



PRESS RELEASE: 20.04.2022

## Artist June Crespo at Biennale Arte 2022 in Venice

- **Three pieces by June Crespo will be on view as part of the central exhibition at the 2022 Venice Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani, from 23 April to 27 November.**
- **The presence of the artist from Pamplona at this internationally renowned contemporary art exhibition made possible with support from the Etxepare Basque Institute.**

In its 59th edition, the Venice Biennale has invited June Crespo (Pamplona, 1982), to exhibit her sculptures 'Helmets IV', 'Helmets IX' and 'Helmets X' at the Central Pavilion (Giardini della Biennale). Following a pandemic-related hiatus, the title of the 2022 La Biennale di Venezia, 'The Milk of Dreams', takes its name from a book by surrealist writer Leonora Carrington, in which she describes a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination. The idea was conceived under the artistic direction of Cecilia Alemani.

Crespo's work forms part of a unique itinerary made up of pieces by 213 artists from around the world. The exhibition invites us to reflect on life, both human and non-human, and our responsibilities towards the planet, people, and other forms of life.

June Crespo's work is set in this same context. In her pieces, Crespo uses sculpture to shape a language that evokes the body and its relationship with architecture. Orifices, channels, limits, circulation and more are some of the terms often used to refer to her production. Crespo creates sculptures and images, always insisting in the essay from precarious material, from the economy of the means and from the relevance of the making itself.



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

Her sculptures 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.

In 2021, Crespo presented her work at Artium Museoa (Vitoria-Gasteiz) in an exhibition titled 'June Crespo. Helmets', which featured sculptures from the same series she is now presenting in Venice, together with pieces from different periods in her career. In the Biennale's Central Pavilion, Crespo will show 'Helmets IX' (2022) and 'Helmets X' (2022), created expressly for the Biennale at Alfa Arte (Eibar), together with 'Helmets IV', from 2018.

Helmets is a free association and alludes to Henry Moore's 'The Helmets Heads' series, which the Crespo discovered while making her first ceramic pieces. By incorporating industrial metal sections, such as aluminium window frames, into the waxes, she tested the lost-wax process, creating unexpected surprises. In this way, as the artist explains, factors such as chance, lack of control and material behaviour acquired greater importance. These types of structural and functional elements, which intersect and fuse components of an anatomical nature, form an organic, mechanical, manual and industrial hybrid.

The titles suggest that they are more akin to armour or a casing, something to wear or protect oneself, rather than the body itself.

Crespo has been awarded the M<sup>a</sup> 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 for her creative activity (2013). Crespo's work is part of the collections of the Reina Sofía Museum and the Artium Museum, among others.

## **Institutional Backing**

June Crespo is supported by the Etxepare Basque Institute for her participation in the Venice Biennale. This year 79 countries will also have their own pavilions dedicated to the highlights of contemporary art.

As a show of the Etxepare Basque Institute's dedicated support, Director Irene Larraza visited the exhibition 'The Milk of Dreams' this morning accompanied by the artist herself and plans to attend several professional and institutional meetings.

Larraza underscored the "high level" of Basque creators, illustrated by Crespo's participation in this year's Venice Biennale, Consonni's forthcoming participation in Documenta Fifteen, and the selection of Itziar Okariz and Sergio Prego's work on display in the Spanish Pavilion at the 2019 edition of the Biennale Arte.

She also highlighted the work being carried out by Etxepare, through the ZABAL programme, to promote the international profile of contemporary Basque creation.

## **ZABAL – 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 Biennale Arte 2022, 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 to create international networks that promote long-term exchange and collaboration between



local and international creators, professionals, stakeholders, and institutions. Curators, art critics and museum directors from around the world are invited to the Basque Country to create a direct relationship with local artists and explore possible partnerships.

To accomplish the initiative, the Institute is supported by the Artingenium Art Office, founded by Lourdes Fernández for 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 Fifteen, the internationally acclaimed exhibition, opening in Kassel, Germany, in June 2022.

### **Biennale Arte 2022: 'The Milk of Dreams'**

The name of this year's Biennale di Venezia, 'The Milk of Dreams', takes its title from a book by surrealist writer and painter Leonora Carrington (1917-2011). 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



**ETXEPARE  
EUSKAL  
INSTITUTUA**

relationship between individuals and technologies; the connection between bodies and the Earth.”

Featuring over 1,400 works of art by 213 artists from 58 countries, this exhibition is an international benchmark for contemporary art. Additionally, during the months of the Biennale, works from 79 other countries will be on display in their respective pavilions, at the Central Pavilion (Giardini della Biennale) and throughout the city. There will also be 31 side events, and on 23 April, presentation of the Biennale Arte 2022 Golden Lion Awards.

#### **Info+**

Mikel Lasa  
Etxepare Euskal Institutua  
Tabakalera / Andre Zigarrogileen plaza, 1  
Donostia / San Sebastián  
T: 943 023 400 / M: 688 670 217  
[komunikazioa@etxepare.eus](mailto:komunikazioa@etxepare.eus)

[www.etxepare.eus](http://www.etxepare.eus)