

*Kids, don't run around the patio.  
It will seem bigger.*

Esther Gatón  
Curated by Piero Bisello



AFFILIATE **WIELS**

Some say that to rip a doll apart is the child's way to seek the doll's soul. It is a test to see whether inanimate things can suffer, whether they live. The child animates her toys – moving, throwing, building them – but is she really sure those things are alive? Is she really sure they're not? She has no evidence. She might think: "let's see if violence does anything." Before that, the doll is, at once, known and unknown, familiar and unfamiliar, cosy and rough.

Some say the child can be ruthless, but we also like to think the contrary. Children need to be cute too and so should be their belongings. Think of that IKEA children's bed with an added roof, only there to improve cosiness. Think of spaceships, desirable war machines. We love the child but see her faults, projecting onto her what scars our life. The ambivalence is more ours than hers.

Piero Bisello, 2025



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025

*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*  
2024



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025

*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*  
2024



*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*  
2024



*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*  
2024

Four bas-reliefs, piled one on top of the other. Burnt doll-clay, paint, metal flakes and varnish on stained birch wood and steel structure. Dimensions variable.



*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*  
2024

*Of wars, wars, wars*  
2025



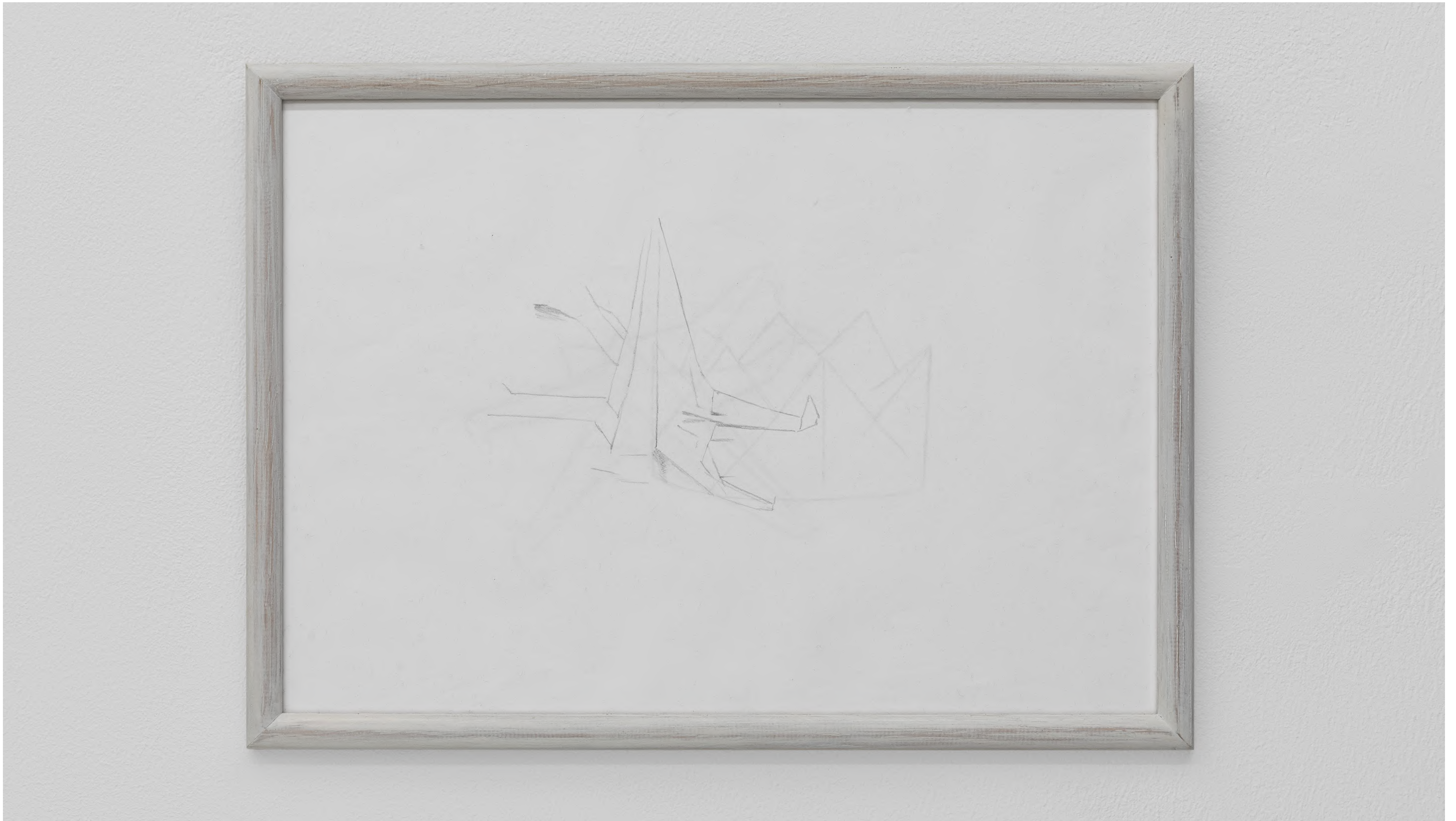
*Of wars, wars, wars*  
2025





*Of wars, wars, wars*  
2025

Still live pencil drawing of an origami X-wing Starfighter, on overlapping 45 gsm paper. Framed on thin oak cushion, painted white flat matte, with anti-reflective glass. 21 x 29,7 cm (paper dimensions).



*Two, of course there are two*  
2025

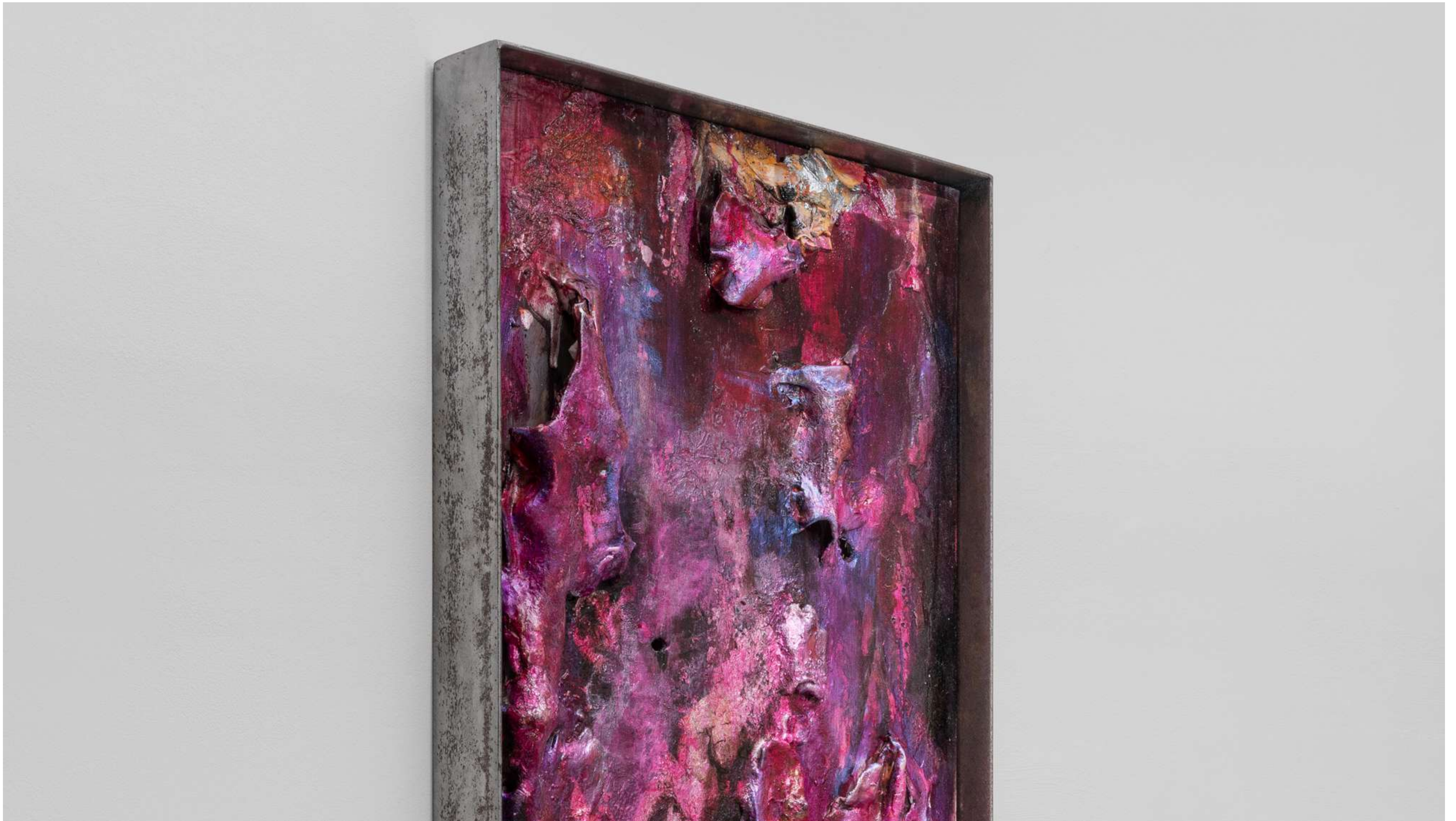
Still live pencil drawing of an origami X-wing Starfighter, on overlapping 45 gsm paper. Framed on thin oak cushion, painted white flat mat, with anti-reflective glass. 21 x 29,7 cm (paper dimensions).



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025

Burnt doll-clay on birch wood, metal flakes, walnut stain and ink. Mounted on a tailored-made, steel tray.  
32 x 90 cm (wood dimensions).



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025



*The tulips are too excitable*  
2025

A new body of work by Esther Gatón consists of bas-reliefs of burnt doll clay on wood. They incorporate metal flakes, walnut stain, and various inks to form rich textures, volumes and palettes. Their size is moderate but not small, suggesting the works were composed with both control and its abdication. Gatón's sculptural practice, which formally evokes Art Informel and traits of post-war modernism, is summarized in these wall works. No vertical sculptures, they are too protruding to be paintings.

Titles such as *The tulips are too excitable* and *Two, of course there are two*<sup>1</sup> (both works on display) remind of Gatón's own writing on her art. The publication for her exhibition at Hothouse in London (2024) is rich in suggestive sentences like the titles, which adds another dimension to the works. The end of the publication is telling: "I wanted to leave the writing to leak [...] I trust that this concatenation of apertures may have entertained you, and now serve you for something else."<sup>2</sup> Titles signal one should not be content with the apparent formalism of the bas-reliefs, or their abstraction.

Talking about post war art, Germano Celant said that "surface and volume of materials were viewed as the fields of unconscious battles, in which it was hoped that the remnants of the social and private self would be redeemed."<sup>3</sup> The programmatic nature of the art mentioned by Celant is where Gatón's bas-reliefs leave modernism. Their surface is a baroque field of clay and inks that has little to do with the humanistic, even militant, approach of abstract expressionism, Informel, etc. At most, the bas-reliefs are the cynical version of these art historical tendencies.

For example, the disenchantment manifests in the chosen material, doll clay. Used by children to play, here it is burnt and tormented. It retains childish connotations through a glittery palette that veers toward fuchsia. The symbolism in these works is not unlike that of Mike Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987, a large composition of stuffed animals stitched together like a Frankensteinian monster. (It is perhaps no coincidence that Kelley's compositional model was also a modernist work, a large Pollock drip painting.) Kelley's suggestion in his title is the same as in Gatón's: the ambiguity of the child, stuck between our love and hate, mirroring our greatest issues, embodying them.

Gatón's pencil drawings of toys (war spaceships) complement the presentation of the bas-reliefs. Their dealing with childhood evokes disillusion—just like adults, children can't stay away from violence—but rejects pessimism by hinting at the healing power of critical distance.

–Piero Bisello

<sup>1</sup> Sentences from Sylvia Plath's poetry. Title of the exhibition from a text by Polyxeni Mantzou.

<sup>2</sup> [https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024\\_Hothouse\\_EstherGaton\\_Publication.pdf](https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_Hothouse_EstherGaton_Publication.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Germano Celant, "Piero Manzoni, an Artist of the Present," Piero Manzoni, ed. Celant, exh. cat. (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Arte, 1991)



Een nieuwe serie werken van Esther Gatón bestaat uit bas-reliëfs van gebrande poppenklei op hout. Ze bevatten metaalschilfers, walnootbeits en verschillende inkten om rijke texturen, volumes en paletten te vormen. Ze zijn middelgroot maar niet klein, wat suggereert dat de werken zijn samengesteld met zowel controle als het afstaan daarvan. Gatóns sculpturale praktijk, die formeel doet denken aan Art Informel en kenmerken van het naoorlogse modernisme, wordt samengevat in deze werken aan de muur. Het zijn geen verticale sculpturen, en ze steken te ver uit om schilderijen te zijn.

Titels als *The tulips are too excitable* en *Two, of course there are two*<sup>1</sup> (hier tentoongesteld) doen denken aan Gatóns eigen schrijven over haar werk. De publicatie voor haar tentoonstelling in Hothouse in Londen (2024) is rijk aan suggestieve zinnen zoals de titels, wat een extra dimensie toevoegt aan de werken. Het einde van de publicatie is veelzeggend: “I wanted to leave the writing to leak [...] I trust that this concatenation of apertures may have entertained you, and now serve you for something else.”<sup>2</sup> De titels geven aan dat men niet tevreden moet zijn met het ogenschijnlijke formalisme van de bas-reliëfs, of met hun abstractie.

Over naoorlogse kunst zei Germano Celant dat “oppervlak en volume van materialen werden gezien als de velden van onbewuste strijd, waarbij men hoopte dat de overblijfselen van het sociale en persoonlijke zelf zouden worden verlost.”<sup>3</sup> De programmatische aard van de kunst die Celant noemt is waar de bas-reliëfs van Gatón het modernisme verlaten. Hun oppervlak is een barok veld van klei en inkt dat weinig te maken heeft met de humanistische, zelfs militante benadering van het abstract expressionisme, Informel, enz. De bas-reliëfs zijn hooguit de cynische versie van deze kunsthistorische tendensen.

De ontgoocheling manifesteert zich bijvoorbeeld in het gekozen materiaal, poppenklei. Normaal door kinderen gebruikt om mee te spelen, werd het hier verbrand en gekweld. Het behoudt kinderlijke connotaties door een glitterpalet dat naar fuchsia neigt. De symboliek in deze werken is niet anders dan die van Mike Kelley’s *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987, een grote compositie van opgezette dieren die aan elkaar zijn genaaid als een Frankensteiniaans monster. (Het is misschien geen toeval dat Kelley’s model ook een modernistisch werk was, een groot schilderij van Pollock). Kelley’s suggestie in de titel is dezelfde als in die van Gatón: de dubbelzinnigheid van het kind, gewrongen tussen onze liefde en haat, weerspiegelt en belichaamt onze grootste problemen .

Gatóns potloodtekeningen van speelgoed (oorlogsruimteschepen) vullen de presentatie van de bas-reliëfs aan. Hun relatie met de kindertijd roept ontgoocheling op - net als volwassenen kunnen kinderen niet wegblijven van geweld - maar verwerpt pessimisme door te wijzen op de helende kracht van kritische afstand.

–Piero Bisello

<sup>1</sup> Zinnen uit de poëzie van Sylvia Plath. Titel van de tentoonstelling uit van Polyxeni Mantzou.

<sup>2</sup> [https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024\\_Hothouse\\_EstherGaton\\_Publication.pdf](https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_Hothouse_EstherGaton_Publication.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Germano Celant, “Piero Manzoni, een kunstenaar van het heden,” Piero Manzoni, ed. Celant, exh. cat. (Milaan: Arnoldo Mondadori Arte, 1991)

Un nouveau corpus d'œuvres d'Esther Gatón consiste en des bas-reliefs d'argile de poupée brûlée sur bois. Ils incorporent des copeaux de métal, du brou de noix et diverses encres pour former des textures, des volumes et des palettes d'une grande richesse. Leur taille est modérée mais pas petite, ce qui suggère que les œuvres ont été composées à la fois avec le contrôle et l'abdication de celui-ci. La pratique sculpturale de Gatón, qui évoque formellement l'Art Informel et des traits du modernisme d'après-guerre, est résumée dans ces œuvres murales. Il ne s'agit pas de sculptures verticales, mais d'œuvres trop saillantes pour être des peintures.

Des titres tels que *The tulips are too excitable* et *Two, of course there are two*<sup>1</sup> (les deux œuvres exposées) rappellent les écrits de Gatón sur son art. La publication de son exposition à Hothouse à Londres (2024) est riche en phrases suggestives comme les titres, ce qui ajoute une autre dimension aux œuvres. La fin de la publication est révélatrice : "Je voulais laisser l'écriture fuir [...] J'espère que cette concaténation d'ouvertures a pu vous divertir et qu'elle vous sert maintenant à autre chose."<sup>2</sup> Les titres signalent qu'il ne faut pas se contenter du formalisme apparent des bas-reliefs, ni de leur abstraction.

Parlant de l'art d'après-guerre, Germano Celant a déclaré que "la surface et le volume des matériaux étaient considérés comme les champs de batailles inconscientes, dans lesquelles on espérait que les vestiges du moi social et privé seraient rachetés".<sup>3</sup> Le caractère programmatique de l'art mentionné par Celant est le point où les bas-reliefs de Gatón quittent le modernisme. Leur surface est un champ baroque d'argile et d'encres qui n'a rien à voir avec l'approche humaniste, voire militante, de l'expressionnisme abstrait, d'Informel, etc. Les bas-reliefs sont tout au plus la version cynique de ces tendances de l'histoire de l'art.

Par exemple, le désenchantement se manifeste dans le matériau choisi, les poupées d'argile. Utilisée par les enfants pour jouer, elle est ici brûlée et tourmentée. Elle conserve des connotations enfantines à travers une palette pailletée qui vire au fuchsia. Le symbolisme de ces œuvres n'est pas sans rappeler celui de *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987, de Mike Kelley, une grande composition d'animaux en peluche cousus ensemble comme un monstre de Frankenstein. (Ce n'est peut-être pas une coïncidence si le modèle de composition de Kelley était également une œuvre moderniste, une grande peinture goutte à goutte de Pollock). La suggestion de Kelley dans son titre est la même que celle de Gatón : l'ambiguïté de l'enfant, coincé entre notre amour et notre haine, reflétant nos plus grands problèmes, les incarnant.

Les dessins au crayon de Gatón représentant des jouets (vaisseaux de guerre) complètent la présentation des bas-reliefs. Leur traitement de l'enfance évoque la désillusion - tout comme les adultes, les enfants ne peuvent pas rester à l'écart de la violence - mais rejette le pessimisme en évoquant le pouvoir curatif de la distance critique.

-Piero Bisello

<sup>1</sup> Phrases de la poésie de Sylvia Plath. Titre de l'exposition tiré d'un texte de Polyxeni Mantzou.

<sup>2</sup> [https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024\\_Hothouse\\_EstherGaton\\_Publication.pdf](https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_Hothouse_EstherGaton_Publication.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Germano Celant, "Piero Manzoni, un artiste du présent", Piero Manzoni, éd. Celant, catalogue d'exposition (Milan : Arnoldo Mondadori Arte, 1991).

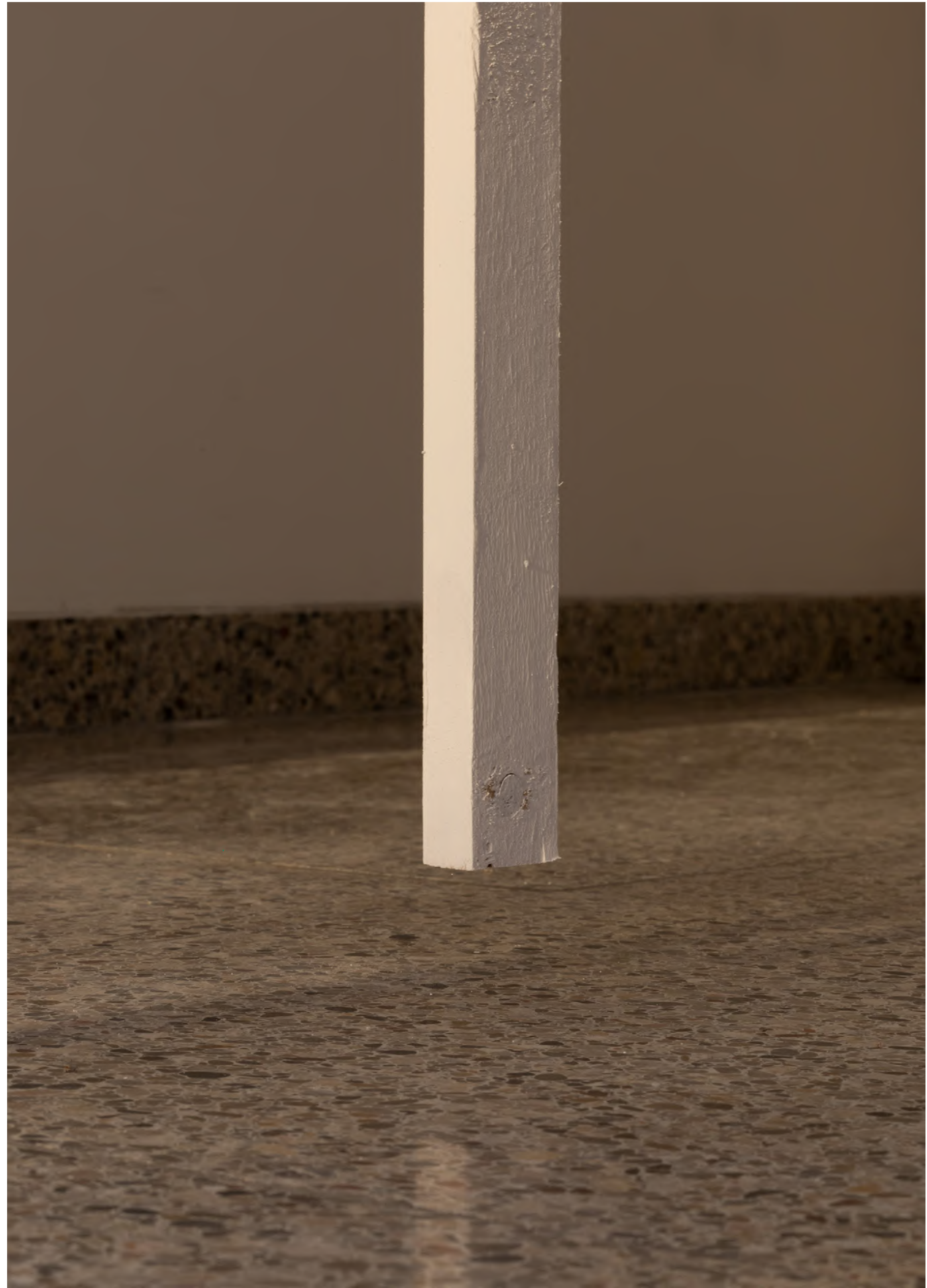














CV Esther Gatón

Born in Valladolid, Spain 1988  
Based in between Madrid and London

Forthcoming :

Emil Lime  
curated by Cory John Scozzari  
CA2M Museum  
Madrid

Un metro y medio  
curated by Tania Pardo and Manuel Segade  
CA2M Museum (online)  
Madrid

Patio Herreriano Museum  
curated by Rafael Barber Cortell  
Valladolid  
solo 2026

2022

Ugly Enemies  
with a text by Benedict Singleton  
Cibrián  
Donostia San Sebastián

2025

WIELS Residency  
Brussels

Kid's don't run around the patio. It'll seem bigger  
curated by Piero Bisello  
Affiliate WIELS  
Brussels

Le Club du Poison-Lune  
curated by Cédric Fauq  
CAPC  
Bordeaux

2019

El Hecho Alegre  
curated by Tania Pardo  
La Casa Encendida  
Madrid

2024

Generaciones Prize  
La Casa Encendida  
Madrid

Hothouse  
facilitated by Benjamin Anderson & Marina Moro  
London

Concretos  
curated by Gilberto González and Pablo León de La Barra  
MUSAC León  
TEA Tenerife

SLURP, GLUG  
with a text by Sonia Fernández Pan Luis Adelantado  
Valencia

Education

Public Collections

Selected Press

Tetillas  
with Darya Diamond  
Pauline Perplexe  
Paris

Descripción de un Estado Físico  
curated by Pepe Suárez  
Galería Elba Benítez  
Madrid

Extended Spaces  
curated by Sérgio Fazenda  
Irène Laub  
Brussels

2020 MFA Goldsmiths London

MUSAC León 2024

Going Down, Raw and Ruinous, by Lu Rose Cunningham, émergent

Crisis de Noche  
programmed by Alejandra Monteverde  
Galería Crisis  
Lima

Blanc, El Fang. La Màquina Solar Més  
curated by Margot Cuevas  
Raccoon  
Barcelona

2018

Las virtudes  
with a text by Julia Morandeira  
Arrizabalaga  
Patio Herreriano Museum  
Valladolid

2016 PhD rated Cum Laude,  
Universidad Complutense Madrid

Comunidad de Madrid 2020  
Fundacion Montemadrid 2022

Critics' Picks, by Ren Ebel, Art Forum  
ATALKA-ATALKA #4, interview with Martin Lahitete

2023

2021

Eu Tenho poucos anos e já era rigorosamente anciã  
Verão  
Lisbon

Abrigo La Nuca  
with a text by Mikel Escobales Castro  
Aldama Fabre  
Bilbao

2011 Séneca Grant, Universidad de Barcelona

2010 Erasmus Grant, Saint-Luc Liège, Belgium

2011 Bellas Artes, Universidad Complutense Madrid

Suppress inheritance, by Andrés Carretero, A\* Desk

phosphoresce of my local lore  
with Carole Ebtinger  
South Parade  
London

Veepee Art Price  
Solo booth, Feria ARCO  
Madrid

Sant Andreu Contemporari Prize  
Fabra i Coats  
Barelona

My Jaw is on The Floor  
curated by Martin Lahitète  
Cibrián  
Donostia, San Sebastián

2020

Adrenaline Querubín  
curated by Cristina Herráiz  
Intersticio  
London

Circuitos Prize  
curated by Bernardo Sopelana  
Sala de Arte Joven  
Madrid

Asleep on a feather bed, with black curtains around him, an inverted torch. (The Earth was full of poppies)  
site-specific commission  
C3A Museum  
Córdoba

Piero Bisello is an art critic based in Brussels. He has masters degrees in art history (UNIPD Padova) and philosophy (KU Leuven, EUR Rotterdam), with a specialization in analytic aesthetics. He is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and the Belgian Association of Art Critics (ABCA). His writing has appeared in magazines such as Artforum, Glean, and CFA among others. He was one of the editors at CFA from 2019 till 2023, while managing the program of foreign galleries CFAlive in Milan. He has published two books, “A Few Homers” (2021) and “Brussels Midi Spoor 7” (2023), both in collaboration with the Brussels-based publisher Surfaces Utiles. He has recently curated shows in Vienna (Curated By at Zeller Van Almsick, 2024) and Brussels (Teresa Cos at St Martin Bookshop, 2023). He currently co-runs the art gallery Gauli Zitter in Brussels.