

## **IBON ARANBERRI**

### **Gramática de meseta**



Estela funeraria originaria de la necrópolis de Muelas del Pan, Zamora.

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**PLACE:** Abadía de Santo Domingo de Silos (Burgos)

**ORGANIZED BY:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

**CURATED BY:** Nuria Enguita Mayo

Some of the inert stone is extracted and carved into a segment of the structure. The blocks are moved one by one and are retouched for conservation purposes. They are covered with plaster as a protective measure to avoid damage to their decoration. They are then numbered by hand with paint and, having been disassembled, are spread about on a sloping piece of ground. They may remain there for years until a political decision determines their new location. Finally, they are moved to their new destination by oxen or motorised vehicles, depending on the mechanical resources available during the period in question. In a complicated exercise of material acrobatics, huge wooden scaffolding is erected to facilitate the arduous task of relocating the stone blocks. Their original ordering and arrangement is either adhered to or not, depending on the criteria applied.

In areas of low rainfall the remains of the plaster on moulding and the paint used for the numbers have survived to the present day. In some rare cases the erasure of the numbers through wear has left a negative imprint of the inscriptions.

A reservoir, a new motorway or a ski station will be built. These mega-projects will bring about the destruction of historical heritage or will encourage the shipping in of catalogued remains in a response to the need to create a new identity for locations stripped of significant memory. At times this involves no more than moving the fragment of a ruin within the city or from its outskirts, re-locating it in the old city centre in order to reflect the symbolic power conferred on us by cultural heritage. Using the most characteristic elements of these remains, new buildings are constructed with forms and functions different to the original ones. On occasions these new compositions retain a use value equivalent to the previous one, which they may even bring about by their own merits. However, in most cases this quality is lost when the original significance is modified and is replaced by the cliché of the monument-object.

Selecting a random point on the map, the new location is decided. Out of laziness, the ruin will be moved to gardens in the capital or to the middle of a new housing development. In the best possible scenario, it will end up in a new location close to its original one as a result of lobbying by the local community.

In the past, the missing or ruined elements were replaced with new ones. Over the decades, however, the ruin's incomplete morphology came to be respected and was reproduced down to the last detail. As a result, the transplanted iconography can be assimilated as a visual element in the corporate message disseminated by the entities involved. Information panels suitable for the new type of visitor are installed and, in a hyperbolic way, the new setting is given night-time illumination powered by electricity paid for by the sponsoring company. The exterior thus acquires a new contemplative function, replacing its now lost, liturgical one. Stone becomes a surface for

electrical conduction.

In general, such episodes take place in inland areas, far from the coast and from traditional communication hubs. It could be said that historic patrimony in its original state has been best preserved in steep, remote places. Historical memory is disturbed when it clashes with the growth of modern infrastructures.

In turn, the use of contemporary materials in the reconstruction brings about new morphological and semantic variations. The joins between the masonry are now filled with cement and resin. The new construction will consequently spread out and grow in respect to the size of the original, like an exaggerated fiction.

Professional restorers do not recommend physically moving historical buildings because this put at risk their documentary, cultural and aesthetic value. Nonetheless, the practice has been prevalent in the 20th century.

In the present day, all production is transferable and volatile. Elements constantly change place and appearance. The transformation of the landscape through manual intervention has come to an end as human beings' basic necessities have been met. There is no longer any industrial argument for roads or nuclear power plants. In the post-modern age one place is just like another (with the exception of deserts or mountains, which are by nature uninhabitable). The motivation behind major projects is now symbolic or spiritual, like the stones that are moved one by one. Hypothetically, these arrangements take shape as Land Art interventions. They are re-codified "sites" and topological spaces and are the unexpected result of the widely proclaimed communion between art and nature.

The path between place A (origin) and place B (destination) may be long or short. Whatever the case, it will bring about a constant and eventful process of migration on any point along the ideal line between the two poles. Clearly, it will not be a mere relocating of the material. There are objects that we take with us and others that remain behind, like a transaction between materials and memory; memory that is constructed and dismantled over and over again. In this way the visible object replaces memory. The distance between A and B generates the way in which we appreciate the origins and idea of the "primary space".

Little remains of the glorious past, not even ruins or columns. The radical movements say: "let's look at the sun, the clouds, the stars." There has not been a need for shelter since climatic conditions changed and the body's automatic temperature regulation adapted itself to ensure total comfort. At the very most we can play at building shelters and at constructing buildings and monuments. The movement and settlement of individuals constantly interacts, resulting in a continuous flux. The flow and migrations of human beings can be deduced

from the formulation of precise rules, the distance between A and B, attraction-reaction, destruction-reconstruction.

We have heard about the malfunctioning of civil engineering projects and the irrationality of moving buildings from place to place. Empty cities, major infrastructures, leisure zones, places of spiritual pilgrimage and survey points are all different expressions of an analogous desire, reflecting an attempt to control the natural world from the standpoint of economic criteria.

The model aspired to is the logical selection of these developing trends: the elimination of all formal structure and the transferral of all created activity to a conceptual realm. Essentially, the renunciation of production, consumption and work is visualised as an "a-physical" metaphor. In a continual transit of material and energy, destruction is juxtaposed with preservation. Transformation eliminates all trace of memory while activating the life of the entity concerned.

*Gramática de meseta* presents itself as the imperfect result of a whole: it confirms the importance of an account and the impossibility of a linear construction. From a de-centred viewpoint (which is a subterfuge used to cover up the impossibility of grasping the different registers involved) a universalising account is evoked: a story of stories or an interrupted flow. Different genres overlap. On the one hand we encounter the futile intent to catalogue originals stored in archives, both those of large companies and those in the private collections of amateur photographers. On the other, we find the chance result of an itinerant, updated approximation to those same places through the medium of the camera.

Meta-history, or the exhibition as antithesis. The three-dimensional encounter is suggested through a negative adaptation of the documentary; the presence of a spatial structure that articulates the transmission of contents simultaneously signifies their voiding. The opacity of the artefact ultimately results in the blurring of the documentary item's narrative potential.

**Ibon Aranberri** was born in Itziar, Guipúzcoa. He obtained his degree in Fine Arts from the Universidad del País Vasco, Bilbao, in 1994.

In the mid-1990s he participated in the Arteleku workshops in San Sebastian and continued his studies at CCA-Kitakyushu, Japan. He was involved with the early stages

of the Consonni project in Bilbao in 2000. He took part in *Manifesta 4* in Frankfurt in 2002. Recent notable exhibitions include *On working with (Ir.T.no. 513)*, Iaspis project room, Stockholm, 2006; *Documenta 12*, Kassel, 2007; *Integration*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, 2007; *Disorder*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, 2008; and the 16th Sydney Biennial, 2008. He is currently preparing a solo exhibition for the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2011.