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June Crespo, guest artist at Biennale Arte 2022

- **The exhibition, also known as the Venice Biennale, will run from 23 April to 27 November, curated by Cecilia Alemani.**
- **Crespo's participation is one of the achievements of the ZABAL programme supported by the Etxepare Basque Institute.**

After being invited as a guest artist, June Crespo (Pamplona, 1982) will take part in the 59th Venice Biennale (Biennale Arte 2022). The international showcase of contemporary art will feature 213 artists from 58 countries, and more than 1,400 works of art.

'The Milk of Dreams', a title taken from a book by surrealist writer and painter Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), is the name of this year's exhibition, which has been delayed for a year due to the pandemic. In her book, Carrington describes a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination.

How is the definition of the human changing? What constitutes life, and what differentiates plant and animal, human and non-human? What are our responsibilities towards the planet, other people, and other life forms? And what would life look like without us? In the words of exhibition curator Cecilia Alemani, "these are some of the guiding questions for this edition of the Biennale Arte, which focuses on three thematic areas in particular: the representation of bodies and their metamorphoses; the relationship between individuals and technologies; the connection between bodies and the Earth."

June Crespo's work falls within this same context. In her pieces, Crespo uses sculpture to create a language that evokes the body and its relationship to architecture. Holes, passages, limits, circulation and remainders are some of the terms often heard to refer to the artist's production. Her sculptures and images are based on precarious materials, an economy of means and on the importance of being by doing.

Using fibreglass, resin, ceramics and bronze, she cuts, divides, enlarges and recombines elements and materials, creating new intuitive forms that allow viewers to explore their own interpretation.

Some sculptures contain recognisable elements, while others are completely abstract and amorphous. Crespo's pieces are like armour, reminiscent of both the constructed environment and the human body. Her installations reflect the dystopian urban landscapes of the future and the contemporary experience as composite cyborg creatures. She describes her sculptures as vessels, as well as "the demonstration of all earlier vessels".

In 2021 the Artium Museum brought together works from different moments in her career and those produced specifically for the project 'June Crespo. Helmets'. Crespo has been awarded the M^a José Jove Foundation International Art Prize (2019), the RNE Critical Eye Prize (2018), a fellowship from the Botín Foundation (2018) and the Gure Artea Award to for her creative activity (2013). Crespo's work is part of the collections of the Reina Sofía Museum and the Artium Museum, among others.

ZABAL - the first fruits

June Crespo's participation in the Venice Biennale is one of the outcomes of the ZABAL programme launched by the Etxepare Basque Institute. The aim of ZABAL is to raise the international profile of contemporary Basque creation and forge links between Basque and international art worlds. The programme also strives to develop new forms of collaboration and to build lasting relations between the Institute and the leading international contemporary exhibitions.

Through this project, the curator of this year's Venice Biennale, Cecilia Alemani, had the chance to become familiar with the work of several Basque creators, which led to June Crespo being invited to take part in the international exhibition.

The Etxepare Basque Institute launched the ZABAL programme in 2019 for the purpose of developing international networks that promote and facilitate long-term exchange and collaboration between local and international creators, professionals, stakeholders and institutions. International curators, art critics and museum directors are invited to the Basque Country to create a direct relationship with local artists and explore possible partnerships.

To carry out the initiative, the Institute has the support of Artingenium, the art office founded by Lourdes Fernández, dedicated to the production and management of contemporary art projects locally and internationally.

In 2019, Ruth Estévez, curator of the São Paulo Biennial, was the first guest. Estévez was followed by the Jakarta-based artists' collective Ruangrupa, artistic directors of Documenta 15. After the hiatus imposed by the pandemic, the programme continued with a visit by Marina Otero, curator at the Shanghai Art Biennial 2021.

The initiative continues to bear fruit. In addition to June Crespo's work on display in Venice, the independent Bilbao publishing house and cultural space Consonni has been chosen to take part in Documenta 15, the internationally acclaimed exhibition, slated to open in Kassel, Germany, in June 2022.

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