



The Valleys of Sainte-Victoire
Cosmos and Cosmetics
Fernando Sánchez Castillo
June 2 – July 7, 2023

Via the title of his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, *The Valleys of Sainte-Victoire. Cosmos and Cosmetics*, Fernando Sánchez Castillo takes us to the mountain that was an endless source of inspiration for one of the fathers of modern art, Paul Cézanne. The paintings of Cézanne deal with the tension between sensory perception and observation, the tension between the eye and the mind. Cézanne explored the face of the mountain in order to fathom the harmony of nature. Sánchez Castillo focuses not on the outward appearance of these iconic works but wonders, instead, what lies hidden in the valleys, the caves and the quarries of the mountain range. What historical agents play a role in generating such iconic images from the history of art? Do the valleys and caverns in those mountains bring us closer to a present-day desire for a different way of dealing with history?

Sánchez Castillo has transformed the gallery into a laboratory, a place for observation, for discovering and exploring cross connections. The exhibition is an environment in which the eye can approach a variety of images and subjects in an elliptical manner. This is a way of looking which, the artist says, was unconsciously initiated by predecessors – artists and activists – with the construction of what we call ‘history’. Each work in the exhibition enters into its own relationship with the surroundings. *Tomiko* is a sculpture, in white patinated bronze, which alludes to the story of ‘the girl with the white flag’ – a seven-year-old girl on the Japanese island of Okinawa who became separated from her family during World War II and had to survive on her own in the midst of the horrors of a war zone. *Landmesser* is a very tall sculpture in wood which, like the story of Tomiko, portrays the strength of the individual. By contrast, bronze protest masks derived from face coverings worn by people throughout the world represent the power of the masses. A neon work, which has the shape of the lightbulb seen in Picasso’s *Guernica*, is able to flash to the rhythm of Morse code, while abstract paintings charged with political messages evoke probing images of the street.

The most diverse narratives come together: dwelling in the dark valleys full of fertile soil are fantastic creatures. The stories that surface are questioned by Sánchez Castillo: how does history get constructed, and what is art’s role in this? How do ethics and aesthetics relate to each other? And how cosmetic is our present-day cosmos?

Fernando Sánchez Castillo was born in 1970 in Madrid (ES). He holds a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Complutense Madrid, and a MA degree from the Instituto de Estética Contemporánea, Universidad Autónoma, Madrid. He is a former member of the research group of ENSBA Paris. In 2005 and 2006 he was a resident at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (NL). Sánchez Castillo participated in the Research Team of the United Nations Geneva, PIMPA Memory, Politics and Art Practices. He had solo exhibitions at a.o. IVAM, Valencia (2019, ES); Shchusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow (2019, RU); Kunstraum Innsbruck (2016, AT); Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Polanco (2016, MX); Stedelijk Museum ’s-Hertogenbosch (2016, NL); Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo CA2M, Madrid (2015, ES); OK Centrum Linz (2014, AT); Rabo Kunstzone, Utrecht (2013, NL); Kunstpavillon München (2013, DE); Kunstverein Braunschweig (2012, DE); Matadero Madrid (2012, ES); CAC Malaga (2011, ES). Group shows at a.o. New Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (2022, RU); Flughafen Berlin-Tempelhof, Berlin (2021, DE); Museo de Turuel, Turuel (2021, ES); Tick Tack Cinema, Antwerp (2021, BE); CAAM, Gran Canaria (2021, ES); Museo de Arte Contemporanea Helga de Alvear, Cáceres (2021, ES); Albarrán Bourdais, Madrid (2022, ES); Riga Biennial (2018, LT); and many more. Works by Fernando Sánchez Castillo are part of international public and private collections.