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Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on July 7

BASQUE ARTIST PROGRAM 2015-19

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Basque Artist Program, 2015–19

- Dates: July 8–September 6, 2022
- Curated by: Lucía Agirre and Geanine Gutierrez-Guimarães, curators, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

As part of the Guggenheim Bilbao's 25th Anniversary, the Museum presents the works of the ten Basque artists who have participated in the five editions to date of the *Basque Artist Program* that the Guggenheim Museums in Bilbao and New York launched jointly in 2015. Targeted at artists born or living in the Basque Country, every year this initiative, whose 2022 edition is currently open (deadline for registering is July 18), allows two emerging artists chosen by the curatorial teams of both museums to receive an intensive orientation on the New York art scene and get experience designed to foster exchange and professional development from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum team.

The ten emerging artists featured in this show are Raquel Asensi, Nora Aurrekoetxea Etxebarria, Helena Goñi, Jon Gorospe, Gala Knörr, Maite Pinto, Karla Tobar Abarca, Alain Urrutia, Cristian Villavicencio, and Diego Vivanco. In their works they address issues like identity, history, representation, and individual and collective memory through a diverse range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, works on paper, photography, video, site-specific installations, and performance.

The natural and the artificial merge in the works of **Raquel Asensi** (b. 1989, Bilbao) via performance, the word, and sculptural objects. In *Tetrad Interface (I)* (2019), she turns a ceramic mask into an extension of the body that will return to the environment through decomposition, while in *abyss – ālis* (2022), she “petrifies” the traces of seaweed on a glazed ceramic surface and uses its ashes to generate different effects as a testimony of submarine deforestation.

Nora Aurrekoetxea Etxebarria (b. 1989, Bilbao) uses building materials which are usually concealed from view and turns them into supports where she inlays and hangs tin, bronze, and silver rings and braids. In *Spooning* (2022), the plasterboard panels are attached together with corrugated, bare, sharp rods that hold each other up, while the rings and braids—archetypes which represent certain relationships among people in different cultures—work independently.

The importance of the body-object-environment relationship is omnipresent in the artistic inquiry of **Helena Goñi** (b. 1990, Bilbao), whose works span photography, video, and performance. In an investigation on collective imagination, Goñi used her 35-mm camera to portray the people and scenes of her environs when she lives in New York. In *Caleb's Feet* (2018) and *Lynn Holding Books* (2022), she explores aspects related to resistance, commitment, the fetishization of the body, and the representation of the human figure via sculpture.

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Polished Cities (2018-21) by **Jon Gorospe** (b. 1986, Vitoria-Gasteiz) is composed of a series of black-and-white photographs of contemporary buildings in cities like Berlin, Milan, New York, Oslo, and Singapore, arranged in geometric order. The artist has tinkered with some of these images using red acrylic sheets which symbolize the frenetic pace of city life, in a reinterpretation of a dystopian society.

Gala Knörr (b. 1984, Vitoria-Gasteiz) revisits the history of the American West by reviving figures that may have played a prominent role in their day but have been forgotten in popular US culture. Examples include *Young Cowboy* (2022) and *Young Cowboy Gazing* (2022), which she revises through the image of the young African-American woman Brianna Noble on horseback, which she found among the photographs of the protests that arose in the USA within the context of the “Black Lives Matter” movement after the murder of George Floyd.

Maite Pinto (b. 1993, Logroño) focuses on memory and identity, both individual and collective, by retrieving snapshots from a wide array of archives, which she then recreates through the technique of engraving. Her works focus on photographs of some of the thousands of Basque children who were sent to Southampton (United Kingdom) on the steamer *Habana* in 1937. Within this context of displacement, fragmentation, and loss, the images speak about the need to belong to a group.

In *Twisted Paintings* (2019) **Karla Tobar Abarca** (b. 1981, Quito) reinvents a pictorial language associated with the senses in a symbiosis between art and technology. The artist digitizes the images she gets from walking through the streets of different cities with a scanner in her backpack and captures them on soft panels, which she then twists and creases, giving rise to a series of tactile images that embody the fragmented image via the corporal and performative gesture.

Alain Urrutia (b. 1981, Bilbao) explores the concepts of individual and collective memory in *Memento* (2021–ongoing), a mosaic installation in which he presents new and recovered images in period frames, to which the artist will add a new piece every year in order to reflect the passage of time. Using a term from Latin—“memento” means “remember”—Urrutia studies the construction of memory based on fragmented recollections and the power of images to create stories.

Whistle (2021, from the *Hybrid Organisms* series), a work by **Cristian Villavicencio** (b. 1984, Quito), merges history and collective memory by recovering and reinterpreting indigenous tradition. Based on a three-dimensional scan of a pre-Columbian sculpture, he creates a mollusk-shaped wind instrument which consists of two interconnected bodies that house water and produce a whistling resonance, to which he adds a new layer of meaning with a contemporary approach. In the video related to this piece also presented in the gallery, an inhabitant of the Amazonian community of Alta Florencia imitates different tones of animal noises which were recorded in the Napo River in Yasuní Park, which in turn evoke the musical vibrations issuing from the ceramic.

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Through video, photography, performance, and installation, **Diego Vivanco** (b. 1988, Bilbao) evinces the tensions generated in different social, political, and cultural contexts. In *Human Flag* (2013), the artist depicts himself and encourages reflection on the importance attached to signs of identity. In *Principle of Conservation of Matter* (2019), he metaphorically highlights the similarities of the passions aroused by different flags by reducing them to ashes.

Cover image:

Karla Tobar Abarca (Quito, 1981)

<scanner-pack>project_documentary, 2022

Video, color, stereo sound, 30 min.

Collection of the artist

Photo © Karla Tobar Abarca

For more information:

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Marketing and Communications Department

Tel: 944 359 008

media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus

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Raquel Asensi (Bilbao, 1989)

abyss – ālis, 2022

Glazed ceramic, seaweed ashes and wood

150 x 90 cm

Artist's collection

Photo © Raquel Asensi



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Noraurrekoetxea Etxebarria (Bilbao, 1989)

Spooning, 2022

Bronze, tin, silver, corrugated rods, and plasterboard

Site-specific dimensions

Artist's collection

Photo © Noraurrekoetxea Etxebarria



Helena Goñi (Bilbao, 1990)

Caleb's Feet, 2018

Inkjet print

80 x 120 cm

Ed. 2/3 + 1 AP

Artist's collection

Photo © Helena Goñi



Jon Gorospe (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1986)

Polished Cities, 2018–21

Dye-sublimation prints on aluminum

Site-specific dimensions

Artist's collection

Photo © Jon Gorospe



Gala Knörr (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1984)

Young Cowboy Gazing, 2022

Oil and oil pastel on canvas

162 x 130 cm

Artist's collection

Photo © Gala Knörr



Maite Pinto (Logroño, 1993)

Human chain, 2018

Etching and aquatint on paper

Plate size: 34 x 25 cm

Paper: 46 x 38 cm

Artist's collection

Photo © Maite Pinto



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Karla Tobar Abarca (Quito, 1981)

Twisted Paintings, 2019

4 rolls of transparent PVC, stainless steel cable, LED light, and hooks
200 x 120 cm each, site-specific dimensions

Artist's collection

Photo © Karla Tobar Abarca



Alain Urrutia (Bilbao, 1981)

Memento, 2021–underway

Oil on linen, wood, mirror, linen, and period offset prints

Site-specific dimensions

Artist's collection

Photo © Alain Urrutia



Cristian Villavicencio (Quito, 1984)

Whistle (from the *Hybrid Organisms* series), 2021

Ceramic, water, and programmed mechanical system

50 x 40 x 50 cm

Artist's collection

Photo © Cristian Villavicencio



Diego Vivanco (Bilbao, 1988)

Human Flag, 2013

Lenticular image

140 x 105 cm

Artist's collection

Photo © Diego Vivanco

