

# ` ` Insignificando ` `

Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa

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CarrerasMugica

In this exhibition called *Insignificando*, (something akin to *unmeaning* or *unsignifying*), I am presenting some of the works I have produced since 2019 divided into two different series that work well together as a set.

Both these subsets—which bear the titles “Great Black Chickens” and “American imperialism is...”—examine the sign, the symbol and the inexplicable functioning of master-signifiers that have the power to put people to work for free, when we all know just how hard that is. Father and motherlands, flags, gods, the team colours, honour...

The techniques I’ve used for these works are pencil drawing and collage, both of which are often associated with childhood, with an economy viewed as deficit, which is to say, as surplus, and with a deliberate waste of time, enterprises in which I consider myself to be an expert.

I believe, maybe naively, that the right choice of technique can spark that magical moment of connection, without overlooking the polysemy implicit in any effort to communicate. Or perhaps not, the truth is I don’t really care. Well, I do actually, I do care.

I can identify with the way the impressionists worked: go outside, take a look at the world around you, see how the sun, the air, the elements and the screens of our devices reflect things and try to capture the moment. Although the moment vanishes in the moment.

What is the mechanism that makes the sum of a signifier (for instance a flag) and a signified—the image, the meaning they produce—so different? What makes somebody a patriot and someone else a person who just sees a piece of cloth with stripes of colours flying from a pole? A symbol of power shared by many cultures or a well-feathered bird?

I was thinking about a statement by... I can’t remember who, that said that speaking beings have a tendency towards mental weakness. Spinoza said that our life is no more than an everyday invocation of signs, and if there is one thing that characterizes signs then that is the fact that they are variable, associative and ambiguous.

I suppose that’s the reason I am so obsessed with culture and how it affects us, shapes us, forms us and especially how it deforms us. I am talking about real culture, the legacy that is passed down to us, that composite of the psychological state of our forebears and those who have gone before us, and the mental state of the heroes who lead our destinies and of our places of birth, and probably some other factor I’ve forgotten or am unaware of.

That’s why, whenever I have to explain my work, I have to describe it as a struggle against culture, and if I use the word ‘struggle’ it is because I believe that ‘fighting’ is a bit too much. I’ll leave that to the idealists. I’m one of those people who never set themselves goals because that way I am never disappointed. My project in a world waiting for signs is insignificant but it’s enough for me.

P.S. All my respects to the painter mentioned in Don Quixote, who was so bad that after painting a cock he had to write “this is a cock” beneath it in order to create meaning.

*Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa (Donostia-San Sebastian, 1963) lives and works in Paris. He studied Fine Arts at UPV and at Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Beaux-Arts in Paris and Philosophy at Université Paris 8. His work has been exhibited in museums and art centres such as Centre d'Art La Panera (2018) and Artium (2017), Malmö Konstmuseum (2015), Punk: sus rastros en el arte contemporáneo, MACBA, Barcelona (2015), La ville après les applaudissements, at Pavillon Vendôme - Centre d'art Contemporain, Clichy (2014); Forever Young at Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2013), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (2012), Museum of Modern Art MUHKA, Antwerp (2008), Norrlands Operan, Umeå, Sweden (2007) and Chacun à son at Museo Guggenheim Bilbao (2007). His work has also been seen in many international group shows including Memoria del porvenir (MUSAC, 2021) and Vasos Comunicantes (MNCARS, 2021), MG+MSUM (2020), the Jakarta Biennial (2015), How to (...) things that don't exist, 31st Sao Paulo Biennial (2014) and the Lyon Biennial (2007). He has received many awards and scholarships such as the Gure Artea Prize (2006), the Bancaixa Prize for Painting (1997), a scholarship for creation from MUSAC, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (2004), a residency at Fundación La Vaca Independiente, Mexico (1999) and a scholarship for creation from Fundación Banesto (1993). His work is in many museums and collections, among others, MUSAC (Leon), CGAC (Santiago de Compostela), Museo de San Telmo (San Sebastian), Madeira Corporate Services (Madeira), Guggenheim Bilbao, Legion Düsseldorf, MAM Sao Paulo, Iberdrola (Bilbao), MNCARS (Madrid), La Panera (Lleida) and Marugame Hirai Museum (Marugame, Japan).*



Installation view



Installation view



Installation view



*The Great Black Chickens N°6, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*



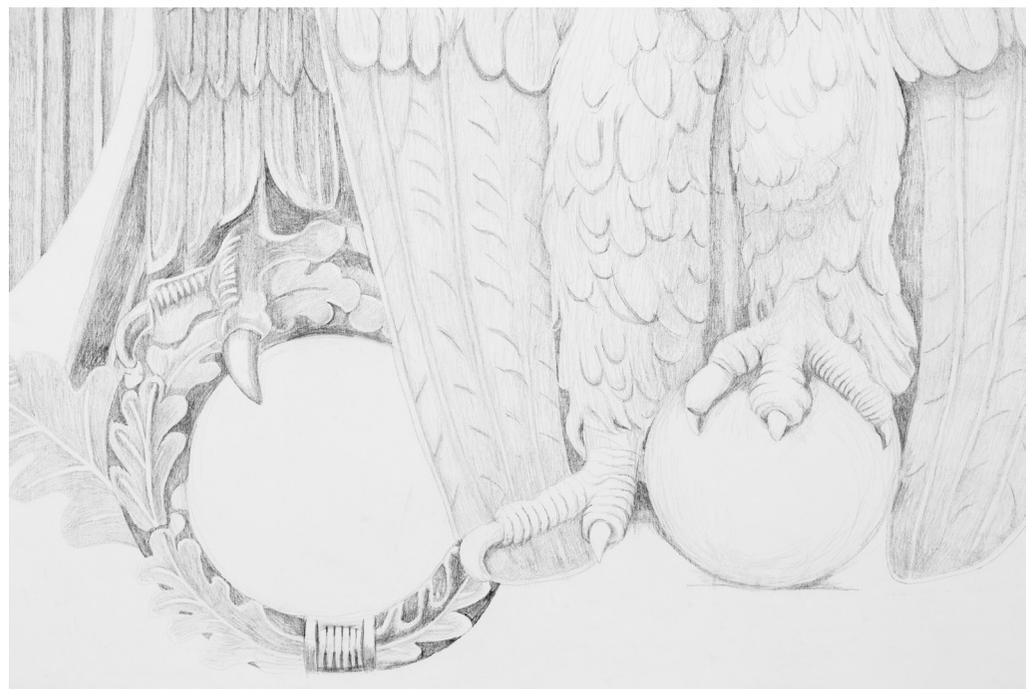
*Black Chickens 3*, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 220 cm.



*Black Chickens 3, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 220 cm.*



*The Great Black Chickens N°6, 2021*  
Pencil on canvas  
200 x 300 cm.





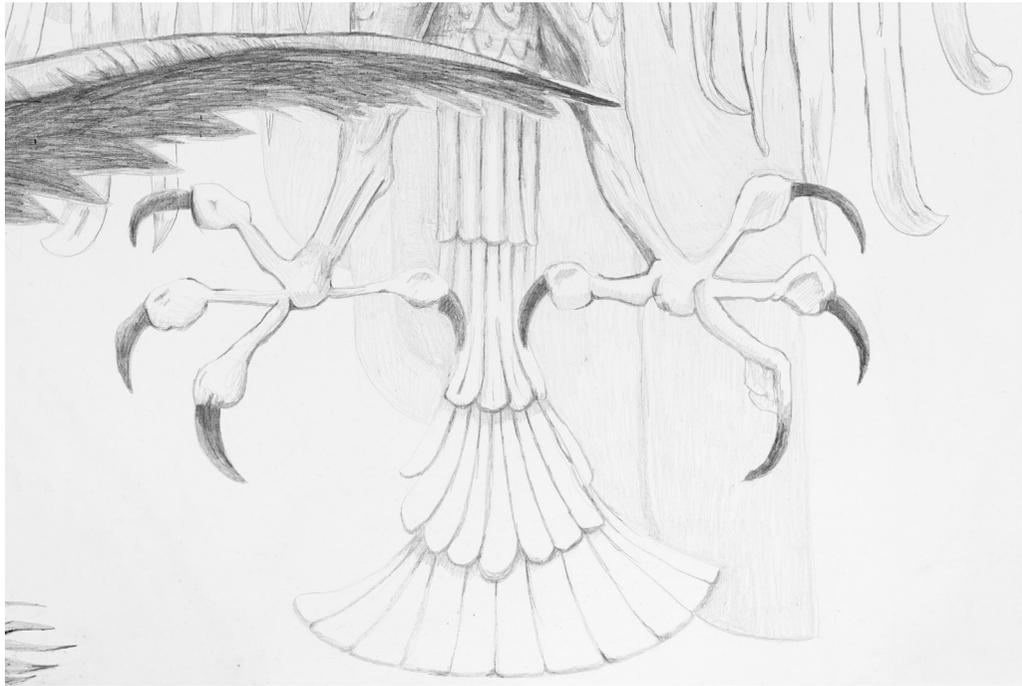
*The Great Black Chickens N°6, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*



Installation view



*The Great Black Chickens N°4, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*





*The Great Black Chickens №4, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*



*The Great Black Chickens N°8, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*

*The Great Black Chickens N°8, 2021 (detail)*  
Pencil on canvas  
200 x 300 cm.





*The Great Black Chickens N°8, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*



Installation view



Installation view



*The Great Black Chickens N°4, 2021 (detail)*  
Pencil on canvas  
200 x 300 cm.



*The Great Black Chickens N°7, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.*



Installation view



*The Great Black Chickens N°5*, 2021. Pencil on canvas. 200 x 300 cm.





Installation view



*American Imperialism is... Chicken, 2021. Collage on canvas. 130 x 195 cm. (detail)*



*American Imperialism is... Chicken*, 2021. Collage on canvas. 130 x 195 cm.



*American Imperialism is...* *The Rose Book*, 2021  
Collage on canvas  
130 x 195 cm.



*American Imperialism is... Butterflies and bees, 2021. Collage on canvas. 130 x 195 cm.*



*Fachita suicida*, 2021  
Collage on canvas  
100 x 73 cm.



Installation view

# CarrerasMugica

[www.carrerasmugica.com](http://www.carrerasmugica.com)

[info@carrerasmugica.com](mailto:info@carrerasmugica.com)

Calle Heros 2 / E-48009 BILBAO  
T. +34 944234725