Eyes & Ears: a constant negotiation

The experience of Art can be reduced to its essence as a microcosm of human existence itself, one that depends on the senses and a mental capability to decipher the information they gather. With the visual arts, we could presume that sight would be the sense that applies the most; however, through this two-part exhibition, we challenge this dominance by investigating the critical role of sound. Additionally, and perhaps more radically, we highlight the power of the void in the form of absence and silence as processes that help us reach the meaningful poetry contained in artistic expression as they activate the imagination and heighten our awareness of ourselves and others.

"Sound disobeys barriers and moves across space, including disciplinary and creative boundaries. It comes in and out of range, advancing through and past its listener, finding an audience in waiting as it circulates among strangers. As something that gathers its publics on the move, sound is not only central to the production of social and political life but to its transformation." (Sonic Insurgency Research Group)

The Staircase:

Located around the hallways and landings on both ends of the staircase are three works that use visual means in their attempt to decode and recode our perception of sound. In the lower end of the staircase, the works of Carsten Nicolai and Oliver Beer reduce the sense of hearing to its most essential - visualized sound waves and the part of the human body that would turn it into an audible experience. On the upper level, Ximena Garrido-Lecca presents a contrast to this simplicity by giving us patterns and sounds that are constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions of code in the form of patterns and sounds. Together, these works introduce the viewer to some of the themes that will be further elaborated on throughout the exhibition, *Into the Void*.

Bottom staircase hallway



Carsten Nicolai (Chemnitz, Germany, 1969 – Berlin, Germany, currently) is part of an artist generation that works intensively in the transitional area between art and science. As a visual artist, Nicolai seeks to overcome the separation of the sensory perceptions of man by making scientific phenomena like sound and light frequencies perceivable for both eyes and ears. *Telefunken Prototype 4 x 2* adapts minimalist aesthetics to depict sound frequency.

The Viewpoint



Contextually, it is in the translation of this frequency into audible sound that the interest of **Oliver Beer** (Kent, UK, 1985 – London, UK, currently) lies. The sculpture installation *Silence is Golden: Soprano-Incus-Right* is a crystal globe encasing a gold replica of an incus, one of the three smallest bones in the human body, located in the ear, responsible for converting sound frequency into audible sound. It sits on a pedestal of paper as a paperweight, which it was designed to be, thereby creating a link between sound and visual art —a constant preoccupation of the artist in all his work.

Upper staircase landing



Aleaciones con memoria de forma: Conversión I (Shape-memory alloys: Conversion I), 2023, by **Ximena Garrido-Lecca** (Lima, Peru, 1980 – Mexico City, Mexico & Lima, Peru, currently), is a textile made with insulated copper wires woven into a pattern and design based on the primary structures of pre-Columbian weaves. During the elaboration of the series of works that this is a part of, a basic language was developed that represented the action of weaving the cables. By analyzing the weft and warp of the textiles, the repetitions of shapes and colors were transcribed into a written notation system in order to identify the basic patterns, and thereafter, represent their essence. This language, initially represented by diagrams, arrows, numbers, and codes in handwritten notes, was shared with a group of system programmers to be "translated" into a logical programming code. The weaving patterns were interpreted as constants to then develop a language based on commands through *JavaScript*, a commonly used programming language.

Into the void: the presence within silence and absence

The power of artistic expression can be especially examined by focusing on the voids that exist within and around it. While absence and silence are an ironic approach to presenting what we would expect to be visual or aural experiences, they provide evidence that sound and sight are such inherent forces within us that their exclusion, as artistic intent, becomes poetry as potent as their presence. While the experience requires our patience and concentration, the void is also a form of generosity, offering an alternative artistic voice or a place for our imagination. The concerted effort towards deeper empathy and digging beyond the surface is ultimately rewarded by involving us, a reminder that we, as recipients, are part of the puzzle that makes Art essential.

"There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot."
(John Cage)

Gallery V: Absence

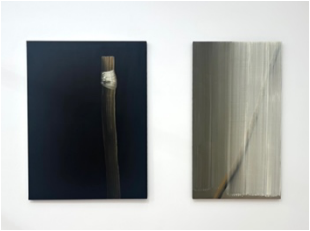
What happens when images and objects of art don't meet our expectations - when the absence of figures, objects, or landscapes leaves us with nothing familiar to grab on to? Minimalist artistic practices put Art front and center, where the mark-making gestures, their materials, and color become the focus of their own subject. We get to see Art in its purest form, reduced to its foundational essence.

Behind the deceivingly simple aesthetics of Minimalism lies a profound artistic commitment that honors the material and non-material foundations upon which artists build meaning. Beyond bestowing them with a focused spotlight, it is a process that also brings a deeper understanding of their own meanings, both inherent within them and those that have evolved since the beginning of mankind. It is an inner search for a visual language that enables a more rigorous artistic practice.

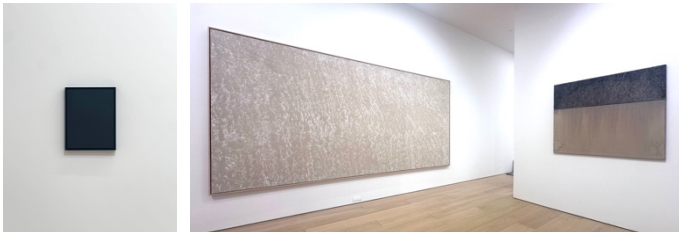
"The painter should paint not only what he has in front of him, but also what he sees inside himself. If he sees nothing within, then he should stop painting what is in front of him." (Caspar David Friedrich)



The paintings of **Joan Hernández Pijuan** (Barcelona, Spain, 1931 – 2005) from the 1980s mark a point of his return to Informalism and the reduction to black and white. As a result, there is a focused interest within his determined frame on mark-making, ranging from the drawing line to the broad painterly gesture.



To **Hyun-Sook Song** (Damyang, Korea, 1952 – Hamburg, Germany, currently), a brushstroke is the ultimate proof of the painter's inner peace (or turmoil) and is always expressive. In addition, the brushstroke is always unique because the relation with the surface, the scale and the light is always different. Further proof of the importance of the brushstroke in Song's oeuvre is the fact that her titles (L: *6 Brushstrokes, 2022* and R: *19 Brushstrokes, 2020*) are based on the number of movements that she needed to complete the work. Hyun-Sook Song's works can be compared to haiku: short and simple but very powerful in terms of content. *(Zeno X)*

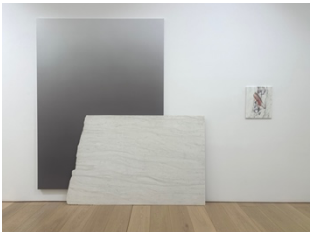


What is a painting when it is reduced completely to its materiality, devoid of gestures, color compositions or imagery? For **Frank Gerritz** (Hamburg, Germany, 1964), paint assumes a sculptural form, wherein the density and opacity create a physicality that transcends illusion. Even in a diminutive scale, its presence is as evident from a distance as it is up close.

However, **Navid Nuur** (Tehran, Iran, 1976 – Den Haag, Netherlands, currently) takes an opposite approach by revealing what might otherwise be hidden in most paintings. *Untitled, 2015* utilizes only raw linen and gesso (traditionally used as primer for further paint application), both materials usually covered in a finished painting. Here they are left to be both subject and material, and with its grand scale, we are forced to take notice of it. *Blackblock, 2012*, also has secrets to reveal, as Nuur coaxes out of black paint, through a meticulous moistening process, the many layers of color that we would otherwise be unaware of.



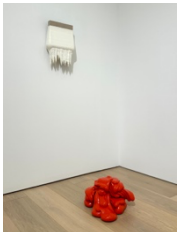
Although **Carlos Bunga** (Porto, Portugal, 1976 – Barcelona, Spain, currently) often employs humble everyday materials, his work involves a highly developed degree of aesthetic care and delicacy, as well as conceptual complexity stemming from the interrelationship between building and destroying, between making and remaking, between the micro and the macro, between the investigation and the conclusion. Straddling the division of sculpture and painting, Bunga's deceptively delicate works are characterized by an intense study of the combination of color and materiality, while at the same time emphasizing the performative aspect of the creative act. *(Galería Elba Benítez)*



The ephemeral and seemingly absent aspect of time is never so evident in the static character of paintings and sculptures; however, it is Time that very much shares the focus in these works by **Pieter Vermeersch** (Kortrijk, Belgium, 1973 – Turin, Italy, currently). Ranging from the split-second decision of a highly considered painterly gesture, to the laborious human time that creates a gradient color-field, and further in scale, to the geological time of centuries that creates the patterns on stone, Time on all levels seems to be suspended in Vermeersch's objects.



All the artworks presented together on this wall have in common a direct and reductive creative approach. Although there are deep art historical references that they might share or diverge on, what they all embrace is the language of Minimalism, which allows for the essential material aspects of Art to come front and center. The absence of illusory and compositional techniques enables the viewer to focus on paint and stone, color and frame, and the creative diversity highlighted by their choices of material and process, each possessing much more profound meanings than what they visually might present.



Roxy Paine (New York, USA, 1966), with his PMU (Painting Manufacturing Unit) and SCUMAK (Sculpture Maker), produced objects take this focus on materiality to an extreme, where his creative input ends with these machines he has invented to take over the creation of the artistic object. Although a nod to industrial processes of conveyor-belt mass production, subtle adjustments to machine settings, the nature of the liquid plastics he uses, and their particular reactions to gravitational and frictional forces allow for a unique piece made every time.



reference images: machines that create Roxy Paine's works



Karin Sander (Bensberg, Germany, 1957 – Berlin, Germany, currently) allows nature to collaborate by leaving a prepared canvas outdoors overnight to create “One Night of Rain”, 2008, and **Fernando García** (Madrid, Spain, 1975 - Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, currently) experiments with material by replacing paint with Priorat wine to create a color-field painting as part of the experience of that particular wine-region. These are works that push the boundaries of traditional painting, where an unusual process and an unexpected material become extensions to larger concepts of time and place contained within objects themselves, devoid of illusionistic devices.



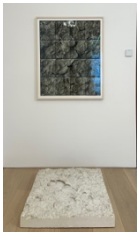
In **Alberto Peral**’s (Santurce, Spain, 1966 – Barcelona, Spain, currently) *Mitad (Half)* series, ancient marble columns are given new life from the simple gesture of cutting and positioning. In this case, with *Pieza 4, 2017*, a square is achieved from a circular form in revealing a surface that has been the interior of its volume for hundreds of years.



Works by **Perejaume** (Sant Pol de Mar, Spain, 1957) are often preoccupied with the landscape, his work embracing the essence of its experience. What does it mean to capture a landscape within an artwork? The stone, frame, and paint on canvas reduce materiality to its very essence with great efficiency and effectiveness.



Gerhard Richter (Dresden, Germany, 1932 – Cologne, Germany, currently) called grey “the ideal color for indifference, fence-sitting, keeping quiet, despair." On one hand, grey becomes a way for the artist to keep a distance from realism, a dichotomy where grey could be a color but relates closely to black-and-white photography, but on the other hand, the finger gestures on its surface allude to delicate intimacy. A reductive painting powerfully containing the constant push and pull of ambiguity in Richter’s oeuvre.



Christoph Weber (Vienna, Austria, 1974) creates Minimalist sculptures, each one made either completely or partly of the same material: concrete, with concrete, against concrete, and in spite of concrete. Weber’s use of the material in his sculptures seems to refuse its more utilitarian associations, suggesting both its strength and its unexpected fragility.

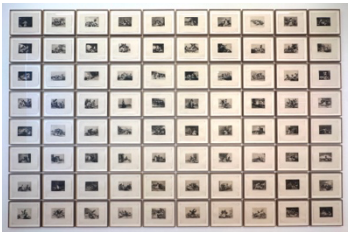
In each of his sculptures, Weber’s intimate use of concrete serves to transcend the material’s primarily social and political symbolism – namely, its link to the industrialization of the 20th century and its role as the second mineral resource used by humans today, the first one being water. Through his use of sensory resonances between materials and his process of associations, inversions, and contradictions, we discover a discrete but fruitful gesture toward valorization. All the permanence and commercial utilitarianism conveyed by concrete are dispersed through Weber’s careful investigation of its inherent unrevealed potential. *(“Christoph Weber: Review”, Frieze, 2012)*



Ulrich Rückriem (Düsseldorf, Germany, 1938) was largely influenced by Minimalism and artists with whom he came into contact in the 1960s. His work is characterized by geometric forms and rational, systemic structures, often cutting a block of stone into regular sections and reassembling those parts to explore scale and proportion. Very much rooted in the materials and the processes of working them, traces of the artist's intervention are deliberately left bare. As he states, "The material, its form, characteristics, and proportions influence and circumscribe my creative activity. Work processes should remain visible, and their traces not be erased by subsequent interventions. – My working of the material determines the nature of the object and its relationship to its new surroundings." *(Annely Juda Fine Art, 2015)*

Gallery VI: Silenced

The exhibition journey continues with artistic expressions that are reactions to voices censored by political and social strife. Here, the language that Art provides remains an option when words fail and all else is silenced. These are brave voices that are equally protests and cries of frustration, and over time, they serve as documents of important moments in history that might have otherwise been forgotten. Just as absence might challenge us to see with new and closer perspectives, silence might do the same for listening.



Francisco de Goya (Fuendetodos, Spain, 1746 – Bordeaux, France, 1828) began working on *The Disasters of War* in 1810. At the age of 62, Goya was suffering from poor health and deafness, but he eventually completed the series of etchings in 1820. The imagery is not pleasant, but this is by design. Instead of heroic depictions of battles, Goya sought to convey the tragic results of violent conflict through his harsh, realistic etchings.

Although Goya worked on many of the plates during the actual War of Independence against the French Bonapartists, "The Disasters of War" wouldn't be published until 1863, 35 years after his death. Most historians suggest that Goya intended to delay the publication of the series until the politically charged images could be viewed uncensored, while others believe the delay was due to fear of retribution from King Ferdinand VII's regime.

It is impossible to talk about the important role art plays as a voice for the oppressed and hopeless without referring to these works by Francisco de Goya. The way they are presented here lends itself less towards individual inspection but instead serves as an overwhelming singular body of work that is a metaphorical backdrop to the contemporary works that inadvertently find their roots back to the father of this form of artistic expression. Like the gruesome scenarios in the "Disasters of War", the narratives in this room are sometimes difficult to stomach, but they remind us to appreciate the alternative that the language of Art offers when circumstances lead us to be overlooked or silenced otherwise.



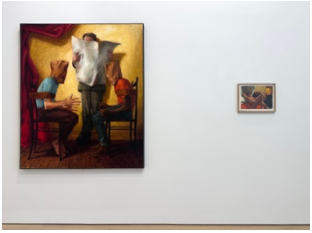
Jiří Kolář (Protivín, Czech Republic, 1914 – Prague, Czech Republic, 2002) began his career as a writer and poet who challenged the political regime of his time, spending a brief time in prison as a result of his controversial writings. He began experimenting with combining the written word and painting, and in the 1960s, he eventually shifted completely to the visual arts, creating a language of visual poetry; a poetry of silence. Kolář's experimentation and creativity in manipulating printed material were much more than just about methods and techniques, as it was a work of discovery and a desire to see and express new perspectives. By deconstructing and constructing, or repeating or recontextualizing found imagery, and combined with the printed word, Kolář broadened the capacity of words and extended the power of poetry. His work was a symbolic and metaphoric form of rebellion, as he continued expression without words in a landscape of political and social repression.

"The world attacks us directly, tears us apart through the experiencing of the most incredible events, and assembles and reassembles us again. Collage is the most appropriate medium to illustrate this reality." (Jiří Kolář)



The photographs of **Robert Mapplethorpe** (Flora Park, NY, USA, 1946 – Boston, MA, USA, 1989) sparked intense censorship debates, particularly concerning his sexually explicit imagery, which led to the cancellation of exhibitions and legal challenges. Controversies that arose from Mapplethorpe's work highlighted the debate about whether artistic expression should be limited by public morality and determine funding considerations. Mapplethorpe's work continues to be exhibited and studied, but the censorship debates surrounding it remain relevant, raising questions about artistic freedom and the role of institutions in presenting challenging or controversial art.

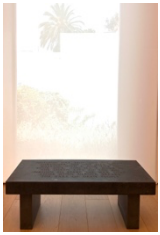
While the controversial subjects he photographed have built up his legacy as a rebel-hero for sensational artistic freedom, it is of equal importance to recognize him for his commitment towards the broadening our definitions of beauty beyond conservatively defined social constructs. Whether capturing the fragility of a flower or the physicality of a highly erotic act, Mapplethorpe approached each subject with precision and reverence, infusing his images with a timeless quality that captures classical form in a broader and more inclusive way.



Before his death at 32 from HIV-related complications, **Hugh Steers** (Washington, DC, USA, 1962 – New York, NY, USA, 1995) created allegorical images of everyday life that captured the emotional and political tenor of New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Embracing representational painting and figuration at a time when such approaches were deemed unfashionable, his intimate compositions are poignant symbols of life under the specter of AIDS. *(Alexander Gray Associates)*

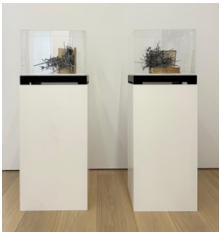
"It's like conjuring.... It's as if painting it will make it become real. That painting a man holding another man is conjuring that tenderness, that hope that someone will still care about you and will be there. It's like wishful thinking, a kind of touchstone for those who are traumatized by the same situations. They can see it and say: someone else has been there." - Hugh Steers, 1992






Jenny Holzer (Gallipolis, OH, USA, 1950 – New York, NY, USA, currently) is a person of carefully chosen words. In the late 1970s, she arrived in New York City at a time of cultural and political revolution. Feminism, racial inequality, poverty, the Vietnam War, and the AIDS epidemic were among the key issues of the period. Holzer has challenged the limits of art. Writing is her medium, and the public her audience. By inscribing her texts on everyday objects such as T-shirts, pantyhose, cups, plates, condoms, and postcards, Holzer has brought surprise, provocation, and critique to the public realm. *(Guggenheim Bilbao, "FROM THE 1970s TO NOW: JENNY HOLZER IN CONTEXT" (excerpts))*

"Text … can be abused or can be truthful. It depends on who's doing what and why." – Jenny Holzer

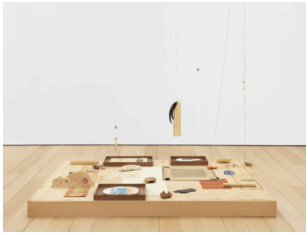


In the book-sculptures of **Ryan Villamael** (Laguna, Philippines, 1987), paper structures grow and spill out of old books on historical victories and defeats, specifically on the post-World War II of the Pacific, carefully collected by the artist on numerous trips to antique shops, book sales, and garage sales over the years. These are broken open to reveal something other than the text written inside, contain structures that are visually precarious, but simultaneously persistent and insistent in their desire to break away from what often feels like propaganda. The rebuilt ruins look like they're trying to escape; they're the truths that refuse to be buried in narratives that others have written and made up. The books exist to say one thing, often from the perspective of the victors, but Villamael's structures, which are made from photographic evidence of what transpired, exist to say something else that's true. *(Silverlens)*

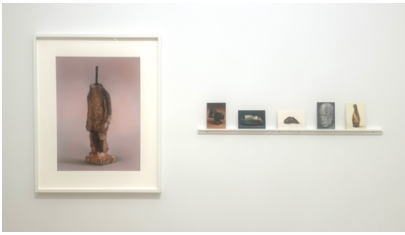
Gallery VII: Silent Homage

The resilience and courage of artists of previous generations have become a great inspiration to those who come after them. Creating work that references previous artists who had spoken up in the face of adversity, or geniuses who were overlooked because they were ahead of their time, is a form of homage that shines a light on great poets of all forms. These works ensure they receive the attention they deserve and continue to serve as a source of motivation for crafting powerful messages through the subtlety of silence.





Kang Seung Lee (Seoul, Korea, 1978 – Los Angeles, CA, USA, currently) employs various artistic media, including drawing, embroidery, installation, and the appropriation of organic materials and objects. Lee's work combines the narrative and iconographic possibilities of artistic figures who died due to AIDS-related complications. Within the artist's environment, spectators can reconfigure queer narratives in a transnational and transhistorical manner. Drawings, embroideries crafted with 24-karat gold-plated lines, objects suspended from the ceiling, and other elements installed on the walls enable viewers to navigate through narratives that pay homage to pivotal figures of queer culture in an anti-monumental fashion. Lee prefers a pluralistic view of history over an encyclopedic narrative, allowing micro- and macro-history to coexist within a single installation. *(Raphael Fonseca, The 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia: Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, 2024)*



Martí Cormand (Barcelona, Spain, 1970 – New York, USA, currently) tackles issues and proposes perspectives related to memory, social and political histories, visual languages and painting styles all at once, thus exhibiting the subtle power of art to communicate on a great number of levels.

In 1937, the Nazis organized an exhibition of what they considered "degenerate art" *(Entartete Kunst)* curated by Adolf Ziegler, Hitler's favorite painter. The show opened on July 19th and remained until November 30th. Through the halls of the Archaeology Institute of Munich, about 600 works were presented by artists whose legacy is nowadays indisputable: Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, George Grosz, Emil Nolde, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, among other masters of Modernism. In the 1930s, though these works aroused controversy not only in Germany, their value was already recognized in major capitals of the world. Taking advantage of this situation, the Nazis sold most of them in the international art market; 1,004 paintings and 3,825 engravings of those that could not be detached were burned in 1939. Their remains were rediscovered when construction of the Berlin main train station unearthed them. Based on images, Cormand gives these works new life as portraits in the form of renewed artistic expressions.



Robert Mapplethorpe (Flora Park, NY, USA, 1946 – Boston, MA, USA, 1989) and **David Wojnarowicz** (New Jersey, USA, 1954 – New York, USA, 1992), despite living in a different era from Arthur Rimbaud, are linked by their shared exploration of themes of rebellion, sensuality, and the darker aspects of human experience, particularly within The context of their respective artistic mediums.

A Season in Hell by Arthur Rimbaud was not well-received at the time of its publication in 1873. It was self-published, but the initial print run of unsold copies remained in a Brussels warehouse for years after. The poem's themes of self-destruction, spiritual crisis, and unconventional style were likely too challenging for the prevailing literary tastes of the time. It wasn't until after Rimbaud's death in 1891, and particularly around 1901, when the unsold copies were discovered and disseminated, that the work began to gain recognition. **Robert Mapplethorpe**, a photographer known for his provocative and often controversial imagery, found inspiration in Rimbaud's raw and emotionally charged poetry. On the occasion of a new translation of the prose-poem in 1986, Mapplethorpe created this series of eight photographs that would be included in the publication.

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, one of the few incursions of **David Wojnarowicz** into photography, is the articulation of a testimony to urban, social and political change in New York. Wojnarowicz, using the figure of the accursed poet as the only way for an artist to intervene in reality, chronicles his own life and his emotional relationship with New York City in the late 1970s. The artist portrays a number of friends with a life-size mask of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, thereby taking on his identity and highlighting the parallels in their lives: the violence suffered in their youths, the feeling of being denied freedom, the desire to live far away from the bourgeois environment and the fact of their homosexuality. Wojnarowicz is juxtaposing the historical time of the symbolist poet with the artist's present. *(Salvador Nadales, Museo Reina Sofía)*

Gallery VIII: Silent Surrogates

Words, symbols and signals; these are the codes that can serve as silent surrogates for objects and sounds. They act as placeholders or representations of these things, allowing us to communicate about them even when they are not physically present. By their very essence, these are already a form of poetry and, as such, a great source for artistic material and inspiration. In the hands of artists, their meanings are given new perspectives, brought to light in diverse and creative ways. And in the same way, a blank page can mean more than emptiness. Instead, in these artistic forms, they are filled with potential and inclusion as they sensitize our minds, eyes, and ears to the subtleties that surround us or linger in the backs of our minds.



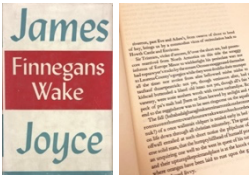
Employing a systems-based conceptualism that **Charles Gaines** (Charleston, NC, USA, 1944 – Los Angeles, CA, USA, currently) has long embraced and highlighting the enduring influence of composer John Cage's experiments with chance, the 12-part body of work brings together the score of a tragic love story, the opera La Vida Breve (c. 1904) by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, and a fiery 1967 speech by the civil rights activist and Black Panther Party (*) member Stokely Carmichael. The unexpected combination of music and text foregrounds the universality of long-standing class and racial struggles and the power of music to bridge differences. *("Charles Gaines: Librettos: Manuel de Falla / Stokely Carmichael" (excerpt), Anne Ellegood and Jamillah James, Hammer Museum, 2015)*



This large painting from the series *Bababad* is inspired by the longest word in James Joyce's novel, *Finnegans Wake*, as **William Anastasi** (Pennsylvania, USA, 1933 – New York, USA, 2023) explained, Joyce's "frightening beast" of an experimental novel. Like many admirers of the book, it has held an enduring fascination for Anastasi and has found its way into the soul of Anastasi's work and literally onto his canvas. He began the series in the mid-eighties, spelling portions of the sound of the fall of man or the thunderclap expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, from one painting to the next.

Bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronntonner
ronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawnloohoohoordenenthurnuk

The bold, colorful, larger-than-life-size canvas is created in part by chance, what Anastasi called "unsighted painting" – painting without consciously looking at the canvas. In the novel, the word is first introduced to the reader on page one. It's the first of ten thunderclaps scattered throughout the novel; each of which has 100 letters. Each painting from the series includes just a few of the letters. Sometimes the letters unintentionally form a word, and more intentionally, a sound. *(Stellan Holm Gallery / Lisa Jacobs Fine Art (excerpts)*



reference image: a copy of "Finnegans Wake"
by James Joyce and the first page



Beyond being surrogates to objects and sounds, words like *FAME* and *TOMORROW* can also represent ephemeral human conditions. With the fallen and deteriorating signage that serves as a found sculpture by **Jack Pierson** (Plymouth, Massachusetts, USA, 1960 – New York, USA, currently), meaning goes beyond literal definitions of the word 'fame' and becomes a poetic commentary on the failure of the American Dream in line with the artist's constant search of ways to express what he calls "the tragedy inherent in the pursuit of glamour". Likewise, but more optimistically, *Tomorrow, 2023*, by **Claire Kerr** (Wallsend, N. Tyneside, UK, 1968 – Dublin, Ireland, currently), becomes a sculptural form, pristinely painted in such a way to depict a stencil, thus offering a positive attitude towards the constant opportunity of the chance of another day.



Yohji Yamamoto (Tokyo, Japan, 1942) is a Japanese fashion designer based in Tokyo and Paris, best known for his avant-garde tailoring featuring Japanese design aesthetics. In his Spring/Summer 2018 men's collection, Yohji Yamamoto commissioned the artist Saitoh Yusuke to paint Eiko Koike, a popular Japanese actress, in a stylized 30's aesthetic, which he used to decorate parts of the collection.

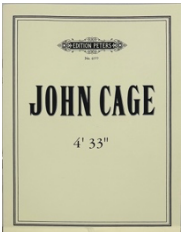
Yamamoto's clothes are predominantly black. As he describes it: "Black is modest and arrogant at the same time. Black is lazy and easy – but mysterious. But above all, black says this: *I don't bother you – don't bother me*." His use of an image of Eiko Koike making a "silence" or "shh" gesture on this particular garment seems to epitomize his mindset.



"Sssshhh!"… The finger on the lip has become a universal symbol for silence, humorously depicted by the photograph “Paris” by **Richard Wentworth** (Samoa, 1947 – London, UK, currently) and the painting *Don’t Wake Daddy* by **Martin Kippenberger** (Dortmund, Germany, 1953 – Vienna, Austria, 1997). Similarly, the double-slash “caesura” has become the standard symbol in musical notation and poetry for a break for silence, here playfully reversed with a broken violin bow by **Oliver Beer** (Kent, UK, 1985 – London, UK, currently).



What can all these requests for silence mean? Perhaps contextualized with the empty pages of the book-sculptures by **Jordi Alcaraz** (Calella, Spain, 1963), a trompe-l’oeil by **Gerhard Richter** (Dresden, Germany, 1932 – Cologne, Germany, currently) and the notebook painting of **Ed Ruscha** (Omaha, NE, USA, 1937 – Culver City, CA, USA, currently), it’s more than just about nothingness. Instead, just as a blank page is an invitation for thought and contribution, perhaps silence is a way of achieving greater concentration to hear the subtle sounds that are drowned out by noise.



When **John Cage** (Los Angeles, CA, USA, 1912 - New York, NY, USA, 1992) composed “4:33” and it was performed for the first time in 1952, it was both controversial and perceived as comical, seemingly presenting nothing. However, the seminal composition has had a profound effect and influence on modern music, as it introduced silence as more than a break and a void of sound, but more importantly, an opportunity to hear the unintentional sounds around us. As Cage was once quoted, “There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.”



Fascinated by the relationship between sound and physical form, **Pablo Dávila** (Mexico City, Mexico, 1983) reimagines how we perceive and inhabit space. His practice often reflects on the impermanence of material and the invisible forces that shape our world, inviting viewers to engage with the fleeting and ephemeral.

With this work, he takes inspiration from Tōru Takemitsu, a Japanese composer and writer on aesthetics and music theory. Largely self-taught, Takemitsu was admired for the subtle manipulation of instrumental and orchestral timbre. He is known for combining elements of oriental and occidental philosophy and for fusing sound with silence and tradition with innovation.

Gallery IX: Franz Erhard Walther

In this gallery, we have the opportunity to view six decades of work by Franz Erhard Walther (Fulda, Germany, 1939), embodiments of the many themes covered throughout this exhibition. Considered by many to be the father of artistic movements that further developed into a wide range of art forms, from minimalism to performance art, his work has become foundational in our understanding of contemporary art today. And in context to absence and silence, he epitomizes by example the concepts that make these artistic expressions a form of openness, generosity and inclusivity.





The work of Franz Erhard Walther anticipates many issues that came to the fore in later art history, such as the condition of the artistic object (sculpture, its materials, techniques and uses) and the nature of the viewer as receiver and participant. Walther sees his sculptures as places for the body, inhabitable spaces that modify their appearance and significance in accordance with multiple formal solutions, and also with the actions (which the artist terms "activations") suggested to the public by the artist and the works themselves. By these means, the artist reinterprets the definition of the artistic object, as well as the relationship between art and the viewer. For Franz Erhard Walther, the body in itself is already the sculpture. *("Franz Erhard Walther: A Place for the Body", Museo Reina Sofía – Palacio de Velázquez, 2017)*



Materialbild Gelb (Material-image Yellow), 1960, consists of a sheet of cardboard wrapped in muslin in a manner that gives it both body and texture, painted a bright yellow monochrome. Given the freedom to present it as a painting on a wall or leaning on a shelf, it is not a painting nor a sculpture, but something in between. This tentative early step, with its narrative of transformations, already suggests performance. Walther can be seen attempting to escape the limits of the picture plane.



At the beginning of his artistic career, Franz Erhard Walther intensively explored type, typeface and font design. While studying commercial graphics at the *Offenbach Werkkunstschule*, Franz Erhard Walther worked on the design of type and typefaces. He considered the relationship between concept and language and how it could be expressed in form and color for artistic expression.

"When I say 'language as material', I mean that quite concretely, the way a sculptor uses iron or marble, or a painter canvas and oils. It is, first of all, a material that I shape. When I construct these Wortwerke (Word Works), I have a way of handling it, the same feeling when dealing with this material that I would have when painting or drawing, or if I were making a sculpture. I add, I remove, I correct, I build. But this building isn't construction; it's a living image, an organism" (Franz Erhard Walther, Dialogue)



Franz Erhard Walther's drawings are crucial to his oeuvre as they document, explain, and expand upon his participatory sculptures. These drawings, often including descriptions, diagrams, and instructions, serve as a bridge between the conceptual idea of his works and their physical manifestation through viewer interaction. They are not merely preparatory sketches, but rather integral components of his artistic practice, emphasizing the process and the activation of his sculptures by viewers.





Since the early sixties, Walther has been using textiles in the configuration of his works. Couture here functions as a constructive principle, just as 20th-century collage and assemblage do when they are conceived as processes for the approximation of art and life. Their undeniably tactile appearance, reinforced by a complex use of color, gives these works a ludic character replete with possibilities. In the artist's own words, these textile prototypes become "a set of conditions rather than a finite object". *("Franz Erhard Walther: A Place for the Body", Museo Reina Sofía – Palacio de Velázquez, 2017)*

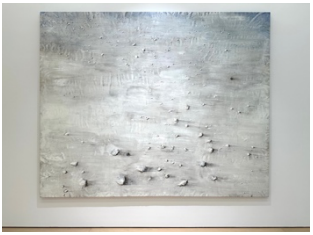
Galleries X-XII: In context

The permanent exhibitions in Galleries X to XII are dedicated to presentations of works by Anselm Kiefer and Miquel Barceló, each accompanied by a separate comprehensive brochure. However, to continue the theme of this temporary exhibition, we highlight a couple of works within these separate exhibits and present them in context with the themes of "seeing" and "hearing" introduced by the previous galleries.



This work is inspired by and named after the opera Richard Wagner wrote in 1868, one of the most popular and successful of its time. An epic story that revolves around culture and tradition, it became a symbol of German patriotism in the Arts but was eventually co-opted by the Nazis, frequently used as a form of propaganda. **Anselm Kiefer** honors this Wagner masterpiece in his work as a way to restore it from its corrupted legacy, reclaiming what the Nazis had tarnished by their abuse of its optimistic message.

Kiefer's use of straw in his work represents energy. He claims this is due to straw's physical qualities, including the color gold and its release of energy and heat when burned. The resulting ash makes way for new creation, thus echoing the motifs of transformation and the cycle of life. *(Albano, Albert P. (1998). "Reflections on Painting, Alchemy, Nazism: Visiting with Anselm Kiefer". Journal of the American Institute for Conservation)*



Miquel Barceló created this painting as a reaction to the strikingly bright sunlight he experienced in the deserts of Africa. In context with the ideas of silence and absence in the previous galleries, this work can also be seen as a kind of visual silence where blinding light might make the subtle shadows of rocks, usually overlooked, our predominant visual experience.

'The light in the desert is so intense that things disappear, and the shadows are more intense than the things themselves… what is not has more intensity than what is.' – Enrique Juncosa, "The Earthly Cycles", p.IV, Miquel Barceló, Obra sobre papel, 1979-1999, MNCARS, Madrid, 1999

Eyes & Ears: a constant negotiation

PART ONE
From whisper to scream: the close correlation between hearing and seeing
September 2025 – July 2026

PART TWO
Into the void: the presence within silence and absence
September 2026 – July 2027

20/21 espacio de arte
la palma