

An insurmountable distance

From 23 March to 15 June 2025

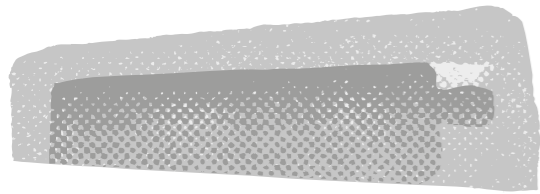
The farthest distances sometimes seem within arm's reach. Just ask the bourgeois in *The Exterminating Angel*: there can be unpassable thresholds in a house where all the doors are open.

Two and a half thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea tried to demonstrate with irrefutable syllogisms that a tortoise would beat Achilles in a race if the reptile started first: that minimal advantage, he argued, comprises an infinite number of parts, and no one (not even the swift-footed hero) can travel an inexhaustible distance.

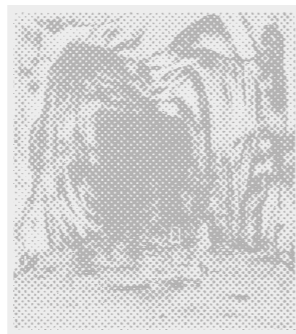
An Insurmountable Distance is an exhibition about distance and resignation: about what objects promise and do not deliver. Starting from the encounter between a heterogeneous collection of contemporary works and a set of assets from the monasteries of San Pedro de Eslonza, San Miguel de Escalada, Santa María de Sandoval, and Santa María la Real de Gradefes, the exhibition explores the eloquence still retained by these historical artifacts – now banished from their powerful original locations – and what response works lacking the symbolic weight of tradition can offer.

The exhibition is structured as a succession of displacements and equivocations: a tomb in which there is no body but a silhouette; a fictitious bishop who keeps the relic of a jawbone on his chest; telluric elements (the sun, the moon, a mountain) made of cardboard and wood; photographs of photographs; propaganda images; bearers of other people's heads; sculptures made of emptiness; and an insistent expiration.

These works, diverse in origin, technique, and meaning, combine their artistic force with a certain semantic vulnerability: they all negotiate with something fleeting or elusive. As if, no matter how fixed they are on their platforms, they were rebelling against the stillness to which the space obliges them.



Artist unknown
Sepulchre (circa s.X)
Limestone
Monasterio de Santa
María la Real de Gradefes



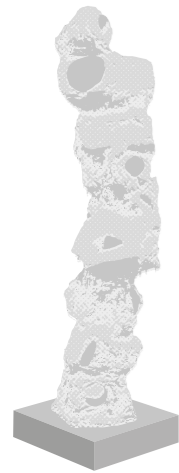
Jorge Diezma
Malevich painting
from life (2015)
Acrylic on paper



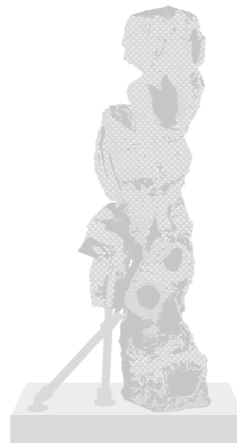
Luis Vassallo
Solar Disc (2025)
Painted wood and iron
structure



Raquel G. Ibáñez
to fill a gap (2025)
Installation consisting of two pieces of pigmented blown glass
and an audio piece
Recordings made on the Chavarría organ (18th century) in the Church
of San Juan Bautista de Marchena (Seville) and the Liborna Echevarría
organ (18th century) in the Church of Santa Marina la Real (León),
thanks to the collaboration of Juan Ramón Gallardo Soriano, Manuel
Chaparro Vera, and Pelayo Rodríguez González. Recording assistance:
Joaquín Jesús Sánchez, José Ángel Sánchez Díaz, and Luis Martínez
Campo. Glassblowing workshop and accompaniment: Diego Rodríguez
Blanco.



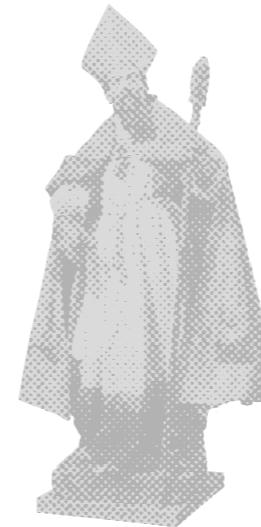
Juliana Cerqueira Leite
Contraction 1 (2019)
Plaster, steel and hessian
Juliana Cerqueira Leite



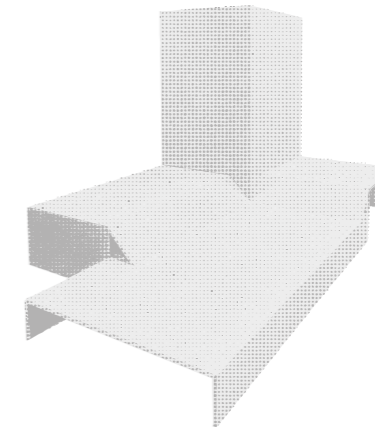
Juliana Cerqueira Leite
Contraction 3 (2019)
Plaster, steel, aluminium, acrylic,
hessian and wax



Artist unknown
Reliquary bust
(18th c.)
Polychrome wood
Parish church of La
Inmaculada Concepción,
Palazuelo de Eslonza



Artist unknown
San Geroteo (18th c.)
Polychrome wood
Monasterio de Santa María
de Sandoval



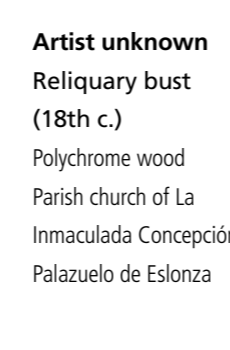
José Miguel Pereñiguez
Escalada Notebook /
Wedding Vows by
Pareja: place and figures
(2025)
Installation composed of
graphite drawings on paper
and furniture



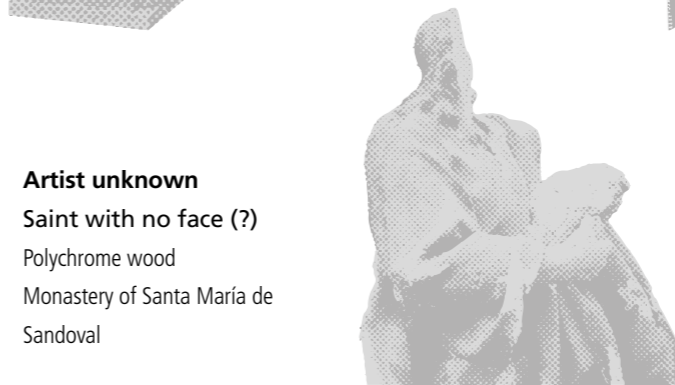
Juliana Cerqueira Leite
Sit (2023)
CalCast 300 alpha plaster,
stainless steel, aluminium,
fibreglass, pigment and wax



Artist unknown
Reliquary bust
(18th c.)
Polychrome wood
Parish church of La
Inmaculada Concepción,
Palazuelo de Eslonza



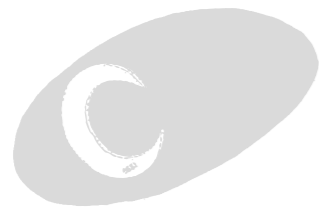
Artist unknown
Reliquary bust
(18th c.)
Polychrome wood
Parish church of La
Inmaculada Concepción,
Palazuelo de Eslonza



Artist unknown
Saint with no face (?)
Polychrome wood
Monastery of Santa María de
Sandoval

Artist unknown
Remnants of stonework
from the monastery of
San Pedro de Eslonza
(17th-18th c.)
Gradefes Town Council

Luis Vassallo
Moon (2025)
Painted wood, iron and
carpet



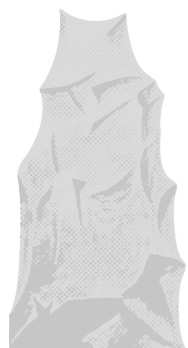
Cecilio Sánchez del Pando
Restoration of the Church of
Santa Marina, Seville, burned
down on 18 July 1936 (1940s)
Photographic print



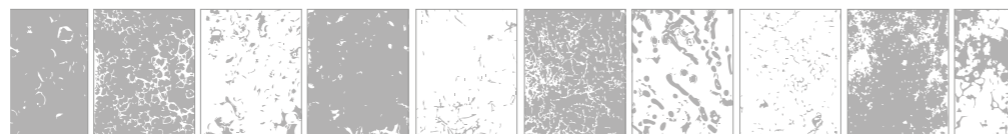
Ignacio Abarca
(attributed)
David (18th c.)
Oil on canvas
Museo de León



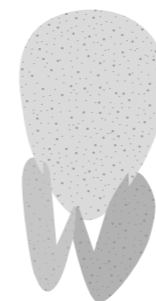
Ignacio Abarca
(attributed)
Orisgonta (18th c.)
Oil on canvas
Museo de León



Luis Vassallo
Forehead (2018)
Acrylic on card and wooden structure
Part of the installation
Petit Larousse Illustré (2018)

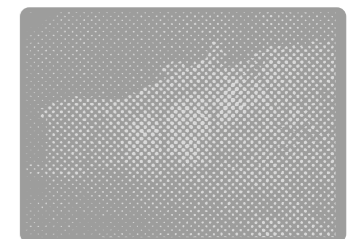


Martínez Bellido
Cells (2021)
Silver gelatin on glass and negatoscopes



Luis Vassallo
At prayer (2025)
Iron

Images of the research
work: photographic plates
conserved in the Diocesan
Archive of León
Documentation: 34 images in
display case.



A reliquary is an object exquisitely crafted to contain horrendous mutilations. Contrary to what might seem to be the case, the beauty of its workmanship is not intended to compensate for the ugliness of what it holds, but rather to be worthy of its mystical prestige. Not all corpses are dismembered to make relics, only the victorious ones; those in whom the spirit has prevailed over the flesh. The offal is literal; what is summoned up is metaphorical: the glorious, fragrant, and prodigious body of the saint.

Several pieces participate in this semantic muddle. The various reliquaries, of course: all with horrified expressions. (One of them, the largest, represents Saint Gerotheus, a bishop invented by the Jesuit Román de la Higuera, who made a career for himself in the curia by finding an illustrious founder for each diocese. The miracle followed almost immediately: three or four years after the invention, the monks of Sandoval found the saint's skull in the monastery gardens. The carving has a piece of the jawbone in its chest, because in this saint nothing is where it should be. In similar fashion, the sculptures of Juliana Cerqueira Leite are volumes formed from a body of which all that remains is its emptiness. Much the same is true of the sarcophagus that rests in the meadow, inside which the stonemasons drew the profile of a man, like a figure in a comic book.

In ruins, Simmel wrote, the forces of the spirit (of intelligence, which raised the building by subjugating the stone) and the geological are maintained in balance: '[...] it is the fascination of the ruin that here the work of man appears to us entirely as a product of nature. The same forces which give a mountain its shape through weathering, erosion, faulting, and the growth of vegetation, here do their work on old walls.'

The pieces of stone piled up in this room are from the monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza and are arranged as they are now found on that plot. The silhouettes of the sun and moon (as well as the man praying) that Luis Vassallo used for his works are taken from a tombstone in the portico of San Miguel de Escalada. Two more telluric elements do something to alleviate the solemnity of these subjects. One is a drawing by Jorge Diezma, in which the painter Kazimir Malevich is shown painting his black square from life, using the blackness of an abyss as a model. The other is a lofty peak fashioned from cardboard.

There is a category of saints known as cephalophores, or head-carriers. Typically, the head they hold is their own, which some heathen has cut off during the travails of their martyrdom: Orisgonta and David chose, idiosyncratically, to carry someone else's skull. These two paintings encapsulate many of the concerns of this exhibition, in which everything has been displaced for the umpteenth time (disentailments, pillage, incorporation into household goods, and so on). Understandable, then, that such much-handled objects should end up being confused. José Miguel Pereñíguez has made a series of drawings based on the Escalada Monastery and *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*, an oil painting by Juan de Pareja (Velázquez's slave) made for the Benedictines of Eslonza and currently in the parish church of Santa Olaja. During the production of this series, Pereñíguez's only reference was the curator's working archive, part which is on display as a substitute for a collection of glass photographic plates conserved in the Diocesan Archive in León. Taken by both professional and amateur photographers, all of these plates have a spectral quality.

Their absence coexists with two contributions. One, four photographs by Sánchez del Pando: prints of the restoration of the Church of Santa Marina in Seville, briefly in flames on the afternoon of 18 July 1936 and subsequently used as Civil War propaganda. The other is a work by Martínez Bellido: a series of photographs which, although reminiscent of microorganisms, are enlargements of the degradation of the photosensitive film of a historical photograph. In other words, the visual record of how an image is lost.

Raquel G. Ibáñez's piece also deals with an expiration. Using the first movement of Arvo Pärt's *Annum per annum* (a composition for organ whose performance requires damping the instrument's bellows until the sound collapses), the artist has constructed a work consisting of a pair of blown glass vessels and a pedestal, which acts as a resonator for a sound piece. Some of the recordings used for this latter piece were performed on eighteenth-century organs.

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Opening:
Sunday 23 March 2025

Dates:
From 23 March to 15 June 2025

Opening time:
From 12 until 14 and 16 until 19,
Tuesday to Sunday. Closed Mondays.

Organised by:
Fundación Cerezales Antonino y Cinia

In partnership with:
Mirabaud

Commissary:
Joaquín Jesús Sánchez

Artists:
Projects by Raquel G. Ibáñez, José Miguel Pereñíguez and Luis Vassallo and works by Martínez Bellido, Juliana Cerqueira Leite and Jorge Diezma. Items conserved in or referring to the monasteries de San Pedro de Eslonza, San Miguel de Escalada, Santa María de Sandoval y Santa María la Real de Gradefes; the Diocesan Archive of León, the parish church of Palazuelo de Eslonza and the Museo de León.

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Curator:
Alfredo Puente

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Maintenance:
Inmaculada López y Alberto Valbuena

Education and Public Programmes:
Nadia Teixeira y Ana Andrés

Sound and Listening:
Luis Martínez

Communication:
Ana Andrés

Graphic design:
Jose Luis González Macías

Material printing:
Apel Gráfica y Megaprint

Audio-visual archive:
Ismael Aveleira

Photographic archive:
Juan Baraja y equipo FCAYC

Acknowledgements:
Gradefes Town Council, Mansilla Mayor Town Council, Galería Prats Nogueras Blanchard, Haydee Muñoz, Madres Cistercienses de Gradefes. Museo de León, Parish church of La Inmaculada Concepción de Palazuelo de Eslonza, Parish church of San Juan Bautista de Marchena, Parish church of Santa Marina de León.

In partnership with:

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