GUGGENHEIM
BILBAO

Press release

in situ

Zadie Xa

Seed Pattern



November 19, 2026 – April 11, 2027

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in situ: Zadie Xa
Seed Pattern

- Dates: 19th November 2026 – 11th April 2027
- Curator: Lekha Hileman

- Drawing on speculative fiction, Korean folklore, ritual, dance and storytelling, Zadie Xa explores the uncertainties of contemporary life through dreams, myths and the uncanny, considering our relationships with other animals, the natural world and one another.

- *Seed Pattern* is at once a shrine, a portal and a dream space: a place where memories and histories meet, and where human, animal, ancestral and imagined realities coexist.

- Through paintings, moving images, dance, light and sound, *Seed Pattern* invites us to consider what we inherit, what we choose to nurture, and what kinds of worlds might emerge from the conditions we create.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is pleased to present *in situ: Zadie Xa. Seed Pattern*, the fourth chapter of the Museum's *in situ* series, a program that invites artists to create site-specific works in dialogue with the gallery's architecture. Conceived as a platform for ambitious projects by leading contemporary artists, *in situ* highlights practices that expand the possibilities of sculpture, installation, and multimedia. Each presentation engages directly with the Museum's distinctive gallery dedicated to the series, transforming it into environments where architecture and artistic imagination converge.

Zadie Xa has developed an expansive practice that addresses the nature of diasporic identities, global histories, familial legacies and interspecies communication. She explores these themes through immersive installations that appeal to the sensory experience of the viewer, often incorporating painting, sculpture, textile, sound and performance elements. Born in Vancouver, Canada and now based in London, Xa draws upon her Korean heritage as she seeks to elevate narratives that have been erased or repressed by dominant systems of power. For her, art offers a means to analyze socio-political conditions and cultural behaviors through a lens of masquerade, play, costuming and storytelling. Embracing a highly collaborative mode of working, she has developed ongoing exchanges with dancers, musicians, fashion and textile practioners, and has worked closely with the artist Benito Mayor Vallejo since 2006.

Cultivating a heavily research-based way of working, Xa takes inspiration from diverse global references: from the history of art and craft to speculative fiction, pop culture, music and fashion. Korean folklore and mythology, in particular, offer rich visual and narrative traditions that inform her interdisciplinary practice, providing her projects with a 'skeleton or backbone' that, she explains, allows her to 'create points of linking myself to other artists and a timeline in history.' She highlights matrilineal and women-led practices within these traditions, such as Korean shamanism, to envisage new social arrangements and ways of relating to the natural world, positioning her work towards today's pressing ecological questions.

These varied references are reconceived through an autobiographical framework to establish a deep personal mythology, epitomized by the motifs that recur across her paintings, costumes and sculptures. Over the years, diverse modes of textile production have become a central strand in Xa's practice. Clothes

and costumes are worn in performance and presented as standalone pieces. In turn, multicolored patchwork frames referencing traditional Korean quilting techniques, such as *bojagi,* often surround her paintings. Inspired by traditional Korean garments and techniques, as well as the fashion trends familiar to the artist from her upbringing in Canada, the costumes materialize her exploration of diasporic identities by addressing the role of fashion in self-presentation. 'Clothing allows you to change who you are,' says Xa. 'It mediates the person that you, on that particular day, wish to present to the world.' When making the items of clothing, she thinks 'about ideas of magic and shapeshifting, the idea of being a person in the diaspora, or anybody involved with identity politics: the idea of changing form, changing who you are.'

In *Seed Pattern*, alongside fellow artist Benito Mayor Vallejo, her longtime artistic partner, creates an immersive environment where different realities coexist. Drawing on speculative fiction, Korean folklore, ritual, dance and storytelling, Xa explores the uncertainties of contemporary life through dreams, myths and the uncanny, considering our relationships with other animals, the natural world and one another. At the center of the installation stands a guardian tree, inspired by Korean village traditions and sacred trees found across cultures. A dwelling place for protective spirits, the tree connects the human world with ancestral and spiritual realms. It also evokes a witness to human history, holding traces of the care and violence humans have enacted upon one another and the natural world.

Through paintings, moving images, dance, light and sound, *Seed Pattern* invites us to consider what we inherit, what we choose to nurture, and what kinds of worlds might emerge from the conditions we create.

BIO

Zadie Xa trained at the prestigious Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, earning a BFA in 2007, before receiving an MFA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London in 2014. In 2022, the Whitechapel Gallery commissioned Xa's largest solo exhibition to take place in London to date, House Gods, Animal Guides and Five Ways 2 Forgiveness (2022–23). Other solo exhibitions of the artist's work have taken place at Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris (2024), Space K, Seoul (2023); The Box, Plymouth (2022); Leeds Art Gallery (2021); Remai Modern, Saskatoon (2020); De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (2019); Tramway, Glasgow (2019); Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku (2019); Galeria Agustina Ferreyra, Mexico City (2018); Union Pacific, London (2018); and Pump House Gallery, London (2017).

In 2019, Xa was invited to contribute to the performance program curated by Ralph Rugoff with Aaron Cezar for the 58th Venice Biennale. Recent performances have since been staged by Xa at The National Gallery, London (2021; in collaboration with Benito Mayor Vallejo and curated by Priyesh Mistry), Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2020), and Tramway, Glasgow (2019), with earlier performances taking place at the Southbank Centre, London (2018; commissioned by the Hayward Gallery), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018), and Serpentine Galleries, London (2016). Xa's work has been featured in numerous international group exhibitions, including those at Copenhagen Contemporary (2023); Institute of Contemporary Arts, Los Angeles (2022); MACRO – Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Roma, Rome (2022); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2021); The Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver (2021); Arnolfini, Bristol (2019); and MoMA PS1, New York (2018). She participated in the 13th Shanghai Biennale in 2021, the Jeju Biennale in 2022 and the Sharjah Biennial 16 in 2025, for which she was nominated for the Turner Prize 2025, a prize awarded annually by Tate. The Turner Prize exhibition was on view at the Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford from September 2025 to February 2026.

In 2026, her work is the subject of solo exhibitions at the Esker Foundation, Calgary; The Powerplant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto; and Guggenheim Bilbao.

DIDAKTIKA

As part of the Didaktika project, the Museum designs on-site educational spaces, online content, and special activities that complement the exhibitions, offering visitors additional tools and resources to deepen their engagement with the works on display.

The Didaktika space, located in the nearby gallery 204, complements the exhibition *In Situ: Zadie Xa Seed Pattern*. It presents a selection of objects from the artist's studio; chosen by the artist herself that reflect her personal history and it's to the collective memory. The inspiration behind her creative process becomes evident through the complementary texts explaining both the choice of objects and other living beings, such as the trees that protects us and beneath whose branch's stories passed down from generation to generation are told.

Public programs

Opening talk (November 18th)

Conversation between Zadie Xa, the artist, and Lekha Hileman, curator of the exhibition.

Performance *Gárgola* (December 13th)

"Gárgola" (*Gargoyle*) is the latest project by the dance company QABALUM. The performance explores the symbolic relationship between humans and animals, connecting directly to the installation. It will take place concurrently with the ZINETIKA festival and the Museum's TOParte program.

Creative Session (18+): *Scraps of a Life...* (January 28th 2027)

Patchwork creative workshop, in the context of the exhibition and the artist's work, for whom *Bojagi* is a Korean textile technique that she uses as a tribute to her ancestors, and a fundamental part of her artistic practice.

Shared reflections:

Exclusive guided tours by the museum professionals.

- Curatorial vision: with Lekha Hileman, Curator (2nd December)
- Key concepts: with Luz Maguregui, Education coordinator (13th of January)

Cover image:

View of the installation *in situ: Zadie Xa. Seed Pattern* at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
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For further information, the Press Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao can be contacted by phone (+34 944 359 008) or email (media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

View of the installation *in situ: Zadie Xa. Seed Pattern* at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
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Zadie Xa
The Visit, 2026
215 x 325 cm
Oil and on stitched linen
© Zadie Xa, Bilbao 2026



Zadie Xa
The Visit (Detail), 2026
215 x 325cm
Oil and on stitched linen
© Zadie Xa, Bilbao 2026



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The Visit (Detail), 2026
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Zadie Xa
Photo: artifacts
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