

# GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



## *Art and Space*

- Dates: December 5, 2017–April 15, 2018
  - Curated by Manuel Cirauqui
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- The conceptual point of departure of this exhibition is the collaboration between the artist Eduardo Chillida and the philosopher Martin Heidegger that led to the publication of an artist's book titled *Art and Space* in 1969.
  - More than one hundred international works offer a reinterpretation of the history of abstraction over the last six decades.
  - *Art and Space* is also a tribute to the boundless capacity of Frank Gehry's building to establish singular dialogues between its spaces and fundamental works of the modern and contemporary eras.
  - This show is a celebration of place and architecture through art and a unique opportunity to analyze the interaction between spaces and volumes and between visual creation and philosophical thought.
  - *White Bubble* (2013/2017) by Ernesto Neto, who has recently donated the artwork to the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum Collection, will be available to the public for the first time in this exhibition.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is pleased to present *Art and Space*, an ambitious exhibition based on the creative partnership established between Basque artist Eduardo Chillida and German philosopher Martin Heidegger in 1969 that resulted in the publication of an eponymous *livre d'artiste*. Updating and expanding on key concepts in the dialogue between Heidegger and Chillida—place, the presence of things, the relationship between art and science, etc.—this show features over one hundred works by international artists and offers a new reading of the history of abstraction over the last six decades.

As part of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's special year-long program to mark its 20th anniversary, *Art and Space* also pays tribute to the boundless capacity of Frank Gehry's museum to establish singular dialogues between its breathtaking spaces and fundamental works of the modern and contemporary eras. Using key works from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection, along with selected works from other Guggenheim museums and pieces from major international collections, this exhibition invites visitors to join in a celebration of place and architecture through art.

Following Heidegger's observations in *Art and Space*, the show reveals the various ways in which the artwork effects a "domination of space" and "space reigns throughout the work of art". Working on these premises, the exhibition aims to analyze this dialogue between spaces and volumes, exploring the silent conversations and connections between artworks and the forces that structure them—gravity, luminosity, balance—but also between visual creation and philosophical thought. This historically and geographically complex dialogue is not confined to the Western world and spans a host of disciplines, constantly resurfacing in contemporary practices.

The *Art and Space* exhibition is accompanied by a profusely illustrated catalogue with texts and documents contributed by artists Peter Halley, Marcius Galan, Agnieszka Kurant, Asier Mendizabal, Bruce Nauman, Damián Ortega, Sergio Prego, Alyson Shotz, Lee Ufan, and Zarina, as well as the philosopher and writer Sara Nadal-Melsió and the show's curator, Manuel Cirauqui.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EXHIBITION

### Gallery 205: From Recognizing to Questioning Space

How did space, an entity by definition imperceptible, become a central theme of abstract art and, in particular, of sculpture? Eduardo Chillida and Jorge Oteiza, key figures in Basque modern art, both gained international recognition at a time when other movements like Spatialism and Zero were proposing their own strategies for exploring similar questions. Although the artistic investigation of space began with the early avant-garde movements of the interwar period, it became more explicit in the Post-Constructivist proposals of the 1950s and culminated in the emergence of site-specific practices in the late 1960s. Along with man's first moon landing—an event with which Lucio Fontana and many other artists were obsessed—and the premiere of the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the publication of *Art and Space* that same year (1969) marked a decidedly spatial moment in the culture of that time, reinforced by works like Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (1965) and *Species of Spaces* by Georges Pérec (1974).

In addition to a selection of Chillida's works, this gallery contains pieces by great pioneers like Fontana, Oteiza, and Naum Gabo and other artists whose work followed in the wake of their investigations, including Agostino Bonalumi, Sue Fuller, and Norbert Kricke. It also features several artists whose creations illustrate the renewal of the language of abstraction in the mid to late 1960s, most notably Eva Hesse, represented here by a dozen *Studio Works*, and Brazilian artist Anna Maria Maiolino, whose activity continues to this day. The generation of conceptual and site-specific pioneers is likewise present in this gallery with works by Gordon Matta-Clark and Lawrence Weiner.

### Gallery 206: The Ambiguity of the Void

The normalization of the space run advanced at the same pace as the spread of globalization. From the mid-1970s to the dawn of the digital age in the 1990s, creative projects that challenged the legitimacy of

abstraction proliferated on every continent. It is hard to say if speaking of a form entails speaking of the void that surrounds it and allows it to exist; the works shown here chart a zigzagging course through the elemental ambiguity of space.

Some of the artists active in this period returned to the plastic tradition of abstraction in any of its forms—Constructivism, Neo-Concrete, Minimalism, etc.—but did not allow their practice to be associated with any particular trend or movement. In the works of Waltercio Caldas, Mary Corse, Robert Gober, and Prudencio Irazabal, artistic matter produces encounters that border on mirage, while Vija Celmins's work explores the surfaces of the sky and sea in an attempt to nullify perspective and scale. The fortuitous encounter of Celmin's work with the *Blackboard* by General Idea confronts the abstraction of the world with biographical fiction, highlighting the boundary between figuration and the readymade. Meanwhile, the tension between model and fragment, between the found and the built, appears here in works by Isa Genzken and Zarina. In Susana Solano's case, the idea of a hollow hill connects notions of interior (such as a ceiling vault or a basement) and exterior (a valley or an upside-down mountain).

### **Gallery 207: Mutations**

In recent decades, space has become as multifaceted as the data speeding through the air in our homes. As cities grow upwards, the air grows thick with transmissions and networks. The world of objects, at once tangible and distant, has become remote, replaced by its representations. Today's art reflects this exciting yet complex situation and strives to repair the connections between things and the memories they conceal, conducting an archaeological investigation of the present, so to speak, or exploring its possible places, metamorphoses, and combinations.

The works exhibited in this gallery evince constant fluctuation on the material plane and radical speculation on the conceptual plane. The constant mutations of the canvas in Ángela de la Cruz's work contrast with the indiscriminate use of all sorts of materials by Jean-Luc Moulène, whose sculptures orchestrate a collision of notions drawn from topology, politics, and cultural history. In the same topological vein but with a more explicitly scientific approach, Alyson Shotz's works try to visibilize phenomena like gravitational waves or quantum interweaving, while Agnieszka Kurant uses the surprising levitation of her meteorites to suggest the convergence of the artistic value of air (beginning with the iconic *Paris Air* bottled by Marcel Duchamp in 1919) and its property value in the current economy. In the pieces by Pierre Huyghe and Asier Mendizabal presented here, emptiness and memory become tangled in two kinds of operations. Huyghe's *Timekeeper* bores through the wall of every space where it is installed to reveal the history of its scenographic transformations. Mendizabal, on the other hand, uses the Oteizan theme of *Agoramaquia* (fight against the void) to analyze the different stages of a sculptural body, shown lying down here and upright in its full form in Gallery 201.

### **Gallery 209: Among Atoms**

The concept of empty space is addressed in many ancient philosophies around the world. The one that has most influenced the course of Western science is probably the doctrine of atomism, advocated by Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and other Greek philosophers. Thanks to them, the collective imagination seized on the idea that things are only solid in appearance, as everything is made up of countless indivisible particles or atoms separated by the void. In a departure from the chronological groupings of the first three rooms, this gallery presents works by artists of several generations—Nina Canell, María Elena González, Julie Mehretu, Rivane Neuenschwander and Cao Guimarães, Damián Ortega, or James Rosenquist—that have to do with the idea of atomization, the expansion of matter, the interstitial and the negligible.

### **Gallery 202: Motionless Journeys**

The idea of motion, and therefore of travel, is built into our notion of space; indeed, space without movement is inconceivable to us. In 1969, the visionary Robert Smithson coined the term “mirror travel” in connection with the ephemeral compositions he had made on a trek through the Mexican state of Yucatan. The ideas of travel and reflection also converge in this gallery in two opposing pieces by Olafur Eliasson. One of them, suspended from the ceiling, serves as a compass, magnetically aligning itself with the gallery’s north-south axis; the other, comprising 24 solid glass spheres, multiplies the image of its surroundings and, like a lunar cycle, gradually compresses it. Across the room we find Ernesto Neto’s *White Bubble*, a penetrable, shifting space in which we lose all sense of the outside world, as if we had returned to the womb. Finally, two timekeeping devices flank the gallery: *A Study of Relationships between Inner and Outer Space*, a video made in London by conceptual artist David Lamelas the same year that *Art and Space* was published; and a steel and water sculpture by Nobuo Sekine, which was begun in 1969 and has undergone constant variations ever since.

### **Gallery 203: Inexhaustible Places**

Heidegger wrote in *Art and Space* that we must “learn to recognize that things themselves are places and do not merely belong to a place”. In this gallery there are three impossible places. In her sculptures, Cristina Iglesias presents an idea of hospitality and intimate shelter, in this case beneath a structure made of alabaster, perhaps the warmest of all minerals. Richard Long’s *Bilbao Circle*, made of slate fragments, makes us imagine a ritual setting: perhaps a cromlech or a circle representing an invisible community. For Lee Ufan, the canvas is the place where the vibrations of mind and body are united in the form of lines and strokes.

### **Gallery 208: From Frame to Wall: Closed Space**

Chillida spoke of a “rumor of limits” in the space of sculpture. Walls and boundaries are indeed a fundamental aspect of space. We can think of our planet as an enormous network of boundaries and our bodies as an accumulation of membranes, many of which are concentric. In recent history, the work of art has not only tried to eradicate its boundaries and become environmental, but has also sought to assert itself in the

enclosure of its own frame. In the 1970s, Bruce Nauman created a series of installations in which the perception of the spectator's own body was drastically altered by an anomalous, uncomfortable space, as in his *Green Light Corridor*. He also made videos by giving instructions to actors and playing with similar sensations. During the same decade, the painter Robert Motherwell—known as one of the leading exponents of Abstract Expressionism—began to mark vast color fields with small squares, alluding to the picture's former function as a window on the world. Later, Peter Halley made the cell his leitmotiv to highlight the distressing obsession of both artistic and architectural modernity with geometry. This "grid" obsession had been painstakingly explored by many early conceptual artists, including Sol LeWitt, and was revisited by the young Chilean artist Iván Navarro in many of his neon tunnels, every bit as inaccessible as abstract paintings. Matt Mullican's abstract banners are among his most iconic works, proposing icons for a society controlled by big agencies and corporations.

### **Galleries 201 and 204, Atrium, and Grounds**

During this exhibition, several works from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection will be displayed in spaces outside the second-floor galleries. In the Atrium and on one of the museum's outdoor terraces visitors will find two large sculptures by Eduardo Chillida, *Advice to Space V* (1993) and *Embrace XI* (1996). Different components of Sergio Prego's *Sequence of Dihedrals* (2007), a robotic device created specifically for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, will be scattered around the atrium and at various interstitial points on the second floor. The complete version of *Agoramaquia (The Exact Case of the Statue)* by Basque artist Asier Mendizabal is presented in Gallery 201. In the text that accompanies the work, the artist reviews the vicissitudes and misadventures surrounding the production of Jorge Oteiza's last sculpture. Finally, Brazilian artist Marcius Galan tackles the walls of Gallery 204, using a variety of inks and lighting effects to create the illusion of a glass partition that diagonally divides the architecture.

### **DIDAKTIKA**

In the Didaktika project, sponsored by BBK, the museum designs educational spaces and special activities to complement each exhibition, providing tools and resources to help visitors appreciate and understand the works on display.

In the educational area of this exhibition, titled *Questions, with or without Answers*, visitors will be faced with questions that arise from reflection on the concept of space in different fields, from science to art. The answers to some of those questions appear in different formats: images of the first walk on the moon, music videos related to the space race, quotes by artists in the show about the concept of space, cartoons that explain the theory of relativity, or comics that posit parallel universes. All these experiences stimulate thought and reveal new ways of seeing the art displayed in this exhibition.

Special activities:

**Meet the Artists** (December 2)

Panel discussion with artists featured in the exhibition, including Marcius Galan, Agnieszka Kurant, Asier Mendizabal, Iván Navarro, Damián Ortega, Sergio Prego, and Alyson Shotz, moderated by Manuel Cirauqui, the Exhibition Curator.

**Shared Reflections\***

Discover the behind-the-scenes setup process and other fascinating details about the exhibition on these tours led by museum professionals.

- **Curatorial Vision** (December 13) with Manuel Cirauqui, Exhibition Curator
- **Key Concepts** (December 20) with Luz Maguregui, Education Coordinator

\*Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre.

**Screenings: *Space Movie Afternoons***

***2001: A Space Odyssey*** (January 27)

The cult sci-fi film directed by Stanley Kubrick in 1968 is a landmark in cinema history thanks to its special effects, scientific realism and avant-garde perspectives. It tells the story of a team of astronauts who try to follow the radio signals emitted by an alien object found on the moon. Original English soundtrack with Spanish subtitles.

***Space Is the Place*** (January 28)

Written by and featuring Sun Ra, this 1972 sci-fi film narrates the adventures of this African-American jazz musician and composer on a new planet in outer space. A hilarious, over-the-top movie with a genuine 70s feel directed by John Coney. Original English soundtrack with Spanish subtitles.

**Cover image:**

Eduardo Chillida

*Advice to Space V (Consejo al espacio V)*, 1993

Steel

305 x 143 x 207 cm

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

**For more information:**

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Complete information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at [www.guggenheim-bilbao.es](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.es)  
(press room).

Images for press usage  
*Art and Space*  
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: [media@guggenheim-bilbao.es](mailto:media@guggenheim-bilbao.es)

Eduardo Chillida  
*Advice to Space V (Consejo al espacio V)*, 1993  
Steel  
305 x 143 x 207 cm  
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Bruce Nauman  
*Green Light Corridor*, 1970  
Wallboard and green fluorescent light  
3 m x 12.2 m x 30.5 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Panza Collection, Gift,  
1992. 92.4171



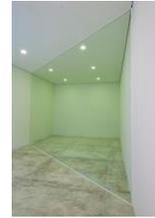
Cristina Iglesias  
*Untitled (Alabaster Room) [Sin título (Habitación de alabastro)]*, 1993  
Iron and alabaster  
3 parts. Total dimensions variable  
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Damián Ortega  
*Cosmic Thing*, 2002  
Volkswagen Beetle '89, metal wires, threaded bars, plexiglass.  
Exhibition copy  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City. Col. MOCA, Los Angeles, purchased with funds provided by Eugenio López and the Jumex Fund for Contemporary Latin



Marcus Galan  
*Diagonal Section (Seção diagonal)*, 2008  
Wood, floor wax, light filters, and paint on the wall  
Dimensions variable  
Inhotim Collection, Brazil



Eduardo Chillida / Martin Heidegger  
*Art and Space (Die Kunst und der Raum)*, 1969  
Artist's book  
215 x 155 mm  
Familia Chillida Belzunce



Eduardo Chillida  
*Lead Stone Incrustation (Piedra Incrustación Plomo)*, 1957  
Stone with lead incrustation  
25.5 x 37.8 x 4.5 cm  
Familia Chillida Belzunce



Jorge Oteiza  
*Study for the Emptying Sphere (Ensayo de desocupación de la esfera)*, 1958  
Forged steel  
50 x 49 x 39 cm  
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa



Robert Gober  
*Drain*, 1989  
Pewter, lead  
7.2 x 10.9 x 10.9 cm  
Collection S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gante



Isa Genzken  
*Look (Blick)*, 1987  
Metallic structure, 13 concrete pieces, one of them with a mirror  
225 x 120 x 70 cm  
Collection FRAC Grand Large-Hauts-de-France, Dunkirk



Olafur Eliasson  
*Rogue Navigator*, 2017  
Driftwood, paint (green, red), magnet, stainless steel  
30.5 x 156.2 x 17.8 cm  
Private collection, New York



Peter Halley

*Isolation Confirmed (PHP 89-07)*, 1989

Acrylic, Day-Glo, and Roll-a-Tex on canvas

229 x 255 cm

Fundación Aldo Rubino, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires



Pierre Huyghe

*Timekeeper*, 2002

Site-specific wall installations

Dimensions variable

Adrastus Collection



Robert Motherwell

*Phoenician Red Studio*, 1977

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas

218.4 x 487.6 cm.

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James Rosenquist

*Flamingo Capsule*, 1970

Oil on canvas and aluminized Mylar

290 x 701 cm

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