

# *Animals that support the weight of mysterious burdens*

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CarrerasMugica

### **Corrected Banality**

Barthes said that whenever he started to write, the first discourse that occurred to him was always banal and only by fighting against this original banality could he gradually write. A vested discourse in which the body will make an act of presence. What is ultimately written is a kind of *corrected* banality. For Barthes, banality is discourse without body. Corrected over the course of a long time, this exhibition at CarrerasMugica is a project that seeks to include the body by means of different strategies in the hope of enacting a new event.

### **What Can Be Done (in a Space)**

According to Edward T. Hall, human perception of space and distance is not static and has little to do with the linear perspective of a single point of view conceived by Renaissance artists. Hall argues that humans perceive distance in the same way as animals, dynamically. This is because distance is related with action, with what can be done in a given space, and not with what one can see by passively looking. Similarly, Christopher Alexander insisted that action and space are indivisible, claiming that “the two form a unit, a pattern of events in space.” This belief is critical in my latest works. At CarrerasMugica, by means of a minimum intervention in the gallery’s architecture—to be precise, an alteration in a piece of furniture—its space, normally separated from the public space outdoors, is transformed, thus allowing hypothetical access and traffic of vehicles to two of its main rooms.

### **What Cannot Be Done: A Banality, a Whim? A car = for cars.**

In 2014 I received a photo of a car parked inside the warehouse that shortly afterwards would become the CarrerasMugica gallery. Its presence introduced a different architectural scale into the space that recalled the uses for which it had originally been built. On seeing it, it occurred to me to do an exhibition with cars. However, I soon dropped the idea as it struck me as whimsical. Now, as I still can’t get it out of my head, I now wonder whether you can really call a seven-year-long desire a whim or, whether, after all this time, it is actually something else. Besides the idea of traffic or of gradually discovering the exhibition as it is lit by the headlamps of the car, I was also interested in the limitations implicit in having to move by car inside a space with a dedicated architectural design.

### **Prest: Program and Strategy**

This exhibition has brought together the two concepts. As Edgar Morin explains in *On Complexity*, “The advantage of a program is obviously a great economy: we don’t have to think, everything is done automatically. A strategy, on the contrary, is determined by taking account of a random situation, adverse or even adversarial elements, and it is brought to modify itself depending on information furnished en route, it can have a great deal of flexibility. But a strategy, in order for it to be carried out by an organization, requires that the organization not be conceived to obey a program, but that it can work with elements capable of contributing to the elaboration and development of the strategy”. The strategy for the exhibition at CarrerasMugica consisted in instrumentalizing premises (programs), using them as alibis.

### **A Specific Number of Alibis**

Alibi is what we commonly call the excuse a person uses to justify that they are somewhere else at the moment an event takes place. When it comes to giving shape to an exhibition, an alibi is a technical way of placing yourself somewhere else, relocating oneself but with the ultimate purpose of appearing present. An alibi allows you to think that it is someone else who is directing operations, in such a way that the work consists in putting yourself at the service of said *direction*. This exhibition is the outcome of a system of alibis in which the most complicated part was to conceive pretexts to restrict the infinite possibilities (formal, positional, executive, relational), allowing for a wide range of individual conflicts, thus freeing us from the accumulation of coercions concealed by the inertias of all convention.

### **Animals that Support the Weight of Mysterious Burdens**

As a child, I was told that the old system once used to create usable paths up a mountainside consisted in loading a donkey with a heavy burden and setting it loose in the direction of the mountaintop. The donkey economizes its energy to the utmost, always taking the most horizontal slopes possible, which, zigzagging, will lead it to the top with the least force possible in relation to the burden it is carrying. Once the path has been outlined by the animal, it would then be widened and adapted for human use. The “form”—the zigzag path—could be viewed as the result of an equation that includes: 1. A pre-existing obstacle: the mountainside; 2. A desire or goal: to climb the slope; 3. An instrument for measuring and calculation: the donkey, which has a built-in energy-saving mechanism; and, finally, 4. The equation needs something extra: the burden.

Likewise, in the artistic process, in order to arrive at a form—be it the zigzag or be it the mountainside whose slope and height remain unknown to us until we reach the top—we only know intuitively that we have to load a structure to the maximum, with a large quantity of materials. Real, Ideal and Vital materials that ensure that the relationship between the weight of them all and the animal’s energy-saving mechanism will create a path. A path that, when used, will tell us the size of the slope, and when arriving to the end (if we do) will show us the form—the zigzag and the height of the mountain. Just like the donkey, we have to come up with subterfuges, dangling any kind of carrot before us, encouragements that lead the animal we are in a certain direction. The specificity of the artistic process is that we are all these things: donkey, mountainside, burden, track and carrot. Once the foregoing has been fulfilled, a structure or strategy could give us a form, but no form in itself will guarantee us meaning, because it is always somewhere else and will depend on the complexity of the question and the motivation, and the way in which you combine the factors that intervene in relation to the genuine need of our action.

### **An External Digestion. An Exhibition**

Besides a place where you exhibit finished works, an exhibition can function as a device that precipitates processes to publically and externally digest the material with which we have been working. Some spiders, who have no stomach, paralyse their prey with poison, and inject digestive fluids that produce an external digestion of the animal inside its own teguments, after which the spider sucks out the resulting juices. In the same way, this exhibition is a digestion, a long rumination in open view, where each one of the gallery’s three spaces corresponds to a different part of a stomach; a place of production, where it is a question of avoiding the *idea of exhibition* in order to be able to produce an exhibition.

### **Materialized Potential. Extreme Rationality Open to Mysteries**

A mystery: the West case. Starting out from an intersection of various premises, to create systems that provoke a decision-taking process. To conceive ways of transforming contingency into determinacy. To produce an exhibition in a set number of days, in a specific place, working with a series of materials with properties that ultimately force me to decide. For instance: an L-shaped piece of stainless steel on a human scale and with a polished, reflecting outside surface is joined to another identical piece, but with its polished side on the inside. Together they should make a unit. The pieces will not be joined until they arrive to the gallery, as one comes from Vienna while the other is waiting here. To form the unit, what is reflected when bringing them together, as well as the limitations on position imposed by the previously made perforations to fix them to the wall, will be critical. The exercise consists in introducing restrictive elements, both conceptual as well as physical, that limit the possible directions. The combination of the two restrictions, as in the above case (*reflection plus perforation*), taken together with the premises of having to fix them to the wall and make a unit, means that my task consists in matching, coordinating (or the opposite) the direction or *directions* marked by the *sense* to which it aspires.

## **29 Conditions for an Imposition**

A text: After being invited in 2017 to a workshop on writing and critique aimed at people whose professions required them to write, I prepared a number of questions on basic issues that would make them think about the various factors that come into play in the act of writing. Afterwards, when I was invited to publish them, I could not resist the temptation to expand them, returning to and varying the viewpoint in each question, trying to embrace the various aspects of the subject matter. When doing so, I discovered that the material could be easily developed in even more detail. The result was a text called *29 Conditions for an Imposition. Setting of a Body that is Made Available for Writing*.

An action: One year later, in the belief that it was too demanding as a text, I transformed it into an action which consisted in an exercise in listening, a proposal like a self-portrait in negative, a double proprioceptive exercise whose configuration, first of all, required to shape — question by question — a specific body (my own) to then remove it from its location to allow the inclusion of any other body. All this in the hope that this movement of particularization would provide whoever is listening a portrait of their own body in the act of writing.

An installation: for the exhibition *Cybernetics of the Poor* (Tabakalera, Donostia; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna) in 2020, I decided to configure an automatic exhibition device that could facilitate an action. The sentence that included the initial definition of the text: “*required to shape a specific body (my own) to then remove it from its location to allow the inclusion of any other body*”, led me to create the sculptural elements now being presented at CarrerasMugica.

## **Behind the Person Standing, the Person Lying Down: An Elevation of 29 Conditions. Everything Double, Everything on the Wall**

I was able to leverage the *29 Conditions* performance to give form to a specific exhibition device in relation with the floor (the horizontal and slightly inclined planes) —which could have been called “the ground wants you back”—in which the public could lie on top of, between, or in the different sculptures that occupied it at different levels. The proposal at CarrerasMugica consists in making an elevation of some of them in vertical (standing), but on and against the wall, while at once I continue working with the behaviour of bodies on inclined planes. And if in *29 Conditions* the overall structure predominated over its constituent parts, here, on the contrary, the approach consists in taking each one of the parts to its maximum individual definition until achieving singularities. Owing to the project’s high level of recursivity, the result could end up as a *mise en abyme*. The exhibition, which takes up the gallery’s three spaces, is mainly composed of three-dimensional pieces coming about from a sculptural approach applied to a two-dimensional material by means of processes of extrusion and folding. These sculptures, viewed as differentiated prototypes of intermediation, created for each one of the places where the *29 Conditions for an Exhibition* project was presented, are articulated around the video-installation *400 Movements to Elude the Predictable*.

## **400 Movements to Elude the Predictable**

This work shows one single sequence of images screened by two video-projectors. The projector on the left, in horizontal position, shows the complete sequence, while the other one, next to it, to its right, is turned 90 degrees, projecting the same sequence but with the image flipped. The confrontation of the pairs of images displays processes which shift from flexible to rigid, from soft to solid; processes of limitation and restriction of the body’s mobility, images of postures conditioned by an activity that comes from adapting the body to a function. [Bodies-machine, inactive bodies (lying in spaces of production, on the floor; on, in or next to tables, boxes, sculptures); active human bodies (working on the floor, on all fours; human bodies manipulated by other bodies); images of bodies interconnected by means of objects; images of self-imposed, self-ordered elements (garments); images of bodies deprived of mobility (snares, traps)].

Objectualization and objection. A contradiction. In this installation when the image is turned by physically rotating the projector (like what happens if we turn a painting on its side), by changing the position—from which or for which it was produced—there is a slight



disassembling of the unity of the various elements that produce representation. The projection on the left is conceived as the dominant norm with respect to what is projected to its right (supposedly subordinate). This subaltern image functions as a variable of the main one. The event in this installation is produced by the simultaneous and successive montage of pairs of images. When the image is *conformed* in the projection on the left, by presenting the same image next to it but rotated, it *objects* (in the double sense of objectualization and objection). If one image forms, the other deforms; if the image on the left confirms, the same one, turned, refutes; if the one on the left agrees, the one on the right disagrees; what the one on the left affirms, the other one contests; if the one on the left claims, when flipped it disclaims. In some cases, the left approves and the right disproves. And all these nuances depend at once on what is represented, and on how it is affected by its contradiction.

**A Thing to Name. A Thing to Declare: A Text, Not an Exhibition Handout**

*"I have but half a score things to do in the time—I have a thing to name—a thing to lament—a thing to hope—a thing to promise and a thing to threaten—I have a thing to suppose—a thing to declare—a thing to conceal—a thing to choose, and a thing to pray for."*

Laurence Sterne. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

While I am writing what you are now reading, I am still preparing, and designing the conditions that will produce the events which will ultimately define the works: the exhibition. Everything is almost decided and at once everything is still to be done. I have so many ideas for possible titles for this exhibition that, given my difficulty in choosing, I have developed some, those that allow it, in the form of separate paragraphs while the rest are camouflaged among the texts for whoever likes hunting down the clues. I note on a piece of paper that what I am writing is a text, not an "exhibition handout" although presumably (on the most basic level) it will be materialized on a sheet that will be handed out at the exhibition. Just to avoid confusion, and confusing myself.

Jon Mikel Euba  
Bilbao, May 2021

*Jon Mikel Euba (Amorebieta, 1967) studied at the School of Fine Art in Bilbao and further his training at Arteleku, San Sebastián, between 1992 and 1995. His work is grounded in drawing, as a procedure, and sculpture, as a program resolved in diverse media. Since the late-nineties, he has developed a practice guided by the need to generate systems of production through an 'economical technique'. This search, which is also a form of resistance, requires processes that involve other people, in which the artist plays the role of a mediator or filter. From 2006 onwards, he carried out research whose results are condensed in a number of performances for which he developed a didactic approach for the different participants with whom he collaborated. In 2010, together with Txomin Badiola and Sergio Prego, he set up the experimental pedagogic project Primer Proforma 2010 at MUSAC, León. In 2015, with the artists Itziar Okariz, Asier Mendizabal and Sergio Prego he carried out the school project Kalostra in San Sebastian. He is a former director of the Action Unites, Words Divide (On Praxis, An Unstated Theory) MA at the Dutch Art Institute in Arnhem between 2014-2017. Since 2006 he has been working on a writing-based project whose goal is to define a praxis that could evolve into a technical theory, endeavouring to lay the foundations for a praxeology of art to reflect on practice through the means of writing. This process is predicated on the application of a taxonomy that, by dividing aspects of artistic production, inasmuch as a complex action, into parts, aspires first of all to understand it from another perspective and then to convey it in such a way that it can be re-implemented in all its complexity by other people. In 2017 he published Writing Out Loud. His work is included in major collections like Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; MACBA, Barcelona; MUSAC, León; MUDAM, Luxembourg; FRAC Poitou-Charentes, France; Ministry of Culture, Madrid; etc. His practice embraces performance, installation, video, photography.*



*Animals that Support the Weight of Mysterious Burdens*, 2021. Installation consisting of a double video-projection and various objects. Variable dimensions, 9 x 12 m approx.





*Animals that Support the Weight of Mysterious Burdens*, 2021. Installation consisting of a double video-projection and various objects. Variable dimensions, 9 x 12 m approx.





Installation view





Installation view

*The Ronsin impasse, (Complex Meassurer +), ascending  $c$ , descending  $a$  to 1,60, 2021*  
Stainless steel  
182 x 28 x 80 cm.







*The Ronsin impasse, (Complex Meassurer +), ascending c, descending a to 1,60, 2021*  
Stainless steel  
182 x 28 x 80 cm.

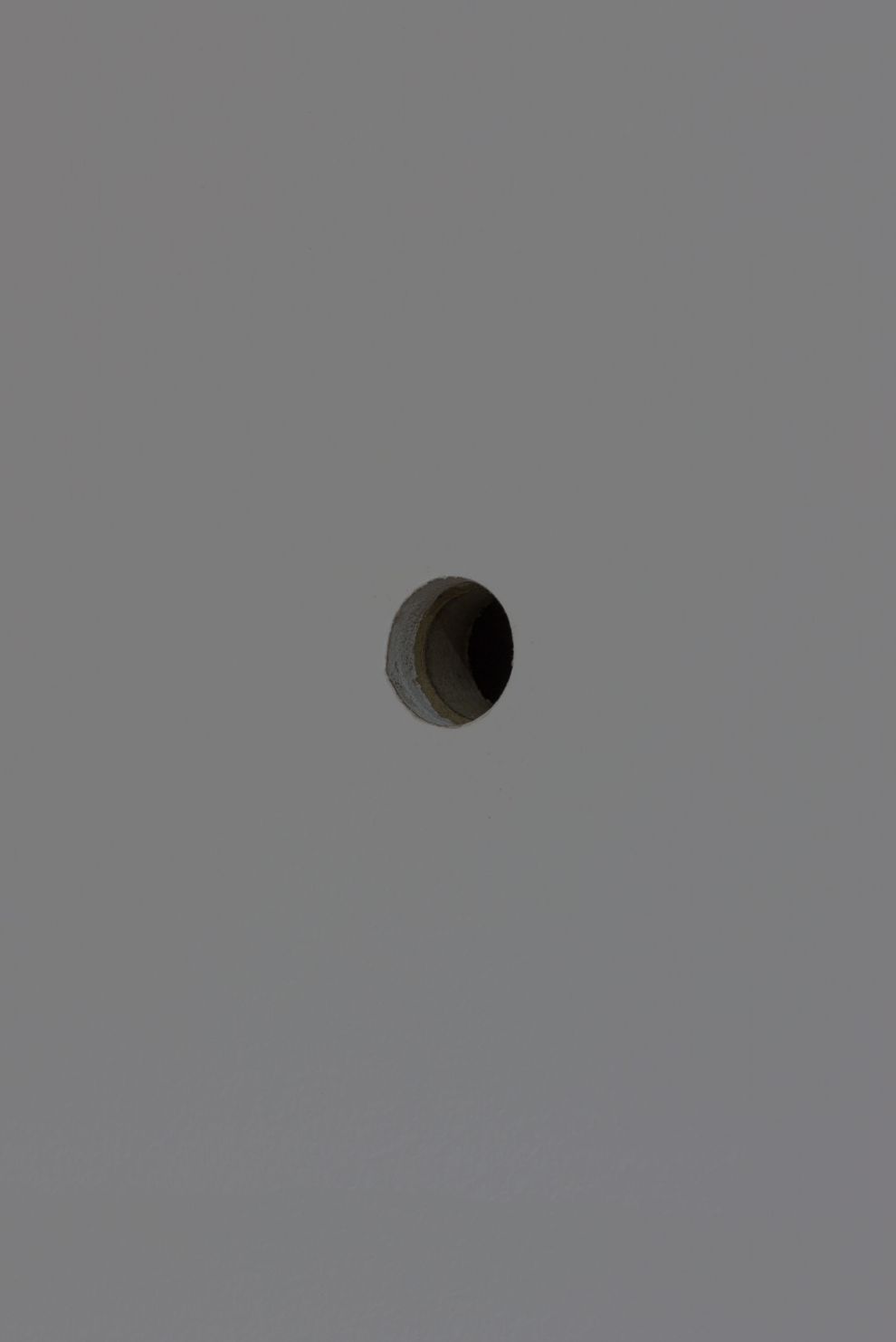


*Behind the World of Appearances the World of Laws, 2021*  
Mural intervention on gallery office door  
280 x 158 cm.



Installation view





*L, to the lighthouse, 2021*  
Intervention / perforation on the wall. Variable dimensions.











*Helping to levitate*, 2021. Stainless steel, wood, two chairs. 74 x 270 x 46 cm.





*Helping to levitate*, 2021. Stainless steel, wood, two chairs. 74 x 270 x 46 cm.





*Double help to levitate*, 2021. Wood, two chairs. 74 x 230 x 46 cm.





Installation view





Installation detail





*400 Moves to Elude the Predictable*, 2020. Video installation. 270 x 454 cm. Ed. 3





Installation view





*BEL UNICO Lacha 24, 2021. Perforated wood construction (24 mm plywood and phenolic). 97 x 165 x 45 cm.*



*BEL UNICO Lacha 18*, 2021  
Perforated wood construction (18 mm plywood and phenolic)  
94 x 171 x 45 cm.







*BEL UNICO Lacha 18, 2021. Perforated wood construction (18 mm plywood and phenolic). 94 x 171 x 45 cm.*





*MostWanted C (The West box; closed case). Convex corner piece, 2021*  
Stainless steel  
182 x 75 x 72,5 cm.



*MostWanted C (The West box; closed case). Convex corner piece, 2021. Stainless steel. 182 x 75 x 72,5 cm.*





Installation view



*BEL UNICO Zutunik (kop exterior), 2020*  
Perforated stainless steel  
190 x 45 x 45 cm.





*The West case (Complex Meassurer A), 2021. Stainless steel. 182 x 28 x 45 cm.*







*Bel UNICO Horman 14 diestra (pointing left), 2021. Perforated stainless steel. 14 x 45 x 190 cm.*

*BEL UNICO Horman 45 (Zurda kop down/pointing right), 2021*  
Perforated stainless steel  
45 x 45 x 190 cm.







*BEL UNICO Horman 45 (Zurda kop down/pointing right), 2021. Perforated stainless steel. 45 x 45 x 190 cm.*





*Double BEL UNICO 14. Ground. (Bilateral kop out), 2020-21. Perforated stainless steel. 190 x 14 x 94 cm.*





Installation view



*Most Wanted L (The West box/case.)*, 2021  
Stainless steel  
182 x 72 x 45 cm.





Installation view

*Most Wanted U (The West case/Open Box) Concave corner piece, 2021*  
Stainless steel  
182 x 81 x 45 cm.







*BEL UNICO 45 Gable roof (double kop up), 2020. Perforated stainless steel. 190 x 45 x 45 cm.*





Installation view





*BEL UNICO Horman 14 zurdo/a (pointing left), 2021. Perforated stainless steel. 14 x 45 x 190 cm.*



Installation view





*BEL UNICO Horman 14 zurdo/a (pointing right), 2021. Perforated stainless steel. 14 x 45 x 190 cm.*



*BEL UNICO Horman 45 (Diestra kop up/pointing left), 2021*  
Perforated stainless steel. 45 x 45 x 190 cm.







*BEL UNICO Horman 45 (Zurda kop up/pointing left), 2021. Perforated stainless steel. 45 x 45 x 190 cm.*





EUBACM2021 (*MYSTERIOUS BURDENS-CARRERASMUGICA*), 2021. Photo installation. 178 x 318 cm.

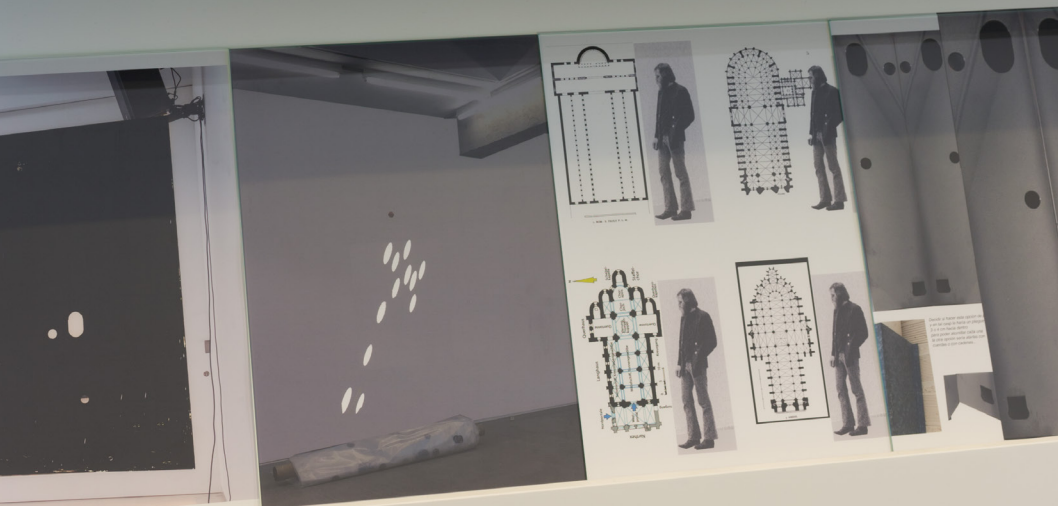












EUBACM2021 (MYSTERIOUS BURDENS-CARRERASMUGICA), 2021 (detail)

*EUBACM2021 (MYSTERIOUS BURDENS-CARRERASMUGICA)*, 2021  
Photo installation  
178 x 318 cm.





# CarrerasMugica

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