

OPENING: 24.03.2017.
EXHIBITION: 25.03 - 17.05.2017
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY TO FRIDAY, FROM 11 TO 19 H.
SATURDAY FROM 11 TO 15 H.

The body of work presented in *Concavitat*, Asier Mendizabal's third exhibition at ProjecteSD, stems from the research the artist carried out in the context of the project Zarigüeya/Alabado Contemporáneo which concluded with his solo show *Problems of style and clay vases* presented at the Museo de Arte Precolombino Casa del Alabado in Quito in April 2016.

Mendizabal continues with his analysis on the relationship between form, discourse and ideology throughout the history of modernity. On this occasion, the author focuses his interest in the origins of archaeological and ethnographic collections developed during the colonial and post-colonial period in the XIX and XX centuries, in the Latin American territory. Mendizabal uses as source to conceive his new work a series of findings by French scientist Paul Rivet in the expedition known as the Second French Geodesic Mission that took place in Ecuador at the beginning of the XX century, that were later compiled in the monumental publication *Ethnographie Ancienne de l'Equateur* in 1922. Mendizabal works, on one hand, from a series of photogravures that gathered hundreds of pre-Colombian ceramic items, and, on the other hand, with material resulting from anthropometric studies of human skulls.

Rivet's gravures collected vases brought together because of their formal resemblances rather than origin or date. The images were laid out on the white background of the sheet configuring arbitrary constellations, the result of optimising the surface of the print sheet, docking the individual vase silhouettes onto each other. A similar approach can be observed in the the visual grouping of crania, in prints or photogravures, laid out also on white background, of skulls from individuals from diverse cultures. These were common publications until the beginning of the 20th century within the context of the anthropology of the time, before ethnography made cultural artefacts, not biological differences the subject of its study.

Mendizabal re-uses some of these prints of vases and skulls to create a new ensemble of collages and line drawings. He either decomposes and disarranges the images, redraws and distorts the contours of the "skulls" to accentuate the ineficacy of these forms of classification and representation as indicative of cultural evidences: both vases and skulls, containers, appear classified following the classical historiographic and ethnographic models regardless of its cultural, social or collective referents.

Together with these works on paper some new sculptures titled generically *Stilfragen** (*crania*) are presented. They are small pieces made with concrete that can either resemble heads or vases, containers or recipients. Mendizabal has imprinted on their surface the traces of basketry warp. Here again the artist questions the Western historic account of technologies as significant vehicles that have favoured gestures and technical abilities associated to the expression of the individual (carving, cutting, moulding, casting) over the rudimentary weft of flexible fibers, a technique that seems to be rather linked to a social act, a collective knowledge.

Following Mendizabal's own words: "In the naïve faith of he who wants to guess the evolution of intelligence through the shape of its recipient, there is a correspondence with the formal intuition that assigns so often anthropomorphic metaphors to vases and other containers. Concavity, the capacity to contain or host something, as a symbol that becomes more or less figurative, in the shape of wombs, genitalia or skulls."

This press release has been written gathering excerpts from two texts by Asier Mendizabal:

- Problemas de Estilo y Vasijas de Barro. Museo de Arte Precolombino Casa del Alabado Quito, 2016
- *De trama y urdimbre, figura y fondo y otras analogías estructurales*. Published in number 05 of the magazine *Concreta*, 2015

**Stilfragen* (Problems of Style) is the title of the book by art historian Alois Riegl published in 1893.