

Exhibition: **Oteiza. Intimo y secreto**
Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
13th June – 15th September 2013

Curated by: Francisco Calvo Serraller

Organised by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM)

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The exhibition *Oteiza. Intimo y secreto* (*Oteiza, Intimate and Secret*) displays Oteiza's most personal and committed work, a selection of drawings and watercolours that were never exhibited in the artist's lifetime. The show comprises several series of drawings made by the artist as a private activity, not for sale or exhibitions. This group of works forms part of the enormous store of studies and sketches the artist made in notebooks and on loose sheets of paper where other themes are predominant, most of which, logically, are strictly artistic. Drawings, ranging from figurative to geometric, on which there occasionally appear written words. He used different materials and techniques to make them, such as graphite, ink, wash, chalk and even collage.

The catalogue brought out for the exhibition reproduces the works displayed and publishes texts about Oteiza and his work by F. Calvo Serraller, José María Parreño, Francisco Javier Rodríguez Chaparro, Edorta Kortadi Olano and Félix Maraña.

We can consider Oteiza's drawings akin to the medieval Goliard tradition and the ancient fetishes of Greco-Roman sects to Dionysus. From a formal point of view, they reveal the eye of a sculptor, although they are tinged with an ironic tone that transmits more anger than humour, as is underscored by the written lines that often accompany these scatological erotic drawings. Combined with these, we find other comments that are political in nature, including artistic and cultural politics, where he finds fault with critics and figures of the Spanish art of his time.

Between exercises in style and outbursts of anger, Oteiza created a sort of diary of likes and dislikes. Some series are a repertoire of insults. There are many examples among the drawings of historico-cultural themes where his criticism and remarks find their referents, both during the dictatorship and regarding the proposals of political parties and nationalisms reactivated during

the transition. Although these drawings appear to be humorous, they reveal more bitterness than wit and from a formal point of view not only show that he is a sculptor but are sometimes reminiscent of drawings by a master like Goya.

Two groups of drawings are included in the exhibition that the artist himself considered series; they are called *Serie Euskara* and *Suite Faraldo*. *Serie Euskara*, made in simple energetic lines of black ink on cardboard, forms a gallery of popular folk: country people and fishermen, dancers and musicians. Among them we also find a nude, furniture ornamented with *lauburus* and various objects –a ladle, a pipe– in categorically geometric, almost sculptural, shapes. *Suite Faraldo* includes the sculpture *Imagen de crítico a cuatro patas* (Image of a Critic on his Hands and Knees) and a dozen drawings and texts against the script writer and art critic Ramón Descalzo Faraldo. It is also worth mentioning a set of collages: groups of four or five geometric shapes in black, cut out and stuck on pale blue or pink backgrounds. On this occasion, Oteiza “draws with scissors”, scattering trapezoid shapes about against a hazy background.

Jorge Oteiza (Orio, Guipúzcoa, 1908 - San Sebastián, 2003) was one of the pioneers in the renovation of contemporary sculpture in the Basque Country and the author of abundant essays on aesthetic, political and cultural themes, which caused a certain amount of polemic in artistic, cultural and political circles.

Oteiza began his artistic activity in the nineteen twenties, assimilating the influence of the avant-garde trends of the time, above all, cubism, and primitive and African art.

Between 1934 and 1948 he lived in different countries on the American continent: Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia. In these years he worked as a lecturer and researcher of Pre-Columbian art, which he addressed in his book *Interpretación estética de la estatuaria megalítica americana*, published in 1952.

After returning to Spain, he won the competition to decorate the façade of the church Nuestra Señora de Arantzazu designed by the architect Sáenz de Oiza, although, due to several circumstances, it was not completed until 1968

At the São Paulo Biennial in 1957 he was granted the sculpture award for a series of works that belong entirely within European constructivist trends.

From the sixties onwards, he embarked upon a series of research projects about the identity and popular culture of the Basque Country, which appeared in several publications. Among his most polemic titles, we can include *Quousque tandem...! Ensayo de interpretación estética del alma vasca*, a book that was reedited several times in the decades that followed, *Cartas al Príncipe* (1988) and *Libro de los plagios* (1991). He also wrote several books of poems, such as *Existe Dios al noroeste* (1990) and *Itziar, elegía y otros poemas* (1991).

In 2003, the Fundación Jorge Oteiza en Alzuza (Navarra) was inaugurated with the artist's personal collection, which he had donated to the people of Navarra, in the town where the artist had made his home and his studio