

Exhibition June 12 – September 2, 2024

Sabatini Building, Floor 1

Eva Lootz

Making as if Wondering: So What Is This?



Eva Lootz, *Without love no revolution*, from the *Little Theatre of Drifting* series,
1994. Long-term loan from the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, 2023
(Gift of the artist). © Eva Lootz, VEGAP, Madrid, 2024

**MUSEO NACIONAL
CENTRO DE ARTE
REINA SOFÍA**



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With the words “Making as if Wondering: So What Is This?”, Eva Lootz (Vienna, 1940) alludes to a particular way of understanding the activity of art: to let oneself, while making, interrogate the world from scratch. With this as a premise, the exhibition sets forth a non-chronological, but panoramic journey through five decades of Lootz’s art, displaying an ensemble of pieces recently donated by the artist to the Museo Reina Sofia and other works, some of which will be on view for the first time or remade specifically for the occasion: in sum, paintings, sculptures, installations, videos, photographic series and sound pieces, all representative of Lootz’s work. There is a focus on the drawings which, straddling exploration and text, constitute a sort of writing running parallel to the artist's researches and which, at different points, do act as a diary. Throughout the exhibition, fragments of texts written by the artist meanwhile accompany her explorations and delve more deeply into her particular ways of doing.

In a dense and heterogeneous room, the exhibition begins with a set of pieces produced in different decades that reveal the connection between two fundamental and complementary questions in Lootz’s work: the literality of the material world and the materiality of language. Many are works produced in the 1970s, a period she calls “primordial soup”, which coincided with the development of Process art or Anti-Form in the United States and Europe, where as much or more importance was attached to the process of creation as to the final result. These works soon broke the bounds of the conventional pictorial format to concentrate on the properties of their materials: the possibility of being creased or folded, of changing state with heat, of covering, amalgamating,



Gestos cosidos [Sewn Gestures], 1973. Long-term loan from the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, 2023 (Gift of the artist)



Dos bloques (costurero) [Two Blocks (Couturier)], 1976. Long-term loan from the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, 2023 (Gift of the artist)



Orejas de pelo [Ears of Hair], 1976. Long-term loan from the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, 2023 (Gift of the artist)

transmitting vibrations, and so on. In time, there also appeared body fragments or objects that function as ambiguous prostheses and underscore the idea of gesture: an action that enters into dialogue with the world with no purpose other than its own making with it. These pieces can be related among themselves to form what Lootz has called “swarms” or “phrases”, an aspect of installation that acquired importance in her work during the 1980s along with her interest in language. The installation – or, to use the terminology then employed by Lootz, the *estancia* or “room” – *Noche, decían* [Night, They Said] (1987), shown here through a video made at the time, is a clear example.



A Farewell to Isaac Newton, view of the installation in the exhibition *Eva Lootz. Cut Through the Fog* at the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 2016. Photo: Ovidio Aldegunde. Collection of the artist and of the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz

Another *estancia*, *A Farewell to Isaac Newton* (1994), marks the beginning of a series of works in which the artist questions contemporary visuality, with its overexposure to images, the impact of digital culture, and its consequences for our experience of things. In these circumstances, how can we look in another way? How to access what remains hidden in the blind spots of vision? Lootz refers to this effort, which is alluded to in the title of the video *Blind Spot* (2005), as “looking out of the corner of the eye”: a way of dodging the frontal gaze that is both a strategy of those who have historically been relegated to the margins of culture and an alternative way of reading the world.

In the face of a human action in the grip of mental crystallizations, Lootz’s insistence on materials that flow or on threads and knots is an encouragement to think both beyond fixed entities and within the material grid we live in. The *Hidrografías* [Hydrographs] series thus consists of works in different formats produced since 2005 which take water and the rivers of the Iberian Peninsula as a basis for reflection on the material implications of the datafication of the world (for example, in sculptures like *Bajo Guadalquivir-272-3*) or examination of the contemporary management of hydro resources. From the end of that decade, the knots and cords already found in works of the 1970s are widely thematized in several series of drawings and in the double-screen video installation *Entre manos* [Between Hands] (2011).

A similar development occurs with the theme of prostheses, whose meaning is enriched as the years go by, and which reappeared in a series of photographic scenes in a *tableau vivant*



Bajo Guadalquivir-272-3 [Lower Guadalquivir-272-3], *Embalses-116-P.R.* [Reservoirs-116-P.R.] and *Agua es el nombre futuro de la sed* [Water is the Future Name of Thirst], 2009, 2013 and 2015. Photo: Ovidio Aldegunde. Courtesy of the artist



Ella vive en el traje que se está haciendo [She Lives in the Costume she is Making],
from the *Little Theatre of Drifting* series, 1994. Courtesy of the artist

format entitled *Little Theatre of Drifting Detours* (1994-1998), shown here for the first time in its entirety and on a large scale.

Lootz has focused her interest on language and tongues in many ways. In *La lengua de los pájaros* [The Language of Birds], a sound installation devised for the Palacio de Cristal in Retiro Park in 2002, she envisaged an interspecies dialogue between humans and other animals: “I have tried to create an audio scenario and center the theme on the border crossing between culture and nature. To insist on the need to dismantle and transform that dualism which is the perfect alibi for the exercise of dominion.” The *Ortofonías en Valsaín* [Orthophonies in Valsaín] (2001), one of the sound pieces in this project, consist of an attempt at conversation between a flautist and the birds in the woods of Valsaín (Segovia),



La agonía de las lenguas [The Agony of Tongues], view of the intervention at the Museo Patio Herreriano in Valladolid, 2020. Photo: Víctor Hugo Martín

insisting upon the importance of listening, another recurrent theme in her work.

Since the intervention *La agonía de las lenguas* [The Agony of Tongues] (2020), shown for the first time in Museo Patio Herreriano of Valladolid, Lootz has thought and warned in recent years of the extinction of languages in territories subject to the persistence of colonial dynamics. In this work, she relates a set of pieces in the form of a tongue, characteristic of her production and made in different materials since the 1980s, with the *Gran lengua de betún* [Great Tongue of Bitumen], an enormous puddle of spilt bitumen or tar that alludes to the production in Castile in olden times of this item indispensable for overseas navigation. In the background, a voice recites the long list of languages (and with them, worlds) in danger of extinction in the territories of Abya Yala.



Corta Atalaya, Riotinto, 2014. Courtesy of the artist

For decades, Lootz has also devoted herself to the study of mines and other sites of mineral extraction, especially in the Iberian Peninsula. In them, she sees a privileged expression of a certain relationship between nature and culture. She interprets the mines where raw materials are extracted to sustain the lifestyle of our societies as “negative monuments” that reveal what those societies hide, and she refers to the coveted “raw materials” as the mistreated “underwear” of History. Insisting on the impossibility of separating nature and culture and on the lives and properties of matter, Lootz helps to make visible what the writer Ursula K. Le Guin thought it urgent to transmit: “the other history, the one that is not told, the history of life.”

Lootz says of mines: “It didn’t take me long to realize how little importance is attached to those ‘places of matter’, always out of the way and known only by those who worked there. I realized the radical dichotomy between matter and spirit that runs through our tradition, and the human implications of work often carried out in conditions of semi-slavery. I started to look more deeply at the parallel between the devaluation of matter and that of woman.” Works like *Endless Task* (1990), with its insistence on spillage and loss, or *El fondo indiferenciado de la conciencia* [The Undifferentiated Background of Conscience] (2018-2019) allude to the place our society allots to women, re-evaluating it or reverting it.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Main venue

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Opening hours

Monday to Saturday and
public holidays from
10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sundays

from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Closed on Tuesdays

Exhibition rooms in all venues
will be cleared 15 minutes
before closing time

All artworks:

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