

TOPALEKUAK

elena aitzkoa

josu bilbao

eduardo chillida

laia estruch

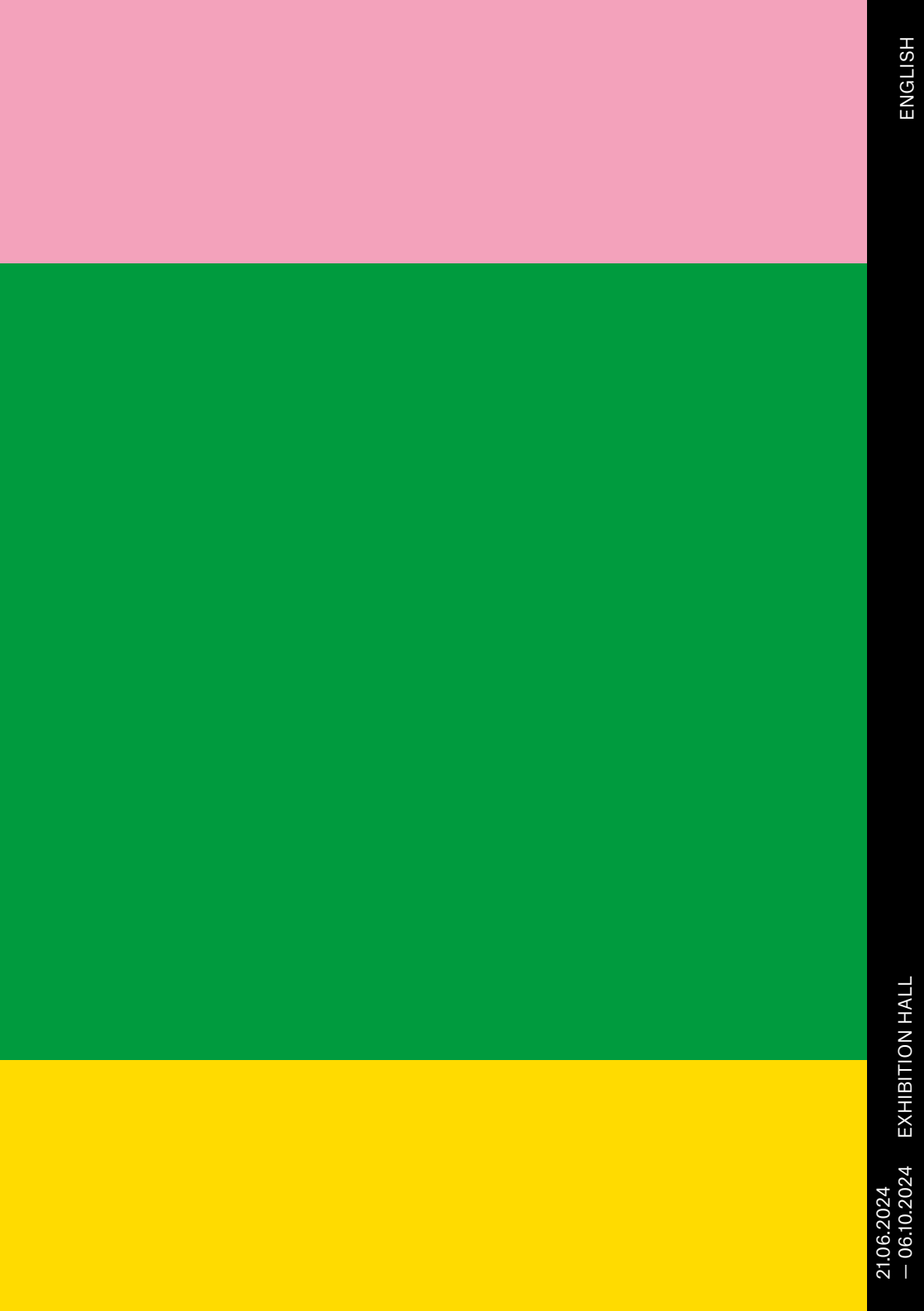
sheroanawe

hakihiwe

Juf. bea ortega y
leto ybarra

christian
salablanca

marianna
simnett



21.06.2024
— 06.10.2024

EXHIBITION HALL

ENGLISH

With the current exhibition, *Topalekuak*, Tabakalera joins the celebrations of the centenary of the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida, and does so from its mission as a centre that promotes contemporary creation.

Topalekuak is an exhibition that arises from the intention of exploring new perspectives on fundamental topics in Eduardo Chillida's work from today's artistic practice. Each generation makes the classics their own through their own eyes. Exploring the aspects of Chillida's work that inspire today's artists serves as a way of discovering new perspectives towards the work of Eduardo Chillida.

The curator, Soledad Gutiérrez, has invited artists from different fields and backgrounds to immerse themselves within the artistic work and writings of Eduardo Chillida and, inspired by them, to make new creations in dialogue with his legacy. Through these new creations, the growing prevalence of many elements of Chillida's work becomes palpable, such as his defence of intuition as a working methodology and form of knowledge, the relation with the place and his holistic approach to art, all topics that are current for today's generation of artists.

The involvement and generous collaboration of the Chillida Leku Museum team has been fundamental, as they have provided the artists with access to Eduardo Chillida's work, writings and archive, and we would also like to thank the Chillida family for having made the magnificent original pieces that form part of the exhibition available to the project.

We would also like to give special thanks for the work of the curator Soledad Gutiérrez and all the artists present in the exhibition.

TABAKALERA
DONOSTIA/SAN SEBASTIÁN, JUNE 2024

Topalekuak ————— This exhibition comes as we celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of Eduardo Chillida's (San Sebastian, 1924-2002) birth. It draws from his writings to create a space for reflection on intuition as a research element, the connection with the place, and other forms of more sensitive and sensory understanding as work methodologies. A conversation articulated around a series of artistic proposals, many of which are new productions, that invite broader reflections on materiality, working processes, and how the way in which we relate to natural elements and the contexts we inhabit can "world building"¹.

Topalekuak refers to the "Meeting Places" series that Eduardo Chillida completed between 1964 and 1974, including large, suspended concrete constructions through which Chillida reflected on the circulation of water, inspired by the architecture of old washing places. At the same time, it brings us back to the moment in which intuition becomes certainty, that the artist himself defined as "meetings" with ideas.

Chillida explained this procedural drift through an image, "drawing with the left hand"², a methodological premise that he imposed on himself in his student days and used throughout his entire professional career to avoid being overly influenced by skill and prior knowledge. This allowed his mind, emotions and sensibility to come first and guide his work process. We would define this practice, focused on the present, as active listening, with reference not only to our environment, but also to the relationship between materials and other forms of knowledge that escape definition and instead respond to sensations and perceptions. As Eduardo Chillida himself said: "Experience is oriented towards knowledge. Perception is oriented towards understanding." And it is from this premise, which questions the accumulation of knowledge, so characteristic of modernity, and which gives transitivity and, therefore, affect and effect to that which is known, that many of the proposals we find in this exhibition arise.

1 Latour, Bruno (2012) "Esperando a Gaia. Componer el mundo común mediante las artes y la política" in *Cuadernos de otra parte. Revista de letras y artes*, No. 26 Winter 2012, p. 67-76.

2 See: "Eduardo Chillida. Conversaciones". Ed. Susana Chillida. *Blow Up Libros únicos*. La Fábrica and Chillida Leku Museum, 2021.

JOSU BILBAO (Bermeo, 1978) bases his work on the phonetic-acoustic phenomena of oral expression, such as accents, tones and intonation, that are intuitively related to sculpture. In *Topalekuak*, the sculptural volumes produced from hollowed out garments operate almost like bodies, with the term “asaska” resonating in their presence. Like the Basque language, these volumes lack a known root, an absence that becomes a space of possibility for imagination and storytelling. The displacement of these pieces from the artist’s studio in Artxanda (Bilbao) to the exhibition space is what transforms them into an installation, bringing with it traces of the passing of time and the effect of natural elements. All of this invites us to reflect on the collective and the role of the spoken word in defining context, while at the same time acting as a tool for construction and transmission of memory. A work in progress in which the volumes are transformed into a series of relationships and openings that connect the worlds of thought-speech and matter-energy. Bilbao works with the voice as a constitutive element of orality, one that is articulated between people and space, becoming presence-form through complex poetic-artistic operations.

The proposal brought to us by Juf [BEA ORTEGA BOTAS (Oviedo, 1990) and LETO YBARRA (Madrid, 1991)] is a practical research exercise based on the desire to bring the body into language using the poetic dimension of punctuation as a tool: pauses for breathing, signs that mark the rhythm of speech or modulate intonation. To this end, a series of questions are raised about the way in which language can be grounded, how it can belong to and affect a space, and how inscribed speech is generated in a given place and time. The skipping rope freely transfers punctuation to a motorised mechanism, generating a rhythm each time it touches the ground, a current of air, and a gap that calls for the incorporation of one or more bodies into that movement or structure. *Sokasalto* (2024) becomes an instrument for reflecting on bodies without their presence, and through the rhythm produced by the skipping rope touching the ground, delves into the aspects of structure and power that have an impact on language.

In EDUARDO CHILLIDA's *Maqueta para Homenaje a Hokusai* (1991), this reflection on the potential of sculpture in relation to a place, its transformative power and, therefore, its ability to generate spaces that invite the spectator to walk through them, resonates. In this case, it is a space where the material touches the ground, and the force of gravity is manifested in the weight of the vertical planes in counterpoint to the *Proyecto Lugar de encuentros* (1972 and 1973) which were intended to be suspended in the air, levitating. This is one of the great dualities that emerge in Chillida's work, which he often used to speak about spiritual or mystical terms when it came to understanding not only sculpture, but also the relationship with the natural elements that surrounded him.

SHEROANAWA HAKIHIIWE (Sheroana, Venezuela, 1971), is an indigenous artist based in Pori Pori, a Yanomami community in the Amazon, who since the 1990s has been working to rescue the oral memory of his people, their cosmogony and ancestral traditions. Hakihiwe transfers to his drawings his cosmovision beyond the human: the spiritual nature of animals, rivers and plants with which we form are of a whole.

ELENA AITZKOA (Apodaka, 1984) works from the valley of Zarandona, Álava, where the echo between the forests and the river speaks to us of the experience of the body itself when feeling emptiness. A place where words turned into poetry reverberate, and where the natural elements impregnate the sculptures through an exercise in openness that goes beyond the senses. It is a work process that has been marked by the search for "the image in the reflection", starting with the washhouse in Apodaka to build a landscape traversed by the flow of water that can resonate in the exhibition space. It is a landscape inhabited by multiple creatures that are invoked through natural remains and drawings that form part of the sculptures themselves.

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- 1 JOSU BILBAO
asàska, 2024
Courtesy of the artist
- 2 Juf (BEA ORTEGA BOTAS and LETO YBARRA)
Sokasalto (Prototype), 2024
Courtesy of the artists
- 3 SHEROANAWE HAKIHIIWE
Hi i hiye riye riye (II) / Planta verde (II), 2022
Courtesy of ABRA gallery



3



4 EDUARDO CHILLIDA
Proyecto Lugar de encuentros, 1972
Photo: Alberto Cobo.
Courtesy of Sucesión Chillida and Hauser & Wirth
© Zabalaga-Leku. San Sebastián. VEGAP, 2024.



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- 5 MARIANNA SIMNETT
Blue Moon, 2022
 Courtesy of the artist and Societé, Berlin
- 6 ELENA AITZKOA
Temperatura, 2024
 Courtesy of the artist

- 7 CHRISTIAN SALABLANCA
*Con las palmas de la manos,
 con las plantas de los pies*, 2024
 Courtesy of the artist
- 8 LAIA ESTRUCH
Sibina, 2019
 Courtesy of Galería Ehrhardt Flórez

LAIA ESTRUCH (Barcelona, 1981) recovers old animal drinking troughs in *Sibina* (2019) activating them to transit from an earthly state to a more aquatic one, guided by a poem that builds a narrative based on oral tradition, starring different female figures. Through the transformation of the movements of the body and the voice in relation to the water and the sculptures themselves, the project seeks to edit a series of spiritual songs to engender a ritual that brings us to the substance of human nature and its surroundings.

The pieces that comprise *Con las palmas de las manos, con las plantas de los pies* (2024) by CHRISTIAN SALABLANCA DÍAZ (Guararí, Costa Rica, 1990) speak to us about the activation of memory through vibration. To this end, the artist seeks out ways to somatising the wind with simple musical instruments that bring together the sound traditions of the Basque Country and Central America. These instruments operate as sculptural objects that speak to us of an encounter, not just between cultural traditions, but also between species, referring to the coexistence of plants and humans, as well as the insects that they feed, appealing to a possible role for plants as mediators in the conflicts that sustain balance in the natural world.

In this process, EDUARDO CHILLIDA's drawings of plant motifs (1946-1951) take centre stage, speaking to us about the sculptor's desire to understand nature through active observation and drawing. Botanical forms float in space, abstracting themselves from their context as occurs with the sculptural objects of SALABLANCA DÍAZ and the natural entities of SHEROANAWÉ HAKIHIIWE. This desire for understanding through work processes is also present in *Lurra* [*Lurra G-246* and *Lurra G-249*, (1992)] and the *Óxidos* (*Óxido 42*, 1979) two series where the artist uses soil instead of iron and concrete and changes the scale to produce much smaller pieces, primary monoliths in which the firing technique and the pigments used will have an impact on the final appearance which, on many occasions, cannot be controlled by the artist himself.

Blue Moon (2022) is a single-channel installation in which MARIANNA SIMNETT (1986) presents us with a female figure, a contemporary Athena trapped in a technicolour blue forest as she is continuously transformed, her body distorted by an artificial intelligence algorithm. This saturated nature neither seeks nor wishes to be romanticised, but becomes a space for critical reflection to think about technology in a broad sense, from artisanal processes to those generated by computers.

The projects included in *Topalekuak* do not aim to illustrate or represent a legacy, instead finding resonance with Eduardo Chillida's writings, which were understood as "raw materials"³ from which to establish a dialogue inscribed in the present. A conversation that pays attention to the materiality of artistic processes, in which absence and presence, the desire and the context that feed oral storytelling and structural narratives come into play, producing a landscape, an orography that becomes an exhibition. Artists who invite other possible ways of producing meaning, relating with the universe that surrounds us as a source of knowledge, as a space constructed in a network from the relationships between human beings and more-than-humans, imagining other possible responses in connection with the world that surrounds them.

Soledad Gutiérrez Rodríguez

3 The idea of "raw material" is taken from the reading by Marina Garcés of Maurice Merleau-Ponty within the "Open Library" course that took place on 16 February 2015 at MACBA.

LIST OF WORKS

ELENA AITZKOA
(Apodaka, 1984)

Temperatura

2024

Mixed media

16 x 25 x 13 cm

Arrullo y vuelo

2024

Mixed media

79 x 113 x 53 cm

Nido

2024

Mixed media

38 x 77 x 70 cm

Vuelo de gorrión

2024

Mixed media

71 x 114 x 56 cm

Envergadura

2024

Mixed media

70 x 170 x 67 cm

A/a

2024

Mixed media

80 x 215 x 67 cm

O/a

2024

Mixed media

70 x 340 x 54 cm

Aleteos, ónfalo, pétalos

2024

Variable series

Mixed media on watercolour paper

50 x 70 cm

New commission

JOSU BILBAO

(Bermeo, 1978)

asàska

2024

Set of sculptural elements

Variable dimensions

New commission

EDUARDO CHILLIDA

(San Sebastián, 1924-2002)

Sin título

1962

Paper, ink

19 x 19 cm

Sin título

1946

Paper, ink

31,5 x 29,5 cm

Sin título

1947

Paper, ink

16,7 x 22 cm

Sin título 1949 Paper, ink 27 x 19,8 cm	LAIA ESTRUCH (Barcelona, 1981) <i>Sibina</i> 2019
Sin título 1950 Paper, ink 37,9 x 14,2 cm	Performance, voice, text, water and iron troughs 110 x 140 x 30 cm 85 x 140 x 30 cm 85 x 140 x 30 cm
Sin título 1951 Paper, ink 33,5 x 29,3 cm	Courtesy of Galería Ehrhardt Flórez
<i>Proyecto Lugar de Encuentros</i> 1972 Plaster 27,5 x 62 x 27,5 cm	SHEROANAWE HAKIHIWE (Sheroana, Venezuela, 1971) <i>Seimi siki (Pluma de pájaro tangara)</i> 2022 Acrylic on cotton paper 50 x 36,5 cm
<i>Proyecto Lugar de Encuentros</i> 1973 Plaster 60 x 25 x 30 cm	<i>Hii riye riye puriwahi (Palo verde espíritu)</i> 2022 Acrylic on cotton paper 50 x 36,5 cm
<i>Óxido 42</i> 1979 Chamotte soil, copper oxide 25,5 x 18 x 13 cm	<i>Yamira shii (Relámpago)</i> 2022 Acrylic on cotton paper 50 x 36,5 cm
<i>Maqueta para Homenaje a Hokusai</i> 1991 Iron 22 x 28 x 43,8 cm	<i>Hii tahiapí hi amakuripi (Un palo con rastro iridiscente)</i> 2022 Acrylic on cotton paper 36,5 x 50 cm
<i>Lurra G-246</i> 1992 Chamotte soil 29,5 x 30 x 26 cm	<i>Haya yimika (Hongo oreja de venado)</i> 2022 Acrylic on cotton paper 36,5 x 50 cm
<i>Lurra G-249</i> 1992 Chamotte soil 35,5 x 50 x 8,5 cm	
Courtesy of Chillida Estate and Hauser & Wirth	

Atayu wakamoshi (Oruga verde grande)

2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
36,5 x 50 cm

Isharomi shinaki (Plumas de arrendajo)

Acrylic on cotton paper
36,5 x 50 cm

Sikomi asiki (Hongo comestible)
2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
50 x 36,5 cm

Hii hi peno uhuti (Espíritu de los troncos de los árboles)

2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
43 x 53 cm

Hii i hipe amakuripe V (Palos con rastros iridiscentes V)

2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
50 x 35 cm

Hi i i hipe riye riye (II) (Planta verde II)
2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
50 x 35 cm

Ayacorami shinaki (Colas de turpial)
Tríptico

2022

Acrylic on cotton paper
35 x 50 cm (Each drawing)

Courtesy of ABRA Gallery

Juf (BEA ORTEGA BOTAS AND LETO YBARRA)

Sokasalto

2024

Installation made of rope, motor and methacrylate
170 x 100 x 550 cm

Swing I, II y III

2024

Drawing on paper
70 x 50 cm

New commission

CHRISTIAN SALABLANCA DÍAZ
(San José, Costa Rica, 1990)

Con las palmas de la manos, con las plantas de los pies

2024

Mixed media
Variable dimensions

New commission

MARIANNA SIMNETT
(London, 1986)

Blue Moon

2022

Digital video with sound
5 variations
5'

Courtesy of the artist and Sociéte, Berlin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

To all participating artists

ABRA Gallery

Chillida Leku

Eider Corral

Galería Ehrhardt Flórez

Elba Benítez Gallery

etHALL Gallery

Hauser & Wirth

Ula Iruretagoiena

Juglans®ia

Société, Berlin

Sucesión Chillida

Estanis Comella

Henry Eigenheer

Gabriel Martínez

Luis Romero

Rocco Roncuzzi

Manu Uranga

TABAKALERA



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EXHIBITION HALL OPENING HOURS

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