

“Neither Sum Nor Fragment”

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20.09.2019 - 07.12.2019

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Neither Sum Nor Fragment interlaces a number of works made specifically for the exhibition with one prior work which acts as a kind of prologue. Not All That Moves Is Red (Telón) #2, a textile piece from 2012, occupies a highly visible place within the exhibition, as a sort of backdrop for the rest of the elements, in keeping with the function connoted in its very form and expressly stated in the telón (curtain) referred to in the title. Made out of nine flags sewn together, there is an evident distortion in how the iconic content is perceived. The unresolved relationship between ground and form, depending on whether we focus our attention on the red geometric form standing out against the black ground or on the black standing out against the red, forces us to accept the impossibility of grasping both at the same time. This troubled relationship between ground and figure and fragment and sum is also mirrored in the fact that, when separating the nine elements in the work, we can intuit the compositional logic of each one of the flags: some of the horizontal, diagonal and vertical fields coincide with existing flags, while others are just meaningless permutations. Having said that, the flags we appear to recognise do not condition the reading of the whole any more than those that do not conjure up any fixed associations. This ambivalent relationship, between culturally agreed meaning and what is devoid of meaning, albeit both share the same elements, acts as a guiding principle for the rest of the exhibition.

A series made up of photographic fragments adhered to aluminium, called Iroko/ukola (2019), further explores the aforementioned relationship between ground and figure. Here, the zigzag motif typical of wooden parquet flooring appears as a scheme of interconnected diagonals sliced by cuttings and layers of the photographic paper that interrupt the formal pattern and produce random geometric forms. In fact, the cuttings applied replicate the same planes with which the main series in the exhibition is composed: the aluminium triangles and rhomboids in Casa/palabra (2019).

This is by no means the only connection between the two series. When I started to think about the work that would eventually lead to this exhibition, I thought that I was preparing the materials for a text. The purported avant-gardism of mid-twentieth century rationalist architecture in Spain normally evinces an anachronistic taste for sumptuous details that somehow redeemed it for the bourgeois sensibility. Among these, the recourse to what at the time was generically known in Spain as 'wood from Guinea' was a revealing way of maintaining the idea of luxury incarnated by hard woods. In point of fact, it was the ready availability of these woods in the colonial economy that enabled access to this luxury, which would become ubiquitous. Imports of sapele, iroko, okume and ukola wood were inextricably tied to colonial politics and became a signature element in the construction of modernization in Spain, as demonstrated by those omnipresent sapele doors that arrived almost without cost to the national wood company on the eve of the independence of Equatorial Guinea. And while the Iroko/ukola collages use photographic depictions of these woods, Casa/palabra, on the other hand, uses an architectural element that travelled in the opposite direction: the triangular shape speaks to the roof of a prototype construction called casa de la palabra (house of the word) which was included in the project for model villages which Carrero Blanco, Franco's erstwhile right-hand man, commissioned to the architect Ramón Estalella, to come up with rationalist construction solutions for Spain's African colony.

As the formal process started to dovetail with other recurrent questions underpinning my work, I began to move away from these references. In doing so, the specific geometry inspired by an architectural element inadvertently took on the form of a series of sculptures I had conceived over ten years ago but which I had never undertaken. Similar to the other pieces described above, and also to the exhibition as a whole, the modular system proposed in Casa/palabra strains the fraught relationship between the fragments and their sum. And while each one of the two elements used in the modular piece is in itself an abstract geometrical form, they also bring to mind heraldic elements, supports for a nevertheless missing meaning. When combined in its finished form, the faceted triangle seems like a monumental emblem equally obtuse with regards to what it might symbolize.

Asier Mendizabal (Ordizia, 1973) lives and works in Bilbao and Stockholm where he is professor at the Royal Institute of Art. He has had solo shows in museums like MACBA, Barcelona; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Culturgest, Lisbon; Raven Row, London; Galerie Miroslav Kraljevic, Zagreb; Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen; Museo San Telmo, Donostia-San Sebastián; Zarigüeya/Alabado contemporáneo, Quito. And group shows like Chacun a son goût and El arte y el espacio, Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao; A Singular Form, Secession, Vienna; Whose Subject am I?, Kunstverein Düsseldorf; Scenarios about Europe, GFZK, Leipzig. In the First Circle, Fundació Tapies, Barcelona; As Artes, Cidadãos, Museu Serralves, Porto; Després de la notícia, at CCCB, Barcelona. Besides he has been selected for Manifesta 5, 54 Venice Biennale (ILLUMInazioni – ILLUMInations, curated by Bice Curiger), 31 São Paulo Biennale, EVA International 2014, Limerick, Ireland; Taipei Biennale 2002; and Bucharest Biennale 4, Bucharest.



Installation view



Matriz (base), 2019. Stainless steel. 100 x 45 x 42,5 cm.



Matriz (base), 2019. Stainless steel. 100 x 45 x 42,5 cm. (detail)



Matriz, 2019. Stainless steel. 100 x 45 x 22 cm. each



Installation view



Casa/palabra (motz), 2019. Folded aluminium. 133 x 416 x 18 cm.



Casa/palabra (motz), 2019. Folded aluminium. 133 x 416 x 18 cm. (detail)



Installation view



Installation view



Not all that moves is red (telón) #2, 2012. Textile. 300 x 400 cm.



Installation view



Casa/palabra, 2019. Folded aluminium. 365 x 416 x 43 cm.



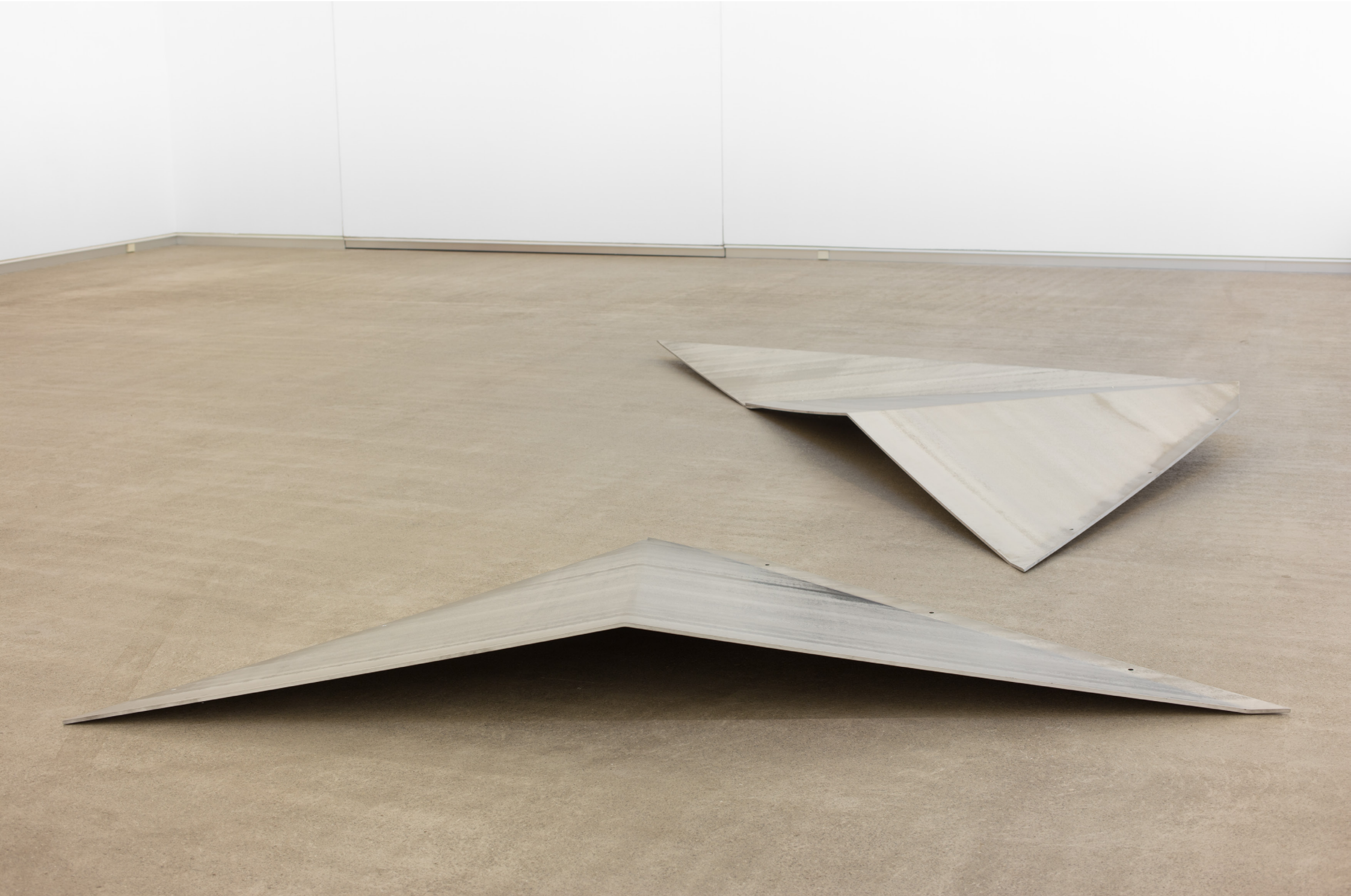
Installation view



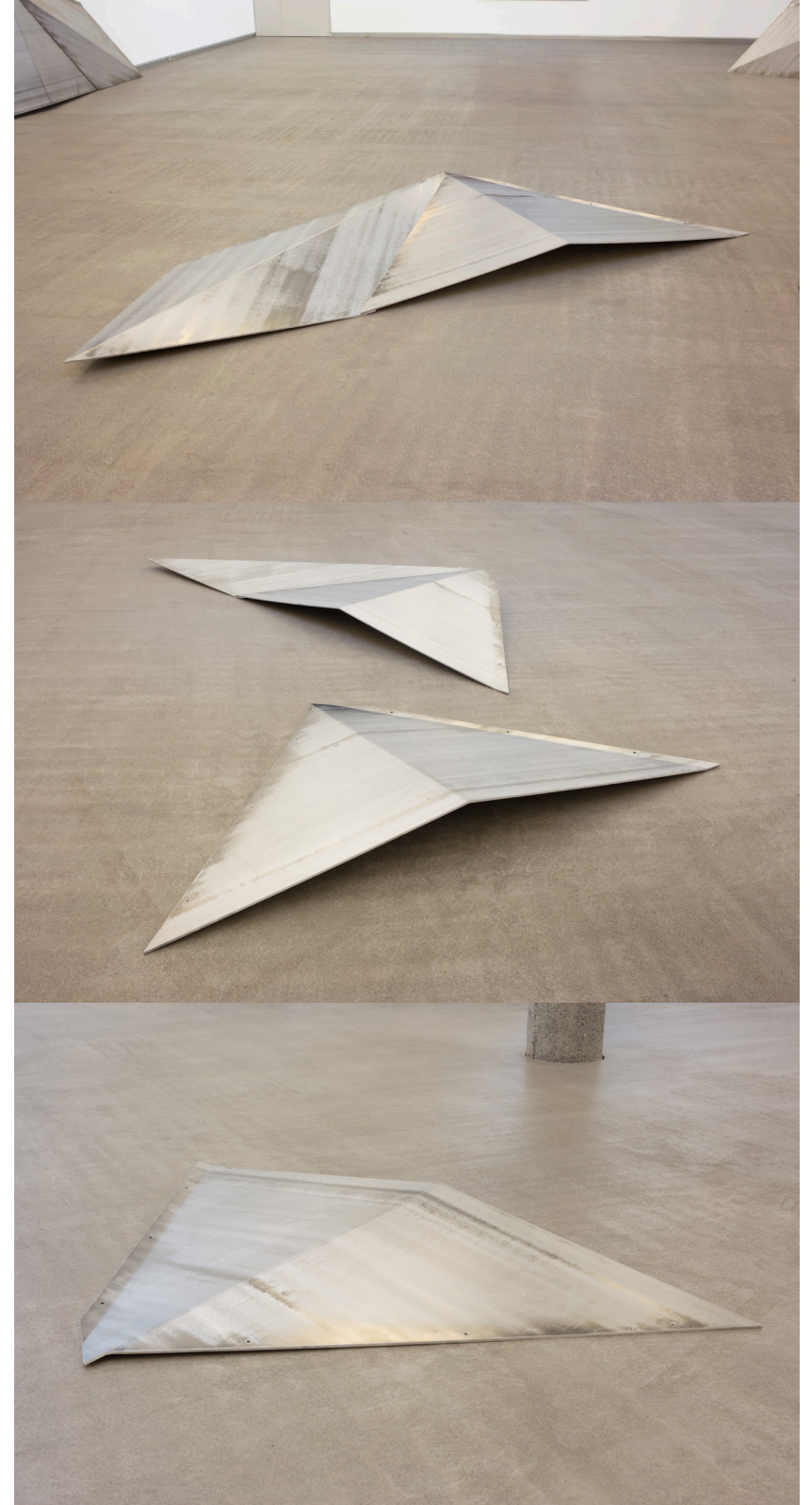
Casa/palabra, 2019. Folded aluminium. 365 x 416 x 43 cm. (detail)



Installation view



Casa/palabra (labur), 2019. Folded aluminium. Variable measure.



Casa/palabra (labur), 2019. Folded aluminium. Variable measure. (views and details)



Installation view



Installation view



Iroko/Ukola #3, 2019. Cut photographs on aluminium. 120 x 166 x 5 cm.



Iroko/Ukola #2, 2019. Cut photographs on aluminium. 153 x 101 x 5 cm.



Iroko/Ukola #1, 2019. Cut photographs on aluminium. 147,5 x 183 x 5 cm.



Sin título (trama #10), 2018. Silkscreen cut-outs on paper. 100 x 70 cm.



Installation view

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