



ASIER MENDIZABAL

*TOMA DE TIERRA*

(03.10.2014 – 20.11.2014)

## To Form An Earth

Directly questioning forms and formally questioning the material elements on which some of the common representations of the collective are sustained, Asier Mendizabal advances wide-ranging interrelations of reading, contextualising and rewriting of some of the conventional symbols underpinning these representations. Titled *Toma de Tierra* (To Form An Earth), the exhibition sets up a network of formal analogies and cross-references that use the very idiom of the exhibition as a syntax to deploy diverse juxtapositions between elements actually present and others alluded to. Cultural conventions like the pedestal, the coded representation of landscape or the use of woodcut, in different cases of political representation, weave a mesh of unexpected affiliations.

For instance, through a process of formal analysis, the ubiquitous image of a crowd of people in a public square with a monument in the centre gives rise to a series of correspondences which, in principle, have nothing to do with the symbolic content one would normally associate with this typology. In fact, the artist's proposal borrows its motto from a statement by Jean Baudrillard, somewhere between disillusioned and perverse, in which he compared the mass, the political agency of the crowd, with electricity – the absorption of energy that makes it form *an earth*, neutralising the active current by grounding it. A small drawing by Umberto Boccioni, not included in the exhibition yet nevertheless central to it, summarises this idea graphically. In it, a mesh of ink brushstrokes composes a mass of arms raised in Roman salute at the foot of an equestrian statue that merge with the pedestal. The dynamic energy conveyed by the drawing's gestural quality makes it seem that the statue is at once being raised or overthrown by the centripetal force of the crowd. This representation coincides with the technical resolution of a representational problem that Mendizabal alludes to in the exhibition: in the mid-nineteenth century newspapers and journals started to use photography, especially to represent events with crowds of people, before this technique could actually be reproduced directly in the rotary press. During the lapse of time before the invention of the half-tone print, photos were "translated" by engravers who used a burin on wood to intricately replicate the grids of little heads of the crowd, though it was obviously unable to portray the features of each individual as photography would eventually do. The implicit and explicit metaphors of this engraving technique are contrasted with other historic cases such as its use in political propaganda during the Chinese cultural revolution or in the period of Estampa Popular, the network of anti-Franco art groups in Spain in the 1960s, of which Ibarrola is probably the best exponent, where the blunt stroke particular to the woodcut technique became a culturally accepted symbolic feature.

Likewise, a text and a series of allusions in different pieces give good account of a specific case of problematic monumentalisation, as exemplified by the ups and downs undergone by a small bust dedicated to Miguel de Unamuno, the writer from Bilbao, before acquiring its existing format. Acts of affront and reparation, of erecting and of iconoclasm, lend themselves to a different interpretation by means of a direct questioning of the materials and languages on which these public representations of a socially agreed narrative are predicated.



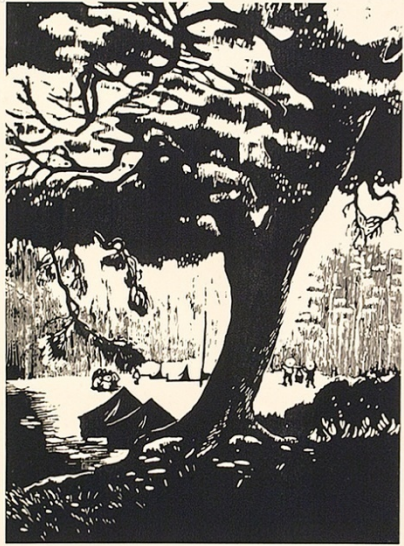








"Sin título (Wicker)", 2014. Hormigón, 61x40cm





"Sin título (Illustrated)", 2014. Material impreso enmarcado, 46x31



"Peana (La Foule)", 2014. Hormigón, guijarros y hierro, 90x122x82







"Sin título (Illustrated)", 2014. Material impreso enmarcado, 46x31







"Cabeza, puño, árbol", 2014. Papel Maché (2 elementos), 95x60x60 / 82x53x56



"Gurentza-Unamuno", 2014. Impresión fotográfica sobre papel Hannemühle, 120x85



"Columna infame", 2014. Hormigón, 160x37







"Sin título (Saski)", 2014. Hormigón.





"Ertz zorrotza (Masta)", 2014. Madera y textil, 200x20x14







"Placa (La Foule)", 2014. Hormigón, guijarros y hierro, 82x122



"*Columna infame*", 2014. Hormigón, 145x46