

The present exhibition is the result of the Juan Zamora's investigations during his residency at the Nirox Foundation, located in the Cradle of Humankind, which gave him the opportunity to explore and establish the connections between the birth of language and the sound of water as a basis for a conversation about the cycles of life and the blurring of boundaries between humans and nature.

The artist establishes a link between the characteristic click [kl] of Khoisan language and the sound of water, and thereafter a series of relationships with the earth where a string of encounters between the ecological and the anthropological takes place. The birth of man and that of language, the flourishing of life and of the works presented are all explored via the attributes of matter through the physical transformations of its own natural cycles.

“We are Nature - long have we been absent, but now we return”, says Walt Whitman in “Leaves of Grass”¹, where the relationship between philosophy, religion and science makes sense when exploring the mystery of life. The American poet held a deep interest for the processes of transformation, the mortality of the human and his connection with nature. This manner of examining human domestication and the possibilities that everything has to be metamorphosed is in line with Zamora's practice. The artist observes the processes of nature and human activity to offer us alternative modes of understanding our environment with a series of works that impel us to reconsider our vision of the planet and our relationship with it.

Zamora recycles the materials of nature, cutting out the landscape, transforming it and taking it inside the gallery. And it is in these organic collages, in this recontextualisation of elements from the *oikos*, that he explores the connections between man and universe, where the earth is understood as a whole.

An installation created with stones depicts a skull - from its palate, like a cradle, flowers blossom. In a curious dimension of *nature morte*, the work connects with another cranium, on this occasion from a homo sapiens, that fights against the *memento* as a pot where more flowers will blossom. The exhibition itself, like nature, will have to be taken care to keep it from dying.

The artist builds a thread with the past – a constant in his latest body of work – with the roots, and therefore with the earth. He would be close to that group of artists who involve (with nature) subtly, almost without noticing, using frailty as an instrument of defense of the place, proposing a new mode of exchange between humanity and its environment.²

Man and earth, water and body. Because as Timothy Morton reminds us in *Ecology without Nature*, the classical elements (fire, water, earth, air) were about the body as much as they were about the atmosphere.³

¹ WHITMAN, W. *Leaves of Grass*. 1855. Dover Thrift Editions.

² ALBELDA, J/SABORIT J. *La construcción de la Naturaleza*. 1997. G. Valenciana p.146

³ MORTON, T. *Ecology without Nature*. 2007. Harvard University Press. P. 41

[kl] The sound of a drop falling on a leaf, screened in a video, in the line of the so-called acoustic ecology, (the discipline that studies the relationships between living beings and their environment through sound. The father of this area, Canadian R. Murray Schafer, suggests that we try to hear the acoustic environment as a musical composition and further, that we own responsibility for its composition.

The same water we hear is also present in the form of a river, a metaphor of the cycle of life and that of men, of memory. The drawings of the birth of the rivers hang on the wall, indefinite like abstractions. Martin Heidegger affirms that we never hear sound in the abstract. Instead, we hear the way things sound, in an almost active sense of the verb. There is no such thing as a “pure” tone all by itself.⁴

Schematizations drawn as semicircular arches, those that unite two basic symbols: circle and square, heaven and earth. A sacred union is also suggested in another of the works presented here: a dry leaf that, as a cradle again, containing holy water from the font of the Pantheon in Rome, where the artist has been spending the past months.

This spiritual element – but devoid of any religious reference – connects with the idea of the earth as the holy mother, source of all significance and connection point of the part to the whole. Vandana Shiva speaks about the earth as the source of all transcendence, about how the soil represents the spiritual and ecological home for most of the cultures. It is the uterus not only of the biological life but also the cultural and spiritual life.⁵

Zamora works with natural materials, phenomena and forms; with the metaphorical use of certain materials, like the installation of a sun made with porcupine quills on the grey ground of the gallery alluding to the sky. The land itself is presented as an essential source of art, of life, of knowledge.

The exhibition deals with language, the human and the natural. Because as Michael Marder claims in “Plant thinking”, vegetal life expresses itself otherwise, without resorting to vocalization. (...) they can express themselves only by their postures. The author assures that he is not using a metaphor employing the word “language” to describe vegetal self-expression in all its spatialized materiality. Instead, he proposes that contemporary philosophy includes plants in the tradition of treating language neither as a means of communication nor as something exclusively human.⁶

[kl] And the viewer will be the one who finally, will activate the exhibition when pronouncing its title, and again unleashes all the cycle connections with that sound.

⁴ Ibid. p. 40

⁵ SHIVA, V. *Ecofeminismo*. 2014. Icaria p. 189

⁶ MARDER, M. *Plant Thinking. A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. 2013. Columbia University Press. P. 75