

## Concha Jerez *Our Memory Is Being Stolen*



CONCHA JEREZ. *Que nos roban la memoria*. Julio, 2020  
Vista de sala con la obra Límite de la cotidianidad (Planta 3 del Edificio Sabatini)  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
Fotografía: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores. Archivo fotográfico del Museo Reina Sofía

<b>DATES:</b>	July 29, 2020 – January 11, 2021
<b>PLACE:</b>	Sabatini Building Floor 3, Stairways, Vaults Gallery and Protocol Room
<b>ORGANIZATION:</b>	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
<b>CURATORSHIP:</b>	João Fernandes
<b>COORDINATION:</b>	Patricia Molins

Concha Jerez presents *Our Memory Is Being Stolen (Que nos roban la memoria)*, an exhibition that focuses in the concept of **memory**, a key topic in the artist's work. Conceived both as a **retrospective** and a **new project**, the show presents works from the 1970s to the present day, retrieving and revising the artist's oeuvre from a perspective in which **personal memory** and **collective memory** intersect. Jerez's conception of the show as an in-situ revision of her essential ideas and projects has led her to occupy exhibition galleries but also **previously unused spaces**, with installations that combine pre-existing works and new elements.

Born in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1941, Concha Jerez studied Music and Political Science before training as a conceptual artist in 1970. A forerunner of conceptual and sound art in Spain, her work is particularly appreciated for its critical nature and its experimental multimedia elements. Her career has been distinguished by several awards, including the MAV Prize (2012), the National Award for Plastic Arts (2015) and the Velázquez Prize for Visual Arts (2017).

*Our Memory Is Being Stolen*, which has been curated by João Fernandes and organized by Museo Reina Sofía in collaboration with Comunidad de Madrid, explores topics as the Spanish Civil War and its subsequent reprisals, the censorship of the period of the transition to democracy, the vindication of the forgotten and anonymous (women, migrants...), and the relationship between memory and its repression.

Concha Jerez insists on the need to interfere in the media, to not fall into nihilism and to face up to, with an attitude of ethical and aesthetic courage, the cynical drifts of the present. In her works, we witness "news checking", meditations on the disarticulation of a political party, testimonies of utopias, views of the limits we inhabit or journeys through landscapes of conflict and exclusion. The artist, moreover, is fully aware that memory is key to reactivating criticism in unhinged times and, above all else, reminds us, in her intervention against the void, that we must avoid history merely repeating itself as farse.

The show transcends the exhibition hosted in Museo Reina Sofía's Sabatini building's third floor and occupies other museum spaces such as corridors and staircases, to which the artist refers as a "great container of memory". This is the first time an exhibition occupies these uniquely beautiful and highly evocative spaces.



### **Sabatini Building Floor 3 and Vaults Gallery**

The main section extends to the areas adjoining the exhibition halls and presents a partial survey of Concha Jerez's career. In this section, conceptualist projects on paper (drawings, collages, prints and artists' books) - many of them not displayed since the seventies, when they were made - refer to the last days of the Franco's regime in Spain and the violent protests reported in the press at the time, while more recent installations critically and poetically examine current affairs, such as *Table of Mobile Conflicts* (1994).



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In this section the visitor will also find a few other essential works such as *Wall of Silence* (1986), *End Measurement* (1986-1996) or *Garden of Absences* (2002), which stand for a conceptual critique that in Jerez's oeuvre has always been both political and aesthetic.

*The Dark Side of the Mirror* (1997) is an installation derived from the actions entitled *Interference Break* that she performed at the male section of Carabanchel Prison during two weeks in 1994, the first on 6 December, Day of the Spanish Constitution. This visual and sound work consists of six units in the form of iron desks with their own artists' books, reading lamps, concealed CD players with their corresponding CDs, and rotating alert lights under the units. The units are surveilled by a security camera whose real-time images can be watched continuously on a monitor located in front of the staircase.

### **Site-specific interventions in Sabatini's staircases**

The museum staircases and an underground room accommodate four interventions adapted to these spaces, establishing a dialogue with its space and its history: *Xm3 de Memoria olvidada (Forgotten Memory)*, *Xm3 de Memoria Autocensurada (Self-Censored Memory)*, *Xm3 de Memoria Escrita y Oralizada (Written and Oral Memory)* and *Xm3 de Memoria Silenciada (Silenced Memory)*. They derive from earlier works articulated in a double proposal she calls Interior Landscape and Exterior Landscape in which objects, videos, sound recordings and drawings interact with the museum space – a former hospital – and its history, analyzing memory as a political, linguistic and poetic resource filled with personal and social codes, past and present, that are shown in oral, poetic and journalistic expressions.

Other works in these spaces include installations like *Portrait of Rosario*, *Limit of Ordinarity* (1986), *Wall of Silence* (1986), *End Measurement* (1986-1996) or *Garden of Absences* (2002).

## Protocol Room

The protocol room presents Concha Jerez's personal archive. It displays a selection of objects and projects collected by the artist since the seventies, including databases that compile artworks produced throughout her career — sound, performative and plastic works, installations, artist's books, drawings, sketches and mail art pieces.

## The artist

Concha Jerez (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1941) studied music and political sciences before turning fully to conceptual art in 1970. In those first years, she produced drawings and collages often inspired by news items she read in the press, in which she focused especially on the repression of freedom of expression and censorship, both political and artistic. Such themes continue to interest her, and her approach is twofold, embracing both personal and collective experiences. In 1976 she made her first large installation entitled *Self-Censorship* (*La Autocensura*), a work on paper in which she converted censored writing into illegible graphic symbols.

From then on, her work has developed above all in multimedia installations, into which she introduces new technological possibilities such as video, audio, photography, net.art, performance art, etc. These installations often include two elements that emerged in her early work – news items in the press as a starting point for critical works, self-censored texts as illegible calligraphy – which she adds to those inspired by current topics, especially those related to feminism and immigration, and how they are overlooked or mishandled by the official media and policies.

Since the late eighties she has made numerous sound works, especially for the radio, developing since 1990 a collaborative work with musician José Iges, with whom she has produced radiophonic works, performances and multimedia installations in Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Mexico, among other countries. Her career has been distinguished by several awards, including the MAV Prize (2012), the National Award for Plastic Arts (2015) and the Velázquez Prize for Visual Arts (2017).



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Detalle de la muestra (Escaleras del Edificio Sabatini)  
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Further information:

PRESS OFFICE

MUSEO REINA SOFÍA

[internacionalprensa@museoreinasofia.es](mailto:internacionalprensa@museoreinasofia.es)

(+34) 91 774 22 81

[www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa](http://www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa)

