

On Work Processes. Erlea Maneros Zabala in Conversation with Beatriz Herráez

BEATRIZ HERRÁEZ: The idea for this book was formed when I invited you to make an exhibition for the Museum of Contemporary Art of Basque Country - Artium Museoa.¹ If the book does include all the works that were eventually shown in the exhibition, it remains a separate, independent project. It is also your first book, and your approach to it has been very specific. So maybe, let's begin by talking about the structure of the book.

ERLEA MANEROS ZABALA: Although the exhibition took place first, I conceptualized it in reverse. In a way, the exhibition was conceived in response to the ideas I had around the book. Making this book has helped me a lot, as has looking back and deciding how to move forward with my work. In the past, I gave myself a lot of liberty to go off on tangents. It's like a tree with a lot branches and suddenly some of them are disconnected.

I approached the book as an exhibition. I did not want to make a catalogue or illustrate artworks. Instead, I wanted to get the book closer to experiencing the works themselves. I reduced the selection to five works that, together, capture an attitude that is relevant to my practice today. Reducing the number of works in the book allowed each project to have more space, more breathing room.

BH: The book is also very much based on collaborations.

1. Beatriz Herráez curated Erlea Maneros Zabala's exhibit *The Voice of the Valley* at Artium Museoa, which was on display between April 8 and September 18, 2022.

EMZ: Although I approached the book as an exhibition, a book is a different format, it has its own logic, and working in collaboration with Filiep Tacq has allowed me to translate my ideas to the book form. We had an approach to making the book that takes into consideration the materiality of the book as an artform, its production methods and processes, its limits. For example, the structure of the book follows the rhythms of the folds –16 folded pages. Equally important are the three ways in which the images have been laid out: full-bleed, double-page images, white-framed images, and half-page spreads.

BH: The book's title, *The Voice of the Valley* [2016–2022],² includes three elements that define a sort of mental landscape relevant to your work: space—the valley, an element of the earth's relief; time—a six-year interval; and the figure of the voice, which refers to language and, indirectly, to the text. How have you decided for the texts included in the book? Some are yours, and come from the works, but there are also other voices, such as the one of the American writer Dodie Bellamy, with a text entitled “Double Tongue,” and those of the conversations.

EMZ: There are different types of texts in the book. In the layout, we wanted to reflect this diversity of registers graphically. “Double Tongue” has been given a literary text treatment, like a chapter in a novel. The text of the fragments of the voiceover transcription from *The Voice of the Valley* (2017) is presented the way Adobe Premiere exports recorded audio to a text file, timestamps and all. And in the case of *Prompt Book* (2016–2022), the text layout takes on, as implied by the title, the format of the prompt book of a theater piece.

BH: “Double Tongue,”³ the text by Dodie Bellamy that opens the book, refers to the *Prompt Book* without coming close to describing it. How did you initiate the exchange with her?

EMZ: Dodie Bellamy's contribution came out of conversations with Hedi El Kholti.⁴ We've known each other since the early 2000s from the L.A. art scene. I felt comfortable approaching him; there is a kinship with him as people who did not grow up in the U.S. but have developed our work in this country and now call it home. He has a breadth of knowledge and a sensibility that I relate to. I talked to him about my approach to the book and he suggested that Dodie Bellamy would be a good fit.

After I installed the show at Artium Museoa, I returned to the U.S. and Dodie came to visit. We started an ongoing conversation. She engaged

2. The first part of the title is taken from the artist's 2017 work by the same name.

3. “Double Tongue” is part of “Vomit Journal,” from a novel Dodie Bellamy is

currently working on.

4. Born in Rabat, Hedi El Kholti is an artist and co-editor of *Semiotext(e)* based in Los Angeles.

with the prospect of participating in the book in a way that was familiar to me. We started talking daily and she wanted to know all the ins and outs of the work, the circumstances of my life and my relationship to the work. What I mean is that she didn't see the work as separate from me. It felt like she paid as much attention to the work as to my attitude towards it. It's hard to explain, but I feel like she got to know me to the point where it felt intimate and revealing. It was a striking process. She engaged with her work in a similar way that I engage with the process of making art.

BH: I am thinking about this uninterrupted conversation with Dodie Bellamy and the similarities between her way of working and yours in terms of engagement and commitment. What is your own work process like and how does it relate to the material conditions of your day-to-day?

EMZ: Over time, life has allowed me to have this sort of relationship with art. If I had a partner, if I had kids, I would not be able to work this way. It's only now that I have become aware of the impact that personal circumstances have on shaping the work. Now I can devote my full attention to it for long periods of time. When I was younger, I wasn't able to focus in this way because there were other parts of my life that took my time. And now I have a solitary life. My circumstances allow me to give my work that kind of time. So, I feel that by engaging with the work in this way I'm going to bring realism to it. Because I am always searching for specificity just to make the work worth making to me.

BH: On the different occasions we have worked together, I have gotten to appreciate your attention to the contextual and the specific in every one of your projects. *Prompt Book* comes to mind, a work that began in 2016 at the MNCARS⁵ (the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía) as a result of an invitation to work with the museum's collection. On that occasion, you chose to work with a room in the museum containing works from the 1930s and 1940s produced during Franco's dictatorship.⁶ Inhabiting the spaces of the institution—with the room itself, where you also spent 24 hours—turned out to be crucial in the development of the project. How did you revisit *Prompt Book* in 2022?

EMZ: It was challenging to find a way to show *Prompt Book* in Vitoria-Gasteiz, under other circumstances and in another place, as it was a site-specific

5. The exhibit *Erlea Maneros Zabala*, part of the *Fisuras* program at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, was held between April 20 and August 29, 2016.

6. Opening in the year 2010, Room 403, titled *An Art for the Franco regime: ruin and utopia in the*

dream of national exaltation gathered works by José Caballero (1913–1991), Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), José Gutiérrez Solana (1886–1945), Amando de Ossorio (1918–2001) and Joaquín Vaquero Turcios (1933–2010).

work produced six years earlier in a different museum. My work responds to site-specific narratives, the site being my biographical landscape, that is, the place where the work is made, where it is exhibited, the limits of my material means, the images I consume. These all reflect particular moments. At the same time, I want each work to have some autonomy so I can create crossovers between the works.

In the 2022 version of *Prompt Book* I put the work in conversation with two works by Gutiérrez Solana from the Artium collection. The work also reused a metallic structure from a previous exhibition in the museum. But it is also important to note that the work shared space with other works in the show, and that this circumstance also affected the reading of *Prompt Book*.



Prompt Book (2016–2022). Detail of installation view of Erlea Maneros Zabala (2016). Photographic Archive. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Madrid.

BH: I'd like to return to *Prompt Book* later, to that coexistence within the exhibit between the different works that re-signifies them and adds new layers of meaning. But now, I would like to ask you about the site-specific way of working you mentioned in relation to *Norusta* (2020–2021). Once again, the piece is closely linked to the institution in which it was produced. In this case, the San Telmo Museoa,⁷ a museum with a pronounced ethnographic character. You made this work in response to an invitation extended as part of the Museo Bikoitza/Museo Doble program.⁸

7. San Telmo Museoa, the first museum in the Basque Country, was founded in 1902 in Donostia/San Sebastián as a historical, artistic and archeological museum.
8. Museo Bikoitza/Museo Doble is an artistic intervention program. One artist is invited to promote re-readings of the collection and museographic story of the San Telmo

Museoa. Following a logic of successive invitations, Erlea Maneros Zabala was invited by the artist Ibon Aranberri, from the program's first edition, to participate in the second edition, which took place in 2020. The program was launched by artist Asier Mendizabal.

In your piece *Norusta*, which is the name given in Lekeitio to a type of wind that comes from the sea, you zoom in on various details of the landscape you grew up in: some terms found in the Basque⁹ dialect spoken there, a horn your grandmother gave you that you donated to the San Telmo collection, and a series of photographs of cliffs as seen from the sea and taken from a kayak, as well as a logbook keeping track of the dates of your trips out to sea, and charts for the navigating conditions on those days. *Norusta* brings to mind something that Allen S. Weiss¹⁰ talks about when describing the influence of trains on the way people looked at, framed, and conceived the landscape of the United States in the 19th century. Continuing with this idea, he argues that the myth of landscape was inaugurated at the moment of its decline. Are there instances in *Norusta* and other works of yours of a projection of a nostalgic gaze on the landscape, or on a particular language or culture?



Antzoriz, Azurdi, Talaiepa, Utzkolaitz, Aurrekolueta, Narrapea, Aurrekolueta sakona, Arrakulu, Muntailleta, Zentelarría (2020). Detail from Erlea Maneros Zabala: *Norusta* (2020–2021). Museo Bikoitza/Museo Doble. San Telmo Museoa, Donostia/San Sebastián.

EMZ: It's ironic that you bring up the idea of nostalgia, because I have zero nostalgia. I hate nostalgia. I'm anti-nostalgia. In 2019 and early 2020 I was doing research and gathering material for Museo Bikoitza in the collections and archives of San Telmo Museoa. The initial project had to do with some aspects of my upbringing in the Basque Country; the horn my grandmother gave me was going to appear in the project somewhere. But it wasn't so much about Lekeitio. If I hadn't been locked up by myself in my grandparents' apartment in Lekeitio during the COVID lockdown, there would not have

9. Language of unknown origins spoken in the Basque Country. It is the central and agglutinating element of a sense of identity that will begin to develop at the end of the 19th century.

10. Allen S. Weiss: *Unnatural Horizons: Paradox and Contradiction in Landscape Architecture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

been a *Norusta*. So this extraordinary event that was happening to everyone was happening to me this way: it caught me in Lekeitio, a Basque coastal town, a part of my past. I was not in the US, which is my home... And so I worked with whatever I had. And what I had was my physical surroundings. During the lockdown we weren't allowed to leave the house for two months. After that, we were allowed to go out up to one kilometer, and so on... I live in the desert, where I have long views of the landscape, and the apartment in Lekeitio is between two streets. You can barely see the sky. I spent two months looking at my neighbors and at a wall. As soon as we were allowed to, I started going out to sea, out of a physical need. My dad's kayak was right there and, of course, in the kayak I could go further than I was allowed to. Because who is going to police a kayak at sea?

The cliffs in the pictures are one kilometer away from my grandparents' apartment. In the material from the collection of San Telmo Museoa I had gathered in 2019 there was a 19th century lithograph that represents that view in an idealized manner.¹¹ I decided to build the project around this lithograph, my grandmother's horn and some words;¹² I started to take pictures of the Otoio cliffs from my kayak. And I had to hold on to that to be able to pull off the project when it felt like it was impossible. Because I didn't have a studio and all my stuff was in the U.S. Everything is context-specific, and it couldn't be understood without taking into consideration the time when it was made.

BH: Which is something that, as we already discussed, also happened with *Prompt Book* in 2016. A host of factors led us to rethink the project so that it reflected specific circumstances and a specific moment, yours, but also the institution's. At that time the MNCARS was deploying a series of rewritings of the recent past in the Spanish context, some of which, some five decades after the end of Franco's regime, remained pending to be carried out.¹³

EMZ: Yes, with *Prompt Book* certain limitations came up for which I had to invent solutions. The work is affected by these limitations one way or another, because, for whatever reason, I gravitate towards discomfort and adverse situations. But again, I guess you can look at *Norusta* and think of nostalgia for the past of the Basque Country. But for me it was like this: I was in lockdown, I had to make a project, and I had a job to do. On the other hand, if I had to use the term "nostalgia," I would use it only as a

11. The author of the lithograph is the romantic painter Pedro Pérez de Castro (1823–1902).

12. These words, which belong to the Basque dialect spoken in Lekeitio, fall into two types: in the video, onomatopoeic slang terms; in the installation of the series of photographs of the cliffs of Otoio, toponyms

of coastal points near Lekeitio, some of them out of use.

13. Among other readings linked to the MNCARS Collection, 2016 saw the opening of the exhibition *Campo Cerrado. Spanish Art 1939–1953*, curated by María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco.

tool of resistance against the processes of colonization, erasure and cultural homogenization. In that respect, I am not anti-nostalgia.

BH: Norusta also identifies a series of limitations, of self-imposed rules, that in this case come from working in a natural space, and which can be linked to the processes of production of other works, such as the series *Exercises on Abstraction*, also included in this book.



El monte Utoyo y el cabo Machichaco (costa de Lequeitio), lithograph by Pedro Pérez de Castro (1823–1902). Installation view of *Erlea Maneros Zabala: Norusta* (2020–2021). Detail. Museo Bikoitza/Museo Doble. San Telmo Museoa, Donostia/San Sebastián.

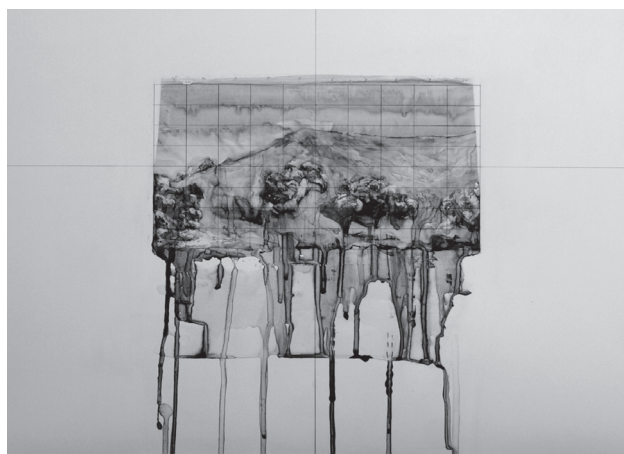
EMZ: Yes, something happens in the representation of these cliffs that also happens in *Exercises on Abstraction*. *Series VI*. In *Norusta* there was an outside force, which was the sea. The atmospheric conditions at sea would limit when I could paddle out there and the kind of pictures that I could take. So I created a situation where something external to me affected the images. There is my subjectivity, but the point was to react to the physical conditions around me to create an image, and taking the idea of expression—as in “pure expression”—out of the equation. And that brings back the idea of realism. Like the reality of being in a kayak. It’s like trying to take a photo from a bicycle. There is no tripod. There is water, and conditions that do not allow you to take a perfect picture. Meanwhile, the San Telmo collection 19th century lithograph was an exoticized image of this same spot, this time as seen from dry land.

BH: Let’s continue with *Exercises on Abstraction*, some series of works that you began in 2007. The one collected in this book, *Exercises on Abstraction. Series VI*, starts in 2018 and is the product of a deterioration process once again determined by exterior forces. This process involved exposing yellowing offset paper to the UV rays of sunlight. The sheets of paper that you placed

out in the sun outside your studio were works exposed to the passage of time. There is a succession of these series over the years, which will have you opening new paths that do not close.

EMZ: Working with the materiality of time, and devising new ways of slowing down processes is something that is present in my work. *Exercises on Abstraction. Series VI*, the series shown at Artium Museoa and included in this book, is the last of the series of this work. *Exercises on Abstraction* went from accidents in the studio to landscape. I like the idea that this series ends in the landscape, and that it is only paper without ink and where I live.

BH: You subjected your previous series of *Exercises on Abstraction* to a different technical approach. You produced those monochrome works in your studio by dipping sheets of offset paper in black ink to which you later applied various techniques, like marbling, that generated effects such as stains, waves, and spikes. The very title of the series, with its reference to Abstract Expressionism, already reflects your interest in questioning notions like authorship and originality, concepts that underpin the canonical readings of 20th century art history. It is in fact the technical and artisanal practices that randomly generate effects that are culturally associated to categories such as the transcendental, spirituality, and the sublime.



Erlea Maneros Zabala: *November 1, 2001*. *Los Angeles Times (Study 14)* (2005). Detail. Artium Collection.

EMZ: All these questions also appear in previous works, such as the series of watercolors on the war in Afghanistan, which are not in the book.¹⁴ In that series, which I created between 2003 and 2013, I drew from press images

14. In reference to, among others, *November 1, 2001. Los Angeles Times (Study 14)* (2005) and *November 1, 2001. The New York Times*

(Study 13) (2005), works that are part of the Artium Museoa collection.

of the bombings immediately following 9/11. Those images show conventionally beautiful landscapes, devoid of human presence, that aesthetically are close to the landscapes of 19th century Romantic painting. In translating these press images into painting, I wanted to highlight the editorial line, the ideology of this specific medium, in this case in the American press. The editors were equating the war with the Romantic notion of the sublime, presenting war as an inevitable event, a natural phenomenon.

BH: This constant questioning of the mechanisms of image construction and your concern about the obsolescence of painting are issues that have been present in your work since its early days. As such, they can be traced back to your formative years: first during your time at the Glasgow School of Art and later at CalArts, near Los Angeles.¹⁵



Three works from 2000 preceding *Temporal Arrangements* (2018). Wood, acrylic paint, graphite and chalk. Lulu May Von Hagen Courtyard, CalArts, Valencia, California.

EMZ: I studied in the painting department at the Glasgow School of Art in the late nineties. The painting department had a traditional approach to painting; it was concerned with the future of the medium itself. In my third year at the Glasgow School of Art I went on exchange to CalArts, looking to approach painting in a conceptual way, through the act of painting itself or otherwise. This [she shows a picture in a laptop] is when I made the first set of *Temporal Arrangements* in 2000 at CalArts. These were wooden panels with a grid, onto which I projected slides with a timer. Meanwhile, I used chalk to make lines on the surfaces, guided by a predetermined time constraint. In 2018, I returned to this series. The wooden surfaces from 2000 were replaced by photographic paper and, for the tracing of images,

15. The California Institute of the Arts, CalArts, was founded in 1961. Its School of Fine Arts has been historically associated with

conceptual art. The artist studied in the MFA program from 2001 to 2003.

instead of chalk I used a brush and gouache. This makes the quality of the image all the more gestural.

BH: What sort of images did you use in the 2000 series? And what about the ones that you used in the series from 2018?

EMZ: In the 2000 series I used newspaper clippings from that time –news-papers were still largely read on paper. In the 2018 series I also used press images, but with the press having already gone digital. These images were photographs of war coverage in Aleppo, Syria. My plan that year was to continue with this series. And then COVID and Museo Bikoitza happened, and there was *Norusta*, and then the show in Artium Museoa, and now I'm making this book. But now I'm getting back to it because that was my plan all along. On the one hand, there are my conceptual, material processes, and on the other the reality of shows and opportunities that intersect and affect that process. It's surprising, but one can take 18 years to find a way to further a work.

This makes me think of the way I weave projects with one another; some come to an end, some are still ongoing, some resuscitate. This is not something predictable: it's like a plant that if placed in a certain spot might grow in a given direction depending on the light. But there are other factors as well... I see my practice as a tree that grows branches and as it goes I reconnect the branches when it is relevant to do so, like a sort of tree-grafting technique. The work branches out and then interconnects following my logic of conceptual and material grafting.

BH: Where do you stand years later vis-a-vis your earlier work?

EMZ: I feel like my relationship to the way I see my work has changed quite a lot. I have figured out that my subjectivity, the things that have to do with my everyday life, are just as important and impact the work. That it's important to acknowledge them as they make the work more real. Real... That's not the word.

Now I wonder why I was so obsessed with press imagery and the way it is used as propaganda. At the time, my practice revolved around the press, how the press edits truth and how editorial lines build political narratives that the public consumes and internalizes. Now I see that my upbringing in the Basque Country in the seventies and eighties, where everything was politicized, is the reason for that. At that time, you could only look at things through that lens in the Basque Country. You and I were both there...

BH: Yes, it was something that cut through everything.

EMZ: Everything was politicized in our lives. Now I realize, having been in the world longer and having seen other people who have lived in other

realities, that there are people who don't think this way. They're not obsessed with these things. Why did I want to constantly make a point about that? Seeing younger artists making work in the Basque Country is a good example of that, of how interests have changed. It must be because they are living a different historical moment. What the Basque Country was at the time is different from what it is today.

BH: What is your stance now when you revisit those image archives—images from the printed press—which you have used in the past in your work? How do you revise your relationship to them? We're talking about a time lapse of more than two decades, during which the circulation and distribution of images has changed radically.

EMZ: The idea of photography and the access to images has changed, that's a fact. In the past, text carried all the weight. We learned mostly through text. Now we learn through visuals. We consume large amounts of images—Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Tik Tok, and digital versions of countless publications. People are being educated through images. It is an aggressive and insidious process because of the immediate libidinal reactions that images provoke.

We take pictures all the time, because we have these things now [she points to her cell phone], because they're cameras, and we're constantly self-publishing. It's a culture of sharing your life; moments that you would never see before.

For the new *Temporal Arrangements* I'm collecting a wider register of imagery, images that make up my visual landscape. Not only press imagery, but also images from my life. I haven't resolved that yet, but I feel like I'm opening it up to pictures I've taken of my everyday. As you can see, I'm trying to work it out.

BH: In *The Voice of the Valley*—a four-hour-long film where you recorded close-ups of your hands executing different actions in your studio in Joshua Tree—, you somehow adopt the same approach you were talking about, by turning the camera towards the everyday. In the film, the camera seems to respond to two parallel temporal events: the routine aspect of the artist's work versus the current affairs that the camera registers through the sound of male voices coming from the local radio station and debating their ultraconservative positions. There comes a moment when we no longer hear those voices and their incessant chatter, they become something of a mumble, background noise.

EMZ: That piece came out of a need to respond to a specific moment. I had been living in the desert for several years by then. There is a romantic perception of the desert: it is a place for escaping, where people from the city go on vacation, or camping, to play sports and/or to get high, to

get away. It is a utopian, expansive place. The desert has all these connotations. I went there in 2010 because there was a community of artists and it was cheaper than living in L.A. Then I started to realize that most of my neighbors were libertarians, that they were armed and listened to K-News 94.3/104.7,¹⁶ the local Talk Radio station. At first, in 2010, they were a novelty, Obama was in power, and the libertarians were a minority movement. By 2016, this fringe faction picks up steam; Trump comes along, picks it up, and solidifies it. Conservative Talk Radio as a phenomenon has been one of the central actors in building this social and political movement that has transformed the Republican Party in the United States.

I started listening to K-News 94.3/104.7 while working. I wanted to understand what my neighbors thought about, the reality of where I was. And I started recording in the studio while I worked. I didn't set out to make an artwork. It was like taking a picture of everyday life. I wanted to capture the moment because we were in shock. It was just unbelievable to think that what these people were saying had gone mainstream. I started recording in January of 2017 as Trump came to power, and kept recording over the next six months.

K-News 94.3/104.7 is a local radio station. Although saying that a radio station is local is redundant, since being local is an inherent quality of radio waves: a radio can only be heard in a limited spatial arc, wherever there is an antenna from which to emit the radio signal through electromagnetic waves. The programming content is tailored to the specific local population that accesses this signal, or those living within this limited spatial arc. This type of Talk Radio is not broadcast in L.A. It is mostly heard in rural areas.

That same year I had a show at Redling Fine Art Gallery in L.A. I remember that at the opening, people came in and were irritated by the show. They had to come to terms with where the country was, and what the country is, beyond their bubble. So that's how that video came about.

BH: You make an interesting point about radio and how those invisible electromagnetic waves delimit a territory and outline it in a likewise invisible but very palpable way. These waves can generate a political climate, a shared sensibility, and they are inextricably linked to the local landscape.

Another aspect that becomes apparent in *The Voice of the Valley* is the importance that time has in your practice: its passage, materiality, and the

16. K-News 94.3 /104.7 is a small station broadcasting a selection of nationally syndicated and locally produced content reflecting the narratives and sensibilities of the Trump Administration. Regular contributors at the time the video was recorded included the conservative radio hosts Rush

Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Mark Levine and Michael Savage. Programming also included *Coast to Coast*, a nightly show about UFOs and paranormal activity, as well as *The Jesus Christ Show*, featuring the host impersonating Christ and answering questions from listeners.

different coexisting temporalities. The light in your studio changes through the four hours that make up the video. It's something that's also present in works such as *Exercises on Abstraction. Series VI*, or in *Temporal Arrangements*, where the title itself accounts for an action that happens in time and produces an image. *Norusta* addresses the repetition of a single action—kayaking to a single place—over different days and in different atmospheric weather conditions. And in *Prompt Book*, the work unfolds over the course of a day, March 2, 2016, during which you spend all 24 hours inside one of the rooms at the MNCARS taking notes of what transpires there, how the sunlight moves along the wall of the room.

EMZ: Time, and its materiality, is an element I am forced to tend to in my practice. And I'm not only talking about the process-driven quality of the works, the fact that they contain or reflect the passage of time, or that they may thematize it. What I am saying is that time is an unavoidable material reality you cannot escape, a reality that structures everything. In an urban setting, social activity articulates time in its many forms. In the secluded place where I live, there are barely any interruptions or social interactions, and time takes on a shape defined by the changing light between day and night and the structure you impose on your day-to-day.

BH: I would like to take a closer look at the great dissociation between image and sound in *The Voice of the Valley*. On the one hand, you have these close-ups of your hands, of your work in the studio, so routine, practically artisanal. On the other hand, you have these male voices, their tone, and what they're saying. Thinking about how to install this work in the museum was something we debated a lot, because it was not easy, given the force of the text. Finally, following this logic of dissociation between image and sound, we had the transcribed text—the chorus of voices of the radio talk-show hosts—projected on a wall and detached from the screen onto which the video was being projected.

To better understand the installation of *The Voice of the Valley* it's important to go back to something we already talked about: the coexistence of the pieces in the Artium Museoa exhibition in 2022. The rewriting of *Prompt Book* was critical, as was linking it to *The Voice of the Valley*.

EMZ: I decided that these two pieces should share space and time in the museum's room because of the echoes between the two historical contexts: present-day United States and the 1930s and 1940s in Spain. In a way, the voices of the female characters in *Prompt Book* counter the male voices on the radio in *The Voice of the Valley*. One piece responds to the other and vice-versa. The resurgence of ultra-conservative positions in today's global political landscape runs through the exhibition.

When I was working on *Prompt Book* at the MNCARS in 2016, we debated the treatment of the protagonist female figures in the images. You also

referred to texts like “Corpus Delicti” by Rosalind Krauss.¹⁷ I suppose the objectification and violence on women’s bodies was not something unique to Spanish painters of the 1930s and 1940s under Franco’s dictatorship. It was pretty much in line with the international avant-garde currents of the moment.

As for the rewriting of *Prompt Book* for Artium Museoa, I initially returned to my original idea for the 2016 exhibition, where I had proposed mural-sized enlargements of the figures. But I decided against it. Translating these female figures to a larger scale gave too much weight to the sensuality of their bodies. Instead, I decided to keep the figures at a smaller scale by using preliminary drawings in A4 and A3 format sizes, which was consistent with the damage maps of the works, the drawings of the character symbols, and so on. By using smaller drawings, their voices became the central focus. I did not want the gestural to upstage their voices.

I have an ambivalent relationship to painting and gesture, and this is a good example of when and how to use them. The way people react to the brushstroke is insidiously emotional. Therefore, I feel that when I paint I have to have a critical approach. Because painting has this power.

BH: We have decided to call this interview “On Work Processes.” The materiality of process is key to your way of being an artist.

EMZ: I use ways to make art that consider the economic pressures involved in the production of art. For me, there is a question of the everyday in relation to materiality, an economy of means, of making do with what you have. This allows me to have a relative freedom. This affects the aesthetics of my work. An example of this was my repurposing one of the benches in the Artium Museoa square as part of *The Voice of the Valley* video installation. The bench bore the effects of its life in an outdoor public space: it had graffiti, moss in its grooves, paint chipping. Using the bench inside the exhibition space as a gesture linked the work to an ongoing effort at the museum to open it to its most immediate context. In my practice, I work with what I have at hand, based on an economy of means. But having access to an abundance of production conditions can also have a distorting effect on your practice. In the end, the material limit, putting a material limit on yourself, is part of the work.

17, Rosalind Krauss: “Corpus Delicti”. *October*, Vol. 33 (Summer, 1985), pp. 31–72.