

6 February - 13 May 2013



Habitación vegetal III (Vegetation Room III), 2005. Bronze powder, polyester resin and glass fiber. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery

From the moment that her work was first exhibited in the mid-1980s, Spanish sculptor Cristina Iglesias has employed a wide-ranging aesthetic that is as indebted to poetry, literature and architectural theory as it is to the discourse of sculpture proper. She has consequently explored key issues relating to sculpture, first, as an art form—an object—designed for presentation in gallery and museum spaces, and, second, in its site specific guises, as a public art, seen for example in the doors she created for the recent extension to the Prado Museum in Madrid. In both areas of her practice, Iglesias is highly attentive to the ways in which space may operate as a repository of memory, and a location for speculation and reverie.

In addition, throughout a career that now spans some three decades, Iglesias has mined the interface of the natural and cultural in myriad ways. *Deep Fountain*, completed in 2006 in a square in front of Antwerp's Museum of Fine Arts, is comprised of a monumental reflecting pool, whose water is drained and replenished cyclically from a crevice bisecting its sculpted bed of interwoven foliage. In *Estancias sumergidas* (Underwater Dwellings), fish and other marine creatures freely inhabit the labyrinthine spaces of three permeable rooms she installed on the sea-bed in a nature preserve off the coast of Baja California Sur, Mexico, in 2010. Filmed travelogues, titled *Guided Tours*, survey these singular projects along with other works she has installed in urban spaces and indoor plazas in Europe and elsewhere. The *Guided Tours* are included in this retrospective along with smaller, related sculptures, created for gallery and museum contexts, in order to indicate the full span of Iglesias's artistic activity.

As fundamental to her visual repertoire as the exuberant screens of cast foliage that appear both in autonomous and in situ works, are allusions to architectural typologies, natural and man-made: grottoes, caverns, labyrinths, mazes, pavilions, portals, canopies and huts are among her more frequent reference points. Materials redolent of the building trades, past and present, also abound in her work: notably, concrete, metal, clay, glass and even alabaster. On occasion, however, she has invented her own medium, as seen in the woven mesh lattices made from metallic thread coated with bronze powder that are used in the hanging corridors and free-standing pavilions. Previously, she had appropriated vintage tapestries with bucolic landscape scenes to conjure inaccessible realms glimpsed from within an architectonic structure. Dominant among the generative metaphors permeating her work are notions of refuge and shelter. Structures that allude to functional purposes, without actually servicing utilitarian ends, were among her first mature works, sculptures executed in the mid 1980s. They, like the vegetation rooms, suspended ceilings and hanging corridors which followed, offer places for reflective viewing as opposed to direct access. For instead of soliciting an interactive, participatory engagement, Iglesias typically sets up situations in which rumination and reflection prevail – the intermittent cascading and swirling of the water ebbing and flowing in her wells mesmerizes spectators; the beguiling shadows cast by the pavilions do not merely dissolve their structures into the ambient space, but their cryptic shards of text, evoking mysterious abyssal realms and fictive worlds far beyond the present context, ultimately become the focus of visitors' attention. In like vein, the dense looming plane of her suspended ceiling, whose surface resembles an encrusted ocean floor, effects an inexplicable inversion in our experience of the everyday world, suggesting that our understanding of the natural order and our place within it can never be taken for granted. Acutely attentive to the manifold ways that the built environment, past and present, has impacted and structured the organic world, Iglesias has made this awareness integral to the aesthetic pleasures and metaphysical truths that her richly layered works offer her many audiences.

**Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte
Reina Sofía**

Sabatini Building

Santa Isabel, 52

Nouvel Building

Ronda de Atocha
(with Emperador
Carlos V Square)
28012 Madrid

Tel. (34) 91 774 10 00

Fax (34) 91 774 10 56

Museum hours

Monday to Saturday
and holidays

from 10:00 a.m.

to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays from

10:00 a.m.

to 7:00 p.m.*

(*From 2:30 pm
onwards only the
Collection galleries
can be visited)

Closed Tuesdays

Galleries close

15 minutes

prior to Museum
closing

Image:

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Text:

Lynne Cooke

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