

**Vanesa Varela**

***Memory in Our Hands***

18/01/2019 – 24/03/2019

***A Monster Who Tells the Truth***

**Espai 13 exhibition series at the Fundació Joan Miró**

20 September 2018 – 8 September 2019

Curator: Pilar Cruz

In collaboration with Fundació Banc Sabadell

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## **Press Release**

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***Memory in Our Hands* is a project in which Vanesa Varela reflects on the need to reconnect with the human scale, nature and traditional ways of transferring knowledge.**

**Based on an age-old textile technique, backstrap weaving, her proposal for the Espai 13 exhibition series explores the notion of fabric as a text and as a vehicle for collective memory and identity.**

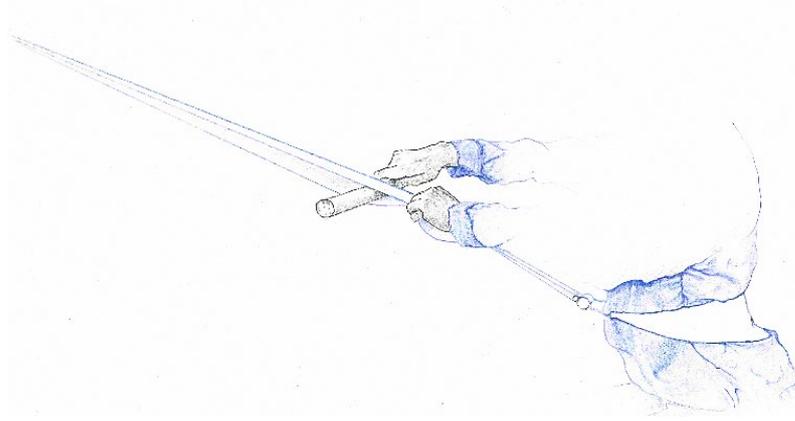
**Varela's exhibition – the third in the *A Monster Who Tells the Truth* series – also constitutes a reflection on the realm of work, examining the relationship between the body, work, technology and product in artisanal production methods and in industrialized systems.**

***A Monster Who Tells the Truth* is the exhibition series featured at the Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13 in the 2018-19 season, with the collaboration of Fundació Banc Sabadell. Curated by Pilar Cruz, the project raises questions about the nature of disciplines and the relationships between knowledge and power.**

**Barcelona, 18 January 2019.** The pieces proposed by Vanesa Varela (Lugo, 1979) stem from the need to challenge notions such as identity, individuality and authorship. Varela focuses on the human creations that arise in anonymous, traditional, collective settings, often related with elementary production methods and informal systems for transferring knowledge.

Her interest in the different uses and contexts of artistic practices have led her to produce projects in institutions as well as in other more heterogeneous venues. Ranging from small-scale interventions in public spaces to increasingly hybrid works, her focus has gradually shifted: from the piece of art as a nexus between different concepts to art as a space for articulating collective narratives.

In this season's Espai 13 series, Vanesa Varela presents *Memory in Our Hands*, a project centered on analysing textile crafts to examine how knowledge is transferred in alternative systems beyond orthodox academia, as well as the capacity of textiles for becoming texts and discourses.



The point of departure for the artist is backstrap weaving, a pre-industrial textile technique, to reflect on production methods, the concept of work and the generation or transfer of knowledge.

Following this traditional craft, the weaver — usually a woman — straps one end of the loom around her waist and fastens the opposite end to a sturdy tree trunk, beginning the labour-intensive task of producing a fabric that is a text about herself.

In Varela's installation, two bodies dressed in clothing associated with factory and farm labour are connected with each other and with the ground in the room by a mesh of warp threads. This web defines an itinerary where, upon approaching the figures, visitors activate a series of narratives about the relationship between fabric and the human body over the course of history: from Herodotus to Penelope, or the uprising against the introduction of automatic spinning mules in Barcelona during the industrial revolution. Also on display in the room are drawings reproducing gestures associated with a variety of textile techniques, analysed prior to the show in a workshop that was led by the artist in collaboration with the Grup de Mitja Subversiva and Niu d'Aranyes needlework and knitting groups and the Banc Expropiat backstrap weaving workshop.

According to the curator, Pilar Cruz, this age-old device connects the weaver's body with nature, reconciling textile production with the human scale. In her own words, “confronting industrial production, here the body is the one imposing its form and movement upon the fabric, in opposition to an alienating, devastating production system.” In turn, the project provides a reflection on how the inherited memory of the body and of its movements connect us with a more organic way of being in the world.

**Vanesa Varela** (Lugo, 1979) graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Vigo and moved to Barcelona in 2006 to pursue her doctoral studies at the University of Barcelona in the GRAPA-GRECS art and anthropology research group, where she developed a line of research on collective authorship. She also received project grants from the Ingràvid competition (2014) and from the Catalan Government's Sala d'Art Jove (2009). She has shown her works at *Detrás do Marco* (Vigo), Arts Santa Mònica (2014), homesession (2011), Swallow Gallery and the artycok.tv and stuffinablank.com virtual spaces (2011). The artist has also presented projects at art production labs such as Liminal GR and Habitació 1418 (MACBA). Vanesa Varela has been involved in *Enmedio*, an art and activism collective in which she has worked on ventures such as the *Cómo acabar con el Mal* workshops (2012). She is currently part of the *Niu d'aranyes* and *Grup de Mitja Subversiva* needlework and knitting groups, a place for collective exploration of the narrative potential of textile practices from an eco-feminist and anti-colonial perspective. <http://asformigas.info>

***A Monster Who Tells the Truth*** is the exhibition programme for Espai 13, Fundació Joan Miró, for the 2018-2019 season, with support from the Banco Sabadell Foundation. The project, curated by Pilar Cruz (Zaragoza, 1972), questions the nature of disciplines and examines the relationships between knowledge and power. Using Michel Foucault's *The Order of Discourse* as its point of departure, the series reflects on the procedures for controlling discourses in an effort to understand how power structures operate and identify their influence on current knowledge. Although knowledge is validated in the framework of disciplines, Cruz looks at what happens on the fringes. Artists tend to place themselves in this marginal territory, the realm of boundaries or aberrations, as a work method and as a way of escaping control. For the curator, art is a powerful monster, capable of unveiling the power dynamics that drive the internal mechanisms of these disciplines. The artists Fito Conesa, Lara Fluxà, Vanesa Varela, Für Alle Fälle and Paco Chanivet examine and try out alternative ways of relating and generating knowledge based on art.

## **Activities**

Thursday, 17 January at 7 pm

Opening performance by María Roja and As Formigas

Sunday, 10 February from 11 am to 1 pm

Family workshop, introduction to backstrap weaving

## Upcoming exhibitions in *A Monster Who Tells the Truth*

### **Für Alle Fälle**

5/04 – 24/06/2019

For the *A Monster Who Tells the Truth* series, *Für Alle Fälle* presents the result of its research on the maker movement and off-the-grid practices in rural settings, where now as in the past individuals tend to seek the best ways of fulfilling their specific needs by transforming locally-sourced materials and applying basic and/or age-old techniques that manage to escape the grasp of major technology corporations.



### **Paco Chanivet**

5/07 – 8/09/2019

For this season's Espai 13 series, Paco Chanivet will be working deliberately in the realm of horror and aberration, using a mix of disciplines that includes robotics, genetic engineering, pharmaceuticals and mysticism to activate an exhibition that will also be performative. In Chanivet's project, hybridisation, appropriation, transfer and the exploration of liminal areas become alternative ways of relating and generating knowledge in opposition to the monolithic solidity of classic academic disciplines.



Images and press materials are available at [www.fmirobcn.org/press](http://www.fmirobcn.org/press) and <http://bit.do/E13-2018-2019>. Follow the Espai 13 activities on social media with the hashtag **#monstreEspai13**

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#### **Further information:**

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