

# Impresiones Corporales: ejercicios de aproximación

elisa ortega montilla

curated by Javiera Luisina Cádiz Bedini

## Souvenir

Opening September 26th - 19.30

From Sept 27th to Oct 22nd 2024

Open by appointment:

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Art is a state of being and *Impresiones Corporales: ejercicios de aproximación*<sup>1</sup> shows how, by encountering art through bodily proximity, it can transcend its objecthood and abandon its passivity, bringing our inherent playful selves and agency to the fore. The exhibition is composed of sculpture, drawing, photography, film and performance, displaying the socially engaged practice of Spanish-American artist elisa ortega montilla, who creates an environment in which objects are touched, and also documented, as part of a collaborative sensorial experience.

Having grown up in the aftermath of Franco and then experienced Spain's transition to democracy, the echo of scarcity and a legacy of thriftiness pushed the artist to commit to environmental sustainability and transmute discarded objects and materials, giving them new life. Her sculptures are made from reclaimed wood, rewriting its history while at the same time maintaining past traces. Collectively titled "Impresiones Corporales," the sculptural elements that float from metal handles fixed onto the wall and are central to the exhibition. The wooden sculptures are drawn, designed, and destined to be touched and cast onto the bodies of those who hold them- a process the artist views as a form of communication with her audience. Having no polish or varnish, elisa implies that it is only the oil of our hands that intensify the work, imbuing them with histories-in-the-making. She wants us to "go beyond the passive format of the white cube" and further question the artificial boundaries that separate art and viewer. Contemporary art is defined through its completion by onlookers, which is why visitors are invited to construct something of the sculptural pieces. At the same time, while play is something we often become alienated from as adults, elisa shows that in fact is an integral part of that expression.

By opening her practice to others, elisa creates connections between people through creative exploration, physical gathering, and dialogue. These happenings are not static or closed, but open to improvisation and play, making them ever evolving, highly individualised and therefore difficult to compartmentalize. The body of work reflects on two separate actions in which the artist created a playful setting for multigenerational audiences to improvise actions with the sculptural forms both individually and collectively<sup>2</sup>. elisa attentively observes and captures people's gestures by registering and archiving them through various media. We see this interactive stance in the drawings, placed in frames made by the artist, delineating individual moments where participants are in "flow" - a steady stream of consciousness and creativity.

1 The subtitle "*ejercicios de aproximación*" was inspired by a reflection made by Brazilian curator Thais de Menezes, who, in collaborating on an action for the artist's first video, *Little Things I find* (2024), commented that the artist's work brings us closer to understanding our own realities.

2 The first action took place at Tangent Projects in January 2024 and consisted of a guided framework in which participants were asked to collaborate in various actions and meditations that were contextualised both within our immediate surrounding as well as the larger political framework. The second action took place over the past Summer 2024 at the artist's studio at TMDC and, in contrast to the previous controlled activities, provided a set of improvised games in which visitors built organic formations with the pieces.

This, in addition to her collaboration with Brazilian photographer Luiza Fagá, has led to an expanding image-based archive documenting the actions.

*Impresiones Corporales: ejercicios de aproximación* marks no conclusive route, nor does it define a fixed way of reading the works because they all relate, in some shape or form, to one another. The artist carves a space in which we are asked to hold space and time, our own space, at our own pace.

Written and curated by **Javiera Luisina Cádiz Bedini**

With the collaboration of photographer **Luiza Fagá**

**elisa ortega montilla** is an artist who works and exhibits between the U.S and Spain. She completed a Master of Fine Arts at the University of California in 2019, after over a decade of international social work. Her projects have been shown in solo and group exhibitions, and art fairs in Spain, Guatemala, Mexico, China, and the U.S, including the Torrance Art Museum, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art and most recently, at the Textile Art Biennial at Est\_Art Space, Madrid. She has received numerous awards, grants and residencies, including from the Rafael Botí Foundation, California Arts Council and Haystack School of Craft, among others. She recently completed the PEI (Independent Studies Programme) at MACBA.

#### **Activities:**

- 26th September - 7.30pm / **Opening**
- 12th October 2024 - 12pm / **Visita guiada - Vermut**
- 22nd October - 7.30pm / **Finissage - performace**

**With the support:**

