



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Itziar Okariz Sergio Preggo

Perforated by

Organized by



Co-organized by



With the support of



In 2022 the Spanish Pavilion at the International Art Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia is celebrating one hundred years as an exhibition space. Over the course of these nearly one hundred years, its spaces have seen paintings, sculptures, artistic installations, drawings, video art, performance and, masterfully executing these disciplines, the most important contemporary artists of our country.

However, our history in Venice is not limited to these one hundred years, as our participation in La Biennale di Venezia has been consolidated since the first edition, celebrated in 1895. In that first participation, master artists such as Mariano and José Benlliure, José Villegas or Joaquín Sorolla were part of the chosen group of artists, and hence commencing 125 years of history of Spanish art at this event.

It is therefore, with great pride that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) once again organizes the participation of Spain at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, as has been the case since 1950.

In this 58th edition, titled *May you live in interesting times* and curated by Ralph Rugoff, our pavilion counts on the curation of Peio Aguirre. His project, *Perforated by*, which is given life through the works of the Basque artists Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego, was especially conceived for the space in Venice and was chosen among other projects by an advisory committee chaired by the Director of the Reina Sofia National Art Museum of Madrid, in accordance with the Directorate for Cultural and Scientific Relations of AECID and Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) - Spain's Public Agency for Cultural Action-

And lastly, a special mention that this project has been possible thanks to the co-organization of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) -Spain's Public Agency for Cultural Action-, as has become customary since 2005.

PERFORATED BY ITZIAR OKARIZ AND SERGIO PREGO

A body in an empty space generates tension with the place where it is inserted, because the enveloping volume of the architecture reflects the minimum materiality of the body. The art of Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego is defined by a principle of immanence in this body-space relationship. Drawing on economical resources, they create an austere and powerful body of work that is complex in its simplicity. Their work is characterized by the creation of spare forms and images that share in that will to transgression, to resistance, that Susan Sontag would have defined as "radical style."

The main gesture and through-line of this exhibition consists in opening and expanding the space by way of an "occupation" which in reality is the opposite, an act of vacating or emptying. Sontag noted in her essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" that "not only does silence exist in a world full of speech and other sounds, but any given silence has its identity as a stretch of time being perforated by sound." To perforate is to make a partial hole in something – an object, image or space – passing through it while offering a glimpse of what was there before, altering it in the act of perforation. This exhibition by Sergio Prego and Itziar Okariz is conceived as a perforation, in a metaphorical as well as literal sense, through actions, sound, image, sculpture and architecture.

The state of the body in our technified society finds its counterpoint in artistic actions that reveal the disciplinary aspect of architecture, urban planning and normative codes of conduct. The work done by these two artists since the nineties redefines the notion of performativity and sculpture, operating within a regime of representation where – as befits our visual era – the production of signs is inevitable. Each in their own way, both Okariz and Prego trace this link between subjectivity, sexuality and environments increasingly constructed by power, or biopower, in an artistic tradition that finds in performance, body art and postminimalism its immediate historical precedents.

Peio Aguirre

PRESS RELEASE

PAVILION OF SPAIN

at the 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

PERFORATED BY ITZIAR OKARIZ AND SERGIO PREGO

Curated by Peio Aguirre.

With the participation of the artists Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego.

From May 11th to November 24th 2019

PERFORATED BY ITZIAR OKARIZ AND SERGIO PREGO is the project curated by Peio Aguirre, presenting Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego as the main artists for the Pavilion of Spain at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. An exhibition which proposes a perforation, metaphorically and literally, through performance, sound, image, sculpture and architecture. Sergio Prego's project will occupy the Pavilion of Spain with a sculpture set in harmony with the Venetian landscape and its vegetation. While Okariz's work will be located indoors, becoming the largest sound and performance installation that has taken place in the Spanish Pavilion. Moreover, for the opening days, the artist has developed a performance program.

The main gesture and thought behind *PERFORATED BY* consists in the opening, widening of space from an occupation which in reality is its own opposite, a clearing out or emptying. Any body in the interior of an empty space generates a tension with the space in which it is introduced, as the enveloping volume of the architecture gives us back the minimal materiality of the body. The main feature of Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego's art is the principle of continuum as inseparable, in this body-space relationship, translated into an austere and powerful body of work, complex in its simplicity.

Susan Sontag wrote in her essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" that "not only does silence exist in a world full of speech and other sounds, but any given silence takes its identity as a stretch of time being perforated by sound." Aguirre's project title sets off from the meaning of the verb to perforate, which means to partially pierce through something, a thing, an image or a space, penetrating, but allowing for a glimpse of what had been there in the first place. The space in the Pavilion, both interior as well as exterior, shall be perforated by Okariz and Prego's works of performance, sound, image, sculpture and architecture.

Itziar Okariz's art is characterized by actions that question the norm to do with language and the production of the symbols which define us as individual subjects. She approaches the private and public space from a feminist perspective.



ITZIAR OKARIZ, *The Statues*, 2018-2019. Video frame.

In *The Statues* (2018-2019) the artist presents **conversations in a low voice, murmuring, and confrontation she has with figures and objects of art.** Through direct confrontation with inanimate objects, these are hence endowed with a soul, life and subjectivity. The content of these conversations and prolonged stances before inanimate objects is the fruit of a strong, subjective and difficult relationship to convey; she defies common sense and favors the inner-story and personal and intimate ways in which we interact with objects and art. These one on ones are developed in the public space of museums. The images and texts, however, do not necessarily reflect what went on, posing a deliberation on documentation and corresponding manifestation. This decoupling of sound, image and text, delves into the displacement between the subject of language and its corporal presence. The action works as a fragmented narration based on that which is omitted, not seen nor heard. **These engagements with objects are extended throughout the period that La Biennale lasts, the works are ever changing, giving the spectator the impression of being before a living work of art, a piece in process which is not yet completed. Two sculptures present in the Pavillion, a statue by Jorge Oteiza in 1948, as well as another contemporary sculpture by Peruvian artist Armando Andrade Tudela, serve as help to the artist in continuing with these conversations.** Okariz explores the ontological character of objects and the anthropomorphism of forms in art.

In *Oceanic Breathing* (2018-2019) **the physical space of the exhibition and the viewer, become a resonating chamber.** The artist and another performer execute a series of intervallic respiratory exercises in front of a microphone which propagates the sound of breathing throughout the surrounding space. This performance, together with other actions, is developed in a **program which shall take place throughout the days of the opening.** Together with these artworks, an unprecedented video of the series *To Pee in Public and Private Spaces* (2001 – 2006) **questions the use of gender conventions and the performance of masculinity.** This video critically questions the regime of the norm, the use of public and private spaces, what is permitted and what is not, using as a basis the elaboration of a feminist and queer imaginary



SERGIO PREGO, *Tetsuo, Bound to Fail*, 1997. Video frame

Sergio Prego, on the premises of artistic strategies from the 60's and 70's, **redefines the relationships of art and the exhibition space, artistic object and the aesthetic experience.** Apart from the body, it is essential to take the material and the autonomy of the Postminimalist sculpture into consideration. Sculpture has traditionally been the most suitable medium in exploring the nature of the body and how it relates to space and time. This sculptural quality is extended into other means, such as video and drawing, with which he attempts to transgress the tradition of form and its limits. **The artist pushes the limits of sculpture with constructions that are generally ephemeral or detachable,** basic geometrical volumes and non-conventional materials, which are often fabricated on site. **His artwork made from pneumatic membranes** –as poems in space, breathing – **explore the nature of the ties uniting sculpture and architecture,** calling materiality into question due to its elaboration with flexible and lightweight materials that allow for the existence of form only in a specific state, or as a consequence of a continuous action on the materials it is composed of. Air becomes a tool that molds shapes. **Also water, cement or synthetic resin.** Pneumatic sculpture has to do with the emptying of space; how an element occupies a space which is simultaneously being vacated, emptied, allowing for the occupation of it by people and spectators. However, this pneumatic sculpture project is present in the exhibition through a model that reflects the initial project proposed by Prego for the Pavilion, suggesting an alternative use of space and architecture.

His artistic answer to this emptying of space takes place in the garden or rear façade of the Pavilion, through site-specific sculpture where the capacity of the fluidity of water and other elements is shown. In consideration of the context and architecture of the Pavillion, a formal investigation is added about the principle of "plasticity" and the organic. This plasticity has to do with giving shape and receiving it. This sculptural work is made up of a **"puzzled" garden, all the while in harmony with the Venetian landscape, its vegetation, and the flowing character of water.** This investigation is complemented with drawings which illustrate botanical and natural specimens, corporal organs and other interstitial forms, biological and sexual.

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BIOGRAPHIES

PEIO AGUIRRE

Born in Elorrio, Vizcaya, Spain in 1972. He lives and works in San Sebastian.

He is a writer, art critic, independent curator and editor. Licensed in Fine Arts in 1996 by the University of El País Vasco. His interests include critical theory, art, film, design and architecture as well as other cultural forms of expression. He is the author of the book *La línea de producción de la crítica* (Consonni, 2014) (The production line of criticism). He has curated exhibitions at the MACBA Museo d'art Contemporani de Barcelona; Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao; Tabakalera, San Sebastián; ARTIUM, Vitoria; CAAM Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno de Gran Canaria; Museo San Telmo, San Sebastián, among others. Since 2000, he has published in specialized magazines and in national and international newspapers such as Cultura(s) of La Vanguardia, EXIT, A-desk, Afterall, A Prior Magazine, Flash Art, El estado mental, e-flux journal, Concreta, Babelia of El País, etc... He has written essay papers in catalogues and monographs on artists such as Philippe Parreno, Annika Eriksson, Liam Gillick, Fernando Sinaga, Susan Philipsz, Asier Mendizabal, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Willie Doherty, Fiona Tan, Txomin Badiola, Armando Andrade Tudela, Isamu Noguchi, Francesc Ruiz, Dora García, among others. He writes in the blog *Crítica y Metacomentario* since 2006: <http://peioaguirre.blogspot.com>

ITZIAR OKARIZ

Born in San Sebastian, Spain in 1965. She currently lives and works in Bilbao.

Her artwork is about language and the body as a symbol, questioning the limits of the norm. From her beginnings, she has resorted to processes such as the decontextualization of signifiers or the reversal of roles of he/she who observes and he/she who is observed. Graduate in Fine Arts at the University of El País Vasco in 1990. She has done several courses in the Arteleku art center in San Sebastian. In the period from 2000 to 2001 she participated at the Independent Studio Program (ISP) of the Whitney Museum of New York. She has done individual exhibitions in Tabakalera, San Sebastian (2018); Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel (2017); CA2M, Mostoles-Madrid (2017); Carreras Múgica Gallery, Bilbao (2017); etHall Gallery, Barcelona (2016); Moisés Pérez de Albéniz Gallery, Madrid (2015); MUSAC Contemporary Art Museum of Castilla y León (2013); Rekalde Center, Bilbao (2008); and has participated in collective shows and performances in Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona (2013); The Singel, Amberes (2007), MACBA Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona, among others. Her artwork can be found in collections such as the Reina Sofia National Art Museum of Madrid ; ARTIUM, Vitoria-Gasteiz; FRAC Poiteau- Chanteres; Fundación La Caixa, Barcelona; MUSAC Contemporary Art Museum of Castilla y León; Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, among others.

SERGIO PREGO

Born in Hondarribia, Guipúzcoa, Spain, in 1969. He currently lives and works in New York.

Throughout his trajectory, he has been questioning and reformulating his affiliation to the tradition of sculpture and performativity through video, drawing and pneumatic architecture. He graduated in Fine Arts at the University of El País Vasco, in 1992. In the period between 1997 and 2002 he worked as part of the team of the artist Vito Acconci, "Acconci Studio". He has done individual exhibitions in Sala Montcada de la Caixa, Barcelona (2001); Sala Rekalde, Bilbao (2004); Pallazo Delle Papesse, Siena (2005); Maupin Gallery, Nueva York (2007); Berlín (2007); Art

Unlimited in ArtBasel 41, Basilea (2010). Soledad Lorenzo Gallery, Madrid (2002, 2006, 2011); Buchmann Galerie, Alfonso Artiaco Gallery, Nápoles (2011); Carreras Múgica Gallery, Bilbao (2015). His artwork is found in collections such as the Reina Sofia National Art Museum of Madrid; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao; MACBA of Barcelona; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna; Colección la Caixa, Barcelona; and Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, among others. In 2010, together with artists Txomin Badiola and Jon Mikel Euba, he organized the Primer Proforma 2010 at the MUSAC, Leon.