to Dora Salazar's *universal man* with its nervous and dynamic movement – body and expression in Salazar, space and action in Prego. Salazar's man is a dancer whose movements are precise and calculated, a mathematical aesthete. Prego's character – he himself – knows what he is doing. In a solo performance he positions the mechanism to record the event from different perspectives, but cannot possibly foresee the results – how the informal yellow liquid rises up to create a flying shape that splashes up in front of him and over him. His system simultaneously documents different unique moments from different angles captured by cameras placed around him. The fragmented perception obtained from one shot after the other is reconstructed to achieve an unexpected perspective in which space, time, body and surroundings are transformed; time stands still while space bends at the behest of the material and the material moves at the suggestion of the space. Multipolarity and continuity are two morphological nods to Baroque; *Tetsuo, Bound to Fail* is indeed the work of a conceptually Baroque artist.

FIGURATIONS: ARCHITECTURES LEFT EMPTY

Such is the ruin of your empire, such the might of harsh
and bloody inclemency that it amazes the eyes and
alarms the ears. The sun is startled and the wind falters;
the rocks form tombstones and the flowers cluster on
gravesites; every building is a mausoleum and every
soldier, a living skeleton.

Estrella in *Life is a Dream*,
Pedro Calderón de la Barca³

We should begin by delineating the differences between the concepts of space and place, as this will prove useful in understanding the following paragraphs. The ideal nature of the first is theoretical, generic and indefinite; the second is concrete, empirical, existential, constructed and definite down to the details. We imagine space and can represent it, but we inhabit a place that must necessarily be constructed with our presence. The act of entering a building, not simply the visual design of the door, the act of looking through a window, either inside or out, rather than the window itself as a material object: these are the acts that determine our experience with architecture. Architectural space, therefore, is an existential place constructed for life. However, the architectural spaces we see in **Jesus Mari Lazkano's** *A la espera del dibujo inacabado* (*Waiting for the Unfinished Drawing*) and *Bastante más que infinito* (*Much More than Infinite*) do not feel very inhabited; instead, they look almost exclusively aesthetic, designed for contemplation and instilled with a sense of cold detachment. They are places in which nothing can or should be done because even the slightest entry or inclusion would alter the meticulously elaborated order. They are not homes. They would only be homes if the original meaning of combining technique and art – which these spaces have in excess – had been taken one step further. In other times, this meant designing buildings to shelter the inherent uncertainties of the life of mortals. In the cities of technologically advanced societies, however, the feelings of alienation, distance and loneliness are more and more overwhelming. Perhaps this is why these ultra pure architectural designs with sophisticated simplicity are not inhabited by people who can humanise them with their presence and expel their icy geometry.

The coldness of hospitals and airports, technically privileged places, often generates a paradoxical sensation of distance and indifference. As Heidegger pointed out, inhabiting a space is showing that the technical advances associated with that space, and the people who inhabit it, can give rise to buildings understood as constructive expressions of the emptiness on which existence is constructed, and which originates the uncertainty that erases time.

³ *Tanta es la ruina de tu imperio, tanta / la fuerza del rigor duro y sangriento, / que visto admira y escuchado espanta. / El sol se turba y se embaraza el viento; / cada piedra una pirámide levanta / y cada flor construye un monumento; / cada edificio es un sepulcro altivo, / cada soldado un esqueleto vivo.*
(Estrella in *La vida es sueño*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, verses 2468-2475.)

The architectural spaces seen in **Javier Riaño's** untitled oil paintings (I and II), are neutral, geometrical and, to a certain extent, ideal: they are *anti-ideological* spaces, and therefore unquestionable from the standpoint of social and political reason. If Lazkano's spaces were made for private use by people who seem to inhabit another place, Riaño's spaces here show a tendency toward the collective, the multitudinous, even if there is nobody in them now. Since their ties with political strategies are not obvious, they are presented and masquerade as objective reality. However, they are only partial representations, small parts of a larger reality made to expand, depersonalise and endlessly homogenise, if allowed to. These spaces lacking specific attributes need to be independent from any content, which is considered impure and, therefore, should be transformed into something more manageable and comprehensible based on standards, data, statistics, moulds, etc. This neutrality is pursued from a geometrical pureness that strives to be the ultimate in *fetishised* order and stability. The impurities of reality (superfluous people, useless objects, dirt, noise, disorder...) are excluded both symbolically and physically. The ideality of this order is also tied to the separation of people, emotions, all things sensual and sensitive, conflict, expressions and ideologies, and the artificial simplicity is associated with a desire for timelessness and security.

Alfonso Gortázar's uninhabited places, such as his *Día de pesca (Day of Fishing)*, describe the concept of constructed place in existentialist and phenomenological terms while, at the same time, the artist turns to the baroque opposition between formal proliferation and emptiness. Diametrically opposed to the spaces seen or imagined by Lazkano and Riaño, in Gortázar's work the absence of inhabitants becomes cacophonous, their voices reach us through the numerous traces of their everyday existence, forming personal scenarios of *horror vacui*. In opposition to the constructive soundness and will to perpetuate seen in Lazkano and Riaño's spaces, Gortázar's fragile chaotic structures reveal an existence attached to ground level and to the small tasks and chores. The *architectural space* seen as the concretion of abstract structures in the material realm of daily life does not interest Gortázar, who would rather put himself in the *place for existence*, understood as a set of blueprints that people accumulate and collect in their memories over different stages in their development and which influence how they perceive their environment. This is why Gortázar's houses are very much like homes: the home is always an unfinished space, a place to be conquered, where there is always something that needs to be done, a vulnerable place just like human existence.

Items of clothing are architectures, spaces to be inhabited, which when they clothe bodies become – or try to become – places of personal comfort. The materials are textile, fragile, their ambition to endure often lasting no longer than a season,

a year or even a single occasion. In both his *Evening dress in white gazar* exhibited here and in any of his creations, **Cristóbal Balenciaga** designed environments in which the body would feel comfortable and attractive. But bodies change and disappear, whereas the dresses that once covered them and attracted onlookers outlive their original owners. Void of the body, the artistic creation is obvious and no longer needs to justify its utilitarian purpose. Stripped of the anthropological necessity, the visual, constructive and spatial values of these personal units of habitation become apparent. The absence of the individual inside her garments underlines the phantasmagorical and melancholic condition of existence. A dress without a person inside looks very much like a *vanitas*, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of things and of the masks used to conceal life. Balenciaga was a conceptual artist whose clientele demanded physical achievements. In his mind, dresses were complete, detailed and finished. Transferring the idea to the actual dress was, in any case, part of a process of conceptualisation which went hand-in-hand with technique, craftsmanship, precision and improvised creative thinking.

Manuel Outumuro's photographs of Cristóbal Balenciaga's designs prolong this respect toward creation by underscoring the importance of the material object, heightened by the absence of the people (or their mannequin replacements) for whom they were conceived and made. In these images, the emptiness of the 'non-body' finds a harmonic echo in the backgrounds against which we observe the dresses, coats and ensembles. Neutral grey spaces – much in the style of Irving Penn and even Velázquez – showing only a few cuts and shadows, help to highlight the majestic delicacy of fabrics and details, the precise descriptive geometry of the pattern and the timeless sobriety of the ideas that outfitted lives.

Balenciaga aristocratic elegance and Outumuro's austere photographs find a surprising dialogue with the sober architecture of the Royal Alcazar of Madrid under the reign of the Habsburgs, in whose rooms Velázquez painted *Las Meninas*, and which **José Manuel Ballester** in his photograph *Palacio Real (Royal Palace)* wanted to imagine without the inhabitants that the Seville-born artist immortalised. Everything else remains in the image: open door, the mirror at the end of the room, part of the canvas and easel to the left, the dark paintings high on the walls, the light coming from the windows on the right... But the Infanta Margaret Theresa, King Philip IV, Queen Mariana, the ladies-in-waiting, assistants, dwarfs, servants, door and painter are not there or have not yet arrived. Ballester reveals the *hidden space* which the presence of the figures does not allow us to see clearly. One would think that the grandiosity of the scene came from the presence of their majesties and the princess. But no; this photograph shows that the grandiosity was already in the room itself. Empty and silent, it is more impressive than when the words and boisterous cries of

children reverberated throughout the room. Its absence magnifies the space, makes it seem greater, more vast. The depth is accentuated, but it is no longer just the pattern of the window buttresses on the right and the lamp hooks suspended from the ceiling that enable us to understand this; now the surface of the floor is shown in an unexpected magnitude. The viewer feels somewhat desolate and empty before this image, like the room he contemplates. The people in the Velázquez painting engage the viewer, making him part of the scene by looking in the direction where the viewer would stand, implying that they know they are being watched – by the queen and king (omitted from the scene despite being the protagonists and whose image is seen only in the far mirror) at the time in history when the painting was made, and now by us, occupying the visual place of the king and queen, whose absence Ballester makes us all feel. All of a sudden their disappearance in this photograph – even more unsettling since it is the exact same size as the canvas – not only leaves us without the gaze but without our very presence before the image. Some years earlier Ballester created *Espacio 5 (Space 5)*, a study of empty spaces, doors, hallways and light.

In his oil painting *Flamenco*, **Gonzalo Sicre** seems to suggest that all places have their own character or atmosphere which give them an identity, and it cannot be reduced to a mere geometric shape or geographic location. If each particular place has its own sense, an identifying character or spirit, no matter how weak, Sicre transmits this to us. In fact, the weaker or more neutral the spirit, even if lived intensely, the more he attracts our gaze. In very *Hopperian* fashion, he captures the smell of hotel rooms, of empty spaces lit by a beam of light cast on furniture touched and used by hands and bodies that convey history. In these anonymous corners of standardised places virtually devoid of personality, Sicre intuits the steps of people whose lives he does not know. But he invites us to imagine them by the place they once laughed and cried, loved or died, fantasising about stillness, silence and permanence.

FIGURANTS: TEXTLESS ACTORS ON THE EDGE OF THE STAGE

Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life.
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution.

Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Act 3, Scene 1

The modern myth envisaged by Honoré de Balzac in his tale *The Unknown Masterpiece* is revamped by **Ramón Zuriarrain** in *Bikote baten erretratua* (*Portrait of a Couple*). Balzac tells the story of an old master painter, Frenhofer, who paints a portrait of a woman, thinking that his portrayal of her is so perfect that it is no longer just an image, but the woman herself in flesh and blood. He speaks to her and plays he is in love with her, which is why he keeps the painting a secret, showing it to no one. This myth has its roots in Classical Antiquity: Pygmalion, the sculptor who believed his sculpture Galatea was alive and so beautiful that he fell in love with her. In the modern era, this madness resulted in disaster for Balzac's protagonist (whose painting, was in fact, a chaotic delirium, and when an outside observer points this out, Frenhofer commits suicide), but was attractive to many painters. Picasso was one of the artists who most often turned his attention to this tale, perhaps because he felt comfortable in the skin of Balzac's old painter; but Magritte did the same, similar in form and manner to Zuriarrain. Magritte painted a woman who came to life as his brushstrokes were painted on a space without canvas. But Zuriarrain's story goes one step further: the painter has almost finished the image of the female portrait, but at the last minute the artist-creator realises that his painting has also painted him. The viewer finds himself wondering who really created whom; which of the two is actually the protagonist and which the figurant; why *she* was created with plant-like vestiges and *he* with a marble-like naked body that only reveals the colour of his flesh when the woman's paintbrush passes over him; why both perform in an artificial territory beside an impossible table in stark contrast with the wooded green backdrop, as if the artist wanted to highlight the opposition between the terrain of artifice and the terrain of nature. The suggestion is everything is theatrical and everyone figurants, that everything is simulation and vain pretension.

The figure by **Andrés Nagel**, *Besamanos (Hand-kiss)*, draws from the same figurative tradition rooted in surrealism as Zuriarrain. As if emerging from a world other than our own, the subject walks with outstretched hands searching for something or someone. A third hand, like a lost bird, sits on his shoulder. This hand does not safely guide the subject, and instead of grasping something solid, the other hands find only another nameless hand. An act of respectful courtly greeting, the hand-kiss reminds us that no kind of life embodies so much theatre and spectacle as the life of the people who have chosen the court as an element; a re-enactment that calls for the presence of a main protagonist, who receives the reverential gesture, partly affectionate, partly reverent, from a long queue of supporting characters who mechanically and ritually repeat the gesture. But Nagel does not show us who receives the honour. He reveals only a lost hand, offering us the image of an individual who, in his amazement, seems ready to perpetrate a more drastic act than a simple sign of reverence. It is the figurant on the verge of becoming the protagonist, whether heroic or criminal. If it is the creative act that makes Zuriarrain's characters catch the onlooker's gaze, here we think that it is the violent act that will put Nagel's character on the frontline of history, and in his desire to perpetrate the act he is already making the other character disappear in the eyes and life of the other character. But is his will to act really his own or has it been introduced in his mind by another individual who would make him a merely instrumental player? The head with the straps coming out the back, a kind of sacred aureole or a device to remotely control the mind, seems to speak to us of someone who in fact directs the situation and in whose absence, we do not see.

In **Nam June Paik's**, *Dream with legs*, the artist sees himself in costume and absorbed by a chromatic whirlwind. **Nan Goldin's** actresses in *Noa Dressing for Venus Show at Shogun Club, Tokyo* are dressing up for their performance. That is the difference between the two works. The Korean artist's dream is not involuntary; it bursts in spontaneously and unpremeditated. His dream, like all dreams, is defined when he awakens, subjected to the threefold pressure of memory, story and interpretation. What is remembered of the dream and how it is told belong to the dreamer, but its interpretation can be either the dreamer's or attributed to whoever has the ability to understand its meaning, whether a shaman or any church that says it is in contact with the beyond, the place where those uncontrolled nocturnal visions emerge when wakefulness lowers its guard. Controlling the meaning of dreams always been a matter of power, a matter of who holds supremacy within a community. Here, Paik plays this role. With an astonished look on his face and a comical hat on his head, like a toy in someone else's hands, he is surprised by the message of the dream. Goldin's Japanese actresses, on the other hand, are very familiar with the

role, which is to make other people dream. They dress themselves voluntarily and appropriately to effectively convey the message, knowing that the most important wisdom is the art of appearance.

The faces and postures of the four untitled bullfighter photographs by **Carlos Aires** (from the *Y fueron felices [And They Were Happy]* series) show that their fate is part of the course of melancholy. Their tragic path is written in the stars, or in the book of nature, but wherever it may be, it is far from their gaze and even farther from their thoughts. This is suggested by the baroque darkness that shrouds them. Their lives are slipping away in the celebration of an event in which the defects of existence and the defects of their bodies will supposedly come face-to-face with the animal strength of a beast that is all instinct and no malice. In the contrast between trauma and laughter, to these figurants life slips away like water through their fingers: things are no longer as they used to be and they no longer even present themselves as things, but rather images. The only thing that suggests the greatness of bullfighting are their pompously serious gestures and masks – those ‘suits of light’. Everything else is darkness and deceit; their supposed happiness was elusive or very brief. They are not genuine bullfighters, but lesser actors in a show that does not try to brush with disaster; and the frame where we see them portrayed is cheap plastic rather than wood. There are only images that speak of an ephemeral stardom which for a few moments could take the place of everyday misery. We human beings always find it hard to identify ourselves with only our bodies and feel the temptation of seeing them as a boundary that must be overcome or defended. These dwarfs choose to dress up in glorious attire to protect themselves from sarcasm and show their pride. Where there is no choice, there is only imperfection, a sad race toward dissolution.

Everything that Aires’s dwarfs had in the way of detailed descriptive precision becomes ambiguous in **Francis Bacon’s** bullfighting scene, *Study for a Bullfight No. 1*. The asphyxiating cubical room in which he usually encloses his subjects has been replaced by another space closed in on itself – the circular bullring. If the room and encloses private dramas, the circular bullring dramatises a tragedy of cosmic dimensions: reason and instinct in conflict before the public eye. Bacon restricts the presence of the public to a specific part of the ring. From this we conclude that for him the drama is separate from other beings, who might be witnesses or completely removed from the drama. In any case, it happens: the drama exists. And in the collision between both elements reason intermingles with instinct, the bodies of both blend together and intertwine as if the existence of one were impossible without the other. Or, as if essentially they were the same thing: what Man profoundly clings to – wrote Walter Benjamin in *One-Way Street* (1928) – is the dark awareness that

in Man lives something recognisable by its bestial kinship with that awareness, to whose call he responds to take control the awareness and finish, symbolically and ritually, time and time again, with its life. The struggle of formless bodies in constant movement is concentrated, diluted, and makes both, that is, everyone, protagonists; and at the same time, makes everyone anonymous figurants.

The link between the untitled photograph by **Carmela García**, (*Serie Paraíso*) [*Paradise Series*], and the photograph by **Shirin Neshat**, *Untitled (Rapture Series)*, is the fact that women occupy the stage in a non-protagonist way despite the absolute certainty of their presence. The women are in the foreground in García's photograph, their backs to the camera, much like Friedrich, standing on a rise while contemplating the landscape stretching out before them. It conveys the idea of communion, of mutually entranced dedication between the women – who assume different postures and wear different types of clothing – and the fertile lush valleys and mountains. Since they have their backs to us and cannot be precisely identified, they could be any women and, in fact, in their diversity, are the metonymy of Woman, of Woman before Nature; two fertilities. Her work suggests the contemplation of nature as the stage, perhaps even the stage of Paradise, the place they are, but which can only be contemplated from a distance and penetrated completely. Neshat's women are many, dozens, all dressed in the same black tunics that cover them from head to toe. They are spread out over a landscape with little nuance: in the foreground, a sandy beach; in the background, rocky ground. The women assume different positions depending on where they are located. Some are standing on the beach, static, leaning slightly into the wind; others are closer, making an effort to move a heavy boat over dry sand. In contrast, others are sitting passively on the rocks, their bodies dotting the horizon. It would seem that they offer three different attitudes in three different locations, from closer to further away: active and hard-working, predisposed but still stationary, and completely inactive. They are all separate from one another, isolated. Only the women around the boat – the fewest in number – show they are group with a cohesive mission. On the other hand, **Clara Gangutia's** painting, *Junio (June)* takes us to a tranquil piece of domesticated urban nature, a park on the banks of a river, setting itself apart from both García's grandiose and unadulterated nature, and Neshat's dry monotonous nature. The feminine element in the painting by Gangutia is distant, handing the prominent role over to nature on a sunny summer afternoon; the relationship is not one of communion, but of integration, absorption, fusion.

Another painting shows us an interior scene in which an individual is carrying a canvas painted with an exterior landscape. Humanity is seen as the intermediary between two representations – the picture we see and the painting we see inside

the picture – but here the human intermediation is also a representation. In his *Bodegón, figura y paisaje (Still Life, Figure and Landscape)*, **José Carlos Fernández Marcote** reflects on the fictitious nature of art and the accommodating nature of self-deceit. In the middle, between the *nature morte* and the living nature of the landscape, a discreet figurant who simply passes before us, without saying a word, is nevertheless the creator of what we are seeing. The brilliant actor Montgomery Clift had a twin sister, but what is the information in the title of **Peter Blake's** work, *Montgomery Clift was a Twin?*, trying to tell us?; What do we learn by seeing him strut amongst ancient Greek architecture?; Is he acting on a stage?; Is the figure we see indeed him? If it all seems like a collage of things and circumstances, why not the title too? Every element – the oval format of the picture, the flamboyant gold frame, the stage represented in the picture, the individual, his clothing and gestures, the reference to being born a twin... – seems to come from a decision unrelated to the rest and to have relatively little importance. Everything functions casually and without great ambition; only the combination takes on unity by having been materialised and, therefore, leads us to a few final questions: whatever happened to Monty's twin sister? Was the actor's bisexuality the duality referred to in the title? Fernández Marcote's artist strolls with his painting and Blake's strolls on the stage. Both are heading somewhere with their work materials; they both represent a role, one in the fictitious space of the canvas and the other in the artificial space of the theatre. After all, the world is a stage and the art of actors and artists is to pretend. All representation involves suspending this sense of reality. We are not only in a world of appearances, but with a few ruses and a little stage machinery, we reveal and exhibit the triumph of appearances.

Rejecting dreams, death and madness, and disappearing or fleeing from melancholy, if only for a moment, are the resources human beings have in their fantastical search for solace when, out of sight of others, they challenge the unbearable burden of fate with unflappable audacity. Human reason is a force that needs this discontinuity – or in metaphorical terms, human reason always looks between the cracks, through the little spaces it opens in the wall of the incomprehensible. It cannot tolerate looking at the wall constantly, nor can it bear to permanently see reality. For this reason, it dreams and imagines. In *Poetics of Disappearance (Poétique de la disparition)*, **Ixone Sádaba** has us watch the tumultuous agitation, whether sexual or mental, in solitary or in company, of someone who despite their efforts does not change scenarios. The dissolution of the bodies in the space will not keep everything around it from later being the same when there is no one around to watch. The Marxist axiom 'all that is solid melts into air' is converted here into the idea that everything human will sooner or later disappear. The basic difference is

that all that is solid refers to the material and social constructions of civilisations, while all that is human points to a poetic and existential emptiness, to the space left by agitated actors and figurants when the show is over, a space scarcely occupied by the ambivalent shadows of their lives in the weak memory of others.

We know that the beauty of the rose is the most fragile. And we know that among the slippery sands of the hourglass are the ashes of death. We are aware of this but even still we pretend to believe that the beauty of the flower is eternal, and that the hourglass measures the passing of time which we throw away or squander. The skull warns us that death is inevitable and that, by the same token, it is indecipherable. Illuminated by the tenuous candlelight, we might ask ourselves if there is something more deceitful and mysterious than the arrogance of the image and of the representations, spread out in front of us one by one, as **Manuel Vilariño** reminds us in his paradoxically titled triptych, *El despertar (The Awakening)*. In turn, in **Andrés Serrano's** photograph, *Morgue*, the artist captures the final moment of human beauty. The head, modestly covered with a cloth, is not a symbol – neither is the skull – but rather a warning that the representation has concluded, that regardless of the role the individual played – a figure with character or a figurant without text, in an idealised space or a specific place – all pretence has ended and the stage is now another.

**FIGURED
FIGURATIONS
FIGURANTS
FIGURE
FIGURE
FIGURE
TO BE OR
(PERCHANCE)
TO DREAM**

Bill Viola

—

Hall of Whispers, 1995

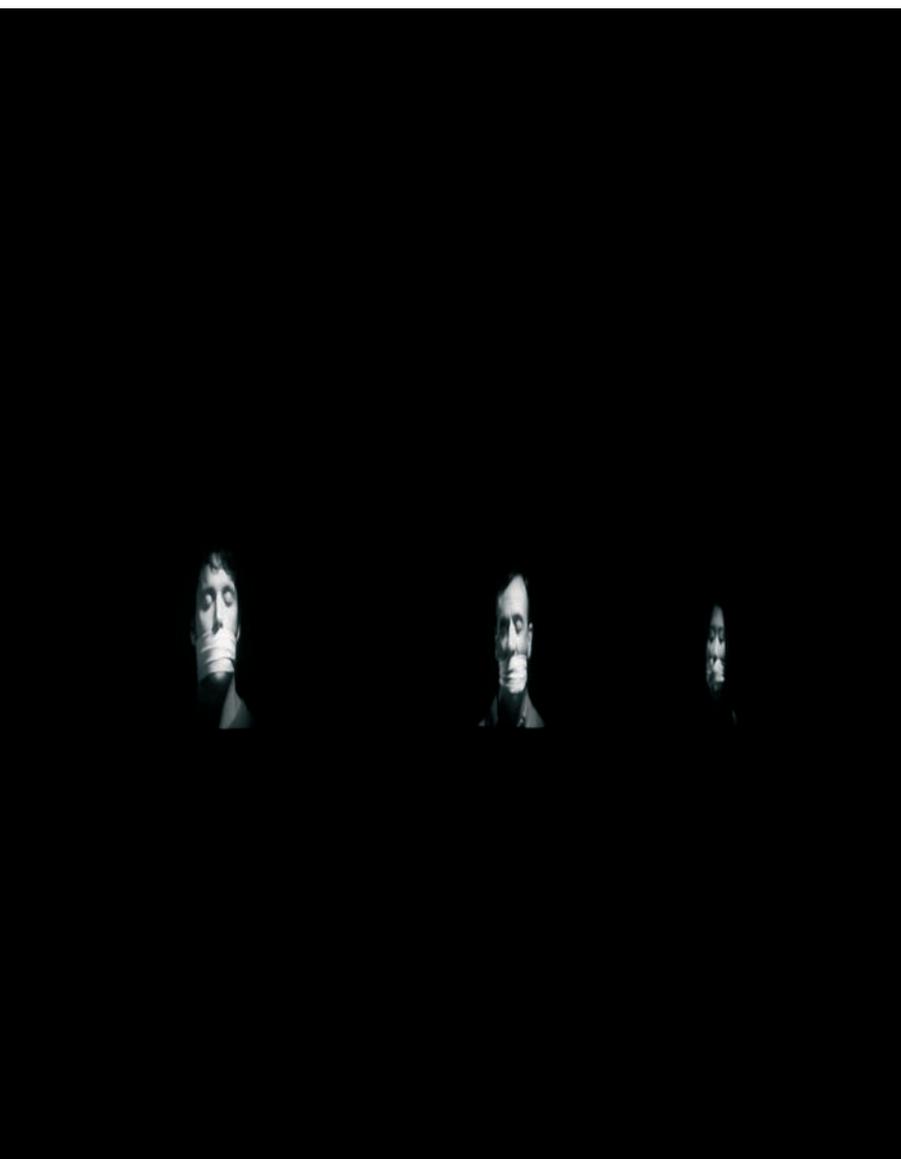
Video installation, variable size

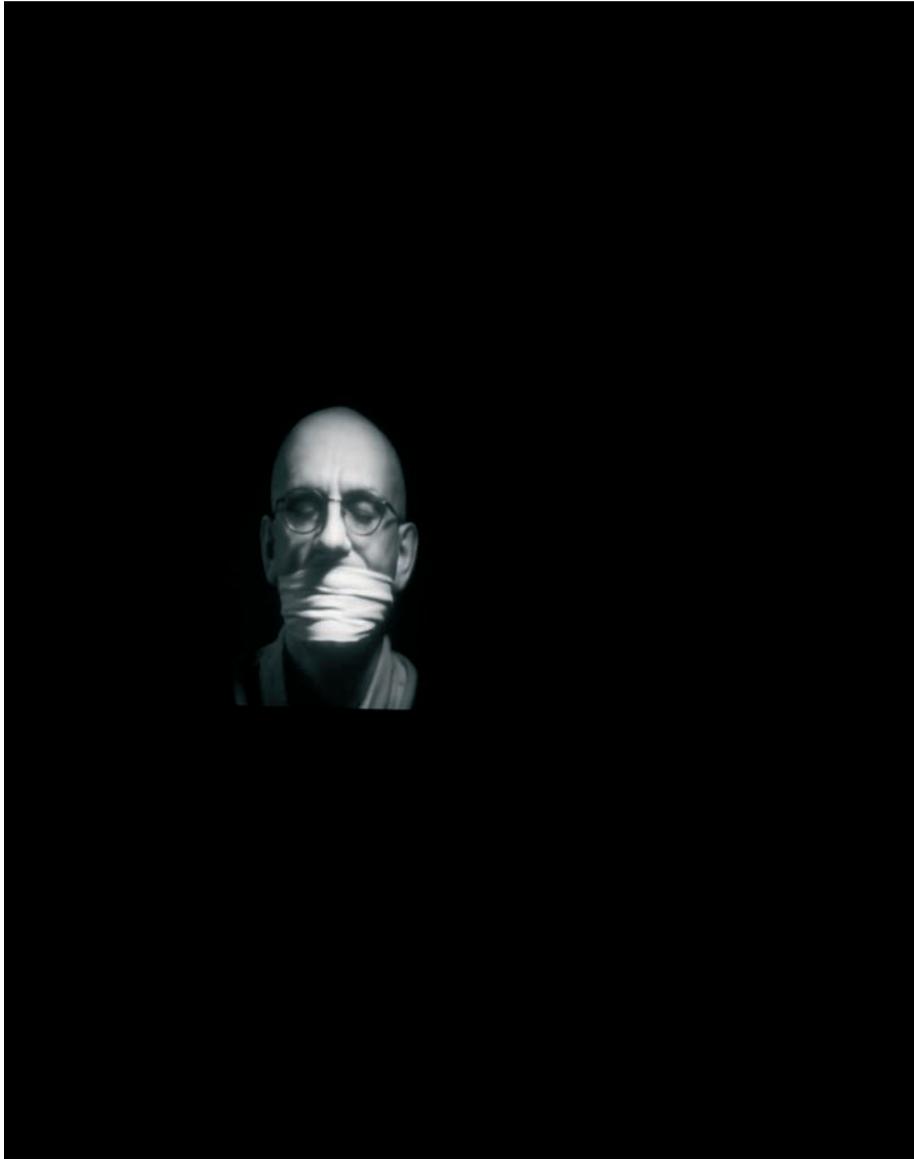
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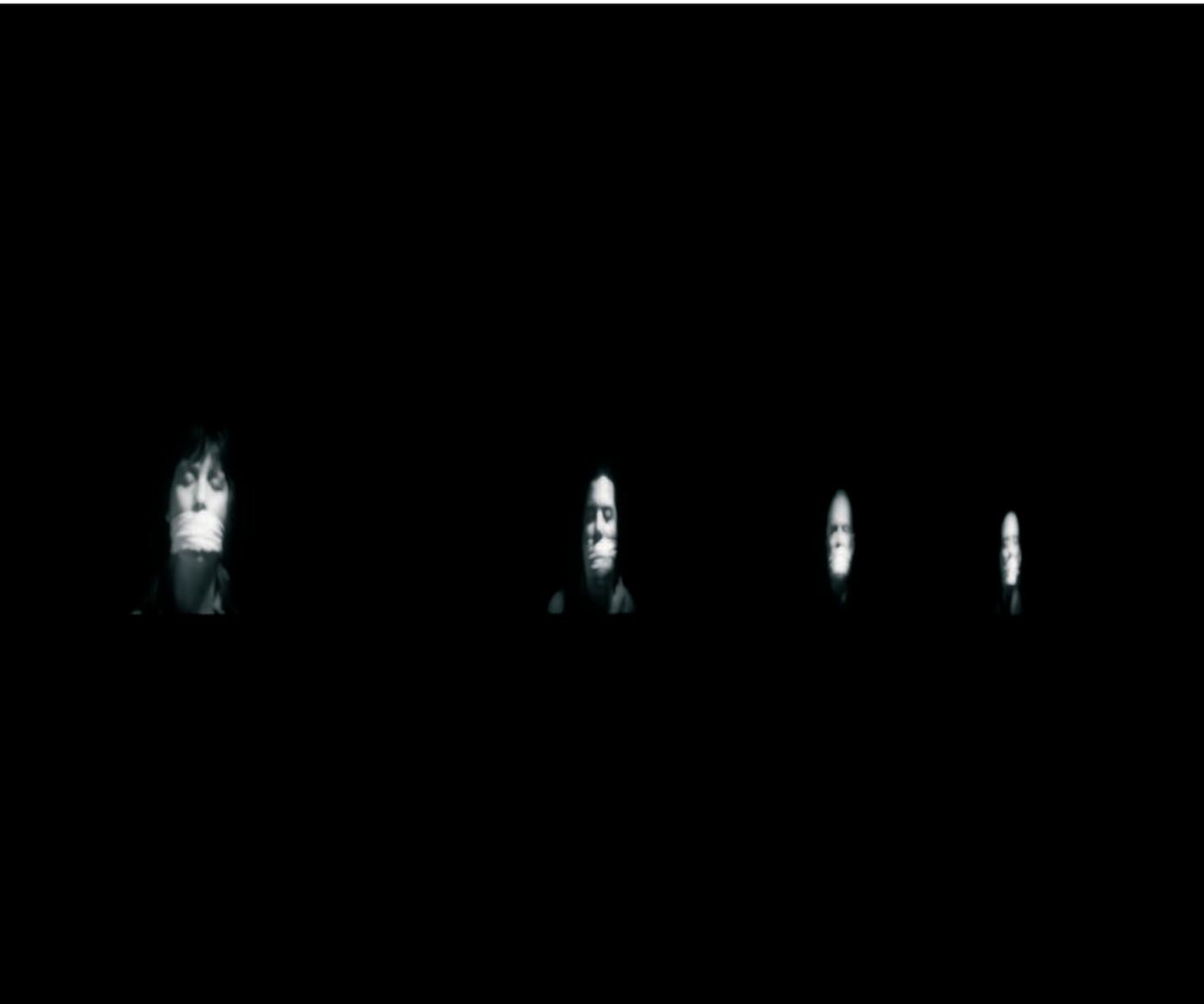
“... these people have engineered the means – interior and exterior – to dissolve this ability. Nonetheless, they try or pretend to try to tell us something, but the space fills with noise.”

–









FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURED

FIGURE

Juan José Aquerreta

—

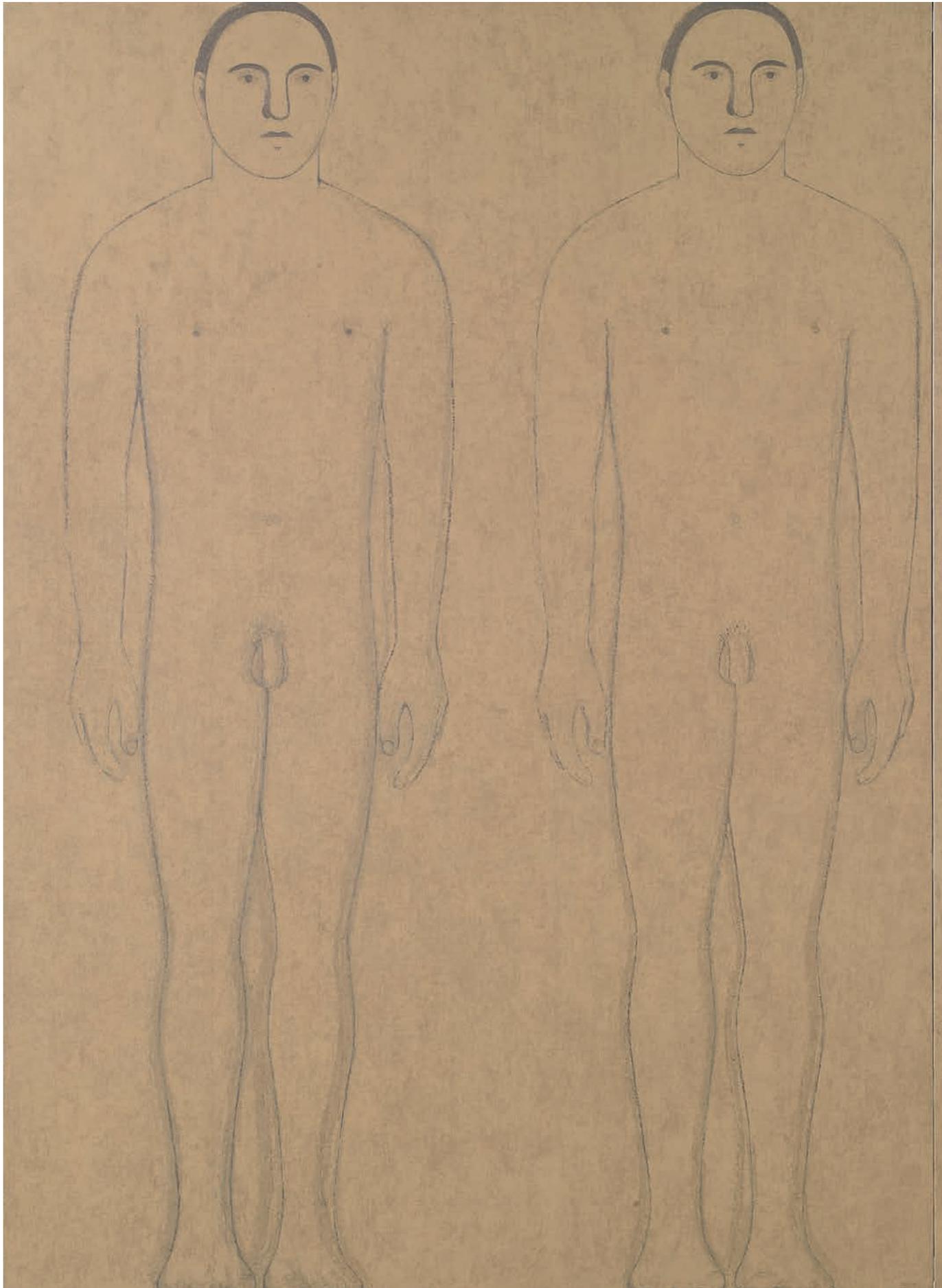
Apolo barneliluratua (Heraklitoen hilobirako frisoa)
[*Apollo Lost in Thought (Frieze for Heraclitus' Tomb)*], 1990-1991

Oil on canvas, 250 x 372 cm

—

“... the useless formal repetition, the insistence on being only nothing more than its own perplexing body, with no surroundings or context, discernible only by a single line ...”

—





Dora Salazar

—

Untitled (I), 2003-2004

Untitled (II), 2003-2004

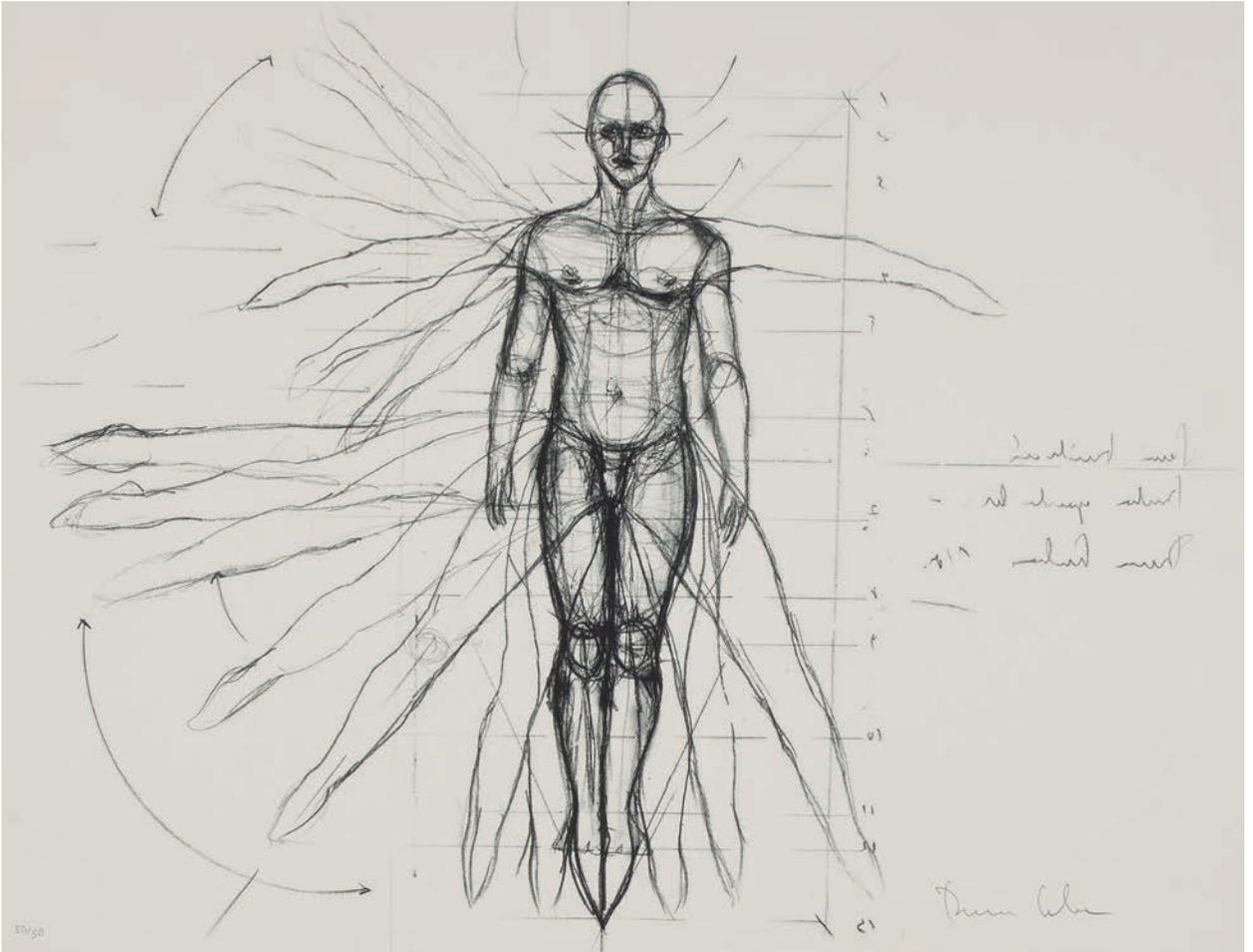
Engraving on paper, 38 x 50 cm

—

“This is not the body of a specific individual but a figured body that wants to encompass all bodies, universalising the idea of a physique without personal attributes ...”

—





John Baldessari

—

*Prima Facie (Third State): Pitiless / Wishful / Disappointed /
Tricky / Quizzical / Unfathomable, 2005*

Mineral pigments on cotton paper mounted on museum board, 373 x 98.3 cm

–

“... The explicit force of the word
– clear, centred, unambiguous
and written in black on a white
background – coexists in tension with
the open, interpretable, chromatically
diverse image, full of conjectural
nuances ...”

–



PITLESS



PITILESS



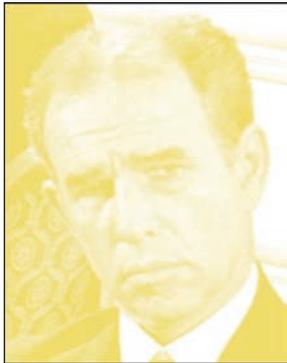
WISHFUL



DISAPPOINTED



TRICKY



QUIZZICAL



UNFATHOMABLE

Robert Mapplethorpe

—

Satyr, 1988

Photograph on paper, 50.8 x 61 cm

–

“The lesser evil usually has a very human aspect in representations. The animalisation of evil and vice ...”

–





John Davies

—

Flemish Head, 1991

Painted polyester resin, 39.4 x 20 x 27.3 cm

—

“The fleshy pigmented skin, bloodshot
eyes and hieratic frontal view ...”

—



Markus Lüpertz

—

Frauenkopf (Kopf meiner Mutter)
[*The Head of a Woman (The Head of my Mother)*], 1987

Painted bronze, 97 x 75 x 47.5 cm

—

“... a heavy mouth, nose and eyes on
a sturdy *unguillotinable* neck ...”

—



Manolo Valdés

—

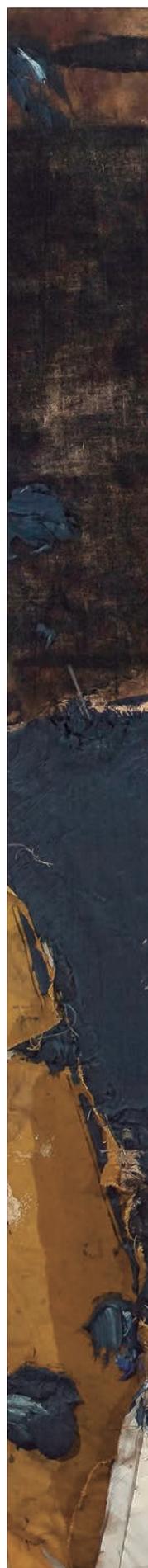
Dama con abanico (Woman with Fan), 2007

Mixed media on canvas, 200 x 150 cm

—

“... a fan adds the accent that fractures the compositional symmetry. In actuality, it has the same stiffness and silence as *Aquerreta's Apollos*.”

—





Ronald Brooks Kitaj

—

The Hispanist (Nissa Torrents), 1977-1978

Oil on canvas, 244.2 x 76.2 cm

—

“... her clothing, her intertwining fingers, her forward-leaning posture, the warm look on her face... The combination is hers alone.”

—



Humberto Rivas

—

Loredana (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1989

Brigitte (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1989

Richard (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1998

Gabriela (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990

Inge (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990

Jeanne (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo)

[from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990

Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm (each one)

—

“Only their faces, unequivocal figures and clothing send us brief inconclusive signals for interpretation.”

—













Joseph Beuys

—

La rivoluzione siamo noi
(*We are the Revolution*), 1972

Lithograph on paper, 185 x 106.5 cm

—

“Beuys presents himself as the epitome of we and allows himself a moment of catharsis in a time of drastic change toward a new era, a time of revolution.”

—



Joseph Beuys
La rivoluzione siamo Noi

Carmen Calvo

—

El ruido de la lluvia lloró alto
(*The Noise of the Rain Cried Loudly*), 2003

Soledad final (Final Solitude), 2006

Collage and photograph, 170 x 120 cm

Collage and photograph, 48 x 50 cm

—

“... an interior fire, a passion that sometimes defied reason. It was as if rationality (the forms) insisted on domesticating the animality (the hair).”

—



Vicente Ameztoy

—

Untitled, 1975

Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm

—

“... in an infinite game of metonymies,
family, history in the primitive sense
of an encounter with origins, and
the legacy, normally lost but always
recoverable, of blood.”

—





Sergio Prego

—

Tetsuo, Bound to Fail, 1998

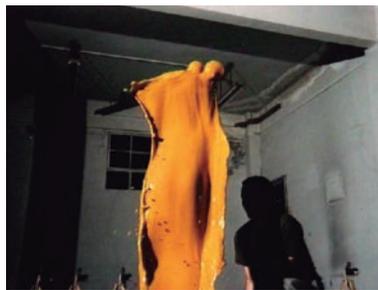
Single-channel video projection (colour and sound), DVD

—

“... space, time, body and surroundings are transformed; time stands still while space bends at the behest of the material and the material moves at the suggestion of the space.”

—





FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURATIONS

FIGURE

Alfonso Gortázar

—

Día de pesca (Day of Fishing), 2006

Oil on canvas, 200 x 350 cm

—

“... the *place for existence*,
understood as a set of blueprints that
people accumulate and collect in their
memories ...”

—





Javier Riaño

—

Untitled (I), 2006

Untitled (II), 2006

Oil on canvas, 100 x 200 cm

—

“... is pursued from a geometrical
purity that strives to be the ultimate
in *fetishised* order and stability.
The impurities of reality (superfluous
people, useless objects, dirt, noise,
disorder) ...”

—









Cristóbal Balenciaga

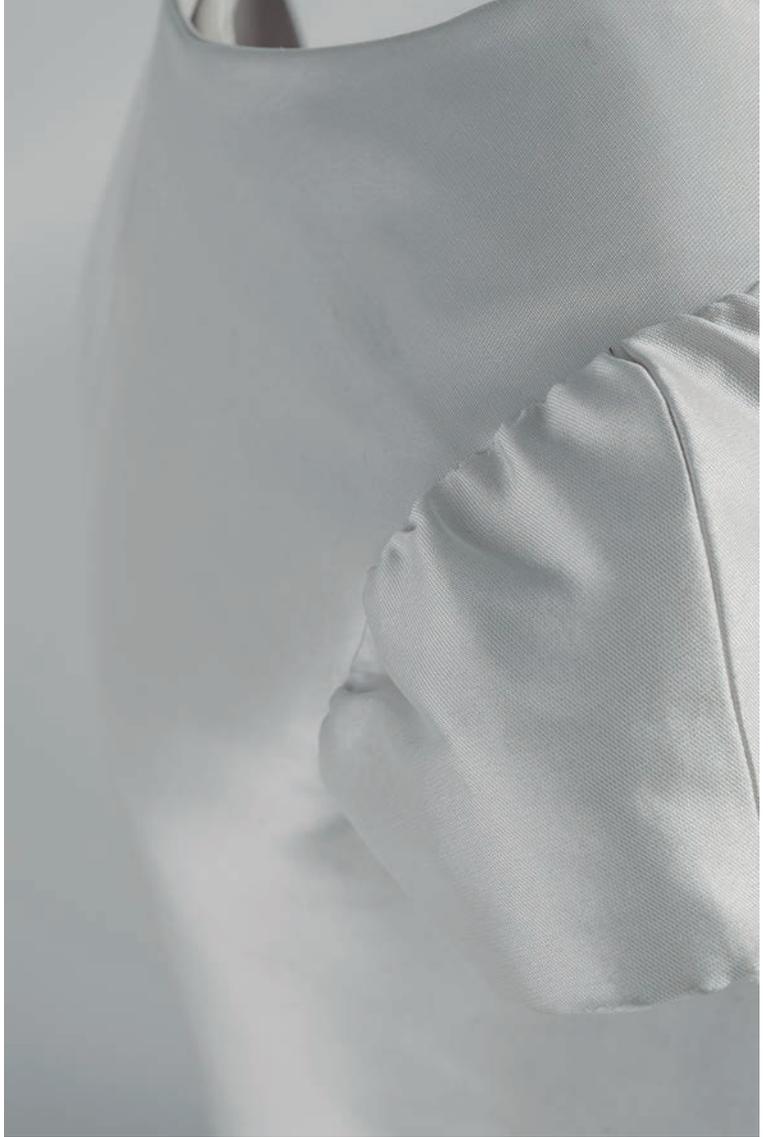
—

Evening dress in white silk zibeline,
August 1967 (model 163), Balenciaga Paris

—

“The absence of the individual inside her garments underlines the phantasmagorical and melancholic condition of existence. A dress without a person inside looks very much like a *vanitas*, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of things ...”

—





Manuel Outumuro

—

Evening coat in black silk taffeta, 1935, 2010

Evening coat in yellow gros de Naples silk with floral appliqué embroidery in polychrome chenille threads, 1960, 2010

Evening dress in black satin with machine-made tulle transparency decorated with an appliqué of sequins and glass-paste beading, 1964, 2010

Evening dress in pale pink satin and black bambula silk with machine-made transparency on black silk, ca. 1953, 2010

Evening ensemble consisting of jacket in silver cloqué on a blue background and skirt in silver and gold cloqué, 1965, 2010

Evening dress in beige silk crepe with machine-made green tulle transparency, 1966, 2010

Wedding dress in ivory silk gazar, 1967, 2010

Evening dress in black silk crepe with a ribbon appliqué of sequins and faceted crystals, 1968, 2010

Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper, 160 x 110 cm (each one)

—

“... the emptiness of the
'non-body' finds a harmonic echo
in the backgrounds against which
we observe the dresses, coats and
ensembles. Neutral grey spaces ...”

—

















José Manuel Ballester

—

Palacio Real, 2009

Espacio 5 (Space 5), 2003

Photographic print on canvas, 318.4 x 276 cm. Edition 1/2 + AP

Digital photograph on paper, 124 x 167 cm

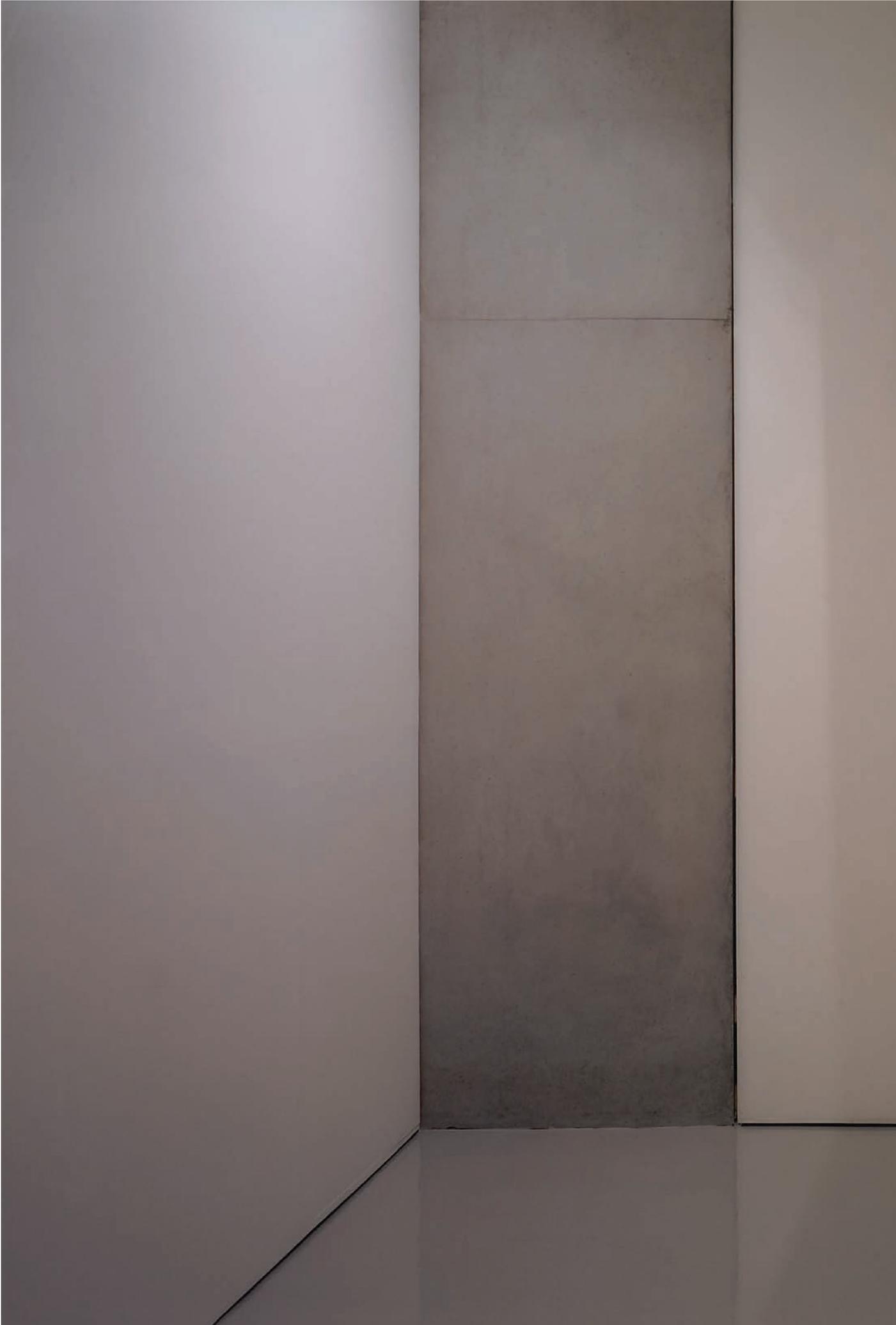
—

“... the grandiosity was already in the room itself. Empty and silent, it is more impressive than when the words and boisterous cries of children reverberated throughout the room. Its absence magnifies the space ...”

—









Jesus Mari Lazkano

—

*A la espera del dibujo inacabado (Waiting for the
Unfinished Drawing), 2001*

Bastante más que infinito (Much More than Infinite), 2001

Acrylic on canvas, 125 x 200 cm

Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 255 cm

—

“... the feelings of alienation, distance and loneliness are more and more overwhelming. Perhaps this is why these ultra pure architectural designs with sophisticated simplicity ...”

—









Gonzalo Sicre

—

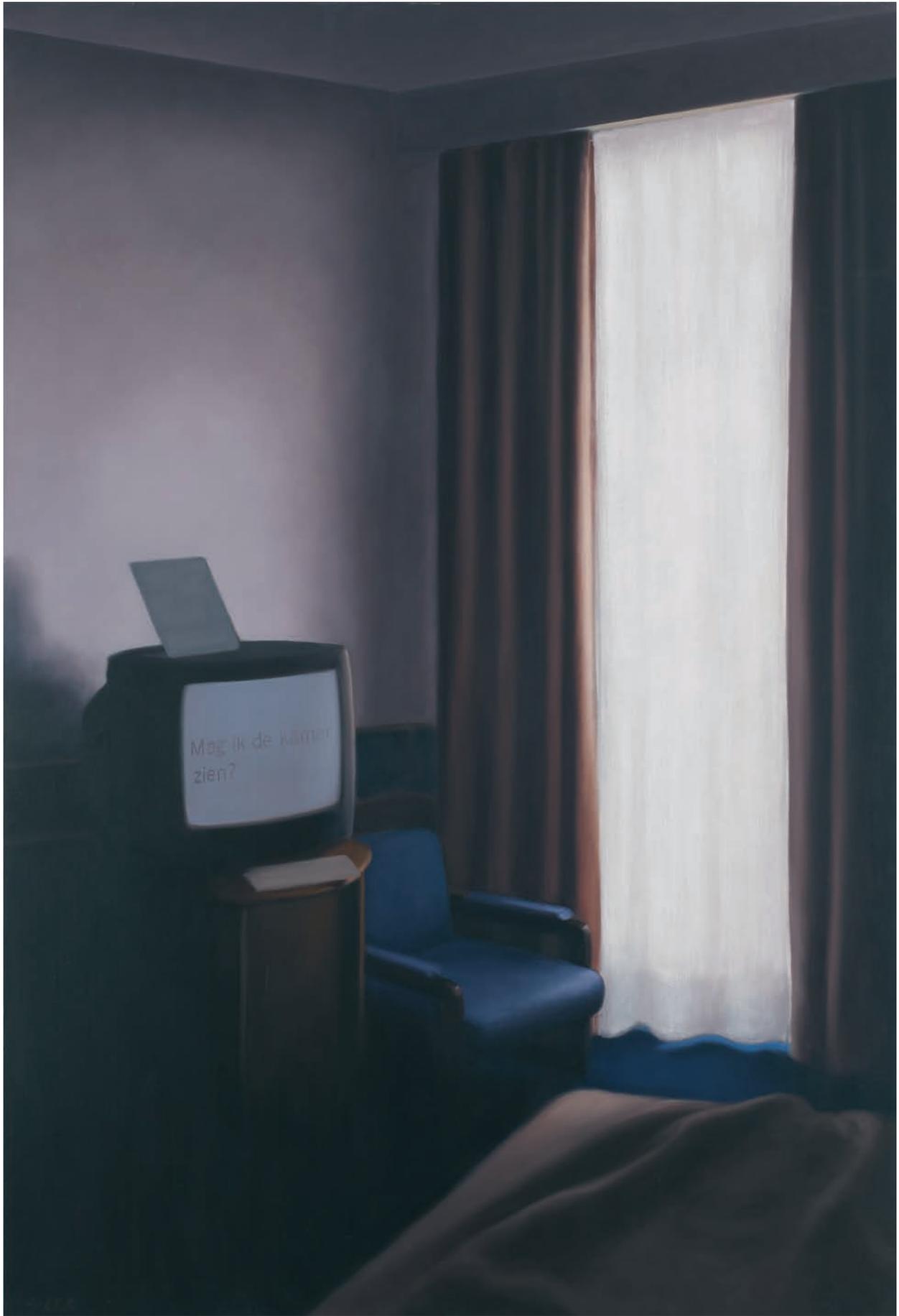
Flamenco, 2001

Oil on canvas, 250 x 170 cm

—

“... he captures the smell of hotel rooms, of empty spaces lit by a beam of light cast on furniture touched and used by hands and bodies that convey history.”

—



FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURE

FIGURANTS

FIGURE

Andrés Nagel

—

Besamanos (Hand-kiss), ca. 1980

Mixed media, oil on fibreglass and polyester, 170 x 100 x 47 cm

—

“ ... the reverential gesture, partly affectionate, partly reverent, from a long queue of supporting characters who mechanically and ritually repeat the gesture.”

—





Nam June Paik

—

Dream with legs, 1988

Mixed media on canvas, 134 x 140 cm

—

“Controlling the meaning of dreams
always been a matter of power, a
matter of who holds supremacy within
a community.”

—



Nan Goldin

—

Noa Dressing for Venus show at Shogun Club, Tokyo, 1994

Cibachrome, 76 x 102 cm

—

“They dress themselves voluntarily
and appropriately to effectively
convey the message, knowing that the
most important wisdom is the art of
appearance.”

—





Ramón Zuriarrain

—

Bikote baten erretratu (*Portrait of a Couple*), 1982

Oil on canvas, 197.5 x 132 cm

—

“... the opposition between the terrain of artifice and the terrain of nature. The suggestion is everything is theatrical and everyone figurants, that everything is simulation and vain pretension.”

—



Carlos Aires

—

Untitled (*Serie Y fueron felices*)
[from the series *And They Were Happy*] I, 2003

Untitled (*Serie Y fueron felices*)
[from the series *And They Were Happy*] II, 2003

Untitled (*Serie Y fueron felices*)
[from the series *And They Were Happy*] III, 2003

Untitled (*Serie Y fueron felices*)
[from the series *And They Were Happy*] IV, 2003

Photograph on paper, 175 x 140 cm (each one)

–

“... their pompously serious gestures
and masks – those ‘suits of light’.
Everything else is darkness and
deceit; their supposed happiness was
elusive or very brief.”

–









Francis Bacon

—

Study for a Bullfight No. 1, ca. 1971

Lithograph on paper, 160 x 120.8 cm

—

“... the bodies of both blend together
and intertwine as if the existence
of one were impossible without the
other. Or, as if essentially they were
the same thing ...”

—





Francis Bacon

Carmela García

—

Untitled (Serie *Paraíso*) [from the series *Paradise*], 2003

Photograph on paper, 180 x 225 cm

—

“... the stage of Paradise, the place they are, but which can only be contemplated from a distance and penetrated completely.”

—





José Carlos Fernández Marcote

—

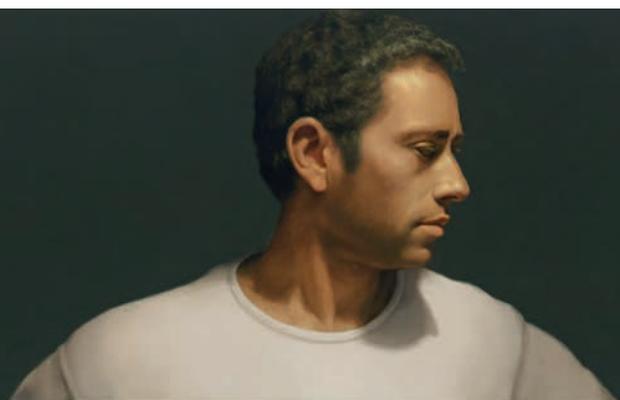
Bodegón, figura y paisaje (Still Life, Figure and Landscape), 2004

Oil on canvas, 81 x 130 cm

—

“... reflects on the fictitious nature of art
and the accommodating nature
of self-deceit. In the middle, between
the nature morte and the living nature
of the landscape, a discreet figurant ...”

—





Clara Gangutia

—

Junio (June), ca. 2003-2005

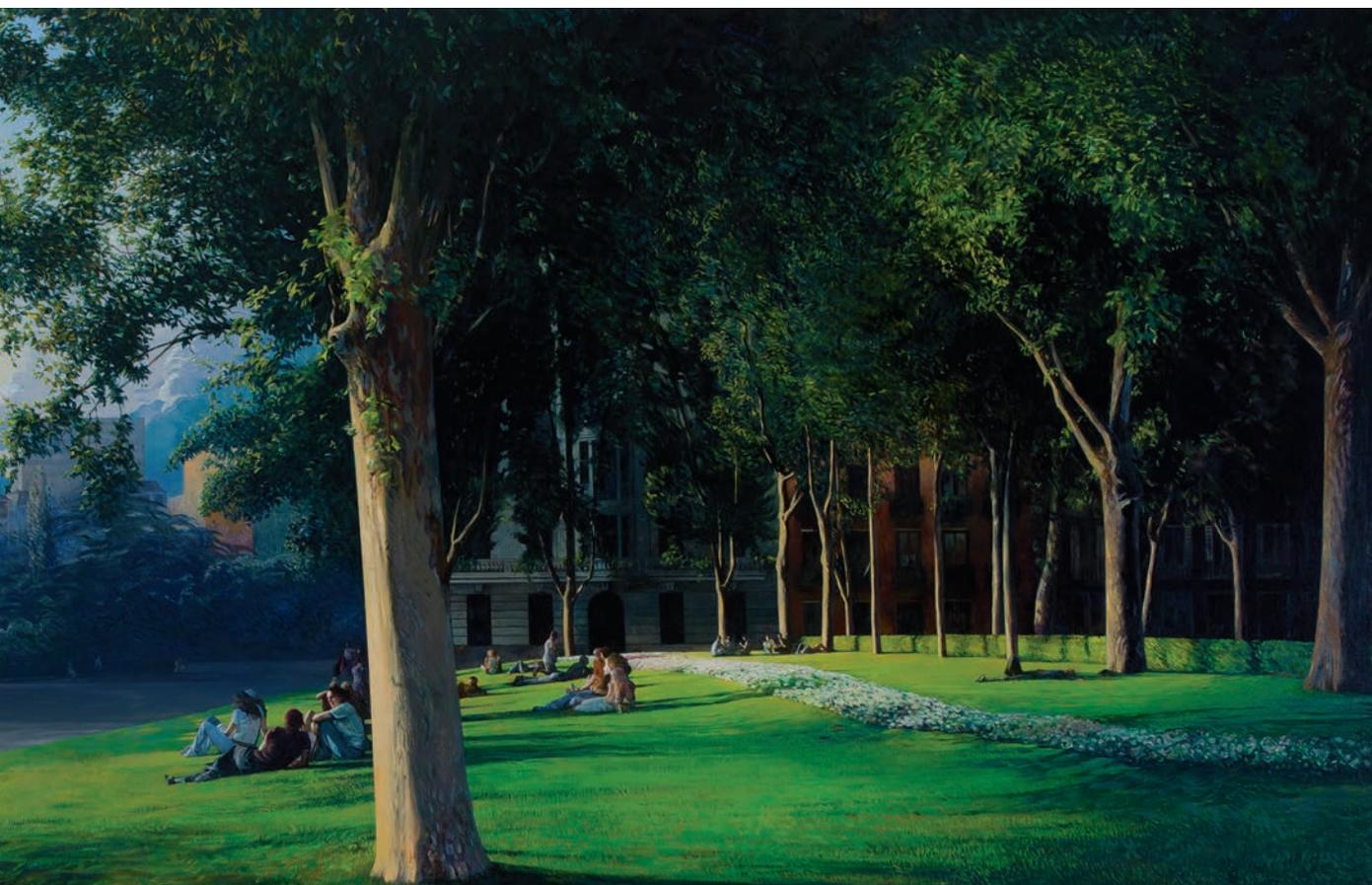
Oil and watercolour on canvas, 75 x 102 cm

—

“... a sunny summer afternoon; the relationship is not one of communion, but of integration, absorption, fusion.”

—





Shirin Neshat

—

Untitled (*Rapture Series*), 1999

Photograph on paper, 90 x 178 cm

—

“... tunics that cover them from head to toe. They are spread out over a landscape with little nuance ...”

—





Peter Blake

—

Montgomery Clift was a Twin, 1981-1983

Mixed media, 116 x 95 x 8.5 cm

—

“All representation involves suspending
this sense of reality. We are not only in
a world of appearances ...”

—





Ixone Sádaba

—

Poetics of Disappearance (Poétique de la disparition), 2006

Five digital colour prints, 100 x 150 cm each. Edition 1/3 + AP

—

“The dissolution of the bodies in the space will not keep everything around it from later being the same when there is no one around to watch.”

—





Manuel Vilariño

—

El despertar (The Awakening), 2001

Photograph on paper mounted on aluminium, 120 x 360 cm

—

“... the passing of time which we throw away or squander. The skull warns us that death is inevitable and that, by the same token, it is indecipherable.”

—





Andrés Serrano

—

Morgue, 1992

Cibachrome, 28 x 35.5 cm

–

“... regardless of the role the individual played – a figure with character or a figurant without text, in an idealised space or a specific place – all pretence has ended and the stage is now another.”

–





COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS AND COLLECTIONS

ARTIUM Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz

Carlos Aires

Untitled (From the *Y fueron felices [And They Were Happy]* series) I, 2003
Photograph on paper, 175 x 140 cm

Untitled (From the *Y fueron felices [And They Were Happy]* series) II, 2003
Photograph on paper, 175 x 140 cm

Untitled (From the *Y fueron felices [And They Were Happy]* series) III, 2003
Photograph on paper, 175 x 140 cm

Untitled (From the *Y fueron felices [And They Were Happy]* series) IV, 2003
Photograph on paper, 175 x 140 cm

José Manuel Ballester

Espacio 5 (Space 5), 2003
Digital photograph on paper, 124 x 167 cm

Carmen Calvo

El ruido de la lluvia lloró alto (The Noise of the Rain Cried Loudly), 2003
Collage and photograph, 170 x 120 cm

Soledad final (Final Solitude), 2006
Collage and photograph, 48 x 50 cm

Carmela García

Untitled (*Paraíso [Paradise]* series), 2003
Photograph on paper, 180 x 225 cm

Gonzalo Sicre

Flamenco, 2001
Oil on canvas, 250 x 170 cm

Humberto Rivas

Loredana (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1989
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Brigitte (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1989
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Richard (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1998
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Gabriela (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Inge (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Jeanne (Serie Retratos de fin de siglo) [from the series *Portraits from the Turn of the Century*], 1990
Photograph on paper, 248 x 123 cm

Javier Riaño

Untitled (I), 2006
Oil on canvas, 100 x 200 cm

Untitled (II), 2006
Oil on canvas, 100 x 200 cm

José Carlos Fernández Marcote

Bodegón, figura y paisaje (Still Life, Figure and Landscape), 2004
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Manuel Vilariño

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Photograph on paper mounted on aluminium, 120 x 360 cm

Andrés Serrano

Morgue, 1992
Cibachrome, 28 x 35.5 cm

Joseph Beuys

La rivoluzione siamo noi (We are the Revolution), 1972.
Lithograph on paper, 185 x 106.5 cm

Vicente Ameztoy

Untitled, 1975
Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm

Bill Viola

Hall of Whispers, 1995
Video installation, variable size

Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao

José Manuel Ballester

Palacio Real (Royal Palace), 2009

Photographic print on canvas, 318.4 x 276 cm.

Edition 1/2 + AP

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Jesus Mari Lazkano

Bastante más que infinito (Much More than Infinite), 2001

Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 255 cm

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Five digital colour prints, 100 x 150 cm each.

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Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, Getaria

Cristóbal Balenciaga

Evening dress in white silk zibeline, August 1967
(model 163), Balenciaga Paris
Photo © Juantxo Egaña

Manuel Outumuro

Evening coat in black silk taffeta, 1935, 2010
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening coat in yellow gros de Naples silk with
floral appliqué embroidery in polychrome
chenille threads, 1960, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening dress in black satin with machine-made
tulle transparency decorated with an appliqué of
sequins and glass-paste beading, 1964, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening dress in pale pink satin and black
bambula silk with machine-made transparency
on black silk, ca. 1953, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening ensemble consisting of jacket in silver
cloqué on a blue background and skirt in silver
and gold cloqué, 1965, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening dress in beige silk crepe with machine-
made green tulle transparency, 1966, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

Wedding dress in ivory silk gazar, 1967, 2010
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

*Evening dress in black silk crepe with
a ribbon appliqué of sequins and faceted
crystals, 1968, 2010*
Digital photograph. Copy on baryta paper,
160 x 110 cm

San Telmo Museoa, San Sebastián

Dora Salazar

Untitled (I), 2003-2004

Engraving on paper, 38 x 50 cm

Untitled (II), 2003-2004

Engraving on paper, 38 x 50 cm

Andrés Nagel

Besamanos (Hand-kiss), ca. 1980

Mixed media, oil on fibreglass and polyester,

170 x 100 x 47 cm

Ramón Zuriarrain

Bikote baten erretratua (Portrait of a Couple), 1982

Oil on canvas, 197.5 x 132 cm

Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao

Markus Lüpertz

Frauenkopf (Kopf meiner Mutter)
[*The Head of a Woman (The Head of my Mother)*], 1987
Painted bronze, 97 x 75 x 47.5 cm

Juan José Aquerreta

Apolo barneliluratua (Heraklitoren hilobirako frisoa) [*Apollo Lost in Thought (Frieze for Heraclitus' Tomb)*], 1990-1991
Oil on canvas, 250 x 372 cm

Ronald Brooks Kitaj

The Hispanist (Nissa Torrents), 1977-1978
Oil on canvas, 244.2 x 76.2 cm

Jesus Mari Lazkano

A la espera del dibujo inacabado (Waiting for the Unfinished Drawing), 2001
Acrylic on canvas, 125 x 200 cm

Peter Blake

Montgomery Clift was a Twin, 1981-1983
Mixed media, 116 x 95 x 8.5 cm

Alfonso Gortázar

Día de pesca (Day of Fishing), 2006
Oil on canvas, 200 x 350 cm

Sergio Prego

Tetsuo, Bound to Fail, 1998
Single-channel video projection (colour and sound), DVD

Nam June Paik

Dream with legs, 1988
Mixed media on canvas, 134 x 140 cm

John Davies

Flemish Head, 1991
Painted polyester resin, 39.4 x 20 x 27.3 cm

Francis Bacon

Study for a Bullfight No. 1, ca. 1971
Lithograph on paper 160 x 120.8 cm

Colección Iberdrola

Clara Gangutia

Junio (June), ca. 2003-2005

Oil and watercolour on canvas, 75 x 102 cm

Manolo Valdés

Dama con abanico (Woman with Fan), 2007

Mixed media on canvas, 200 x 150 cm

Colección Meana Larrucea

Robert Mapplethorpe

Satyr, 1988

Photograph on paper, 50.8 x 61 cm

Shirin Neshat

Untitled (Rapture Series), 1999

Photograph on paper, 90 x 178 cm

Nan Goldin

Noa Dressing for Venus Show at Shogun Club,

Tokyo, 1994

Cibachrome, 76 x 102 cm

John Baldessari

Prima Facie (Third State): Pitiless / Wishful /

Disappointed / Tricky / Quizzical /

Unfathomable, 2005

Mineral pigments on cotton paper mounted on
museum board, 373 x 98.3 cm

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