



Ellen Gallagher
with **Edgar Cleijne**

A law... a blueprint... a scale

14 April - 11 September
Santander, Spain

Edgar Cleijne and Ellen Gallagher, October, 2010 © Edgar Cleijne and Ellen Gallagher. Courtesy the artists

**CENTRO
BOTÍN
CENTRE**

Tickets at centrobotin.org

CENTRO BOTÍN PRESENTS **ELLEN GALLAGHER WITH EDGAR CLEIJNE: A LAW...A BLUEPRINT...A SCALE**

- The first major exhibition of Gallagher's work in Spain, will be on view from 14 April – 11 September and will span two decades including paintings, works on paper as well as three film installations created in collaboration with artist Edgar Cleijne
- Through an immersive itinerary, the exhibition will explore issues of race, identity and transformation, with reference to themes such as Modernist abstraction and marine biology
- The exhibition is accompanied by a publication co-published with Mousse Publishing; with an essay by author Philip Hoare complemented by newly commissioned contributions from marine biologist Helen Scales, and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara with art historian Terri Geis
- Gallagher and Cleijne will develop a workshop for international artists over the summer of 2022, including a participatory creation of cyanotypes – one of the oldest photographic printing processes

Exhibition Dates: 14 April to 11 September 2022

Press Preview: 13 April 2022

This spring, Centro Botín art centre in Santander, will present the first exhibition in Spain by the internationally acclaimed American artist **Ellen Gallagher**. Spanning two decades of the artist's career, it will include paintings, works on paper as well as three film installations created in collaboration with Dutch artist Edgar Cleijne.

Gallagher (b.1965, Rhode Island) builds intricate, multi-layered works that pivot between the natural world, mythology and history. Through an immersive itinerary, the exhibition will explore issues of race, identity and transformation, with reference to themes such as Modernist abstraction and marine biology. It proposes a dialogue with the Atlantic Ocean, whose waters are intrinsically, connected to Gallagher's fluid aesthetics, her archaeological impulse to excavate subaquatic narratives of colonial violence and her ongoing fascination with processes of transformation of all life forms.

Ellen Gallagher with Edgar Cleijne: A law... a blueprint... a scale will include a selection of Gallagher's glistening *Black Paintings*, a sequence of monochrome works begun in 1998 whose layered, keloid surfaces are suffused with the brute realities of colonial extraction. Through these works, the artist sets to convey how the psychotic state of race and ethnic relations is deeply rooted in the history of Western abstraction.

In her ongoing series of works on paper she started in 2001 entitled *Watery Ecstatic*, Gallagher creates a new natural history of complex biomorphic forms associated with Drexiciya, a mythical underwater realm engaging with the afterlife of the Atlantic slave trade.

Completing the exhibition are three filmic installations produced together with Edgar Cleijne, with whom Gallagher has collaborated since 2004. This includes their most recent collaboration: *Highway Gothic*, an immersive meditation on the ecological and cultural implications

of Interstate 10, which crosses the Mississippi Delta and skirts New Orleans. It is composed of 16mm film projections and cyanotype images printed on fabric and 70mm film stock.

Better Dimension is presented in the gallery space as an ad hoc viewing room whose external wooden panels are silkscreened texts and graphics based on broadsheets and pamphlets of the American illusionist Black Herman and the jazz musician Sun Ra. Inside, the combination of projected painted slides and a spinning bust of John F. Kennedy's head suspended above a black vinyl LP reflects upon the notion of space, whether understood as a place to conquer or a realm of escape.

The third film installation, to be exhibited outside the exhibition hall, under the building and therefore in direct connection with the sea, will be *Osedax*, a celluloid narrative centred on whale fall, a scientific term for cetacean carcasses that have descended to the abyssal zones, where they are consumed by scavengers; the title of the work, *Osedax* being a genus of bone-eating annelid worms.

The exhibition is curated by Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz, Centro Botín's Director of Exhibitions and the Collection, and Benjamin Weil, Director of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian's centre for modern art.

On the show **Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz** commented: *'In the midst of our current racial and environmental crisis, Gallagher's eco-political practice builds intricate threads with people of colour across time and space, while meditating on the consequence of the climate crisis in all beings. Elevated over the Cantabrian Sea (the coastal sea of the Atlantic Ocean that washes the northern coast of Spain) Centro Botín becomes a perfect stage for Gallagher's exploration of the constant motion of matter and energy taking place in the deep ocean.'*

Gallagher and Cleijne will develop a workshop for international artists over the summer of 2022, including a participatory creation of cyanotypes - one of the oldest photographic printing processes which distinctive feature is its shade of cyan blue resulting from its exposure to ultraviolet light. Further details of the workshop will be announced in the coming months.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication co-published with Mousse Publishing, with an essay by the British writer Philip Hoare, known for his trilogy *'Leviathan or, The Whale'* (2008), *'The Sea Inside'* (2013), *'RisingTideFallingStar'* (2017), and *'Albert and the Whale: Albrecht Dürer and How Art Imagines Our World'* (2021). Hoare's text will be complemented by newly commissioned contributions from marine biologist Helen Scales and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara with art historian Terri Geis.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

LISTINGS

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Opening Times: Tuesday to Friday, 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 8pm. Weekends and holidays, 10am to 8pm.

General admission: €8 (€9 box office). Concession €4(€4,5 box office)

Free Entrance: 18 May (Museum Day) & 12 October (Hispanic Day)

www.centrobotin.org/en/

About Ellen Gallagher

Ellen Gallagher builds intricate, multi-layered works that pivot between the natural world, mythology and history. Encompassing painting, drawing, collage and celluloid based projections that fuse technique and material into syncretic form, her arresting compositions are a process of recovery and reconstitution through the accumulation and erasure of media, which results in palimpsestic and topographic surfaces that are often carved, inlaid, mounted, printed, blotted and inscribed.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1965, Gallagher lives and works between Rotterdam, Netherlands and New York. Gallagher's work is included in many major international museum collections including MoMA, New York; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; MCA Chicago; MOCA, Los Angeles; Philadelphia Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of Art, New York; and Tate, London.

About Edgar Cleijne

Edgar Cleijne was born in Eindhoven in 1963. He graduated from the Rotterdam Conservatory in 1990. He lives and works between Rotterdam and New York. His photography and film practice is focused on large-scale interventions in the urban landscape enforced by negotiations between the individual and the state. Concentrating on the individual choices that result in complex urban developments, Cleijne portrays the struggle to live and be represented within systems of official denial.

Merging the opposite ends of traditional and digital imaging, Cleijne looks at the effects of our anthropocene in the crossing points of nature, culture and commons.

This position is reflected in the filmic installations by creating an interweaving of space, image and sound.

About Centro Botín

Centro Botín, designed by the architect Renzo Piano, is the most important project of the Fundación Botín. As one of Spain's outstanding private art centres and a high point on the international art circuit, it contributes by way of the arts to the generation of economic and social wealth in Santander. It is also a world pioneer in the development of creativity, making full use of the potential of the arts in the fostering of our emotional intelligence and our creative capacity. In addition, Centro Botín is a new place of encounter, a privileged enclave in the heart of the city and the new cornerstone of the cultural arc of the Cantabrian coast, making a major contribution to the national and international promotion of the city and the region.