

ARTIFICIOS

SUSANA SOLANO

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Here in these spaces we can see works by Susana Solano that seem to take paths which intersect and branch out in time, open roads in different time periods, as if we were contemplating the expansive landscape of her by-now extensive art practice.

"Artifices" is the word the artist chooses for the works she produces. Derived from the Latin *artificium*, literally meaning "a profession, trade, employment, craft; a making by art; a work of art", it denotes something built or made; an invention whose hour, material and time have finally arrived.

In ordinary parlance, an "artifice" suggests something more than that: it bears implicit the stamp of things that are crafted or invented, that come from the playful, sensual gesture of fantasy, and that release or liberate their energy without having to explain themselves. Artistic creation has a legitimate right to behave with absolute indifference to any possible commitment with the industrial production that furnishes our everyday utilitarian world with all kinds of objects. A world like ours in which the unnecessary and the superfluous also exist yet are disguised under the mantle of programmed needs.

Down through the ages, the making of artifices has always been the declared intent of the poetics of art. Our engagement with those objects today, removed from the surrounding noise of our banal everyday environment, affords a much-needed experience. It offers us the possibility of escaping the tyrannical setting of all things subjected to function and utility, to programmed obsolescence and to routine. When we no longer expect a narrative, a pretext or reasoning to stand in for the *raison d'être* of artworks, we can still hope to fulfil an expectation that is in short supply in the realm of reality, namely, the pleasure and freedom of contemplating something unprecedented and devoid of use purpose without demanding anything in return. It is a game played with made things that is

still capable of proportioning the quiddity of beauty: a selfless pleasure.

If we embrace the challenge of this game, "artifices" are removed from the everyday life waiting for us somewhere else, outside its sphere of influence, and we can open a door to the unexpected. And this is how each one of the works by Susana Solano on exhibit appear to invent their own meaning, unfettered from the foreseeable, unfettered from the strict logic of known things—as in the case of the pieces of furniture called "Footprints". An unforeseen meaning that even contradicts the titles the artist has given to some of her series—like the small "Muecas" (Grimaces)— or perhaps gives them an expected meaning, faintly broached, covert and ambiguous, like some works made from materials we would not expect to find together—as in the case of "Encima de una alfombra" (On a Rug). This play with meaning entails a relationship with the past, already well established in art, under the sign of a critical irony we should never waver, yet which is deployed here in a tangential, less explicit fashion. A form of irony that barely alights on the works.

In her exploration of the paths of creation Susana Solano has faithfully responded, above all, to her private world, rummaging about in her own secret chambers. Whoever wishes to discover the meaning of her works from the solitary position of contemplation will have to find them for themselves. The artist does not generally supply the keys. Any clues strewn along the way are few and far between. Nor can we readily discern any common thread running through the sequence of works, given that it mutates with the passing of time and of life, with the experience of the artist, following a logic that remains under wraps.

Some of her early sculptural creations are hard, abstract, defined, rough-edged—as in "Montblanquet" from 1988—while other times they are as cutting as daggers or as specific as diagrams—"El lugar donde volvió" (The Place Returned To), from 1998. Years later, other images arose, expressed

through other materials, that led to more ductile and fragile forms, like the silhouettes of "Lo visible II" (The Visible II) or "La negación" (Negation). Other more recent "artifices" appear to be moved by the wind, by water, by the light breath of life, even at rest—as exemplified by the vibrant "L'Últim sopar" (The Last Supper). Many of her works speak to a will to create enclosures: boxes whose early versions contained images of a barely intuited pain and then later appeared empty, open to the air surrounding them, as if they were liberating the material of their emotions towards a new anticipation, like in "Once-diecinueve-quince" (Eleven-Nineteen-Fifteen) from 1992. Later on, she imagined enclosures sealed with meshes or with latticework that enabled the permeable material to lighten the forms, and also other objects that, turned to the floor, turning their backs on us, fiercely protect their space, preventing anything from escaping from inside, like in the structure of "Stanley", made in 2005.

In a poem from his book *Journey to Love* from the mid-twentieth century, William Carlos Williams wrote that "if we are to understand our time, we must find the key to it, not in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but in earlier, wilder and darker epochs." This recommendation might help us to interpret a present that is always at one remove, that seems to flee forward relentlessly, exhausting us in its pursuit. Perhaps, before setting out on the mysterious paths of art, we should turn to a more distant past, one already closed and concluded, even forgotten, breaking the order of that causal and logical chain with which the history of art is presented to us. Perhaps the keys to the present are concealed in the folds of a time we believed to be over. We shall then see these works anchored in "wilder and darker" roots, like those proposed by the poet, feeding from sources of a timeless art that, each time, reinstates anew her right to the creation of her "artifices".

Approaching Susana Solano's art in this way is, at the very least, evocative, as it posits a free exercise of the imagination and excuses us from having

to once again revise the relative position of her work within the history of art, eschewing any predestined fate. These works we are now contemplating better reveal their value if we confront them with an inaugural time which safeguards the seed of the interest that has always sustained the artist in her search for new structures, materials and meanings. A tireless quest that is constantly renewed in order to be able to maintain her commitment: an austere, genuine, clean gesture endowed with forthright and open sincerity. A gesture that does not hesitate to break pre-established lines whenever they present signs of exhaustion. Susana Solano, at every moment, in every open series of works, has demonstrated that she wishes to continue following uncharted paths, to bolster the strength of images and the expression of materials. And it is these paths that have coloured her choice of techniques and crafts, at times with unpredictable results.

Susana Solano has often said that she feels close to the earth, to memory, to the imagination of childhood. Beyond this intimate terrain, she sets her sights on other horizons and places that she explores on countless journeys, striking up a dialogue between them and her own world on her return. She speaks of her practice with reticence, seeking solitude and reflection, and radically rejects rhetoric that obscures the force of intention. In some personal notes dating from 1995, she asked herself the following question: "What do I ask from sculpture?", to which she replied: "that neither its reading or process be immediate, and that its undecipherability remains within me."

Marta Llorente, Llessui, September 2023







Encima de alfombra, 2000. Stainless steel and carpet. 223 x 140 x 120 cm.

Montblanquet, 1988. Iron and aggregate. 122 x 216 x 216 cm.



Encima de alfombra, 2000.
Stainless steel and carpet
223 x 140 x 120 cm.





Montblanquet, 1988. Iron and aggregate. 122 x 216 x 216 cm.



Montblanquet, 1988. Iron and aggregate. 122 x 216 x 216 cm. (detail)



Huella de rincón II, 2023. Painted bronze. 50 x 7 x 8 cm.



Huella de rincón II, 2023
Painted bronze
50 x 7 x 8 cm.



Once-diecinueve-quince, 1992. Iron. 16 x 290,5 x 197,5 cm.



Once-diecinueve-quince, 1992. Burdina. 16 x 290,5 x 197,5 cm.



(top)
Once-diecinueve-quince, 1992 (detail)
Iron
16 x 290,5 x 197,5 cm.

(right)
Olor de Cendra I, 2022
Stainless steel
61,5 x 19 x 18,5 cm.









(top)
Kapokier, 1997
wire mesh and clamps
62 x 192 x 133 cm.

(left)
Lo visible II, 2009-10
magnesium aluminium
186 x 85 x 79 cm.



Kapokier, 1997. Wire mesh and clamps. 62 x 192 x 133 cm.





Esfinx II, 1983. Iron. 15 x 86 x 75 cm.



El lugar donde volvió, 1998. Iron. 90,5 x 271 x 371 cm.







La negación, 2001. Magnesium aluminium. 158 x 212 x 153 cm.



La negación, 2001. Magnesium aluminium. 158 x 212 x 153 cm.





Footprints n°2, 2014. Stainless steel. 98,5 x 180 x 55 cm.

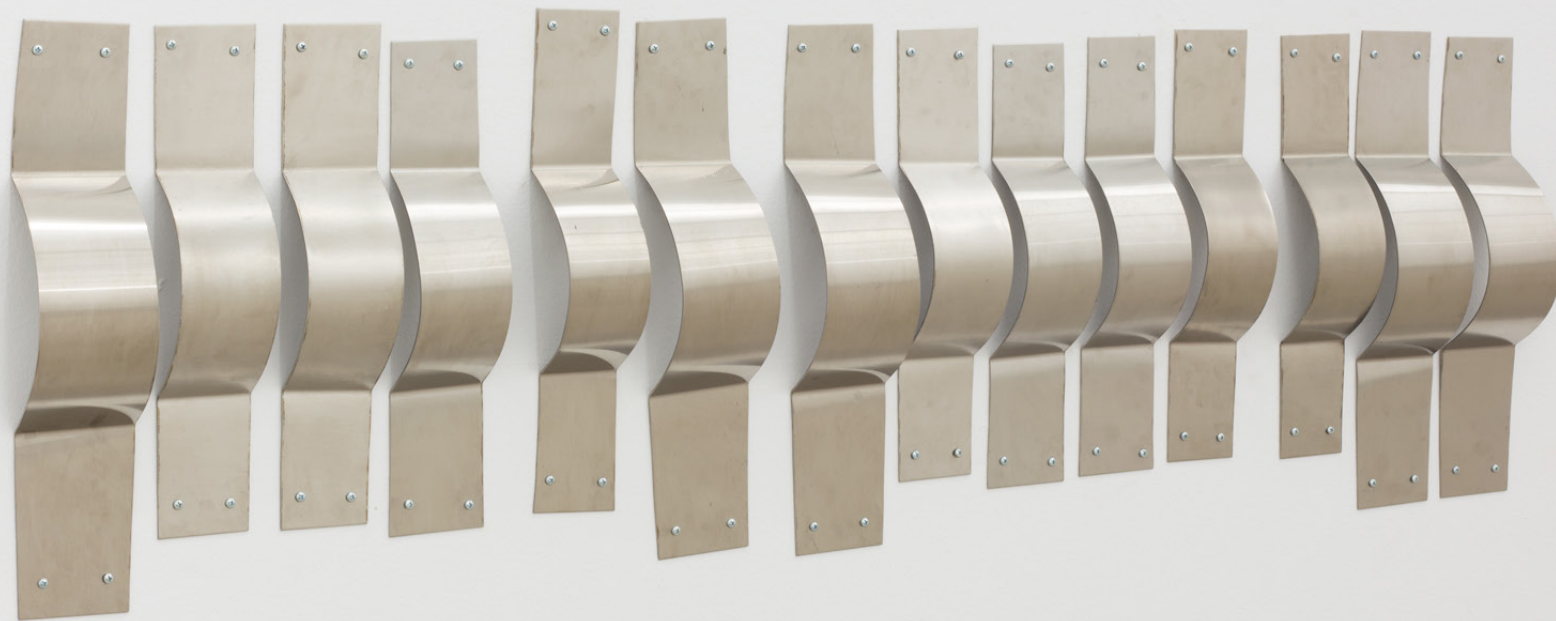


Footprints n°1, 2014. Stainless steel. 85,5 x 180,5 x 55 cm.





Huella de rincón I, 2023. Painted bronze. 22 x 15 x 7,5 cm.



Mueca nº5, 2016. Stainless steel. 38 x 132 x 5,5 cm.





Rock and roll, 1999. Wire mesh and glass. Variable measures. (detail)



Rock and roll, 1999. Wire mesh and glass. Variable measures. (detail)





Rock and roll, 1999. Wire mesh and glass. Variable measures.

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