

Zóbel-Chillida

Crisscrossing Paths

25.04 - 25.07.2019

Mayoral is pleased to present *Zóbel-Chillida: Crisscrossing Paths*, an unprecedented dialogue between Fernando Zóbel and Eduardo Chillida. Curated by Alfonso de la Torre and with the collaboration of the artists' estates, the exhibition features a careful selection of thirteen oil paintings by Zóbel and a dozen sculptures by Chillida which reveal the creative and personal links existing between the two.

As artists, Zóbel and Chillida began to develop in a sort of isolation and in a problematic context. In the early 1950s Chillida conceived his first sculptures in plaster and stone, which would result in works like *Lurra 16 (Earth 16)* (1978), *Lurra G-326 (Earth G-326)* (1995) and *Lurra M-20 (Earth M-20)* (1995), which conserve and rethink the corporeality and the folding of forms characteristic of those early figures. Meanwhile, Zóbel was concurrently moving between figuration and abstraction after witnessing the development of abstract expressionism.

Following his discovery of Rothko's work in 1955, Zóbel reduced the content of his pictures to the essential, in compositional and thematic terms as well as in the use of colour. This would give rise to the *Saetas (Arrows)* paintings with a limited colour palette, known under the generic title of *Serie Negra (Black Series)*, of which some of the works on display, such as *Aquelarre (Witches' Sabbath)* (1961) or *Segovia II* (1962), form part. Alfonso de la Torre notes that "In the *Saetas* Zóbel appears to concur with Chillida as to the heightened script-like stroke of black on the canvas, the two of them orienting their researches towards a certain mark-making that our consciousness attempts to comprehend, the rhythm of its unfolding. [...] They can be understood as visual chords that waver between levity and gravity, in movement." It was Zóbel's definitive shift towards abstraction.

The Hispanic-Filipino artist evolved towards the study of light and the evocation of memory, both his own and that of the spectator. Zóbel himself explained that "[...] essentially I'm speaking of light, of large forms and small forms, of what is far and what is near. Above all I think I speak of memories."¹ The works of this second period are characterized by the reintroduction of colour—now symbolic—which constitutes the basis for the construction of the painting. In pictures like *Canción protesta III (Protest Song III)* (1968) we can see how the forms emanate from their coloration, becoming increasingly blurred until they blend into the background, in ever lighter and more neutral tones, which would eventually give rise to the so-called *Serie Blanca (White Series)*, to which works like *La plazoleta (The Little Square)* (1975) pertain.

Light was also one of the principal themes in the works of Chillida. In his case his works are plays of matter and void in which light comes into being, assumes its importance and turns into a generator of spaces and volumes. As well as the *Lurras*, see such works in steel as *Yunque de sueños XIX (Anvil of Dreams)* (1998), *Besarkada V (Embrace V)* (1991) or the bronze *Hierros de temblor III (Trembling Irons III)* (1957). Without a doubt, the handling of this light and the delicacy of their creations means that the works of both artists have a high poetical value.

According to the director of the gallery, Jordi Mayoral, "not only is this exhibition an original dialogue between two artists



Lurra M-20 (1995)
Chamotte clay
20 × 31 × 27 cm



Canción protesta III (1968)
Oil on canvas
100 × 100 cm



La plazoleta (1975)
Oil on canvas
60 × 60 cm

1. PÉREZ-MADERO, Rafael; ZÓBEL DE AYALA, Fernando. *Zóbel: La Serie Blanca*. Madrid: Ediciones Rayuela, 1978, p. 35.

of great relevance in postwar art, it is an encounter of 'crisscrossing paths' that render the project exceedingly attractive and exceptional." In that sense, the curator concludes that the meeting which took place in Cuenca in 1964 due to Zóbel's wish to include Chillida's *Abesti Gogorra IV (Rough Chant IV)* 1964 in the collection of art on show in the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was a moment of "mutual admiration, the feeling of having known each other forever, friendship, a fondness for poetry, a way with words, a eulogizing of the East".

A catalogue has been published for the show which as well as the curator's

introductory essay reproduces Zóbel's letters to Chillida—also unpublished— together with interviews by Alfonso de la Torre with two close members of the artists' families: Fernando Zóbel de Ayala y Miranda and Ignacio Chillida Belzunce, which allow us to delve into the relationship the artists maintained and also to comprehend their way of understanding and experiencing the making of art. By way of an epilogue, the curator Patrick D. Flores invites us to consider important aspects of the construction of Filipino modernity, the turn towards abstraction it involved and the way in which it alludes to the colonial past.



Hierros de temblor III (1957)
Bronze
27 × 72 × 41 cm
Ed. 2/3

The artists

Fernando Zóbel

(Manila, the Philippines, 1924 – Rome, Italy, 1984) He studied Philosophy and Letters at Harvard University. A self-taught artist, painter, printmaker, draughtsman, he received numerous awards for his museum work and for his in-depth knowledge of art. A collector of the abstract generation and the international art of his time, he was the prime mover of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca, inaugurated in 1966.

At the end of the 1950s he took part in several major international exhibitions: *Before Picasso, After Miró* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1960), the Venice Biennale (1962), and *Modern Spanish Painting* (Tate Gallery, London, 1962). Having moved definitively to Spain, in 1959 he exhibited for the first time at the Galería Biosca in Madrid, run by the person who would become his regular dealer, Juana Mordó, in whose gallery he had one-man shows between 1964 and 1974. He also exhibited at Bertha Schaefer (New York, 1965 and 1968) and the Galerie Jacob (Paris, 1977), as well as at renowned Spanish galleries and institutions.

Eduardo Chillida

(San Sebastián, 1924-2002) An informalist sculptor of international repute, began working principally in plaster and stone, and in 1951—having settled in the Basque town of Hernani—incorporated iron as a sculptural material. In 1954 he was awarded a prize in the X Triennale di Milano. In 1956 he showed his iron sculptures at Galerie Maeght, where he was to exhibit on various occasions. He participated in *Sculptures and Drawings from Seven Sculptors* (1958) at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and that same year won the Grand Prize for Sculpture at the 29th Venice Biennale. In 1959 he was invited to show in a number of important exhibitions in the United States and Canada, as well as in the II Documenta in Kassel. He began working in wood, concrete, alabaster and clay, at the same time as making prints, collages and drawings, on occasion illustrating his own writings. The world's most important museums have devoted monographic shows to him and his public sculptures are on display in cities all over the world. In 2000 he founded the Museo Chillida Leku in Hernani, which reopens to the public this April.

The curator

Alfonso de la Torre is a specialist in the emergence of abstraction in the postwar period and the development of the Museo de Arte Abstracto and has curated various exhibitions to do with this: *El grupo de Cuenca* (Madrid, 1997); *El grupo de Cuenca* (Burgos and Pamplona, 1998) and *Cuenca: Cuarenta años después (1964-2004)*. *La poética de Cuenca* (Madrid, 2004). He collaborated on the exhibition *La ciudad abstracta. 1966: El nacimiento del Museo de Arte Abstracto Español* (Cuenca, 2006). He is also the author of numerous monographic texts on Zóbel and the Cuenca Group. After compiling the catalogues raisonnés of Millares, Rivera and Palazuelo, he is currently working on the Catalogue Raisonné of the paintings of Fernando Zóbel.

He has curated more than a hundred exhibitions, published essays and poetry, and given courses at different universities and institutions. For the Galería Mayoral he curated, together with Elena Sorokina, *Millares: Building Bridges Not Walls* (2017). He is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA).

Mayoral

Mayoral is an art gallery specialized in modern and postwar art. Founded in Barcelona in 1989, this year celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. The gallery's exhibition programme focuses on the founders of the Dau al Set artistic movement, such as Antoni Tàpies, Joan Brossa and Modest Cuixart, as well as on other great Spanish post-war artists: Eduardo Chillida, Manolo Millares, Antonio Saura, José Guerrero, Fernando Zóbel, Rafael Canogar and Luis Feito. The gallery also exhibits the work of some of the great avant-garde masters of the twentieth century.

The gallery carries out projects that are rigorously curated and which are the result of a thorough research process. Moreover, Mayoral works in collaboration with the families of the artists, foundations and other institutions whose aim is to preserve and promote the different artists' legacy. Likewise, it enjoys the support and confidence of museums and collectors, both private and institutional.