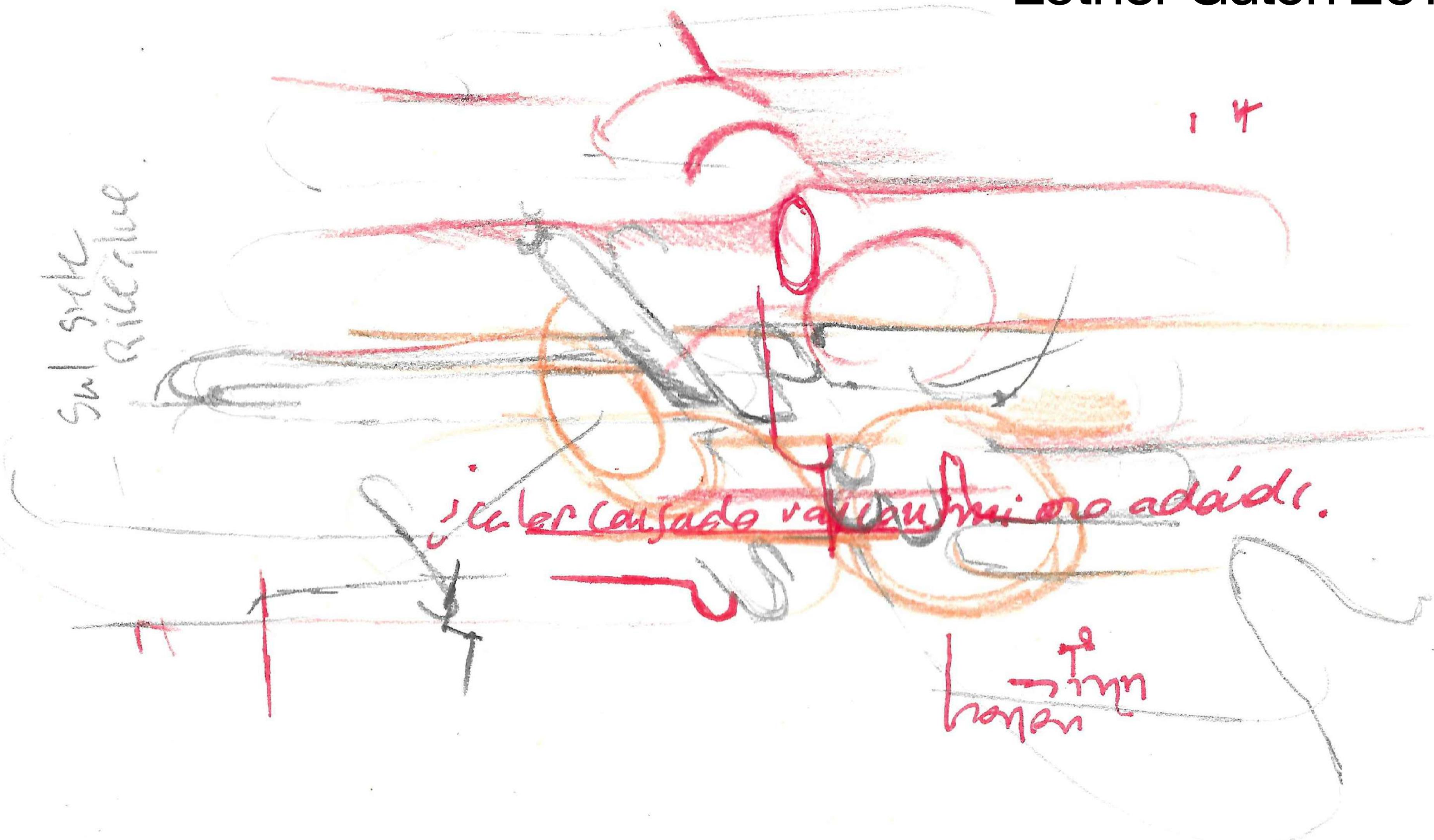


Esther Gatón 2017–2026

Diller nacido mediante  
copias en ando en teatro!



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## Education

2020 MFA Goldsmiths  
 2017 PhD rated *Cum Laude*, Universidad Complutense Madrid  
 2013 Máster en Investigación en Arte y Creación, Universidad Complutense Madrid  
 2011 Sicué-Séneca Grant, Universidad de Barcelona  
 2010 Erasmus Grant, Saint-Luc Belgium  
 2011 BA Fine Arts, Universidad Complutense Madrid

## Public Collections

MUSAC León 2024  
 Comunidad de Madrid 2020  
 Fundacion Montemadrid 2022

## Residencies and grants

WIELS Residency, Brussels  
 Embassy of Spain in The United Kingdom  
 PICE, Acción Cultural Española  
 Guichet Ouvert, Embassy of Spain in Belgium  
 Generación, La Casa Encendida Madrid  
 Veepee Art Price ARCO  
 Time Space Money Bursary UK  
 Art Council Artist Support  
 Residency 11:11 London  
 Ayudas a la Creación, Comunidad de Madrid  
 Sant Andreu Contemporari Barcelona  
 Injuve Madrid  
 Circuitos Madrid

2026 Patio Herreriano Museum  
 Valladolid, Spain (upcoming)

2025 *Bitter Cornices, Partial Versions*,  
 Cambridge, curated by Amy Jones  
*—Kids, don't run around the patio. (...)*  
 curated by Piero Bisello  
 Affiliate WIELS, Brussels

*Vowels*, anteroom, London

2024 Hothouse, London

*Tetillas*, Pauline Perplexe, Paris

*Crisis de Noche*. Screening Galería  
 Crisis Lima

2023 *My Jaw is on The Floor*  
 Cibrián, Donostia-San Sebastián

*Asleep on a feather bed (...)*  
 C3A Museum Córdoba

*Emil Lime*, curated by Cory John  
 Scozzari, CA2M Museum Madrid

2022 *Blanc, el Fang (...)*  
 curated by Margot Cuevas  
 Raccoon Barcelona

2021 *Eu Tinha poucos anos (...)*  
 curated by Antonia Gaeta  
 Verão Lisbon

2020 *Ugly Enemies*, Cibrián Donostia-San  
 Sebastián

2019 *SLURP, GLUG* Luis Adelantado,  
 Valencia

2025 *Fluid Systems*, Carlier Gebauer, Berlin  
*Roulette*, Piloto pardo, London  
*Silent Systems: Breathing Devices*,  
 curated by Daré Dada, Czech Centre  
 London

*Igual que Long Beach*, Puteca  
 Naples  
*XI.i: Off-Site Show*, RTA, London  
*New Pastoral*, Pusher, London  
*Almacén Abierto*, Madrid

2024 */Metal and the Flesh/* Horse & Pony,  
 curated by Aaron Ratajczyk, Berlin  
*Entre Los Ojos del Deseo*, Centro de Arte de Alcobendas Madrid

2023 *STRAY Voltage*, KINGS Melbourne  
*Concretos*, curated by Gilberto González and Pablo León de la Barra, MUSAC León and TEA Tenerife

2022 *CAVE*, curated by Nikolaos Akritidis, Fondations312 Brussels  
*El Medio y el Tiempo*, Mariano Fortuny Foundation Granada  
*Al Alcance*, curated by Marta Sesé, Dilalica Barcelona

2021 *Le Club du Poison-Lune*, curated by Cédric Fauq, CAPC Bordeaux  
*Descripción de un Estado Físico*, Elba Benítez Gallery, Madrid  
*Dialecto*, CA2M Museum Madrid  
*You May Come Full Circle*, Cibrián, Donostia San Sebastián

2020 *Oculto en la Sombra*, curated by Marta Ramos, Nordés, Santiago  
*La mina de sal—La sed animal*, curated by Margot Cuevas, Monica Planes, Alex Palacín, Art Nou, Barcelona  
*Un metro y medio*, curated by Manuel Segade and Tania Pardo, CA2M Museum Madrid

2019 *El Resto*, University of Navarra  
 Museum, Pamplona  
*System Safari*, hosted by Arebyte Gallery, London  
*Pou Sou Nefko*, korai Cyprus  
*The Happy Fact*, curated by Tania Pardo, La Casa Encendida Madrid

*Beneath the beach, seamless paving stones*, The wrong biennale  
*Extended Spaces*, curated by Sérgio Fazenda, Irène Laub Brussels  
*The one that's always there*, SB34-The Pool, Brussels  
*Dazzling Encounters*, curated by Cristina Herráiz, Sanderson Hotel London  
*rocks radio radar long wave radiation*, curated by Cristina Ramos, The Watch Berlin

2018 *Six Memos*, St George Hall, curated by Branka Bencic, Liverpool and Labirynt Gallery, Lublin  
*CALL20*, Luis Adelantado Gallery Valencia  
*Circuitos XXIX Grant*, Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid  
*Mensaje de Arecibo*, curated by D11, Etopía, Zaragoza  
*Oh, how we need a new language to go with our new bodies!*\*, Gextoarte, Bilbao ES  
*Grasping a Concept is Mastering the Use of a Form*, curated by Bea Botas at La Casa Encendida Madrid

2017 *Sombra de Ojos* with Julián Cruz, Javier Silva Gallery, Valladolid  
*Haciendo Días*, CENTEX, Valparaíso Chile

<i>Bitter Cornices</i> , publication for Partial Versions, Cambridge	2026	Lecturer on Foundations of Interior Design, Bachelor of Interior Architecture, IE University	MFA studio talk, Goldsmiths University, London	2025	— <i>Kids, don't run around the patio, it will seem bigger</i> , review by Febe Lamiroy, IMPULSE Mag New York
Final Hot Desert Book (upcoming)	2025	Visiting tutor at Goldsmiths MFA, London	Ona, cruzar en cruzada, workshop Sant Andreu Education, Fabra i Coats Barcelona	2024	<i>Going Down, Raw and Ruinous</i> review by Lu Rose Cunningham, émergent
Conversation with Conor Ackhurst, émergent mag.		Advisory Board at Revista TEXTOS ARTE, – PUCP, Lima.	La Pérgola		
<i>Emil Lime</i> , Book published by CA2M Musem Madrid and WIELS, Brussels		Lecturer on Drawing at TAI, University of the Arts Madrid	Performative talk with Mikel Escobales, Udaletxea Bilbao		
<i>That Back Has Overflowed</i> , NERO	2024	[d]grapho. II International Congress of Research in Contemporary Drawing, Complutense Madrid	Most people guard and keep, Performative talk with Claudia Pagés	2023	<i>Critics' Picks</i> Ren Ebel, Art Forum
<i>Sunburns</i> , edited by Robin Robin Mackay, Urbanomic		Seminar at Istituto Europeo di Design, Madrid	Festival Gelatina, La Casa Encendida, Madrid		ATALKA-ATALKA #4, interview with Martin Lahitete
Compost Reader #2, Cthulhu Books	2023	Emil Lime book launch, ICA London	Para derretir el hielo que nos quede; los restos, los bordes de la pizza, las galletas rotas	2020	<i>Suppress inheritance</i> , by Andrés Carretero, A* Desk
A* Desk, edited by Marta Ramos-Yzquierdo		Conference WIELS Book Fair, Brussels	Workshop with Sonia Fdz-Pan, Festival Gelatina, La Casa Encendida, Madrid		<i>Interview with Esther Gatón</i> Emma O'Brien, Dateagle Art
<i>Interiores</i> , Limited ed. of engravings with La Dominación Mundial, Madrid	2022	Open School WIELS, Brussels	Tripas y aliens		
<i>Phantomene</i> , Palfrey, London	2022	Conference at Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, University of Sevilla	Workshop with Carlos Monleón and Miren Doiz		
<i>Forms, Uses and Commensality. How They Make Things, Do Things</i> , NERO		Screening Room no.1	Open Studio, Madrid		
<i>surface, ornament, frivolity</i> , NERO	2021	Residency 11:11			
<i>Aquí, en El Alto</i> , Festival Salmón Teatrón	2020	Sensual Vernacular, e-talk by Julia Morandeira, Esther Gatón, Alfredo Dufour and Natalia Iguiñiz, ARCO Madrid			
		ArtTalk Escuela de Artes TAI, Madrid			
	2020	FRIGORÍFICO. REFLEJOS (del frigorífico), workshop CreArt			
		Muscle Awareness, with Le Parody, workshop Injuve			
		Forms Of Resistance, performative reading, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary London			
	2019	Programa Chimenea, talk with Tere Solar Abboud, La Casa Encendida Madrid			
		EL CLUB, workshop, Fedriani Acrobatics School, Madrid			
	2018	Lecturer at Espositivo Madrid			

# Bitter Cornices

5

Solo show  
Partial Versions, Cambridge  
2025

Curated by Amy Jones

Site-specific installation, cardboard, phosphorescent paint, and small oil paintings.

Supported by the Embassy of Spain  
in the United Kingdom

[Full documentation available online.](#)

Partial Versions is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in the UK by Madrid and London based artist Esther Gatón. Spanning sculpture, video and painting, Gatón's practice is concerned with states of ambiguity and intensity; particularly their material, spatial, and socio-political effects. Working with intuitive processes and unexpected materials (such as bioplastics, phosphorescent paint, and doll clay), the artist utilises artifice and ornamentation, often alongside spatial intervention, to construct unsettled objects and environments. Previous works take ordinary yet destabilising experiences like watching a horror film, riding a rollercoaster or falling in love as starting points for exploring political, religious, and material histories in contemporary Spain.

For Partial Versions, Gatón turns her attention to the conventions of domestic space, focusing on bookshelves, cupboards and skirting boards across the ground floor of the building. Discrete interventions shift and disrupt protocols of display, concealment and maintenance throughout the space implicating the artist, residents and visitors in a series of architectural and social transgressions.

Plastic sheets suspended from floor to ceiling alter three alcoves in the living and dining rooms. These spaces, an architectural bi-product of the need for fireplaces in each room before the advent of central heating, have gradually become sought after, decorative details in most modern homes. Gatón has concealed them in favour of the illusion of a continuous, blank wall. Books, lamps and ornaments, housed on retrofitted shelves in the alcoves and often displayed to express the identity, taste or status of the resident become partially hidden. The other walls of the space have similarly had any decoration, such as wall based artworks,

removed and holes or cracks have been filled.

Running throughout is *They ring true* (2025), layers of phosphorescent paint added to the skirting boards. A typically overlooked architectural feature, here they are transformed into a surface that emits a gentle and peculiar glow that makes its presence more or less known depending on the time of day.

Cardboard has been used in place of painting directly on to the boards themselves, a renter friendly gesture that speaks to a common yet uneasy relationship between the house, its inhabitants and its decoration. The original Victorian fitted cupboards are left ajar, emitting an unexpected but enticing glow of their own. One of the doors blocks the route and view through to the back of the house, forcing visitors to contort through a small gap to access the next room. Within each cupboard, Gatón has fixed works from a series of paintings, each created over several months as a daily, additive practice that takes place at her home in Madrid. Illuminated by spotlights, their presence and status as artworks draws visitors into the hidden recesses of the home. Revealing mismatched crockery, cleaning supplies and other paraphernalia one prefers to keep out of sight, the gaze of the visitor is a welcomed but uncomfortable act of trespass.







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

9

Solo show  
Affiliate WIELS, Brussels  
2025

Curated by Piero Bisello

Site-specific installation, bas-reliefs and  
pencil drawings.

Supported by the Embassy of Spain  
in Belgium.

Reviewed by Febe Lamiroy, IMPULSE Magazine, New York

Full documentation available online.

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.

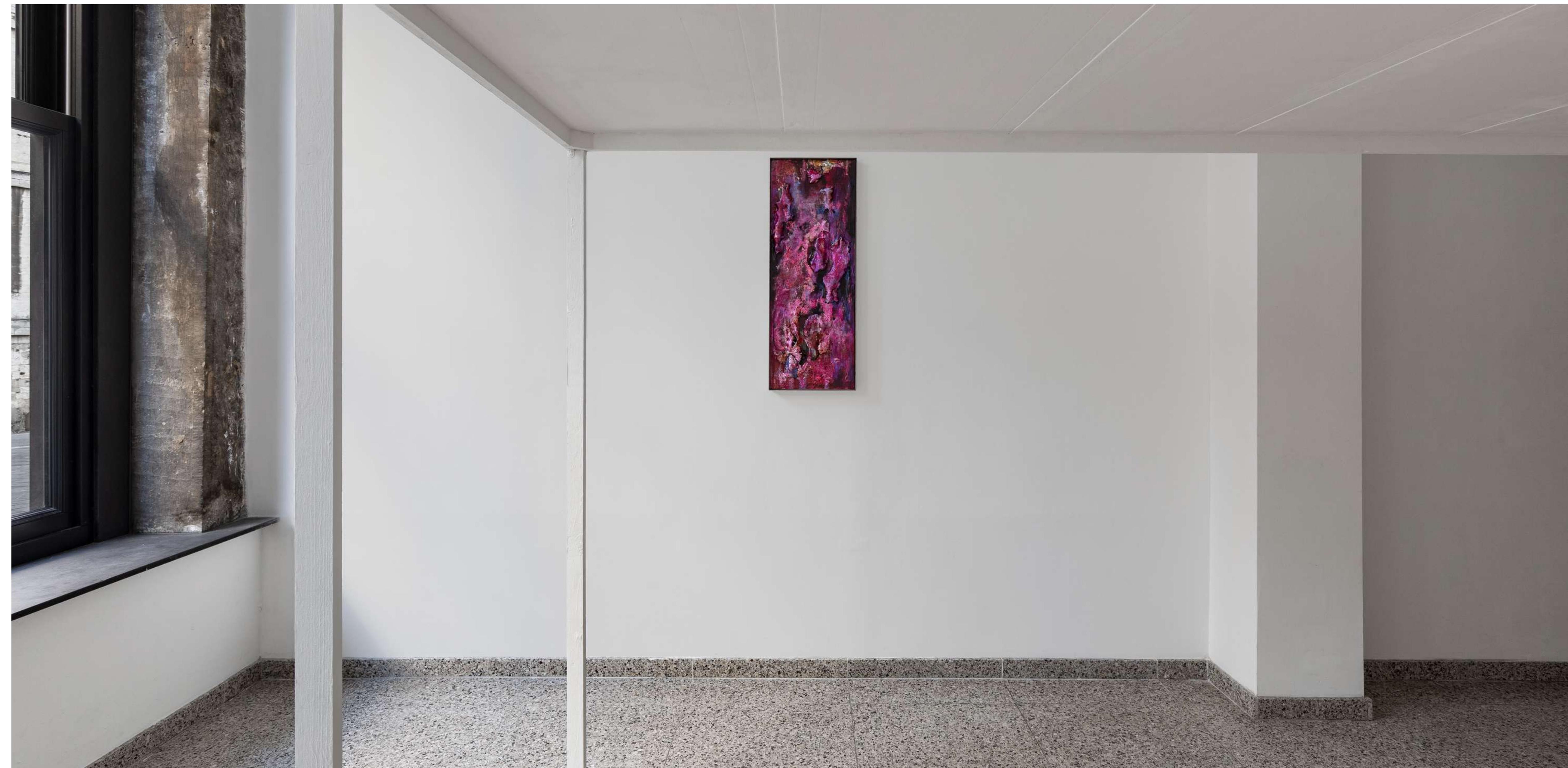
—Piero Bisello.

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

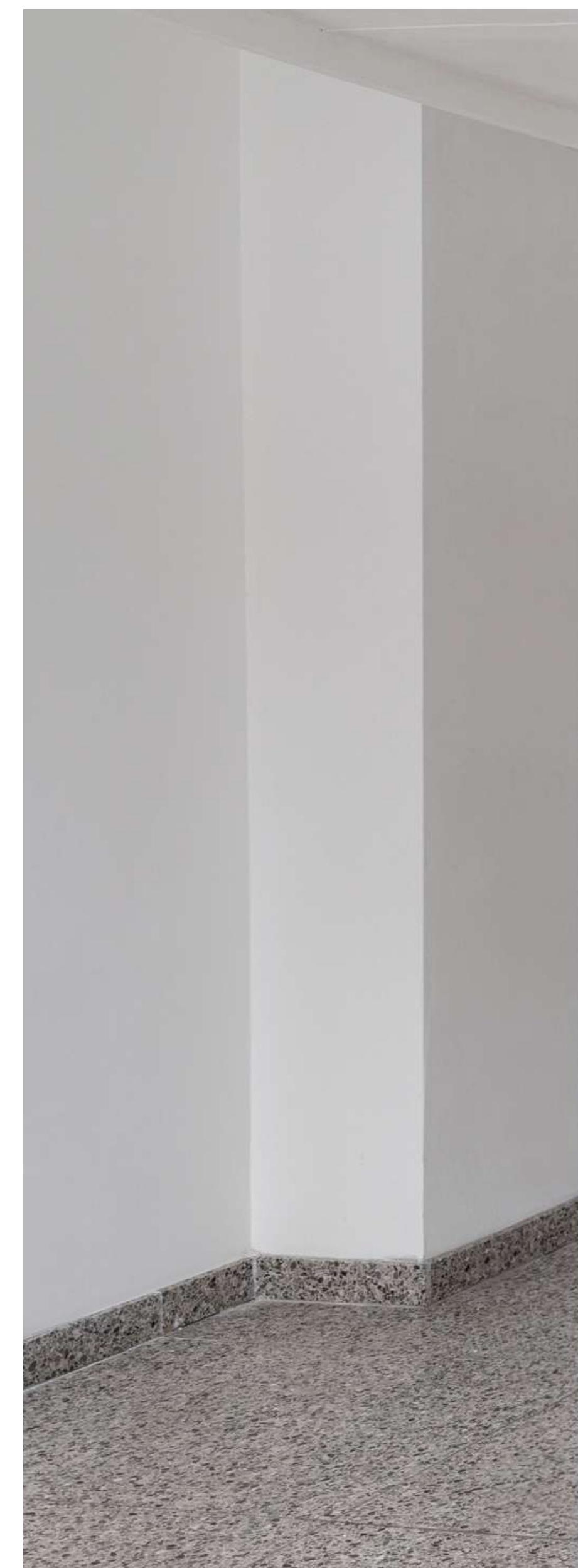
<sup>2</sup> [https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024\\_Hothouse\\_EstherGaton\\_Publication.pdf](https://esthergaton.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024_Hothouse_EstherGaton_Publication.pdf)

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

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



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



— Kids, don't run around the patio. It will seem bigger.  
*Clownlike, happiest on your hands, magnifying your arrival. New statue, We'd wink at if we didn't hear. Delighting*

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.



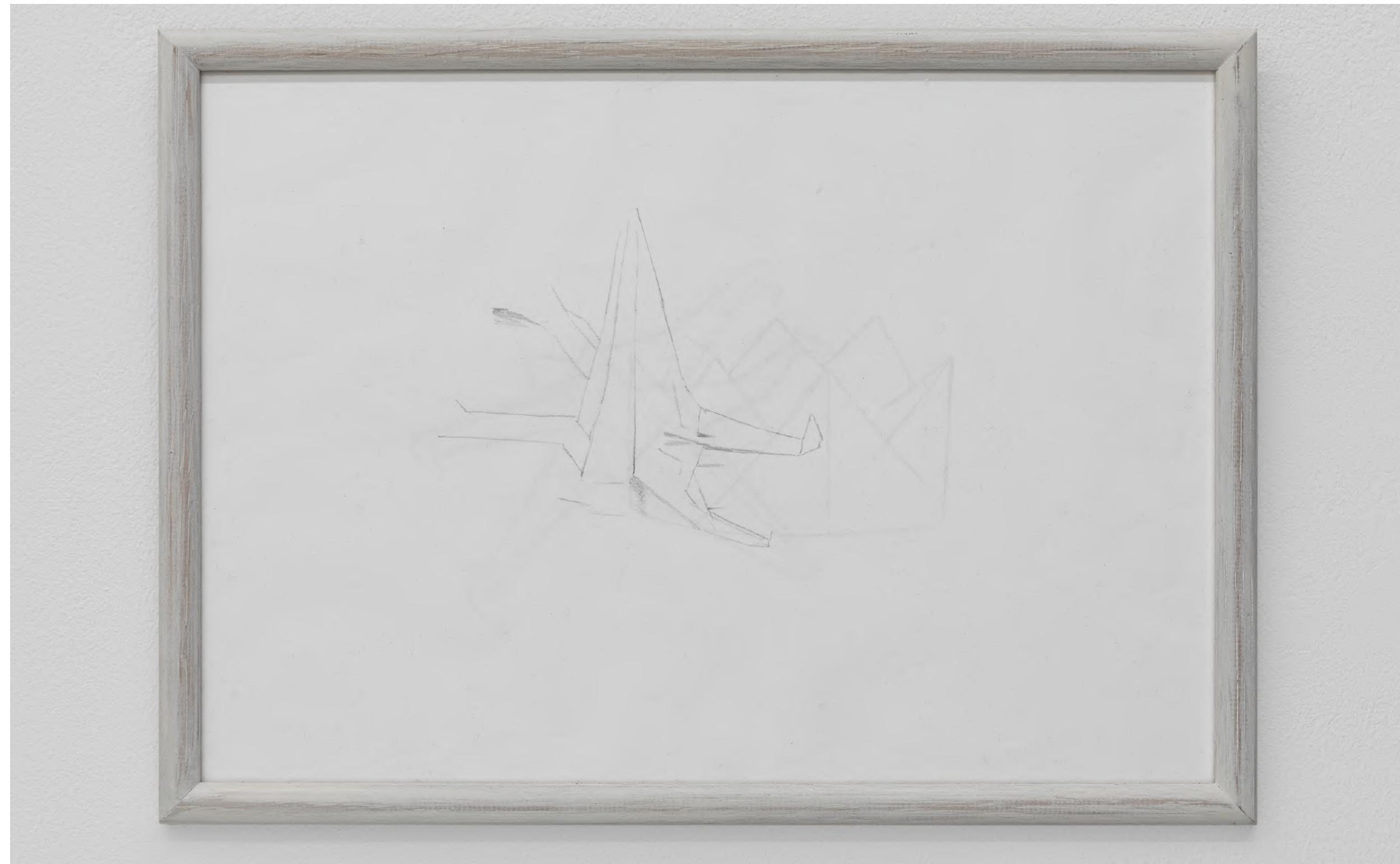


— Kids, don't run around the patio. It will  
seem bigger.  
*The tulips are too excitable*

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

– Kids, don't run around the patio. It will  
seem bigger.  
*Of wars, wars, wars (left)*  
*Two, of course there are two (right)*

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).



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



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



*Then how did she know how to feel it in her dream?*

- Louise Glück

The most primordial language in human history began with childlike sounds. Over time, these utterances grew into a wider array of consonants and auxiliary terms, eventually forming the complex yet ordinary capacity we call speech. At the very beginning, in the most primitive state, humans voiced vowels. From the Latin, vowels mean “with the voice,” alluding to that initial connection between sentiment and the vibration of the vocal cords.

Esther Gatón’s artistic practice returns again and again to this eventful beginning: a sound before it becomes a word, an image so abstract it has not yet taken form; the instant prior to figuration. Working with materials such as bioplastic, textiles, and paper, Gatón gives physical presence to her work without relying on substances that cannot return to organic matter. Her ethically attuned research leads her toward materials that can be cooked, burned, poured, prepared, and molded, using kitchen-like processes to form the sculptures that hang from the ceiling, with a silent, almost kite-like lightness and mobility. To create this movement that ultimately becomes rigid structures, Gatón applies fire, placing heat in selective areas to guide the sculpture’s eventual shape. This technique requires surrender - letting the flames determine the final contours.

The textiles she uses are tied to the places from which they are sourced. London, with its culture of textile shops, second-hand materials, and natural fibres, offers a distinct palette and variety, especially natural silk, which unlike the synthetic version, will catch fire promptly. In Madrid, by contrast, seasonal changes shape patterns and thicknesses. The sculptures for this exhibition were made in Brussels during a residency at WIELS, combining materials from multiple origins that finally, here at anteroom, are assembled in accordance to the structural context the room offers.

In Gatón’s practice, site-specificity is always a challenge. For *Vowels*, her solo exhibition at anteroom, she encounters a rustic architecture and a spacious setting that, aside from the sculptural intervention, calls her back to something primordial: drawing. Suspended throughout the walls of the space with a playful rhythm, the drawings turn the room into a phantasmagoric underworld where mystery and cheer coexist in subtle, drifting motion.

Seemingly visceral, the bioplastic, textiles, and drawings collectively reveal a method that is, in fact, an approach toward a vulnerable, childhood-like state: before language, before imagery becomes vast or coded. A child produces sounds that do not yet distort, magnify, or manipulate. The desire to return to this early form of transference is, in a way, the search for idioms and forms that aim directly at the

barest meaning, toward a state stripped of information, toward the solitude of love, and toward that primordial sovereignty over what is hardest to express: absolute and utter honesty.

Philippa zu Knyphausen, 2025









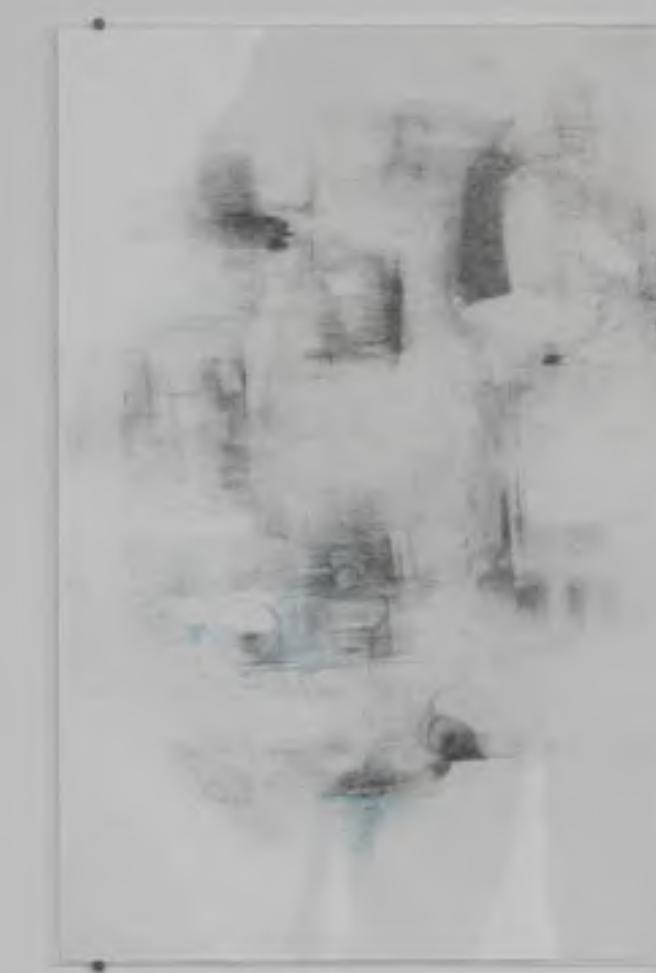
*vocales*

*Doble Fondo*

Graphite, coloured pencils and mirror paint  
on paper. 30 x 42 cm



Hanging sculpture  
95 x 76 x x 6 cm



# My Jaw is On The Floor

23

Solo show  
Cibrián, Donostia-San Sebastián  
2023

Curated by Martin Lahitète

Digital video, 16"40' and bas-reliefs.

[Link to video](#)  
pw: agosto

Film funded by Ayudas a La Creación  
Comunidad de Madrid and by The Embassy  
of Spain in Belgium.

[ATALKA-ATALKA #4, interview with Martin  
Lahitete](#)

*My Jaw is On The Floor* is the title of the second solo exhibition of Esther Gatón at Cibrián. It is also the title of the artist's latest video, on display in the exhibition, in which we follow a female character who evolves erratically in incongruous spaces.

Here, the use of language – verbal and physical – is distorted yet familiar, as the script is based on lines coming from dating apps and manuals on how to pronounce English. The main character, originally from Ireland, is also the narrator. We assist to a delayed bodily reaction to the sentences she's mouthing. Some of them, acting on her unconscious memory, might have been thrown at her in the past, and here seem to be possessing her. This altered relation between the character and her own voice, creates a sense of vitality and malleability in the way she communicates, as it happens to those who are new to the tongue, such as non-native speakers and kids.

Orality, together with the density of the cheap sauna where the main action takes place, triggers the character's behaviour. At the same time, the bas-reliefs shown in the exhibition echo these voices, environmental sounds and musical effects. Their titles are sentences borrowed from the video but, more importantly, their materiality is thought through audible and reverberating qualities. The pieces can be seen as physical remains of the film's sounds.

The video was filmed in spaces that relate to and intensify Esther's experience in the city, which she perceives as humid and dense. She speaks about it in the last instalment of ATALKA\_ATALKA N° 4, describing the making of the video, as connected to her encounter with displacement and with inhabiting a new language:

"(In London) The surfaces are not clear. Rather than the distinct contours and sharp edges, that dark shades produce, we are often surrounded by fog and grey skies, by greater light pollution, with its mixtures of colours, and sheltered behind a crystal covered with condensation and mist. Gleaming and phosphorescent materials, used to improve visibility on the road, multiply and produce reflections everywhere.

Then, the day unfolds under a paler and much more changing solar radiation, the soil feels less stable; it is wet and presents deep irregularities. Well, this also happens because the asphalt in the area where I live, is very deformed and full of cracks.

A palpable influence that can be seen in my work is that, since I moved, I use bright colours, and the silhouettes that I engrave and draw tend to be blurry."

Excerpt by Esther Gatón from the interview with Martin Lahitète, ATALKA ATALKA N°4

Esther works across sculpture, installation, writing, drawing and video. The exhibition *My Jaw is on the Floor* acts as an interconnected element, in which she depicts the contours of a unique body of work. Through a visual investigation around the idea of orality, and its possible physical iterations, the artist sheds a raw yet artificial light on the mechanisms of language – sometimes pulpy and subtle – that give us shape.





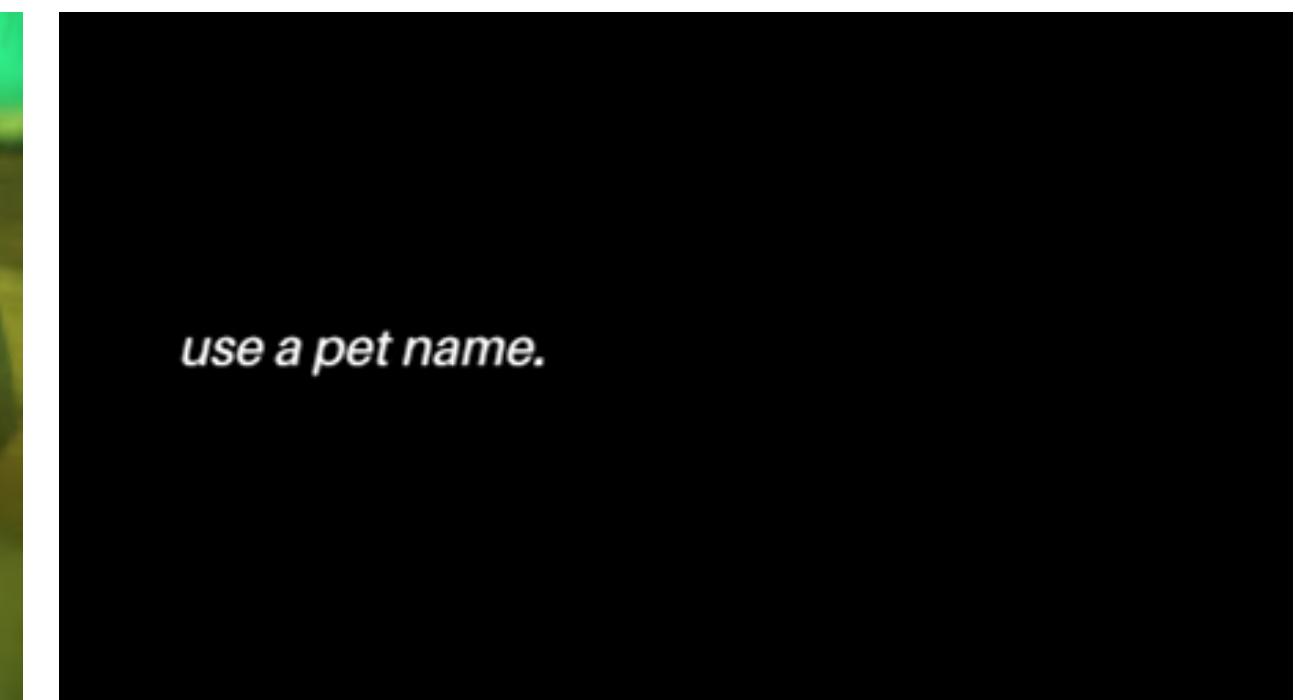


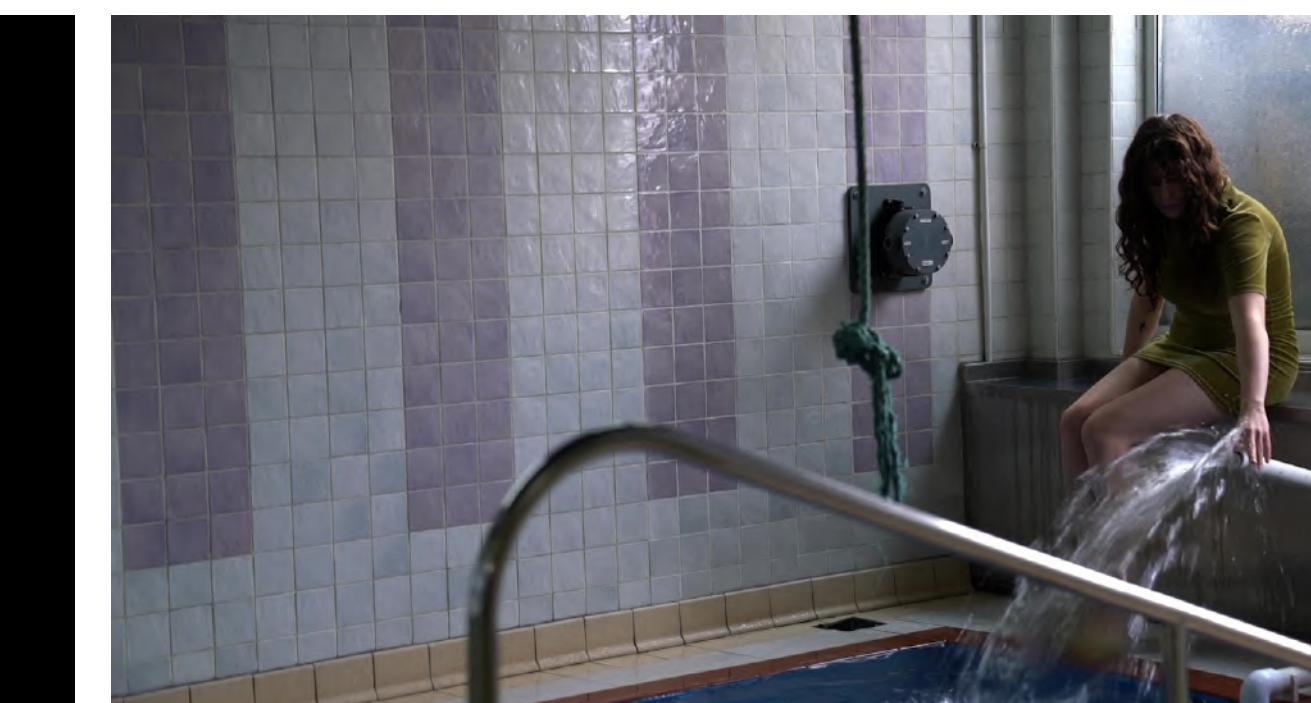
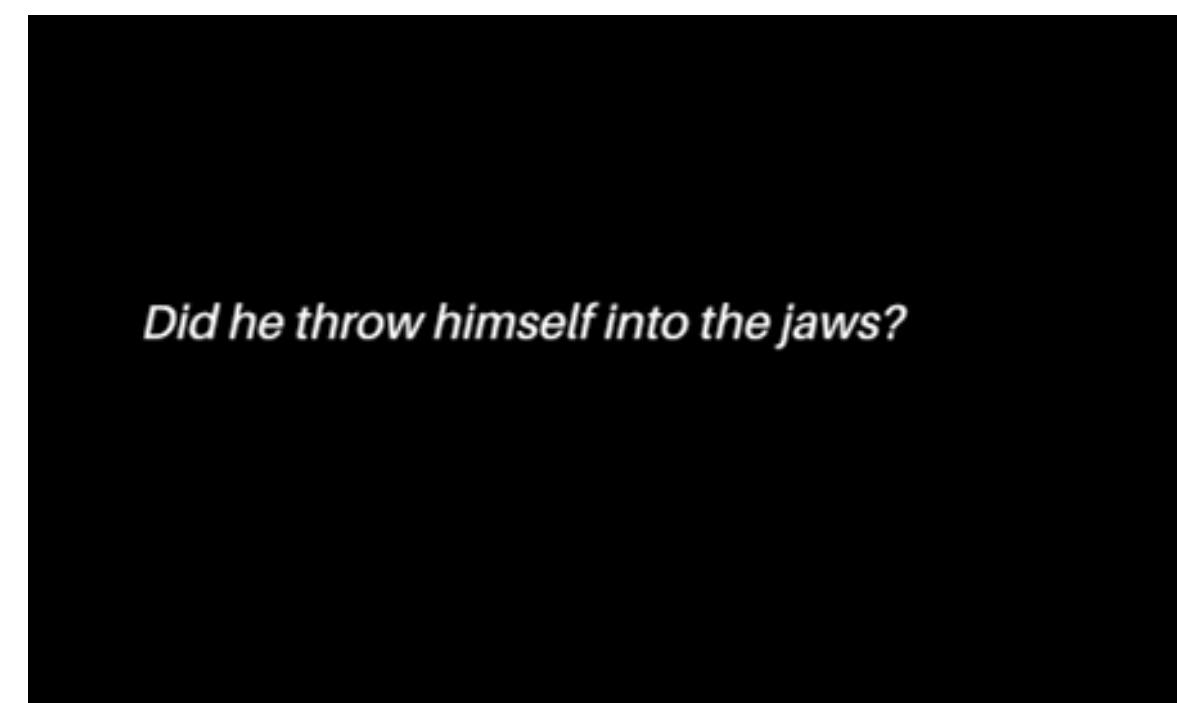
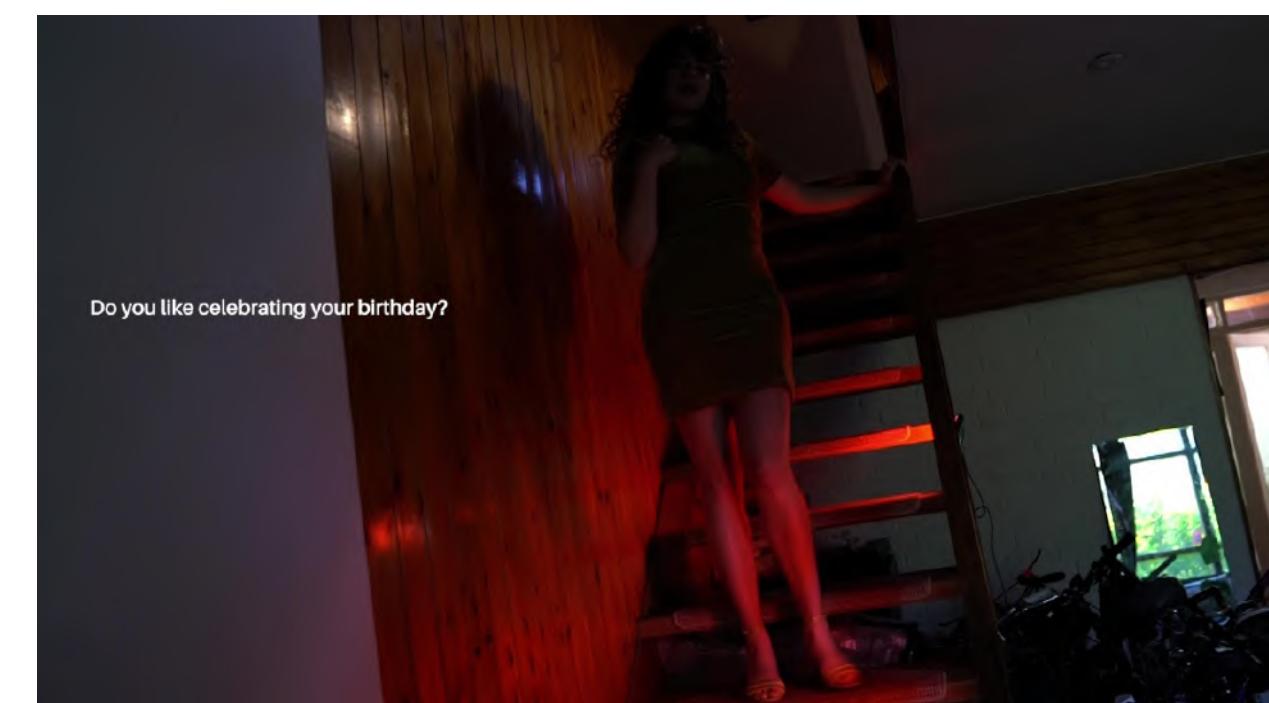
My Jaw is On The Floor  
Use a pet name.  
*Did he throw himself into the jaws?*

Wood, walnut stain, clay, acrylic paint, pastel,  
metal flakes.  
48 x 30 cm  
43 x 23 cm









# Asleep on a feather bed with black curtains around him, an inverted torch. (The Earth was full of poppies)

Site-specific light installation  
C3A Andalucía Museum Córdoba, Spain  
2023

Led lights, 3D animation on façade,  
Switched on every evening, from sunset to  
midnight

[Link to video](#)

This intervention aims to intensify the relationship between light and human behaviour, turning the outer wall of the C3A into a kind of hypnotising machine. The light in movement is used as an interlacing that holds the distracted gazes of those who stroll along the riverside, affecting them in an oblique way.

The title describes the way Hypnos, the Greek mythological god of sleep and slumber, has been commonly depicted.

For this work, Esther looked into techniques such as circadian lighting, trance-inducing systems, flickering, phosphorescent screen glows and strobe light, to play with the correspondences between lighting and rhythms of life. Light is the engine that synchronises us with the day, with sleep (and the lack of it), as well as with multiple states of mind. For example, shock, tenderness, nervousness, tranquillity, delight or good concentration.

The work was produced by abstracting and combining a selection of self-absorbed videos, including beaten eggs, magic tricks (how to make a coin disappear), documentaries on butterflies and diving, knife sharpening, tutorials on how to train to look directly into the eyes, and whispering.

Asleep on a feather bed with black  
curtains around him, an inverted torch.  
(The Earth was full of poppies)

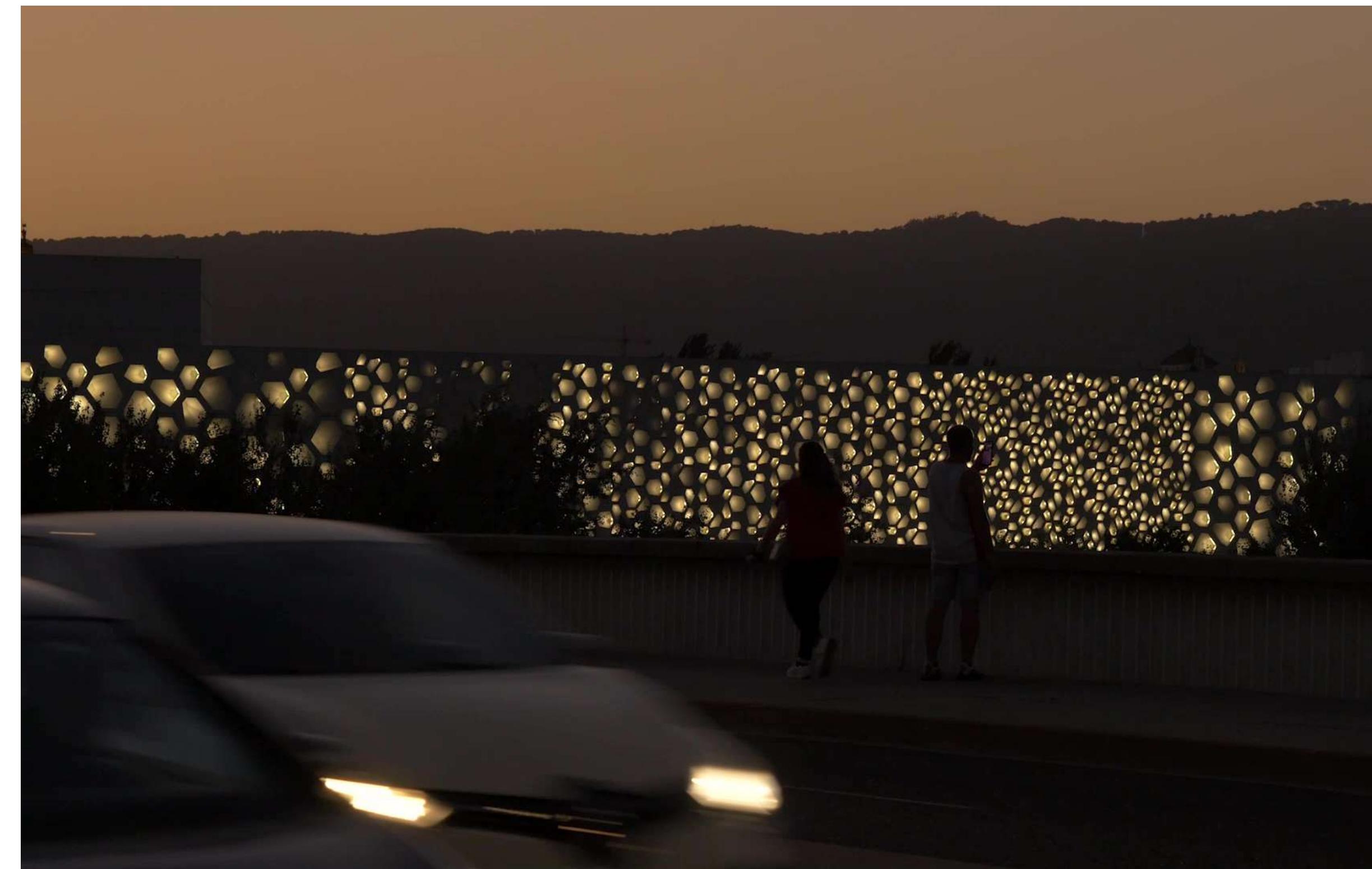
Loop 3D Animation, 6" 5  
100 metres width by 12 metres in height



Asleep on a feather bed with black  
curtains around him, an inverted torch.  
(The Earth was full of poppies)



Asleep on a feather bed with black  
curtains around him, an inverted torch.  
(The Earth was full of poppies)



Asleep on a feather bed with black curtains around him, an inverted torch.  
(The Earth was full of poppies)

Images of the videos that were combined to create the light projection, shown on the façade.



Asleep on a feather bed with black  
curtains around him, an inverted torch.  
(The Earth was full of poppies)



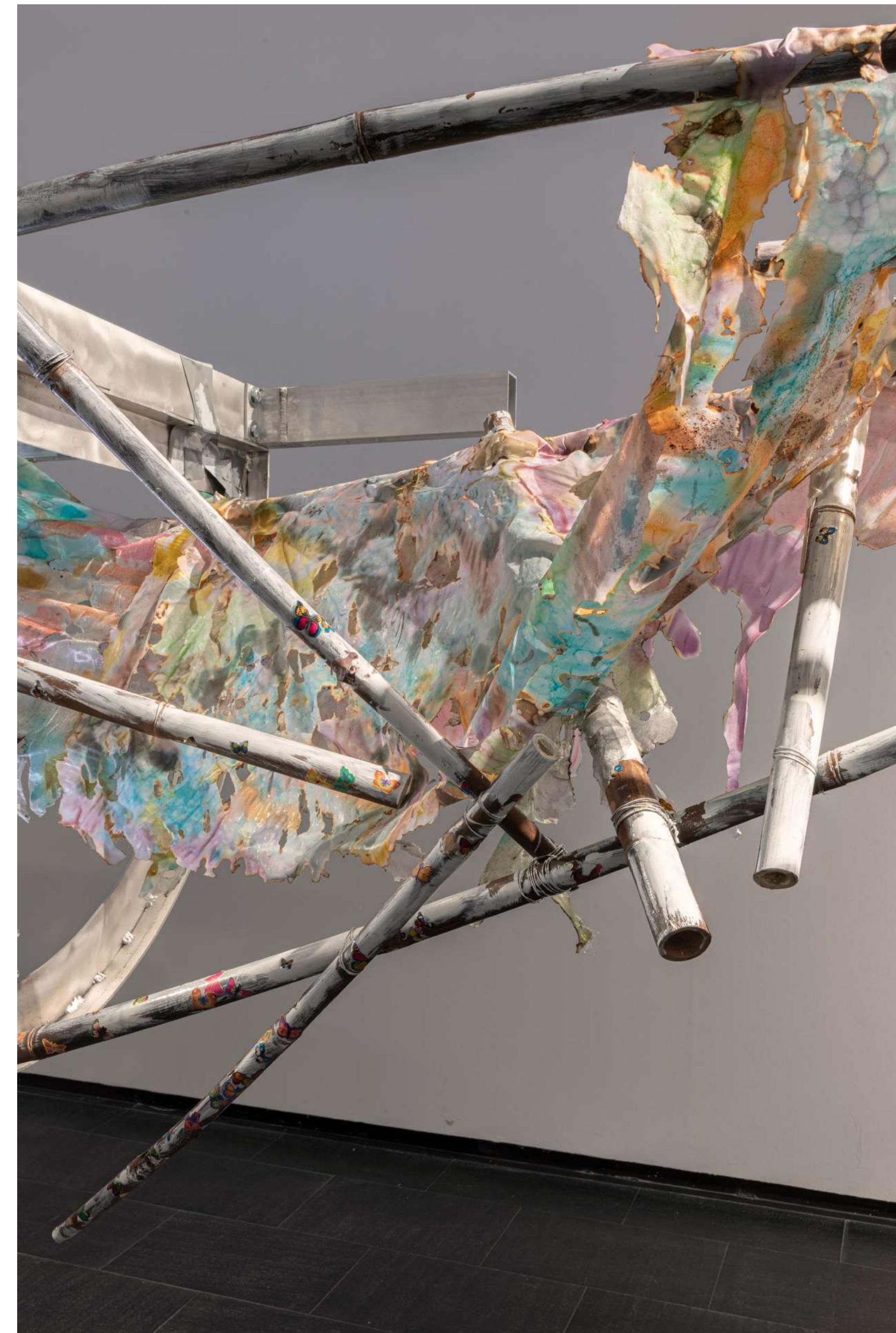
The project sets in motion forms, techniques and conceptual interests frequent in Gatón's practice, such as the construction of ambiguous environments, amateur science, visual artifice, and the crossovers between femininity and machinery, articulating them here, together in a single installation.

Hovering in the middle of the exhibition space is the show's central protagonist, a sculpture that seems to move of its own accord as if possessed. It is suspended by four steel cables connecting it to a central motor programmed by an Arduino (an open-source platform used for programming electronics) that controls its movement. The work's ramshackle construction was additive, in that Gatón gathered and attached a wide range of disparate materials to the structure's central aluminium frame. The piece – also titled *Emil Lime* – has been elongated with various width pieces of black java bamboo, held together with copper and aluminium wire and extra strength tape, and adorned with LED lights, high-gloss enamel paint, a plastic rubber snake, a paper bird, facial jewellery, an anchor sticker, and ash. Suspended between and integrated into the pieces of bamboo is a vegan bioplastic, a staple material in Gatón's practice as of late. Here it has been poured onto pieces of multicolored silk, and hand-burned and dyed with turmeric, paprika, biodegradable glitter, seaweed, charcoal, cocoa, food coloring, eggshells, orange peels, garlic, sparkling soap, curry powder, maca, and ink.

One of the original impetus for the exhibition is the regional fair, and parallels can be drawn between the sculpture on display and a variety of attractions, particularly the mechanical bull and pirate ship. The former has its origins in the rodeo, where a single rider mounts a mechanized bull whose movements replicate the animal's bucking. Riders

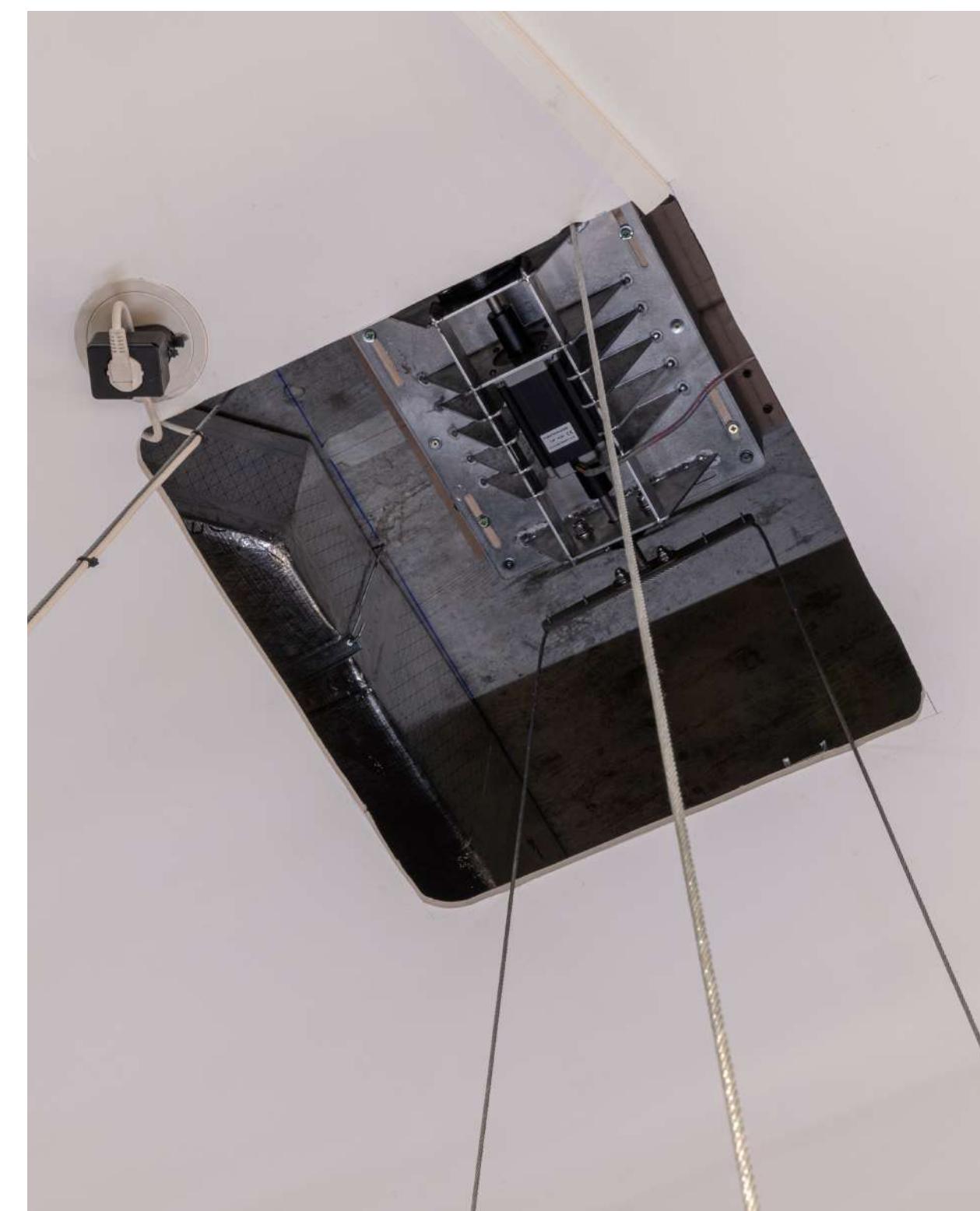
are meant to hold on until they are eventually thrown off. The latter is an open-air gondola ride which moves a group of passengers back and forth from a central pendulum. The oscillation of these attractions is mirrored in the exhibition's palindromic title *Emil Lime*, whose spelling is the same both forwards and backwards. Gatón's interest in popular spectacles relates to an attraction to instability, fear, and adrenaline, and the ways in which these emotions manifest themselves both in the visitor's body and in society at large.

For Gatón, this reckless spirit of dizzied excess parallels Spain's economic history in the early 2000s, with the neoliberalization of the economy, the construction boom and the political value ascribed to consumption and accumulation. This trajectory was cut short by the crash in 2008, the critical year when the CA2M Museum itself was constructed. *Emil Lime* harkens to a moment just before the breakdown of perhaps ill-founded hopes, expectations and projections. The sculpture replicates a nostalgic and fevered delirium through its seemingly erratic choreography of dips, swings, drops and rattles









Writing by Amélie Bataille

“What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all.”

Susan Sontag  
*Against Interpretation*, 1964

The duo show “Salted Peelings” presents a dialogue between Spanish Esther Gatón and Icelandic artist Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir.

Esther Gatón and Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir’s artworks resist interpretation. That is not to say that they don’t evoke anything, quite the opposite – ominous skeletal structures, rolling mountainscapes, the surface of a lake dimpled by vegetation, bursting cells, joyful blasts of colors...Their works draw up an endless variety of landscapes, seeming to take shape in our minds then sliding from one visual association to another, refusing to freeze under our gaze. As soon as we think we have grasped the work, its lines twist, unsuspected details are revealed, the light pierces the composition and transfigures it.

The titles support this equivocal experience. Esther Gatón’s titles form a poem that coexists with the work without explaining or describing it. Always elusive, their works escape the impoverishment imposed by a rigid and reductive analytical grid.

Methodology and precision are, however, constitutive elements of both artists’ approaches. Both collect, inventory, test, establish precise gestures and build their own formal vocabulary from disparate fragments.

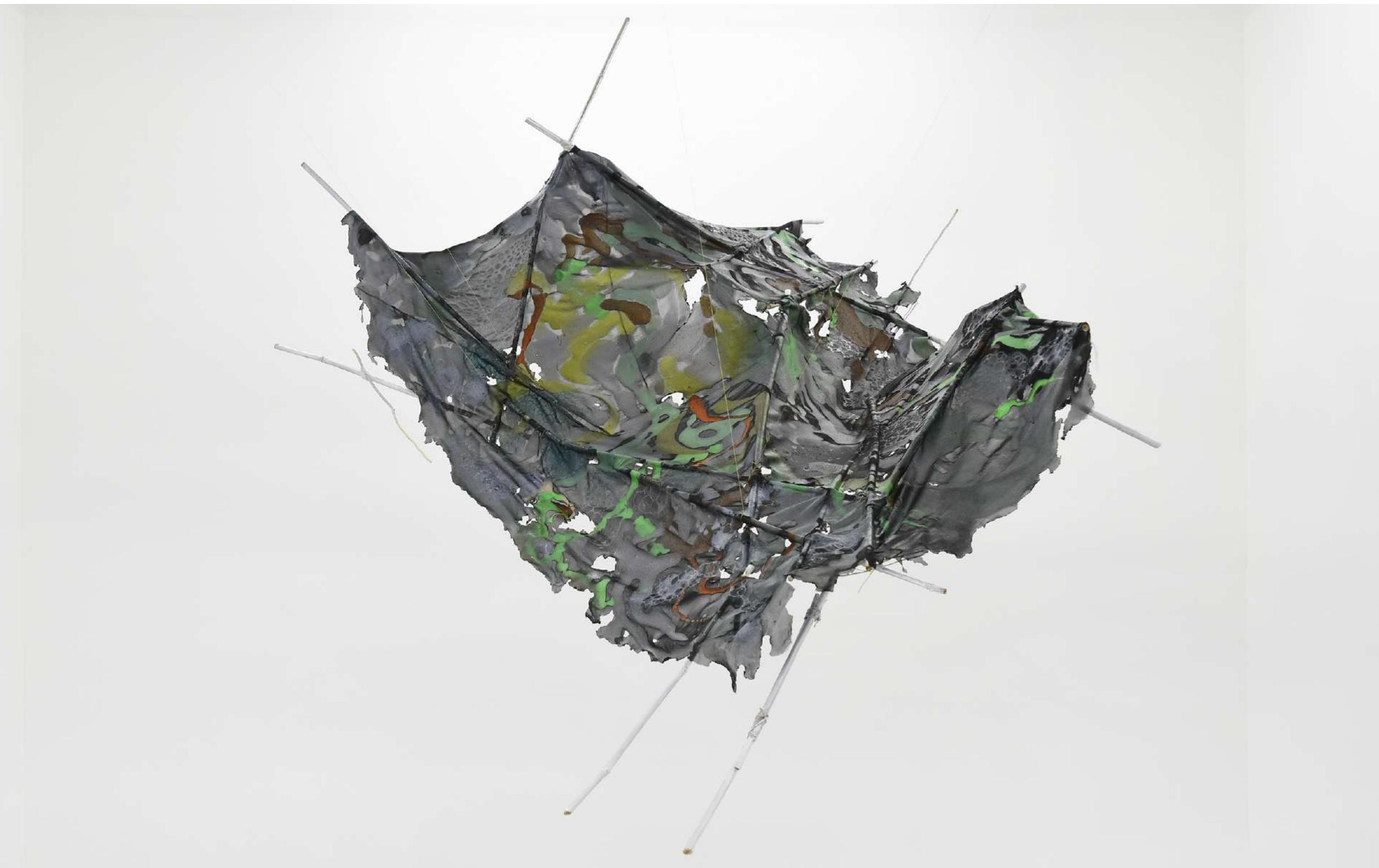
In Esther Gatón’s work, the notion of stratigraphy echoes the excess that surrounds and fascinates her – contrasts in style and taste, dissonant colours, or the constant intermingling of biological and artificial materials. The artist prepares residues of natural materials and transforms them into liquid bioplastics, with which she paints silk strips that are then draped over aerial structures made of flexible wooden arches. Willow, seaweed or paprika are mixed with shimmering glitter to form hybrid monsters, vibrating under every breeze and variation of the light. At once playful, sensual and disturbing, these strange creatures also refuse to be identified and assimilated.

The artworks must be discovered gradually. You have to approach them, move away, change your perspective to slowly apprehend their volumes, their architecture and their surfaces. Sensory experiences in their own right, the works invite us to listen to the rhythm of their cuts, burns and absences, to imagine the unsettling textures of their skins, to taste salt or the bitterness of orange peels on our tongue.



Salted Peelings  
By the guest, to the bone

Silk, fishing line, paint and bamboo with  
vegan bioplastic made of paprika, food  
colorants, seaweed, cacao, turmeric,  
eggshell and garlic.  
115 x 130 x 125 cm





Salted Peelings  
Nut fizzy jeans (left)  
Heat that swims (right)

68 x 9,5 x 117 cm (left)  
87 x 10 x 162 cm (right)



# Monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much loved and elegant friend

47

*Concretos*  
Commission, for a group show

MUSAC León, 2023  
TEA Tenerife, 2022

Curated by Gilberto González and Pablo  
León de La Barra

Work acquired by MUSAC León

Audio loop, 8'32"  
Hidden speakers, (the sound seems  
to come from behind the walls.)

Voice by British artist Simon Thompson

[Link to audio work](#)

This audio work was made in response  
to the invitation to participate in *Concretos*,  
an exhibition that reviews the ubiquity of  
cement as a building material from the  
last century to the present day. The audio  
piece collects and re-enacts the insults  
that Charles III of England directed towards  
Brutalism during his career as a Prince  
(1966 to 2022).

The artwork is played in hidden speakers  
in the museum space, so that the voices  
seem to come from behind the walls, as if  
someone was complaining behind the walls.

British artist Simon Thompson interprets a  
script written with collected material from the  
press.

Artists in the show:  
Pablo Accinelli, Andreas Angelidakis,  
Alexander Apóstol, Chico Buarque, Marcelo  
Cidade, Céline Condorelli, June Crespo,  
Cyprien Gaillard, Esther Gatón, Dominique  
González-Foester, Federico Herrero,  
Nancy Holt, Clara Ianni, Talles Lopes, Ángel  
Mateos, Adrien Missika, Montaje (Saúl  
Alonso, Andrés Carretero), Rafa Munárriz,  
Pérez y Requena, Abraham Riverón, Guy  
Tillim, Andres Valentin, Josep Vilageliu, Jane  
& Louise Wilson.

*"more like the assembly hall of an academy for secret police*

*wreaking more havoc on London than German bombers did in World  
War II.*

*artless, mediocre and contemptuous of public opinion*

*a glass stump*

*un muñón de cristal*

*hay que reconocer que la Luftwaffe, cuando derribó nuestros edificios,  
no los sustituyó por nada más ofensivo que los escombros.*

*Eso lo hicimos nosotros.*

*ellos...*

*hicieron todo lo posible para perder  
la cúpula en un revoltijo de edificios de oficinas*

*tan mediocres que  
la única manera de recordarlos es por la frustración que inducen,  
como un equipo de baloncesto que se interpone entre usted  
y la Mona Lisa.*

*They ... did their best to lose the dome in a jostling scrum of office buildings so mediocre  
that the only way you ever remember them is by the frustration they induce, like a  
basketball team standing shoulder to shoulder between  
you and the Mona Lisa.*

*Large numbers of us in this country are fed up with being talked down to and  
dictated to by the existing planning, architectural and development establishment,*

*the rape of Britain.*

*A place where books are burned rather than put on loan*

*a mildewed lump of elephant droppings.*

*It seems like a clever way of building a nuclear power station in the middle of*

*un lugar donde los libros se incineran, no se guardan*

*más bien el salón de actos de una academia de policía secreta.*

*causando más estragos en Londres que los bombarderos alemanes en la Segunda Guerra Mundial.*

*carente de arte, mediocre y despreciando a la opinión pública*

*un muñón de cristal*

*hay que reconocer que la Luftwaffe, cuando derribó nuestros edificios,  
no los sustituyó por nada más ofensivo que los escombros.*

*Eso lo hicimos nosotros.*

*ellos...*

*hicieron todo lo posible para perder  
la cúpula en un revoltijo de edificios de oficinas*

*tan mediocres que  
la única manera de recordarlos es por la frustración que inducen,  
como un equipo de baloncesto que se interpone entre usted  
y la Mona Lisa.*

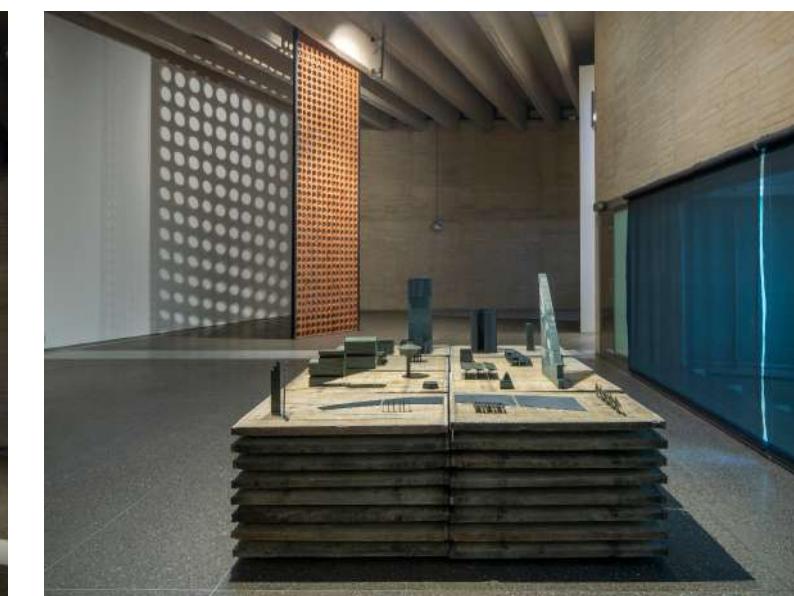
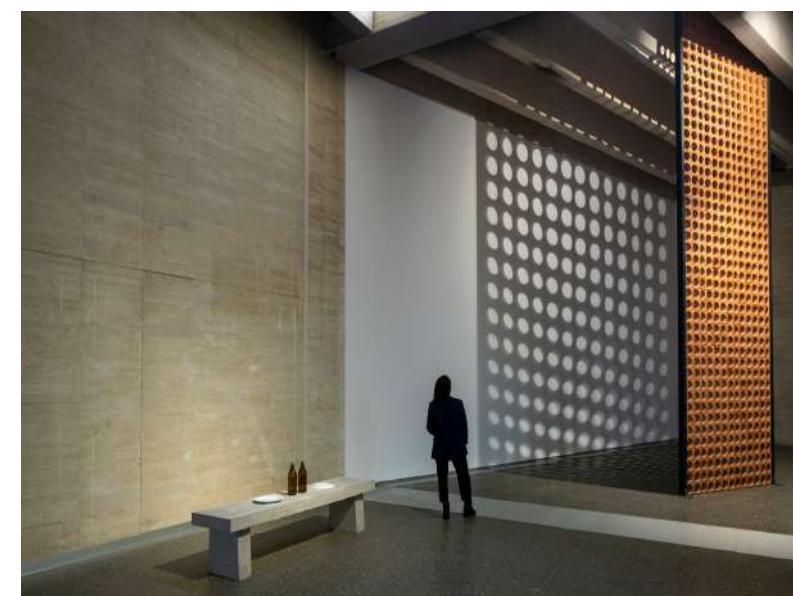
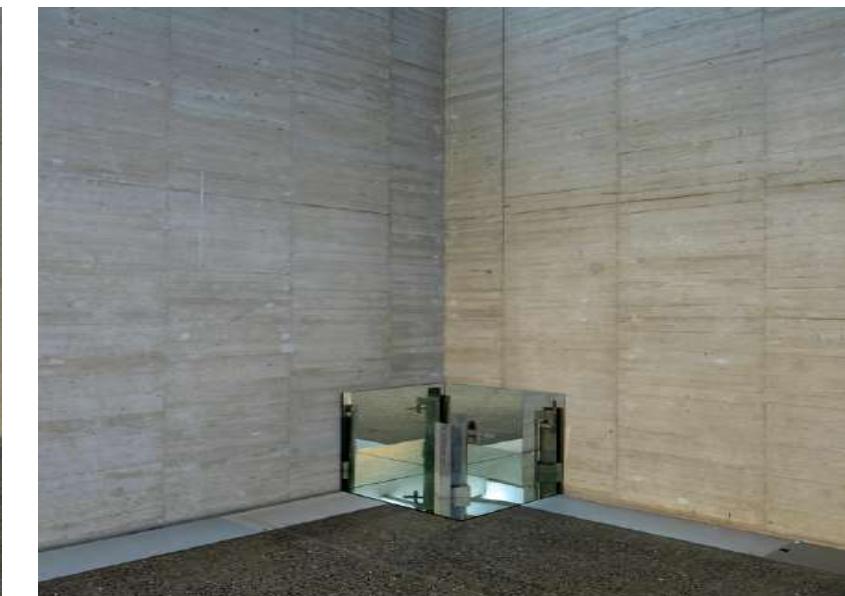
*un gran número de personas en este país están hartas  
de que se les hable con desprecio y se les dicte desde el establecimiento  
de planificación y desarrollo arquitectónico existente.*

*es la violación de Gran Bretaña.*

*un lugar donde se queman los libros en lugar de ponerlos en préstamo*

Monstrous carbuncle on the face of a  
much-loved and elegant friend

Installation views of the group exhibition  
at MUSAC, León 2023



# Eu tinha poucos anos e já era rigorosamente anciã

50

Solo show  
Verão, Lisbon  
2021–2022

Curated by Antonia Gaeta

Sculpture made of bioplastics with seaweed, brown sugar, paprika, goldenrod, silk, willow, and bamboo.

*Eu tinha poucos anos e já era rigorosamente anciã\** is Esther Gatón's first show in Portugal, and the opening of Verão's new space in the neighbourhood of Campolide. The title is a sentence from *La casa de la niebla* by Elena Anníbali. It could be translated as "I was only a few years old, and already a rigorously old woman."

Voluptuousness and ambiguity are returning themes in Esther's work. She makes sculptures that both follow and trick the materials they are made of: their forms behave as one would expect – they spill, they melt, they roll – but they also bounce, turn, use decorative effects, mix smells, and confuse our perception.

In Verão, the sculptures simultaneously invoke fantastic creatures, fast-food, and marionettes, without dedicating themselves to one single representation. Just like in infantile memories or dreams, images function all at once; they bring together unrelated elements, and affirm eerie connections in joyful ways.

During the past few months, Esther has been researching new ecological materials and processes. Her aim is to work with environment friendly processes, while also experimenting with unfamiliar textures and forms.

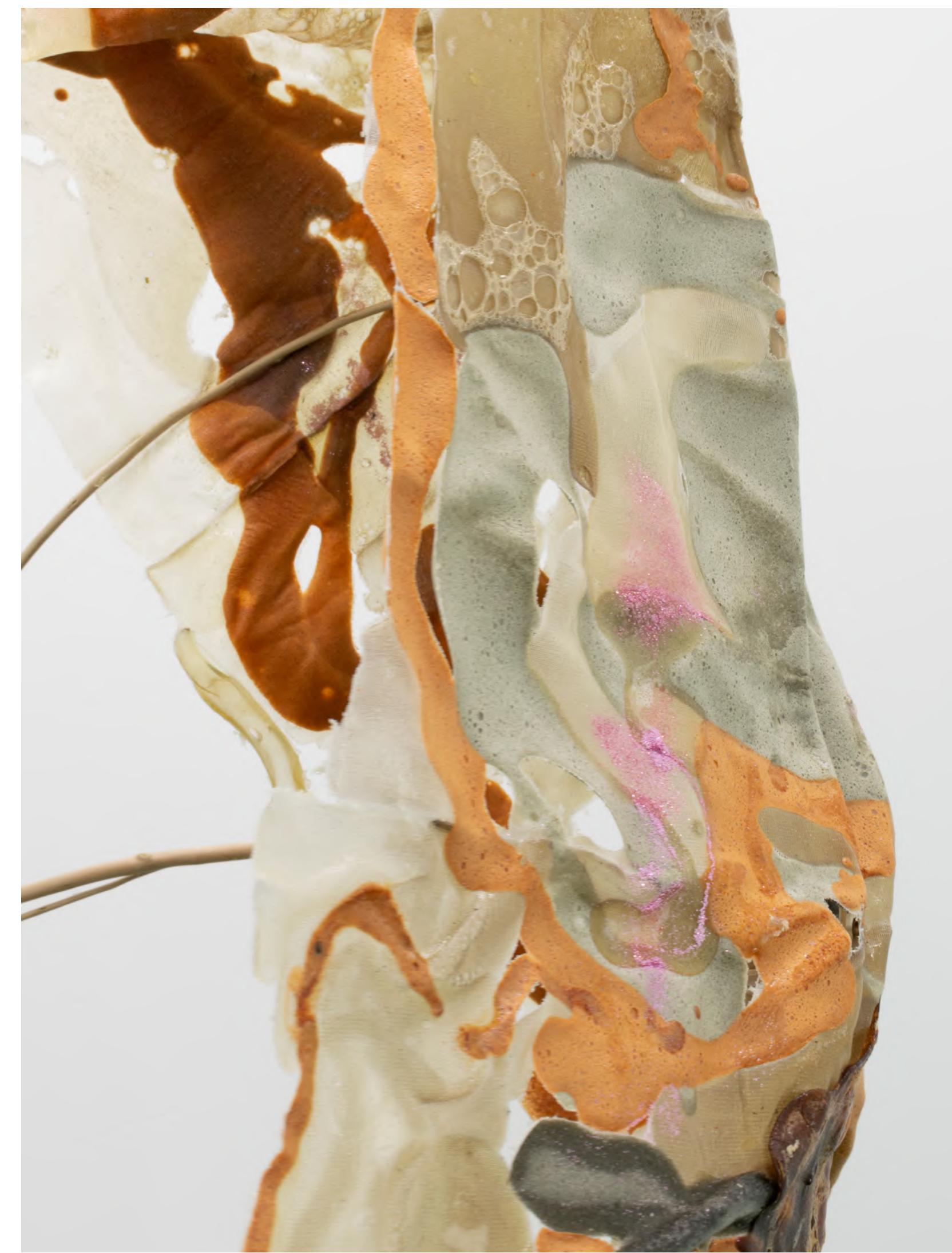
With the help of other researchers such as experimental designer Claudia Palcova (Ljubljana, London), and academic and founder of Materiability, Dr. Manuel Kretzer (Cologne, Dessau), Esther developed a bioplastic made from everyday ingredients.

This material comes from the artist and her friends breakfasts and trips to the English coast. Thus, the pragmatism of using what's at hand has acquired personal meaning, and

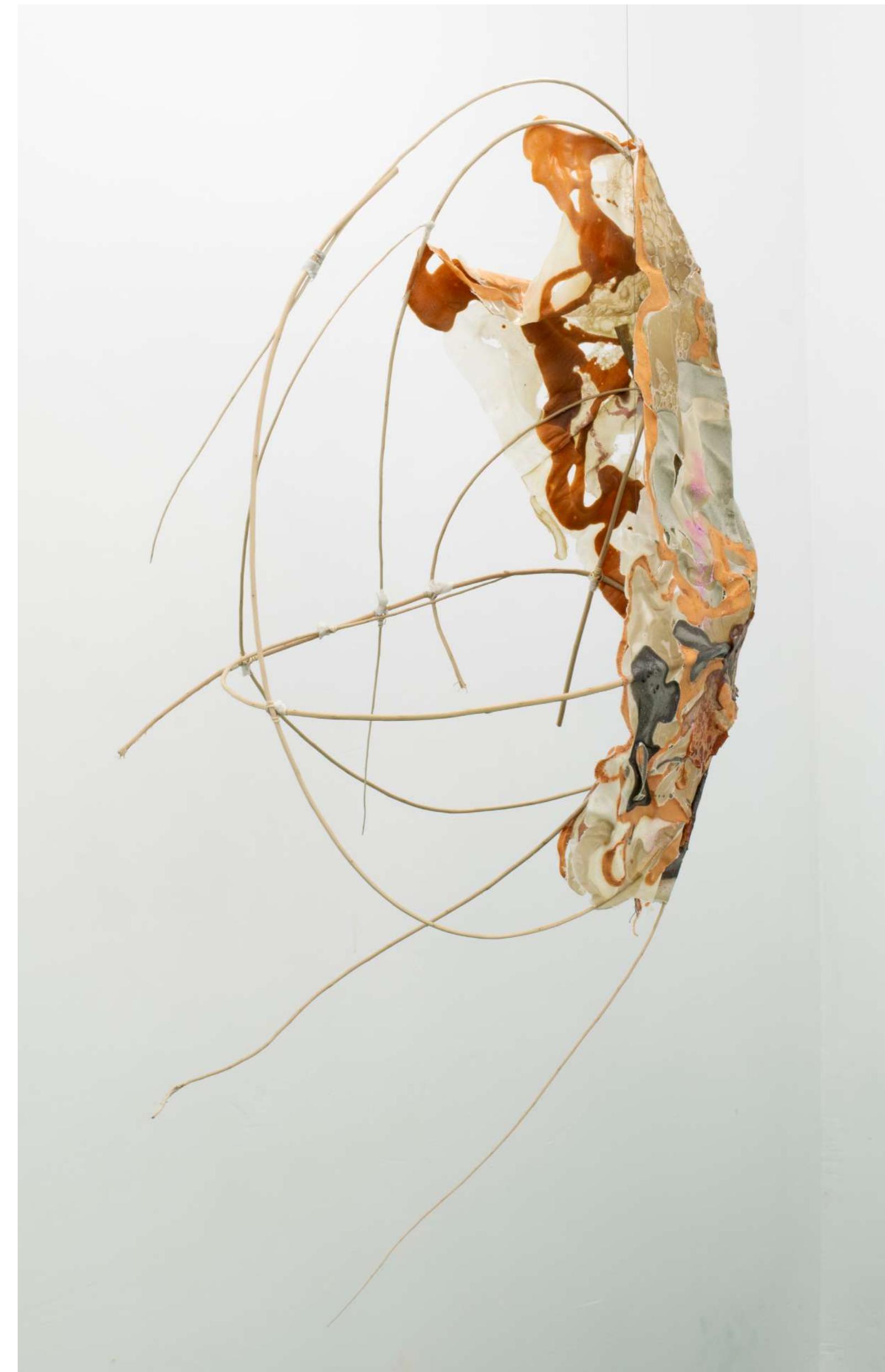
inspired alchemical excitement. The hanging sculptures coagulate intimate memories, encounters, and biodegradable waste; growing into sinister prolongations of these private experiences.

Theses hybrids unfold in the space, hovering over the sporty green tiles, and responding to the gallery's inner shapes and unique light. Verão is located in the underground floor of a residential building, connected to a small patio from which Lisbon's clear brightness invades the space. The sculptures are intentionally translucent and slim; they incorporate changes in the light, and visitor's strolling, as part of the many sights they aim to produce. They expose their inner and external sides equally, inviting us to take a closer look, while cautiously being embraced.

Antonia Gaeta started Verão in Lisbon, in 2019. The Portuguese name of the space means both "summer", and also, "we will see".







# —Hail She Who Holds My Tongue

54

Generaciones Prize  
La Casa Encendida, Madrid  
2022

Bioplastic sculptures, panelling, custom electronics programming, mouvement sensors and LED lighting.

Printed catalogue available, bilingual Spanish-English

[Link to video of the work](#)

“What could be more hopeful than an empty eye that fills itself with seeing as it sleeps?”

*Every Entrance Is an Exit*  
Anne Carson, 2016

—*Hail She Who Holds My Tongue* (the title is taken from Nisha Ramayya’s book *States of the Body Produced by Love*, Ignota, 2019) consists of a collection of suspended, semi-translucent sculptural forms, and a variable, atmospheric lighting structure that surrounds them, built in the form of a small room or enclosure, which responds to the motion of visitors in the space.

The sculptures are suspended between the banks of lights. Beneath their gentle radiance no shadows are cast. The bulbs react to movement in the gallery, as if the light itself possessed *elasticity* — their programming is modelled on formulas that describe the movements of springs. They shine with colder or warmer light depending on the flow, distance, and velocity of bodies moving in the space. Walls turn bright when you approach and darken as you walk away.

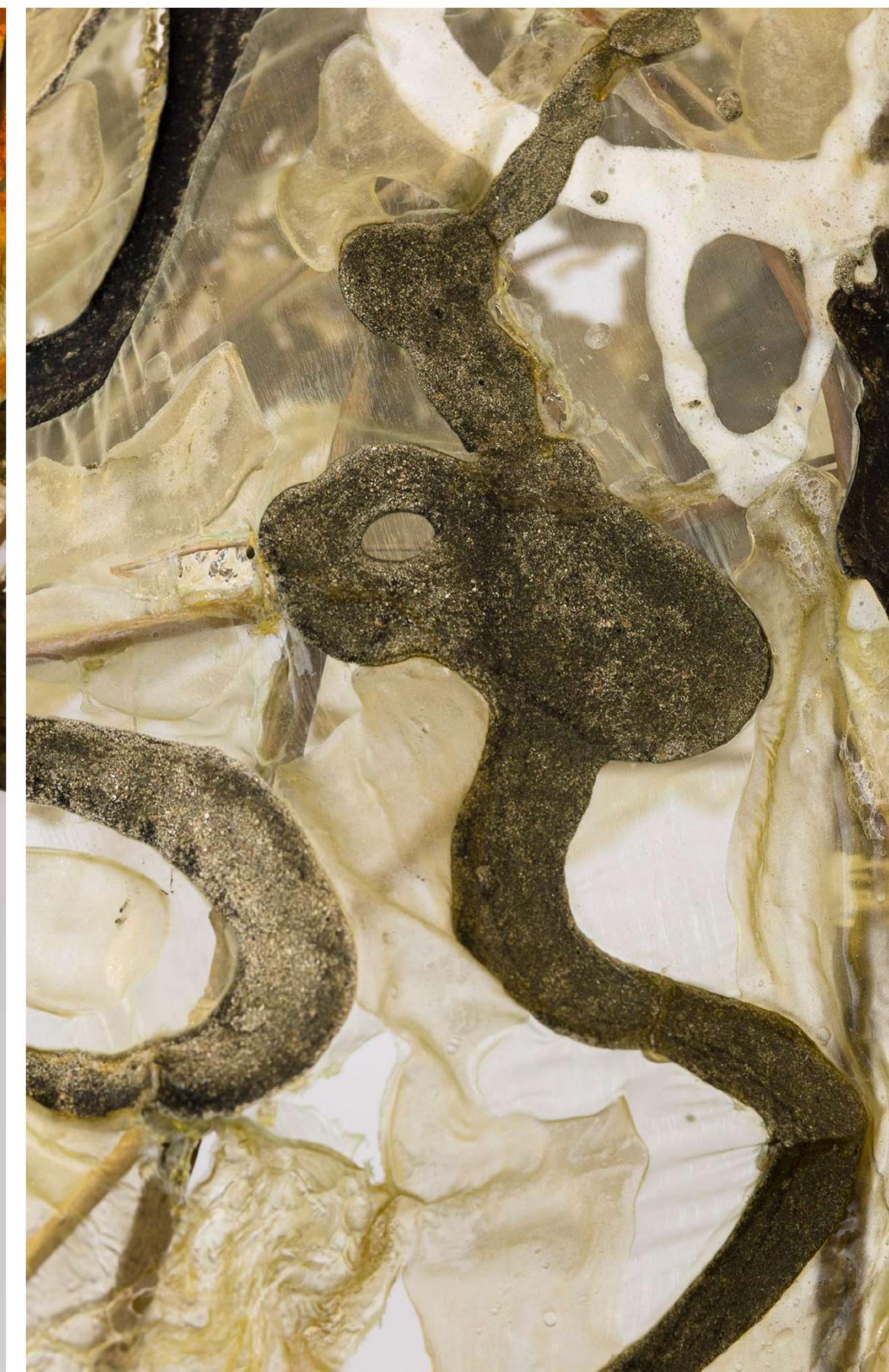
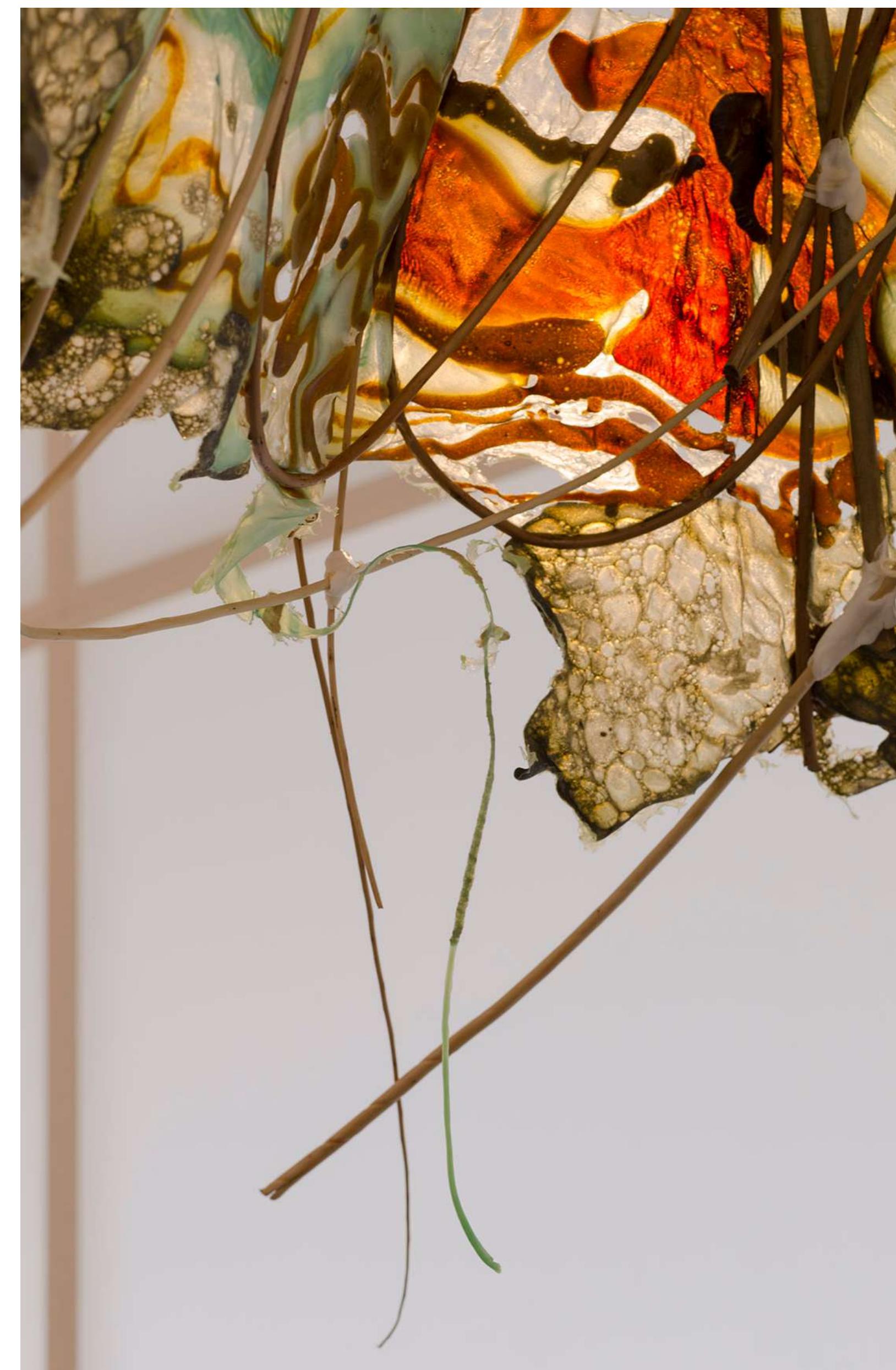
The changes are subtle and progressive, and they alter the colouration of the bioplastics, blending the differences between the sculptures and their surroundings, and making it difficult to see them with clarity. Also on display are the sensors, mechanisms, and processors that allow the room and lights to function.

The work is most active and visible across its many surfaces, where the elements collide to produce unpredictable and jumbled-together landscapes, forms, and sensations. Light finds purchase on the curved skins of the sculptures and their long, thin armatures — it bounces, penetrates, and refracts. There are direct correspondences

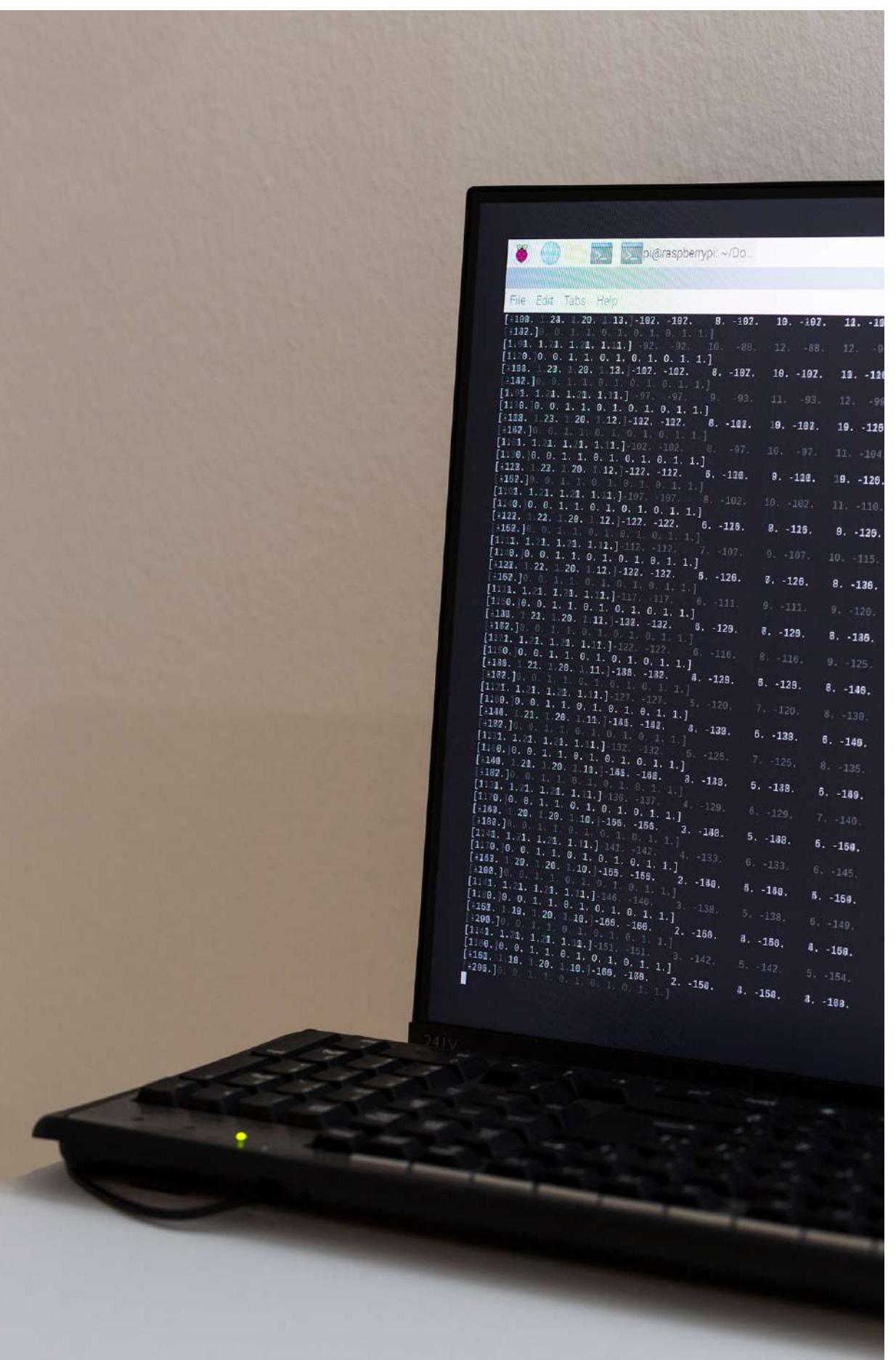
between the shadowless sculptures that hang inside the enclosure and your own body as it moves through the installation.

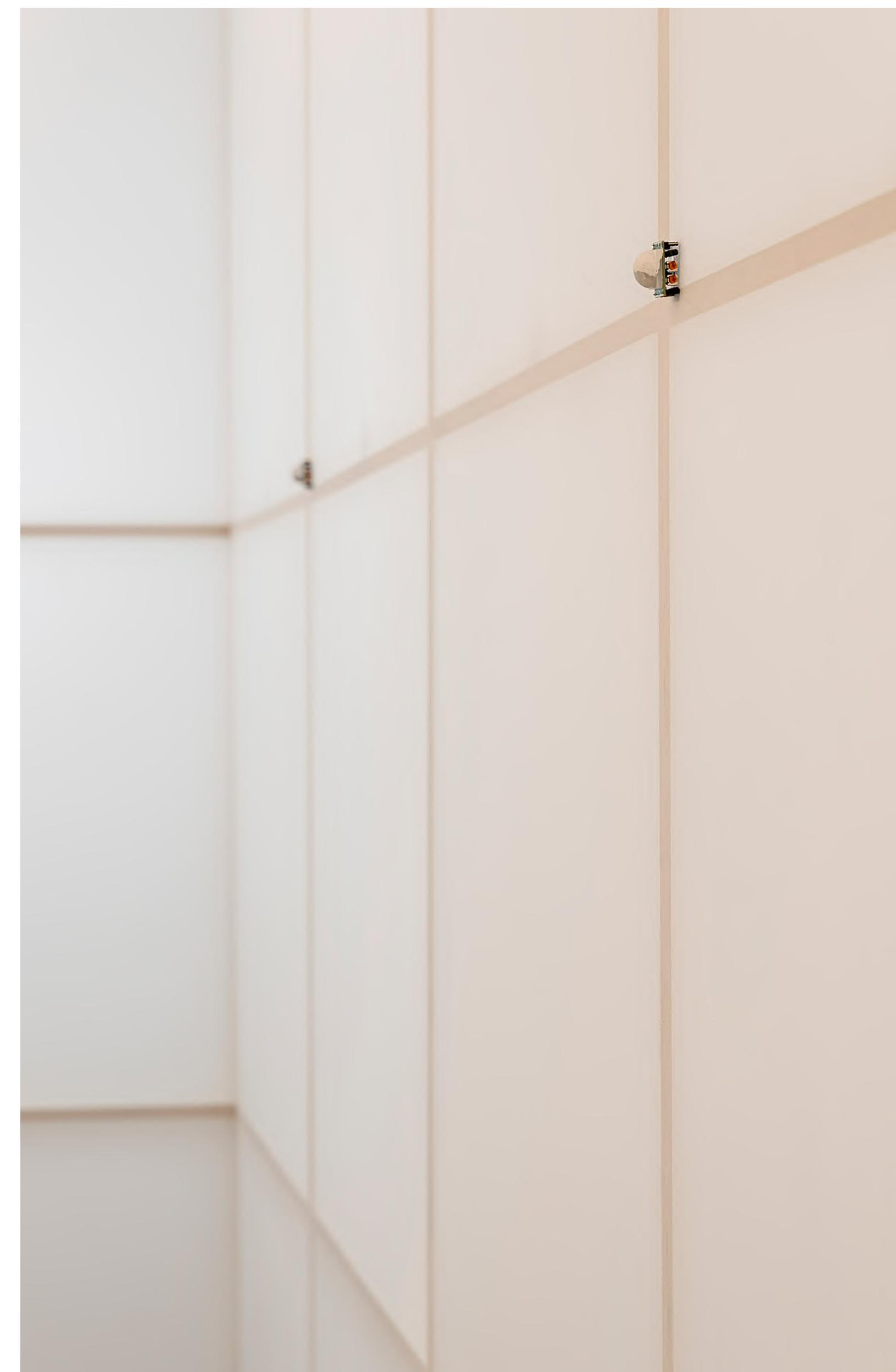
You find that you can modulate the illumination in the room, but exact calibration is difficult and ambiguous, and the rules can only be sensed indirectly, or uncovered by active experimentation. Within this system the sculptures emerge as highly sensitised bodies; they are acted on and echo with their shifting/mercurial environment.

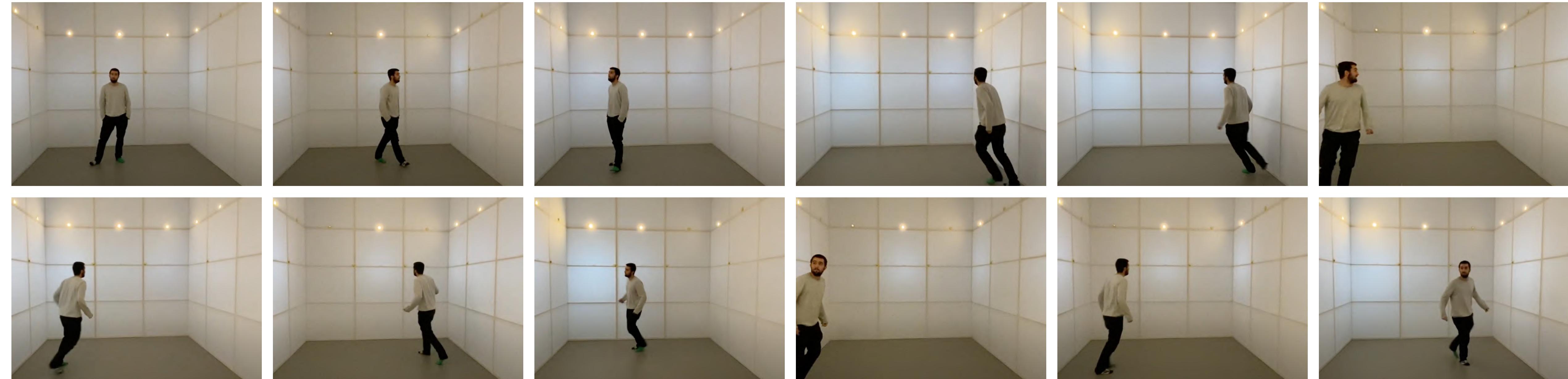
If the sculptures are sensitised, then they allow an entrance into a similar state of sensitivity. When you move through the space you open yourself to their changing conditions, beneath light that is stretched or compressed. The room responds to you when it changes, permeates, and refracts, and when it reveals the multiplying colours of the bioplastic skins and the bamboo substrate. These are states of closeness, of non-discrimination, of love; of all the concrete truths of relation.











# One Hammer Coming Your Way

60

Solo booth at Feria ARCO Madrid  
2021

Linen dyed with roots, logwood chips, and  
iron solution. Oil pastel, paint and steel rods.

*You May Come Full Circle*  
Group show at Cibrián, Donostia  
2021

*Al Alcance*  
Group show at Dilalica Barcelona  
2022

*One Hammer Coming Your Way* is an installation composed of large linen sheets that have been dyed, drawn, and painted onto, and then hung from the ceiling, like a “biombo”\* or tent. You can walk between and around them – the works form an environment that asks to be wandered/meandered through in close physical proximity.

The dyes that Esther employs are sourced from turmeric and iron (vivid orange-yellows, and the black of corroded metal), among others, and the works have been prepared in her domestic spaces, using the resources to hand: stove tops, bathtubs, pots and containers. The colours spread across bathroom tiles and kitchen walls, they run into cracks and stain them, making their presence known.

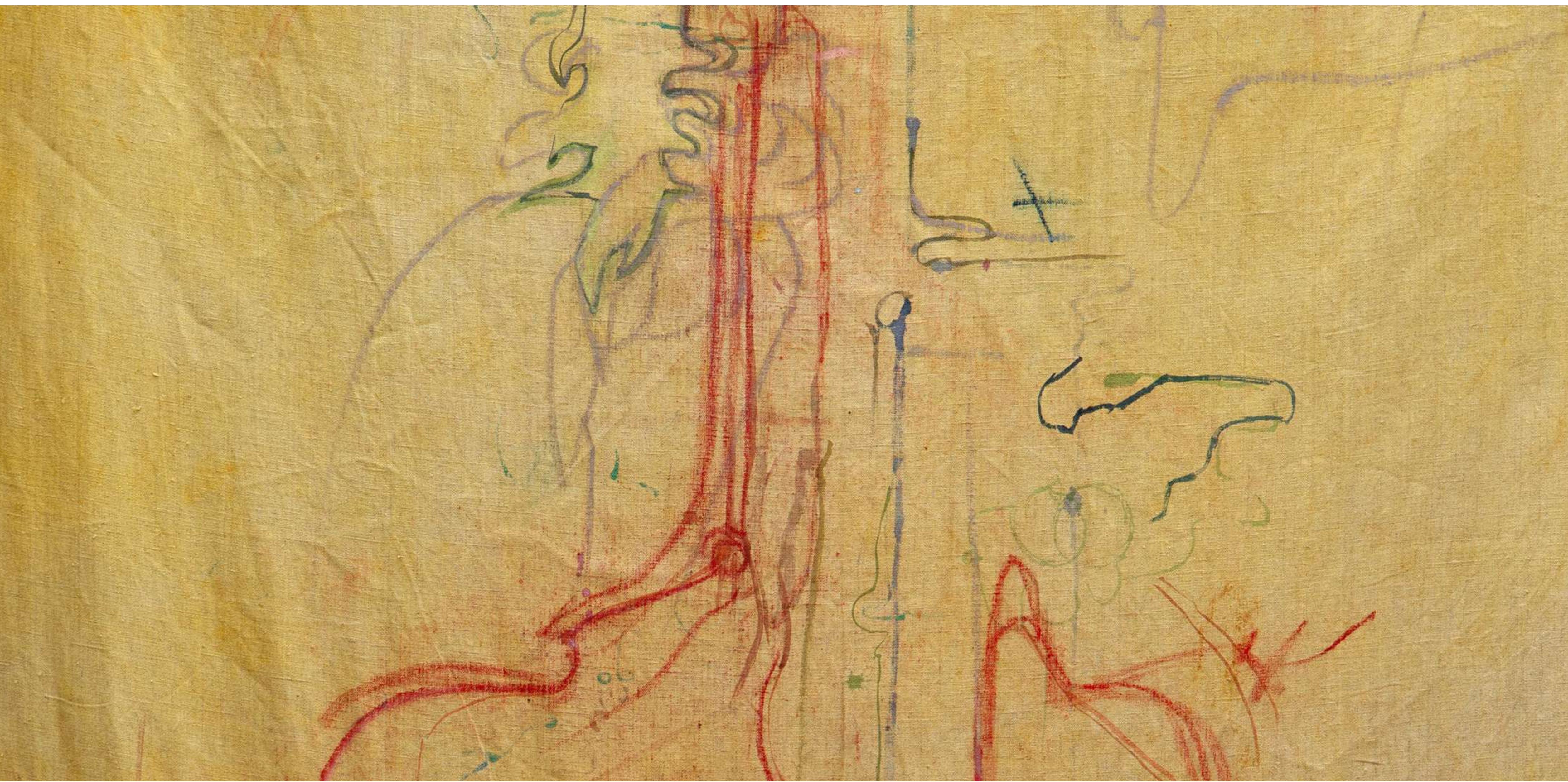
The drawings and paintings on their surfaces are arranged into layers and strata. The oldest, which were applied before the dyes, have been cooked into the fabrics. They have been partly boiled away and remain visible only as subtle, ghastly, underpaintings and residues. The corporal sense of the body, of its labour and playful movements, is ever-present in the hands-on processes of production, and also in the large scale of the sheets; they could easily envelop a body pressed into the fabric. The lines and traces are gestural and expressive – revealed in subtractive and additive processes of layering.

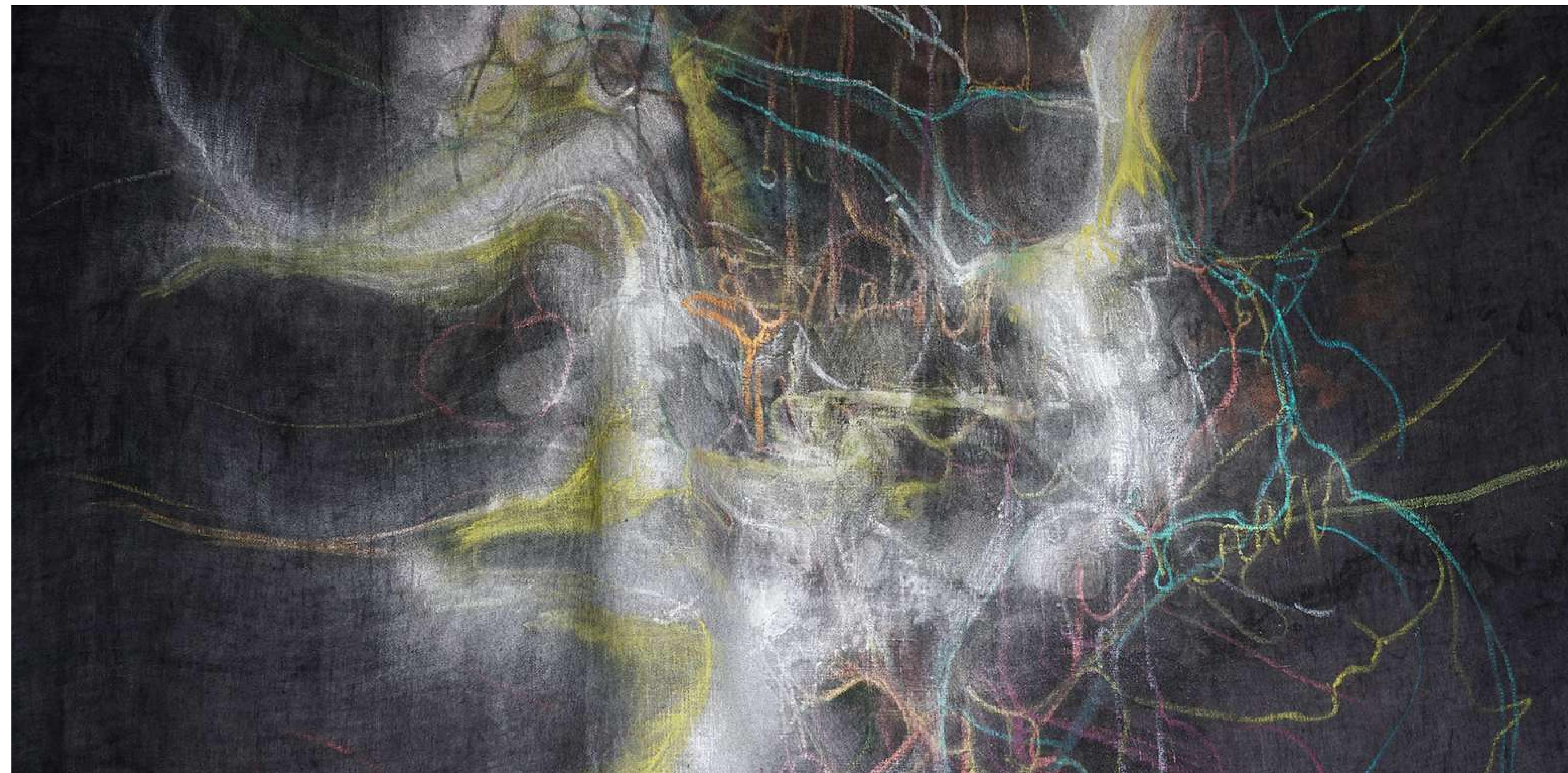
When installed, the works cluster together and form a dense pack or group. Like trees in a forest or a tight group of people who are taller than you. The installation brings back images of childhood, of when the world felt too big for you. Some of the textiles are semi-transparent, and present a maze of images and lines that can, to

an extent, be seen through, allowing your eye to combine one surface with another while moving between them. The works have no designated front or back, and can be encountered again and again. When you enter this maze its shifting surfaces announce and expose themselves as unfixed. They float and ripple with the movement of the air.

The linen sheets come together to form a spatial and pictorial environment. They are also a shelter or dwelling, with moveable walls and screens. Perhaps somewhere to rest or spend time with others. They implicate the entire space of the gallery that they are installed in, gently repurposing its walls, empty spaces, and ceiling, and bringing it in line with their own changing uses.

\*“Biombo” is a Spanish term that translates to ‘screen’, in the sense of a moveable screen used to partition a room or other interior space.











Solo show  
Cibrián, Donostia-San Sebastián  
2021

Accompanied with a text by  
Benedict Singleton

Site-specific installation, wood, PVC strip curtains, spotlights, clay, plastic jewellery, steel platforming, leaves, water, glitter, and printed silk.

Digital video, 4'09"

[Link to video](#)

[Suppress inheritance, by Andrés Carretero, A\\* Desk \(review\)](#)

*Ugly Enemies* is a site-specific intervention made of up a complex series of layers, feints, and screening devices. The overlapping layers are arrayed such that movement through the gallery can easily become circular or recursive – you can find yourself lead down or up, inwards or outwards, through and between its fixed scenes, in a manner similar to an amusement ride. Encounters with the work will shift and change depending on your relative position, your point of view, or the time of the day as the light in the room changes with the position of the sun and the intensity of traffic.

The pieces that make up the show collaborate and compete with the architecture of the gallery; they lead visitors through the space and are themselves active agents in this wandering passage. Architectural features such as the stairway, lift mechanisms, protective glass, and fake marble tiles are implicated in the show's functioning. There are steel pathways and hanging entrances on display beside flat images (*trompe l'oeil* on the floor, plastic jewellery, images applied directly to the walls), red-flickering lights, and a series of small clay sculptures/creatures, partially hidden through the show. These disparate elements compose the installation, but also serve as the set for the filming of *El Que Monta Cargas (He Who Rides Loads)*, a video work that is also on display inside the installation.

In another layer, beyond what is physically present in the gallery, the work enters into correspondence with two texts; one by the artist, titled *Sunburns*, and the other by the philosopher and risk analyst Benedict Singleton, titled *Gyropolitics*. These texts introduce the animating spirit of the installation, which moves through the space like breath moves in a living body – they discuss the figure of the trap, the practice of trapping,

and describe an entire landscape of signs, images, and environments that are designed to betray, to switch their face. All stable relationships are thrown into question. The trap is not put in place to ensnare the viewer; it is something omnipresent, a total environment, and artists, visitors, artworks, and galleries alike are thrust into a space where the distinctions between stable positions blur together.

"These connotations locate it in a radically utilitarian space; a machine is something defined by its function; which is not just performed independently (only the simplest and smallest machine does things on its own) but is likely either to be incorporated into larger systems, or to be an integral part of a larger machine, an individual component integrated into larger systems. A machine is always a beginning, it gestures toward vaster formations."

Esther Gatón  
*Sunburns*

"Gyres are formed when a cluster of people become locked into patterns of pre-emptive manoeuvre with respect to one another. [...] Compel others, instead, to strategise, occupying their minds with attempts to understand where you are leading them, or what you want from them, or what you will do next."

Benedict Singleton  
*Gyropolitics*

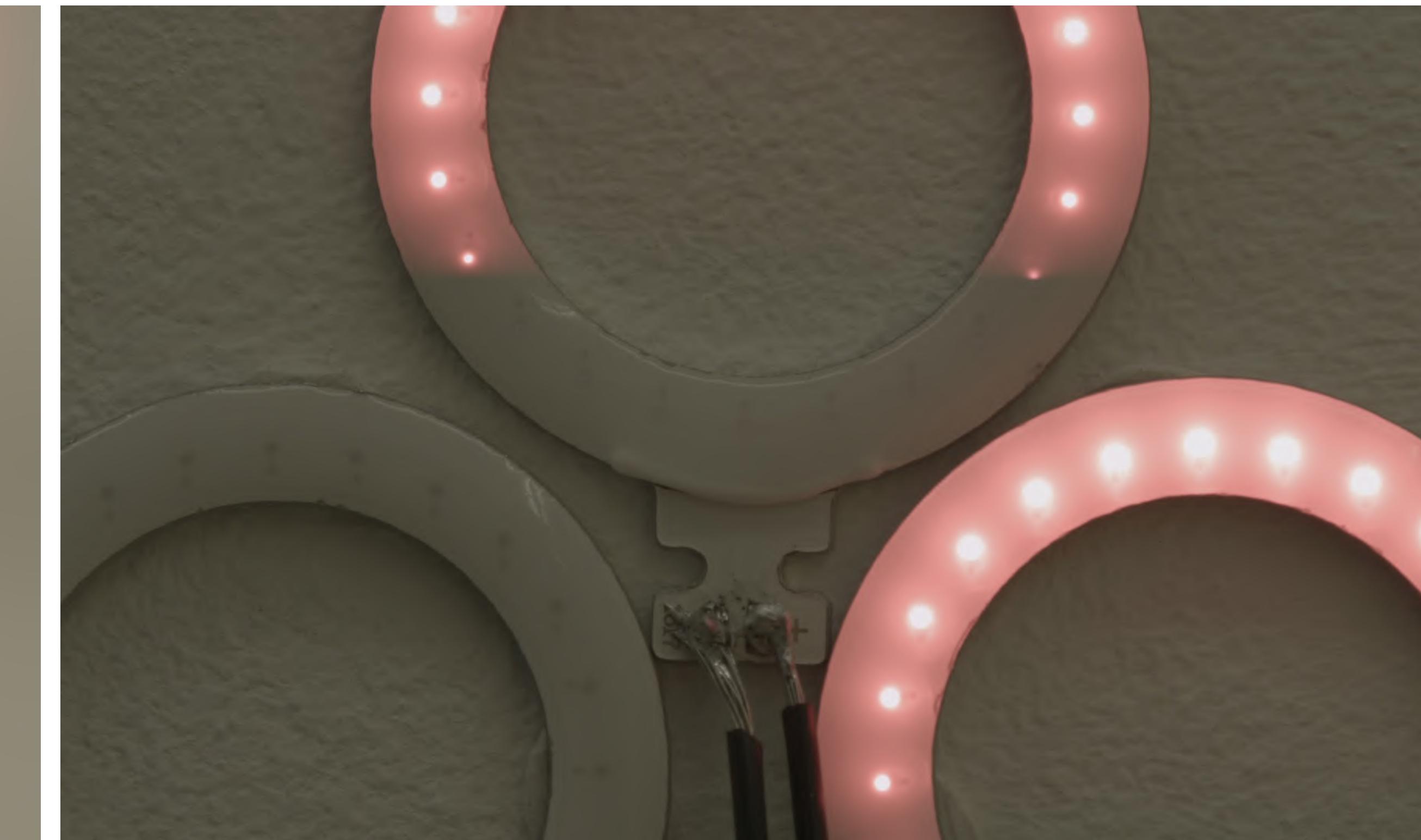
There are certainly other layers as well, but their number and depth will be dependent on the visitor, and how far and deeply they are willing to enter into productive collaboration with the trap works and the trap gallery that surrounds them.

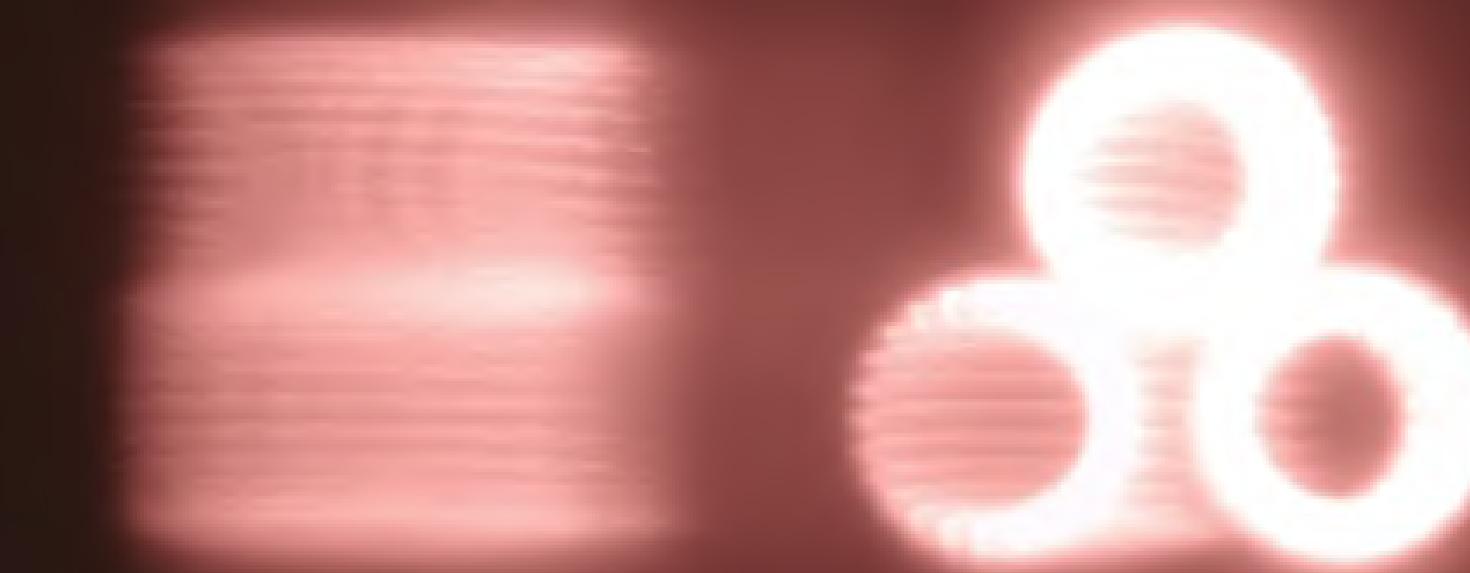












# The Softest Mud That Sees

73

Goldsmiths MFA Degree Show London  
2020

Digital video, 8' 57"  
[Link to video](#)  
pw: thesoftest

Screening Room, Residency 11:11  
2021

Solo show curated by Margot Cuevas,  
Racoon Barcelona  
2022

*Fireworks teach us that, contrary to popular belief, mystery does not happen in obscurity, but in the excess of light.*  
Angel González García, 2007

*The Softest Mud That Sees* is shot mostly on location, with a few short pieces of found footage interspersed throughout. The film opens with the euphoric description of a goal being scored, after which you are led through a variety of contained and constructed worlds; terrariums, shop displays, museological recreations of antiquity, and a studio where special effects are produced.

You see the day-to-day management and manufacture of wonder and awe; the mechanisms, professional labour, and atmospheric tricks that produce these environments for their viewers. These processes are in direct contact with the reality around them; they are not explained in technical detail, but observed in the world, as mundane operations among others. The magic of the spectacle is shifted from its familiar audience position—that of suspended disbelief—and back onto the practical realisation of the effect. The specialists that we see are professionally engaged and wrapped up in their labour: designing and testing a fake blood-pumping system for a violent shower scene. They are busy, making conversation, having fun, testing the props while they work.

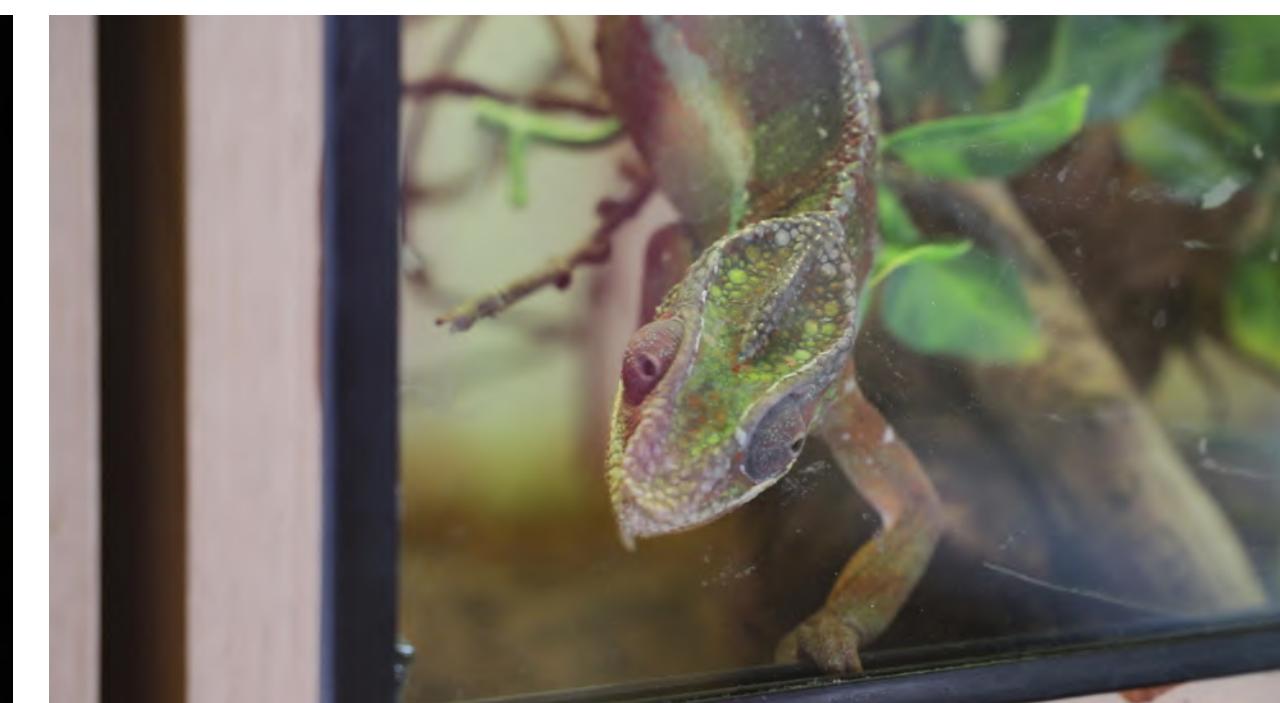
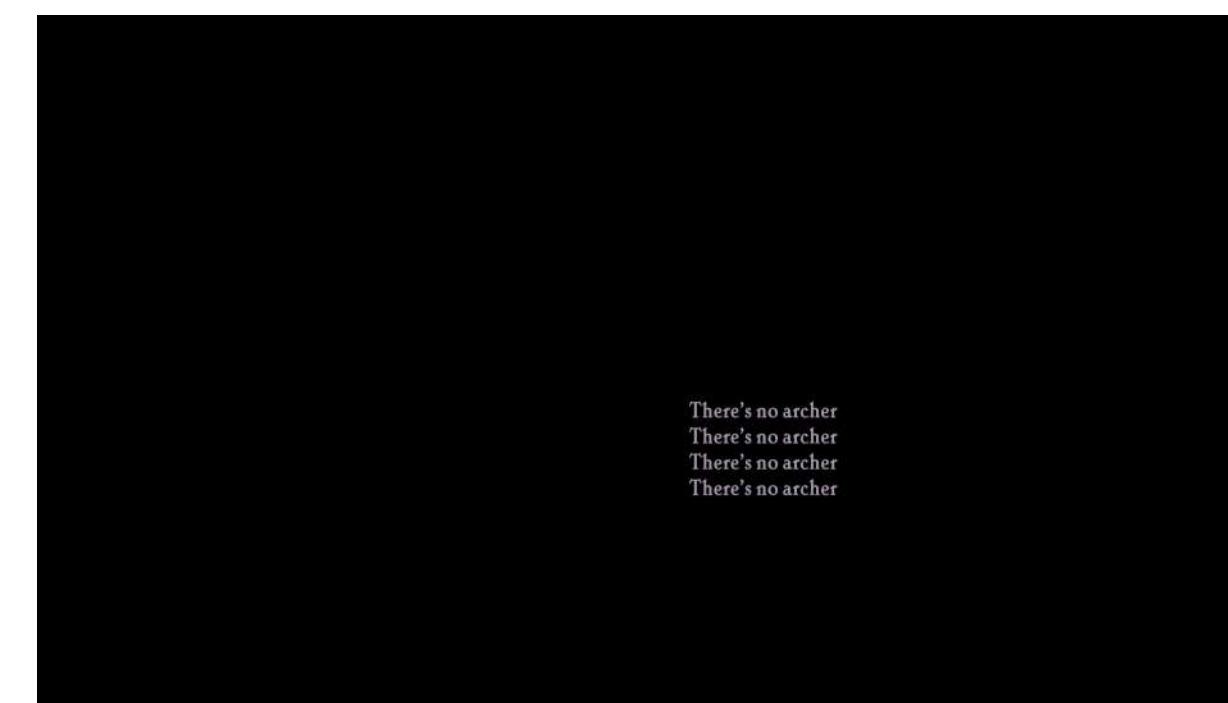
In the film, there is also a particular focus on artificial lighting, and the ways in which it produces varied moods and responses. This is evident across the various scenarios: the reptile terrariums, butcher shop, and London Mithraeum. The butcher uses pink lights to intensify the brightness of the red meat and make it look more fresh and appetising,

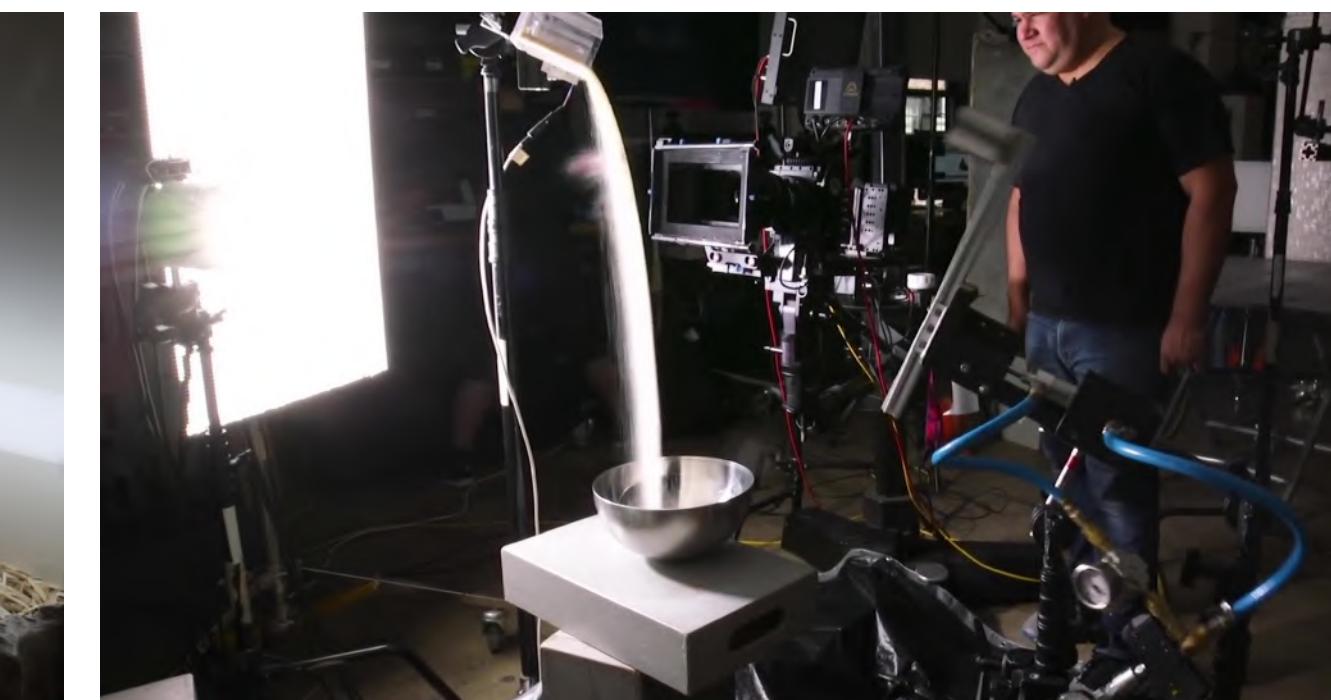
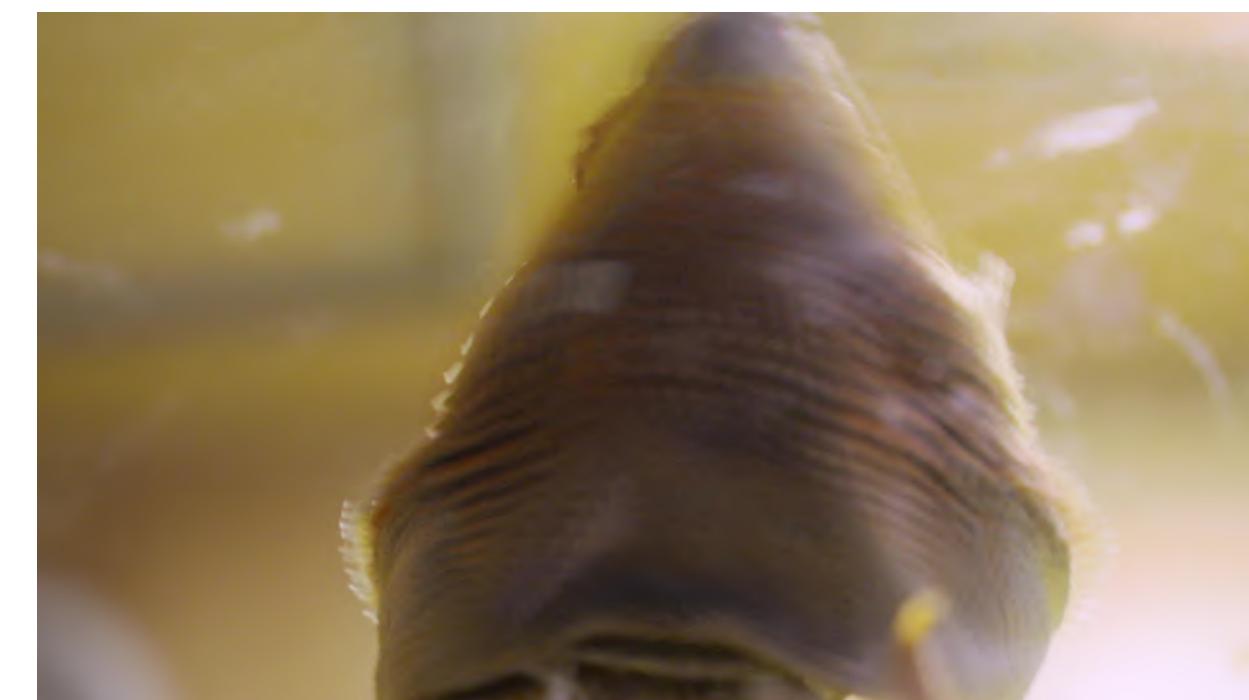
a technique so effective that it has been banned in some countries under false advertising laws.

However, the audience to these lighting illusions are absent from the scenes. The butcher's shop window is shot after dark, through security screens, blurring the texture of the meat pieces with the radiance of the neon. The museum and the reptile shop appear empty, without visitors or clients. Instead, the neo-baroque lighting becomes the film's character, the animating body in each place, working overtime to provide them with their temporary, mythic atmospheres. This ever-shifting light, which appears and reappears in new forms throughout, is the film's protagonist; it rehearses and joins the narration of the film.

There is also a soundscape that runs beneath the shots and complicates them. It is not synchronised with the breaks in the footage, and much of the film is silent. Through a few scenes, there is a motif of underwater movement and the songs of whales in the ocean. The soundtrack is subtle, minimal, ever-present, and implicated with depth and darkness. What began in ecstatic good cheer, with the football commentator ("Why should I care if I kill my throat?! Gooooooooooooaaaal!"), ends up dissolving into almost abstract bubbles and bleeps - the audio produces a second animating figure, less visible and insistent than the artificial light, but similarly ever-present as a structuring force in the film.







This short film is composed by its character and its subject – the character is a gaze, that moves through a series of interstitial and festive spaces during the winter of 2019, and records what passes in front of it. The subject is the movement, behaviour, and temperament of various fluids.

We see scenes of water put to work in harshly directed jets, rooms built for bathing and relaxation, heavy with condensation, and we see that same dew on the interior of a crowded night bus. We see found footage sourced online, mathematical modelling of flows and forces, underwater vignettes, fake pearls and flood scenes. Water that is domesticated and water out of control. Abstracted, aestheticised, damaging, and utilitarian situations; the gaze encounters all of them with equality, at the same small distance.

In response to this work curator Rita Aktay writes in her essay *The Thing in All of It's Instances as it Happens* (2020, written to accompany the work. The first sentence is a quote from Jacques Rancière's essay *The Future of the Image*, 2003) that:

"There is a visibility that does not amount to an image. And how does one visualise something that exists in many places at once, in each instance on its own terms? For example, condensation on a transparent surface is one manifestation of water, but is that the same as the condensation on the windows of a crowded night bus? There is only the entirety of the thing in all of its instances as it happens, which is still not the thing itself."

The quality of the gaze is tuned to what Aktay identifies as 'the thing itself', which cannot be cleanly imaged. In embedding itself into these encounters with fluids, the gaze makes

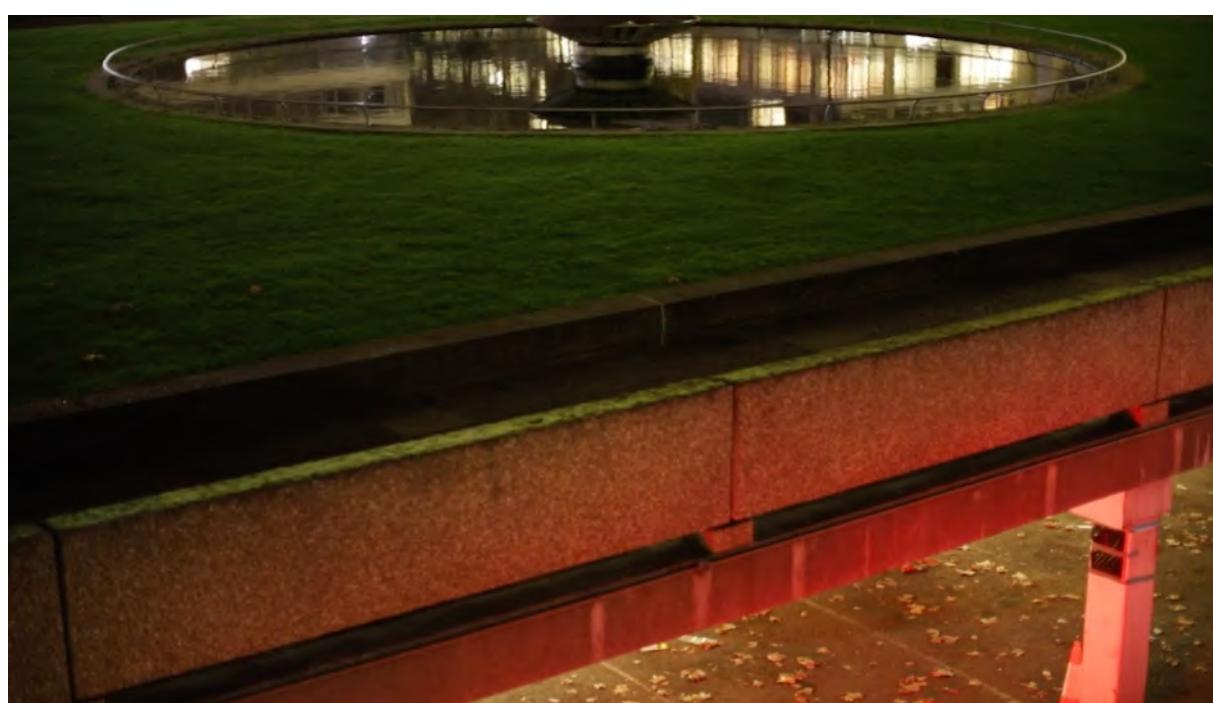
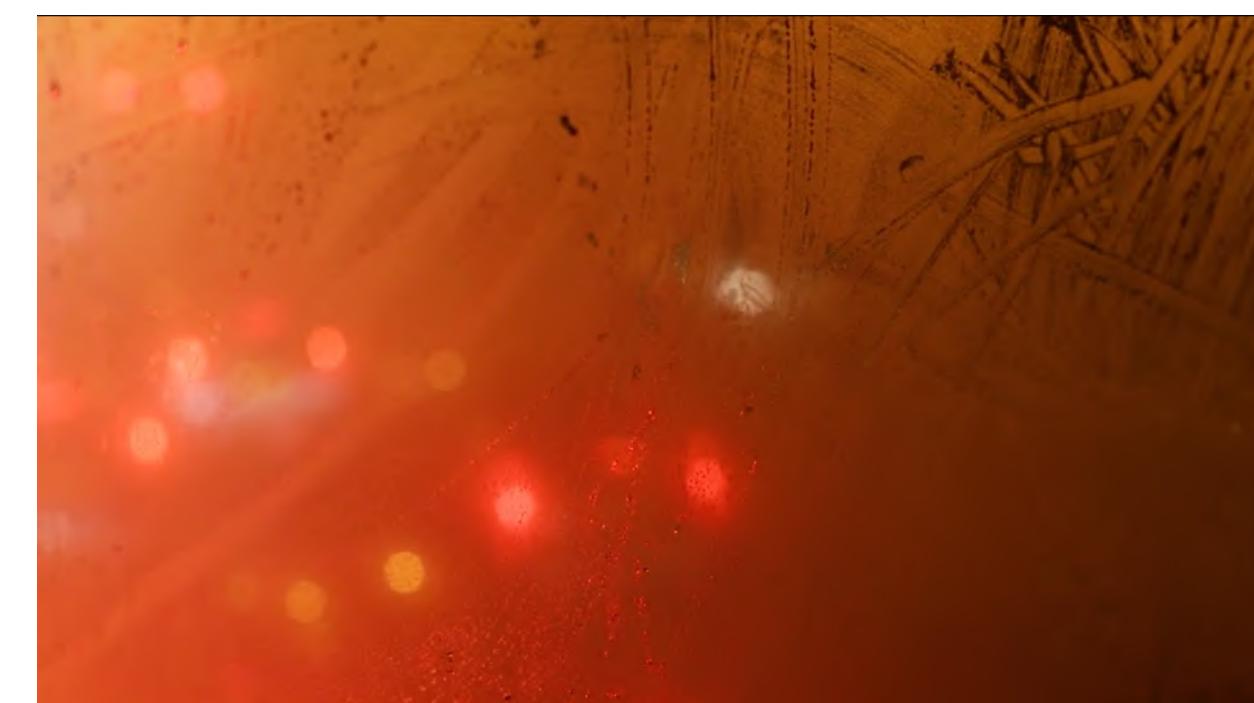
its character known. And as its character is revealed it begins to speak, though what it says is murky; language is not quite sufficient for this type of speaking.

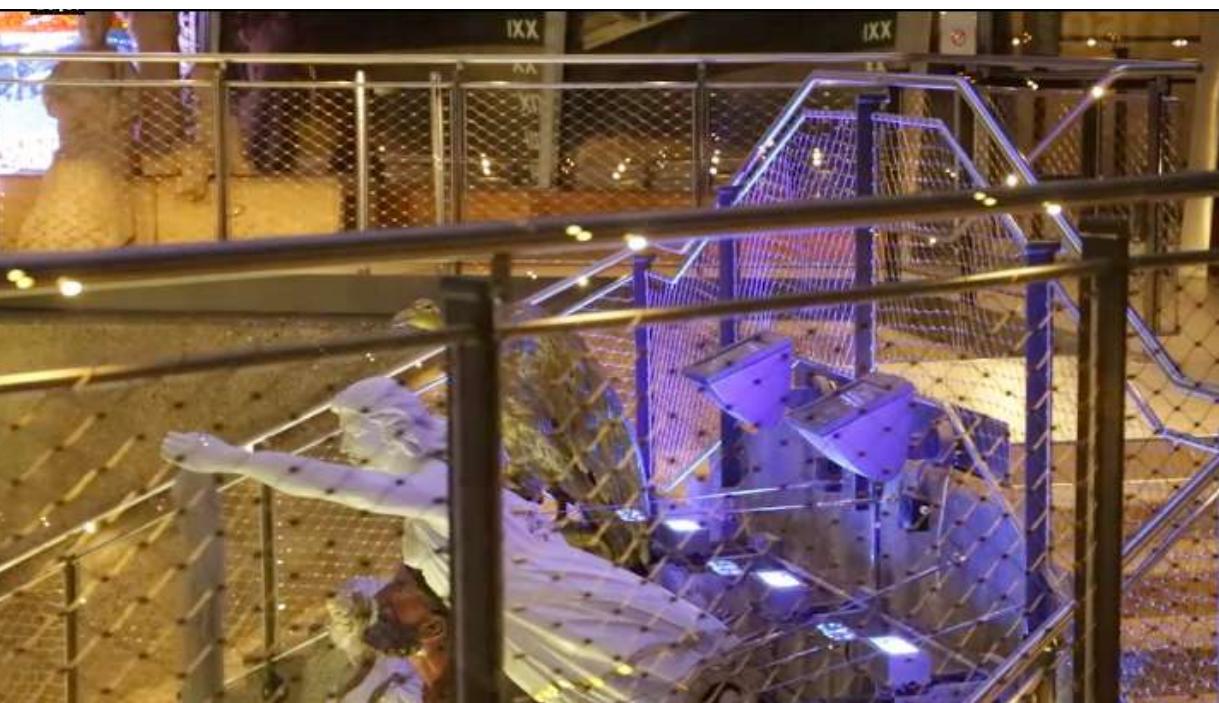
Perhaps what we are left with is a horizontal ordering of experiences, interested in the arbitrariness of a direct encounter with the world. As the film moves forward, images that seemed gratuitous begin to coalesce into a story and a mood, which eventually brings the viewer to a flooded artificial beach, with its fake palms, infatuated couples, loud ambient music and vain teenagers. It is Christmas time. The yearly calamity, the provincial flood, brings an ambience of tranquility and rebalance. Aktay says this:

"Friends are Important. Yet there is a certain ugliness to that which is just there, that which just happens. All those things that weren't specifically intended by anyone but somehow still managed to end up overdetermined. Or all those things that were once attempted but didn't even fail."









Le Club Poisson-Lune, group show  
CAPC Bordeaux, 2021  
Curated by Cédric Fauq

*Descripción de Un Estado Físico*,  
group show Elba Benítez & Schneider Colau  
Madrid, 2021  
Curated by Pepe Suárez

The painting covers the room – it spreads its metallic effects over the walls, floors, plugs, and wiring, implicating every surface available. It coats them without discrimination, makes them all one picture surface, and scrambles the usual uses and codes of the space into a single, flowing surface, caught between architecture and image, communicating as both. It functions like an engine, working with an unsteady rhythm that includes vertigo, tossing, and abrupt stops.

The room is brought into communication with colour, gesture, ground, and form – inherent elements of painting – but also with the movements of air (wind or mechanical air conditioning), with the memory of the sky and the way that sunlight cuts across the clouds at the end and beginning of the day (only a memory, since you are inside the engine), and with the way that light, artificial or otherwise, falls across a surface and transforms it, with each turn of the head.

The room is expressive, built from the gestures of a graffiti artist or home decorator. It has undone the architectural clichés of wall, plug, and floor, but this is only one of its mechanical tricks. Another might be to involve you with its refusal to discriminate – you might also begin to associate with surfaces, plugs and plastic tubing, or with the movements of light and air through space that has been changed by their passage.

*Adrenaline* is a chemical in the body that heightens awareness and increases sensitivity in response to danger and threat – in a state of high adrenaline, the world around you begins to lose its familiar clichés, and its workings are exposed to the sensitive eye in their most concrete and direct forms. Querubín are Cherubs: angels who are now

frequently depicted as small, plump, winged boys, who once held a prominent place in the angelic hierarchy, existing closest to the Throne and singing praise eternally. Their bodies were abstract and composed in light.

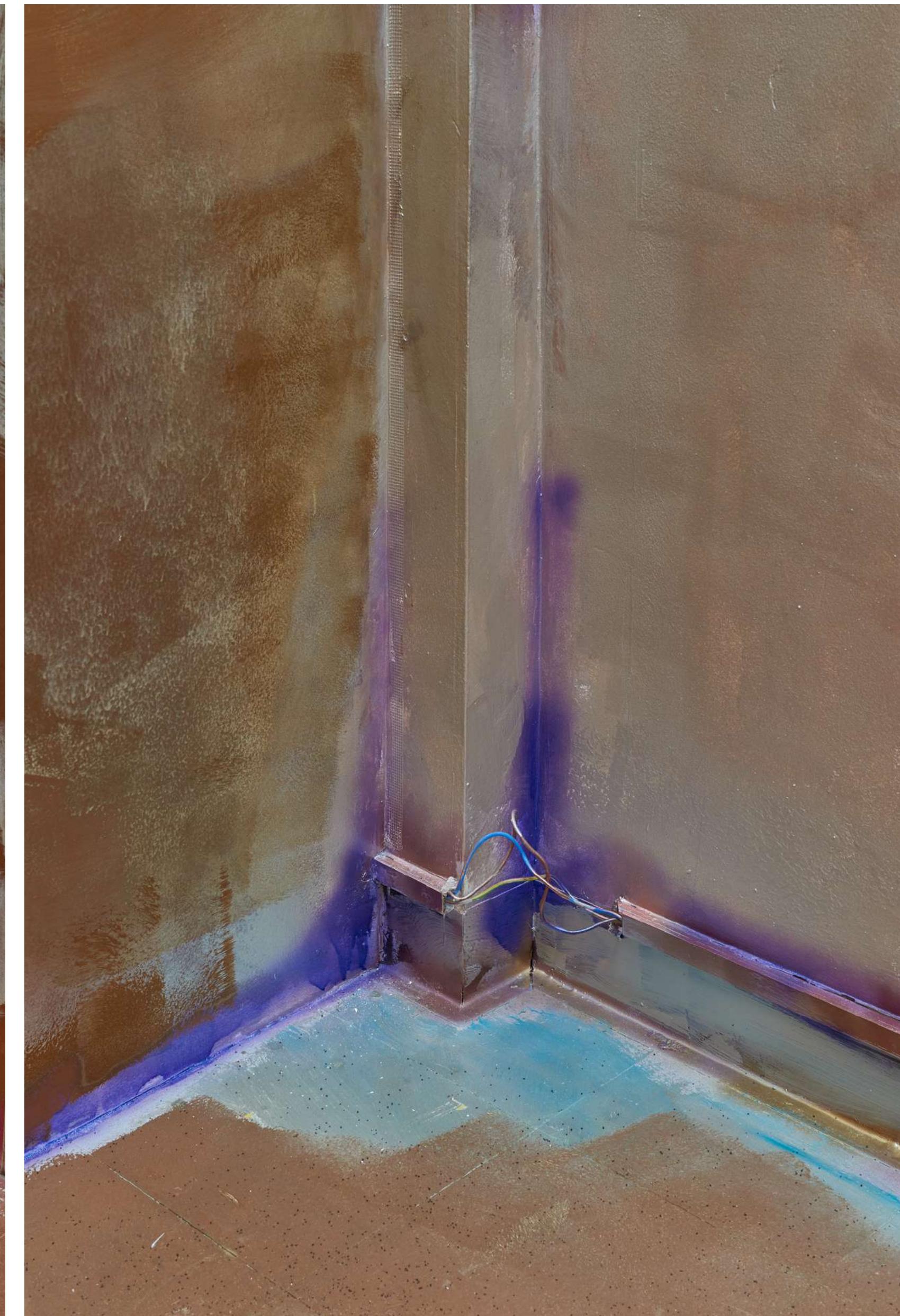
“Time machines’ become spaces for an exception, for fantasy, a vortex to access a space other where everything may be possible. The site-specific intervention of Esther Gatón, in the style of a dysfunctional time machine, proposes a journey that starts with form – that surrounds us, insulates us, a ‘non-space’ – and transforms to speed. We navigate through an intuitive and kaleidoscopic formal process, waving between contention and journey. Gravity pumps and dissolves when entering the room. The artist proposes an attentive gaze at a stunning speed that absorbs us: a celebration of pure life collapsing. It shakes us and, finally, it expels us, or rather holds us, depending on what we find there.”

Excerpt from the curatorial text that accompanied the first showing of the work by Cristina Herràiz Peleteiro.



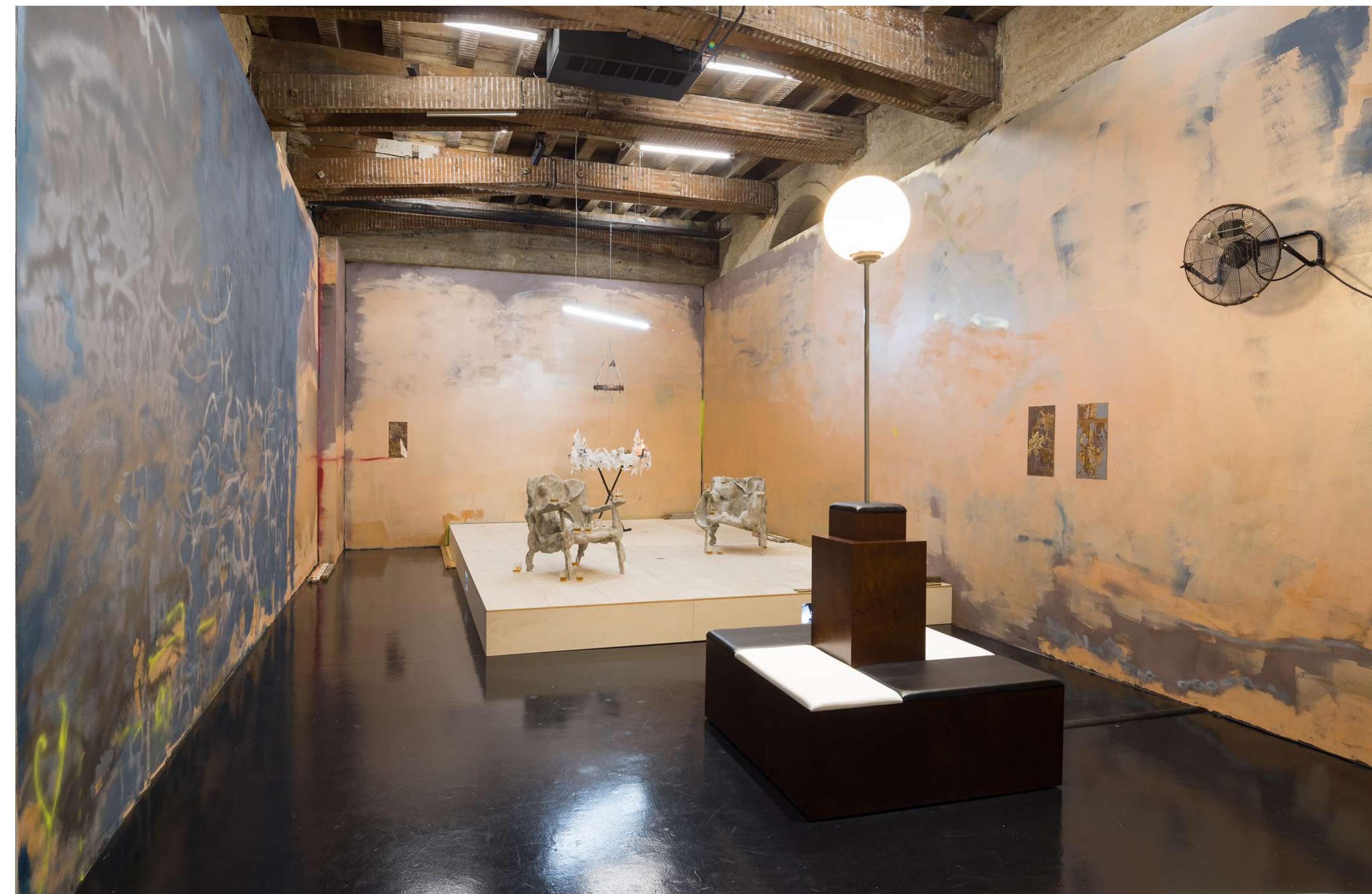














Commissioned by Manuel Segade and Tania Pardo

*blue fire* is a short video that performs like a collage, made entirely from snippets of found footage. The title is taken from the name of a roller coaster that features near the middle of the work, and *blueness* and *fire* predominate through the scenes; they form a type of visual grammar around which the video structures itself, minimally articulated, subtle, and intense.

At the start, there is a brief cameo by a cartoon flame (whose name is 'joe'), and footage of deep undersea volcanic activity, which we are told in voiceover 'has never been seen before, although eruptions like this make up 80 per cent of the Earth's surface volcanic activity'. There are various domestic scenes. Some are staged as spectacles: the water demolition of a house, an Olympic gymnastics routine, teenagers competing in a vaping contest. Others are impromptu, and record sudden emotions and reactions; wonder and joy in the presence of glowing bioluminescence during a family holiday, with a loved life partner, the airtight anxiety of flight turbulence. The footage of the rollercoaster combines and arranges them like a central spine; an elaborately staged spectacle that nonetheless provokes real screams of fright and delight from the passengers strapped into it.

The grammar runs beneath these volatile positions of artificial/authentic, performance/reaction, domestic/professional, and delight/dismay. You feel that each is in a constant state of being *about to erupt*, and are left with the sense that both states are somehow latent beneath the action on the screen.

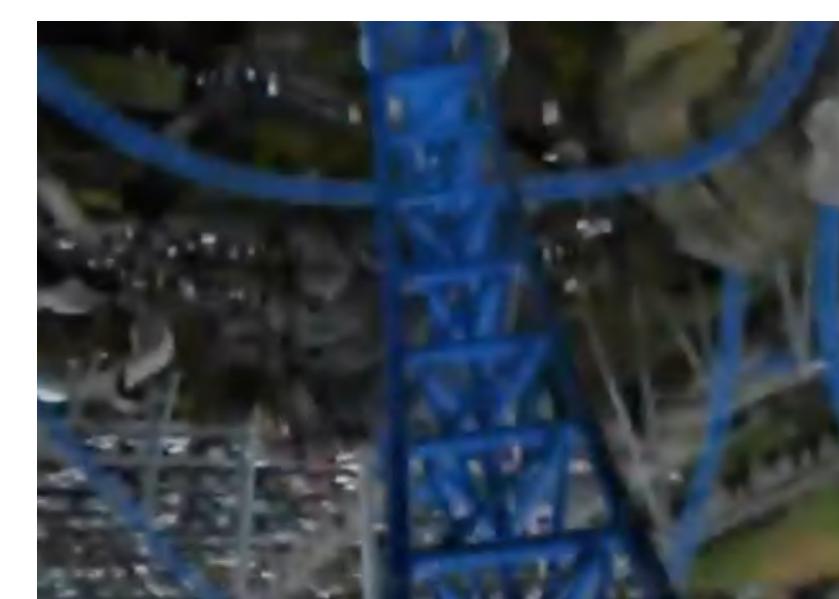
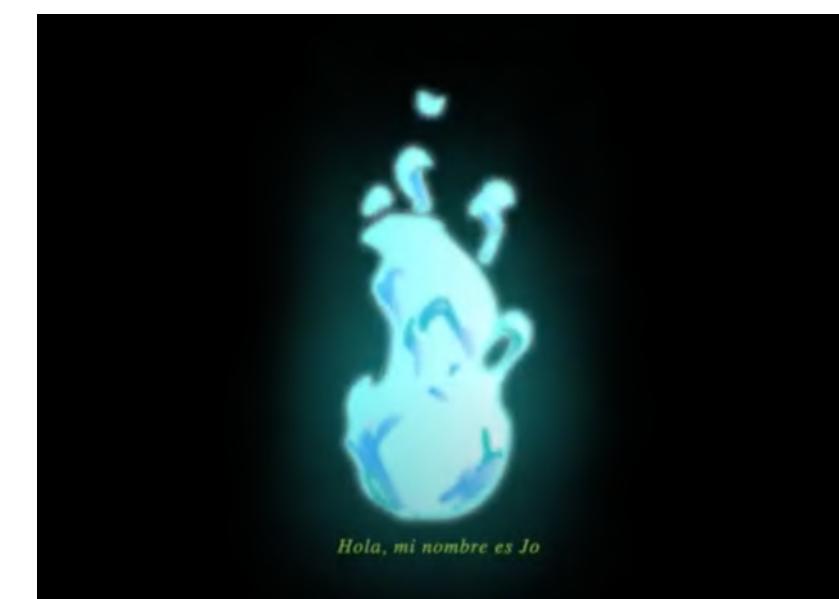
This *about to erupt* never does arrive. Instead, the blue fire stays twisted through the slice-of-life scenes, pseudoscientific images, and youngsters' experiments.

Just like the roller coaster that names it, the video collects easy-going moments of awe, enjoyment, stress, and tension release, and builds them into a chain that progressively builds up. The work is oddly auto-terminating; whenever it comes near to the ecstasy, the sequence ends abruptly, with a common panic scene.

*blue fire* develops a visual language, glueing together separate instants of reality. It acts as something like a statement of intention, and similar gestures and imagery will go on to inform future works by Esther. In this video though, what you get is a carefully managed distance from the combustions and their varied moments of ignition and burst.







# “lub-dub-lub-dub -lub-dub...”

95

Group show  
Sanderson Hotel, London  
2019

Curated by Cristina Herráiz Peleteiro

Iron, rust and paint.  
Dimensions variable.

Sound of a beating  
heart. This seems the  
most common spelling,  
used in medical texts.

“lub-dub-lub-dub-lub-dub...”  
Sound of a beating heart. This seems  
the most common spelling, used  
in medical texts



“lub-dub-lub-dub-lub-dub...”  
Sound of a beating heart. This seems  
the most common spelling, used  
in medical texts



“lub-dub-lub-dub-lub-dub...”  
Sound of a beating heart. This seems  
the most common spelling, used  
in medical texts



*Dazzling Encounters*, London  
*TRANSMISSIONS*, Berlin  
2019

*Volver Dentro del Cuerpo*, Madrid  
2020

Descripción de Un Estado Físico, Madrid  
2022

"I once used the term 'bodily ego', which I understood to mean a strong, almost visceral identification between the body of the creator and/or the body of the viewer and the form. I could also have used Gaston Bachelard's term 'muscular consciousness.'"

Lucy R. Lippard, 2007

*glotis* is a project about the sculptural (tactile) eruptions that appear when we perform the frequent exercise of swallowing. The project investigates the correlations between haptics and phonetics, while at the same time stripping away the rigour of these two sciences. I composed a kind of soundtrack with the involuntary and/or embarrassing sounds produced when our digestive apparatus meets the phonator, such as hiccups, belching, throat clearing, bubbling, mumbling, salivation and other noises produced by this gymnastics that lack a name of their own.



4,2,3 legs. t(f)ake a  
zancada—oomph!

101

Interim show  
MFA Fine Arts, Goldsmiths London  
2019

Resin and plaster sculptures, ashtray, water,  
bricks, fake pond, sand, mosaic pebbles,  
wax, sausage liquid, bubble machine.











Solo show  
Luis Adelantado Gallery, Valencia Spain  
2019

Accompanied with a text by Sonia Fernández-Pan

Rusty iron, handicraft putty, car body filler, artificial oxidant, resin.  
Paint of the following colors: Aztec gold, Tennessee blue, gold rosé, champagne, pearl, graphite, violeta and red.

### *Crunch crunch crunch*

Not so long ago, while impatiently biting into a whole olive, I noticed a strange noise while I was chewing it. The strange thing wasn't so much the noise in itself, I remember hearing similar noises coming from my mouth over the years, but rather the feeling I was chewing something that just a few seconds ago had been a part of me. Although that wasn't what was entirely strange either. I was able to recognise the familiarity of that sound, but I also recognised the texture of what I was chewing. I also found suddenly interrupting my chewing movement familiar, only to start again more slowly in order to discover if I was really chewing a piece of one of my molars mixed in with the olive. That was what made me think about transformation of matter in my own body. That tiny fragment of my tooth was no longer a part of my teeth - it had become detached from my body. In a rather perverse way, it was still a part of me. Bataille's idea that a kiss is the beginning of cannibalism started to fall apart, just like my tooth. Eating parts of yourself seemed to me a much more literal primitive form of anthropophagy, even if involuntary. Insignificant situations such as chewing bits of broken teeth, biting your nails and cuticles, licking blood leaking out from cuts. Making your epidermis deeper, taking up an idea from another poet, this time Valéry, by mixing the inside and outside of our bodies with apparently trivial, secondary gestures. Chewing is one of the many ways of erasing the memory of things.

### *Tras tras tras*

It is said that our cells are constantly regenerating, so quickly in fact that we could say that after a few days our body is not made up of the same matter. And even so, we are still the same. Although the discovery of cell regeneration is fairly recent, the same philosophical dilemma about the identity of

things arose many centuries ago in Ancient Greece. Legend has it that there was a boat whose parts were gradually replaced as they became damaged or worn. After a few years the entire boat had been replaced piece by piece, but it still looked the same. It was a different boat, and at the same time it was still the same boat. Its matter had changed, but not its shape. When chewing however, it is the shape of food that changes tangibly, but not its matter. Is the taste of strawberries really the flavour of strawberries? Is the colour of metal really the colour of metal? Appearances are not deceptive. They are simply appearances. Depth inhabits surfaces.

### *Clang clang ū ū ū clang clang*

We tend to understand things as the result of a process rather than a process as such. Our inability to perceive the changes that take place in those processes does not mean that they do not take place. Things are material processes that take place over time and space. Although we often use the terms indistinctly, objects are not things. If anything, they are the different positions that they acquire during the processes. There is something uncomfortable about things, perhaps it is the way they resist being defined by language. One thing can be too many things all at the same time. A metal bar is not just a metal bar. Stones were not always stones. A volcano erupts and becomes a mountain again. A large piece of glass breaks during transport after being exhibited for the first time in public at Brooklyn Museum in 1926. In *Venus Smiles* by J.G. Ballard, a public sculpture starts showing rather unusual behaviour on the day it is unveiled. The metal it is made from emits a shrill sound and the public look on in amazement, and horror too, to see this unexpected awakening of matter. As the days go by, the sculpture starts moving: it shouts, twists and grows, doubling in size. Unable

to control its growth, it is stripped apart and sold off as scrap metal. Some months later though, the beams of some buildings start vibrating and giving off sounds. The recycled metal from the sculpture was reused in buildings meaning that it continues to grow, having alloyed with other matter. What was previously specific matter giving shape to a sculpture became an entity with expanding life, impossible to pinpoint its exact location because of its continuous dissemination. That sculpture was a possible position in the life of matter. But *Venus Smiles* is no different from *Mona Lisa*, from the marble that gives off the coloured hues in the Parthenon, or rusting metal.

### *Shhh shhhh shhh*

If things could speak, what language would they speak? But why insist on them having a language? How can they communicate with us in a way we can understand? Are not onomatopoeias enough? Are they not an attempt by things to create a language? Our desire to give things a voice that presumably do not have one is so strong that there is even an onomatopoeia for silence. Perhaps onomatopoeias are the only words capable of resisting discourse. They take us closer to the materiality of things, and closer even to our own bodies. They give voice to the heartbeat, to kisses, applause, the splashing of water, breaking objects, explosions, bubbles. The same way some words also take us closer to the materiality of things, transporting us through their sonority. Viscosity is a viscous word. It oozes out between the teeth. Could matter have its own etymology? However, language is not the way things communicate with us, even though there are bacteria that have been able to learn English. Like the ocean on *Solaris*, they have different forms of contact. And what if Mars were coated in béchamel sauce. What would it say to us? Slurp, glug, glug, slurp?

### *Tris tras tras...glugú glugú glugú*

When referring to art, Alexander Kluge mentioned two types of characters: the tamer and the gardener. Unlike the tamer, the gardener is aware that "something is growing by itself". But the frontier between care and domination is not only a slippery slope, but anything that grows by itself never does so alone, but rather in the company of other elements, other lives, other things. Gardens, like cities, are ambiguous places: we are in them, but also outside them. A plant in a plant pot is the convergence of nature and culture. The roots adapt to the space and shape of the plant pot. A lot of plants are indoors, but belong outdoors. Do they feel the difference? As in art, gardens are an aesthetic artefact linked to thought, but also to ways of knowledge that appear with material practice. Techne has its own episteme. The wish to preserve things entails denying the passing of time, and the life that this gives rise to, transforms and discards. What if it were possible to have an exhibition that allowed light from outside, rain, night, wind, dust, bangs and breakage, movement of things, iridescence or disorientation of meaning? And what if all these elements were contained in it, attached to the surface of things? Could it not therefore be an exhibition of a biological system that could grow "by itself"? An exhibition as a third landscape, a residual, transitory space, outside planning, power and submission. An exhibition of items vulnerable to themselves, removed from the deliberate action of human beings. An exhibition as a process of actions that are external to it. An externality that is evident in the internality.

SLURP, GLUG  
It shrieks, it writhes. It gets bigger  
and bigger



SLURP, GLUG  
It shrieks, it writhes. It gets bigger  
and bigger



SLURP, GLUG  
It shrieks, it writhes. It gets bigger  
and bigger





SLURP, GLUG  
A volcano explodes and turns back  
into a mountain

Chicken wire, plaster, hessian, resin and  
pigments.

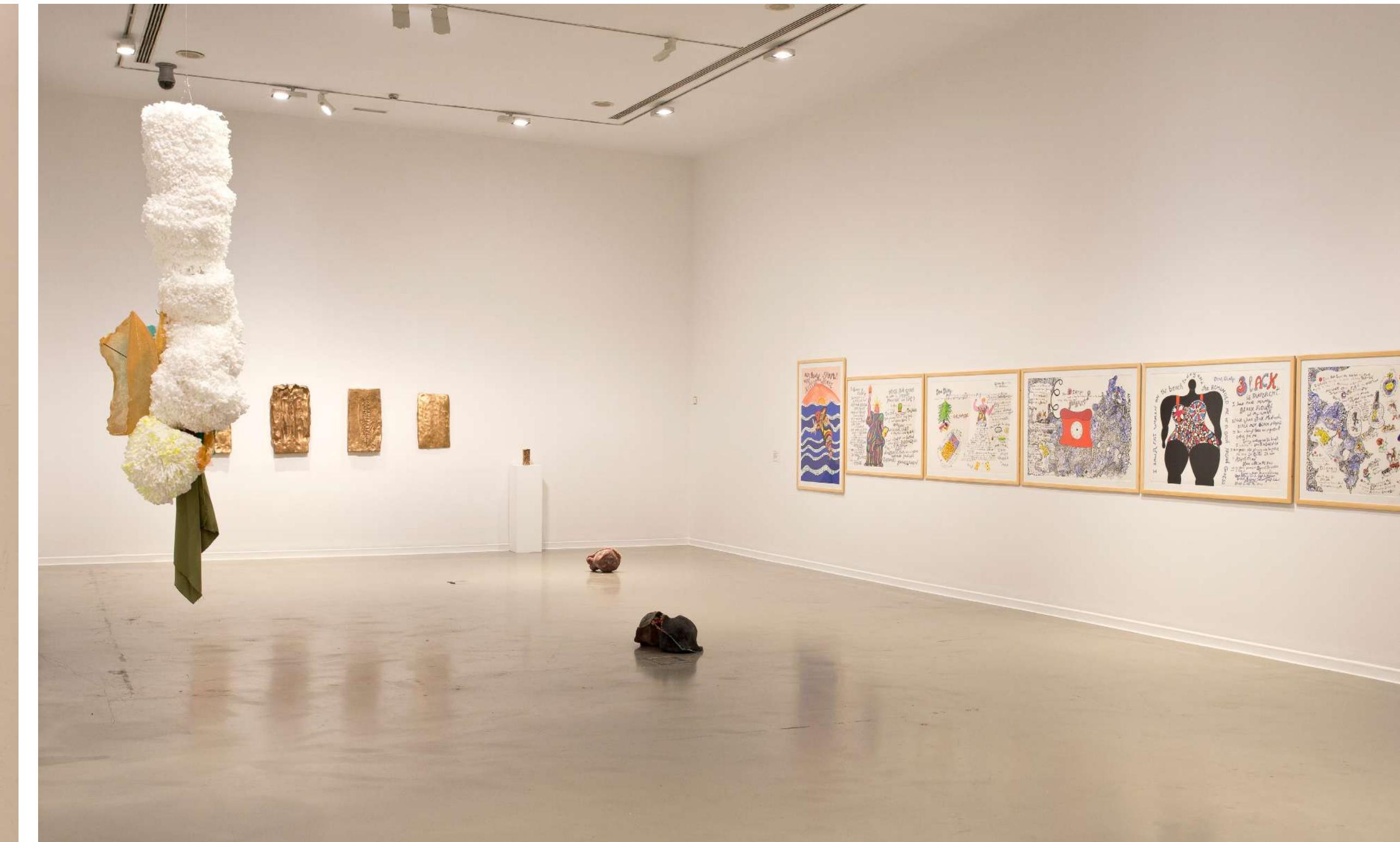


*The Happy Fact*  
Group show  
La Casa Encendida, Madrid  
2019  
Curated by Tania Pardo

Work acquired by Oliva Arauna's collection

Bouncing sculptures, latex, pigments,  
hessian and balls.  
Printed catalogue bilingual Spanish-English,  
it includes the text *surface, ornament,*  
*frivolity*, written by the artist.

Artists in the show:  
Pilar Albarracín, Elena Blasco, Sol Calero,  
Ester Gatón, Daiga Grantina, Camille Henrot,  
Dorothy Iannone, Engel Leonardo, Jonathan  
Monk, Niki de Saint Phalle, Mika Rottemberg,  
Samara Scott and Teresa Solar Abboud.









“Oh, how we need a new language to go with our new bodies!”\*

Lidia Yuknavitch  
*The Book of Joan: A Novel* (2017)

Skin grafting is a dermatological technique by which healthy tissue from a given area of the body is transferred to another area with damaged tissue. The protagonist of Yuknavitch's aforementioned novel becomes, in a post-apocalyptic future, a fully-fledged expert in skin grafting, which has gone from being a merely medical technique to an artistic exercise, through which skins are not only transferred from one body to another, but they are marked, burnt, drawn upon and stretched. In the catastrophic year 2049 as described in the novel – a time ravaged by the control over bodies, the exclusion of everything feminine and the overbearing phallocentricity of language – the practice of grafting and marking skin has a political sense of creative rebellion. If, in the novel's totalitarian regime of signs, everything, even bodily experiences, is mediated by language, then the creative and transformative potential of skin grafting resides in the possibility to make language itself incarnate, applying its malleability and capacity for change to the material stratum of reality, to skins and bodies.

The linguistic paradigm that has dominated the humanities for the last few decades deems language both limiting and enabling, i.e. open to variations in representations of reality. Skin grafting, in *The Book of Joan: A Novel*, is linked to feminist critique and the materialist turn, directing creative and revitalising energy towards material reality itself, and not only towards the discursive consensus in which this is understood. However, it is the poetic and sensual character of skin grafting that allows it to be taken even fur-

ther. Grafting, and working with material surfaces, is seen as a practice that deals with the ability to give form to and record those recognised material interactions in a palpable way. In the year 2049 – when all possibility to desire and form affective relationships with others has ceased to exist – the poetic trope as practiced on bodies, while it gives rise to non-literal, figurative speech, is a way of sculpting desire and shaping sensations.

There is already a non-verbal figuration that takes place in our bodies: fibres and nerves behave poetically, giving shape to our sensorial reactions to the surroundings – “allegorising”, “metaphorising” and “translating”, they shed light on this contact with the world in a true act of bodily poiesis, of creation. From an artistic perspective, the poetic is speech embodied – an exercise in the materialisation of tropes that, beyond inscription and representation, considers the appearance of forms as based on material relations.

In the work of Esther Gatón, the sensuality of grafting is propagated through her artisanal technique. Disparate materials are brought together, the gaps between them narrowed in a trope-like game of seduction in which organic and osseous forms appear as a reaction to the surroundings, while also being reflected as a stimulus, being placed and assuming their position within a material history of both past and present circumstances. Skin grafting: poetic transplants of marked and reactive material, of speech embodied, and skins that become tropes. Reddened, shiny and wrinkled, with bruises and scars that are infected, contorted and embellished, material surfaces are a simile and hyperbole for what surrounds them.



# Bees Jàr Cantinha Fei

120

Circuitos Grant  
Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid  
2018

Curated by Bernardo Sopelana

Extended Spaces  
Group show  
Irène Laub Gallery, Brussels  
2019

Curated by Sérgio Fazenda Rodrigues