

A MEDIA LUMBRE

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Curatorial text. Blanca de la Torre

IVAM, Es Baluard Museu and Casal Solleric have teamed up within the framework of Biennial B to explore the relationship between art and traditional crafts in “A media lumbre”, a series of exhibitions being held in venues across Valencia, Mallorca, Catalonia and Aragon. The project brings together a selection of works and practices that examine the connections between contemporary art, territory, memory and material knowledge.

“A media lumbre” was originated at IVAM in Valencia and is curated by its director, Blanca de la Torre. In Mallorca, the initiative is being presented as part of Biennial B, an initiative launched by Es Baluard Museu and the Consell de Mallorca in close collaboration and partnership with other cultural institutions: the Ajuntament de Palma is coproducing several Biennial B initiatives within Casal Solleric’s own programme, and the Ajuntament de Marratxí is producing a tribute to pioneering artist Teresa Matas at Sa Refinadora.

These exhibitions feature an exceptional number of artists who are either native to or resident in the Balearic Islands. As well as participating in the shows at the various venues, they are also included in the specially commissioned publication. Isabel Servera, Adriana Meunié, Ana Laura Aláez and Marta Font, who featured in the first exhibition in the series at IVAM, are now joined by Teresa Matas, Tonina Crespi and Albert Pinya and Joan Pere Català Roig at this new stage in Mallorca. Among the works featured are *Cardinal Directions*, produced by artist Jessica Stockholder for Es Baluard Museu in collaboration with Pep Toni Ferrer and Magdalena Vidal (Paumes i Brins), and a piece by Lara Ordóñez created using hand-felted Mallorcan wool.

In line with Biennial B’s strategic objectives, the project seeks to promote contemporary Balearic culture with a local focus by creating opportunities for artists and bringing contemporary art closer to the public. It consolidates a model of institutional cooperation that positions Mallorca as a cultural benchmark and highlights the links between art, territory and tradition by championing, from Palma, a collective approach based on shared capabilities and collaborative projects. In addition, the partnership with Marratxí recognises the town’s craft heritage, as well as a way of understanding creative practice that is deeply rooted in the territory, traditional trades and local traditions.

Biennial B is a crosscutting, inclusive project that brings together diverse disciplines from art and craft around sustainable development and the tangible and intangible heritage of the island of Mallorca, functioning as a vital artery or meeting point. “A media lumbre” also enables us to connect with the rest of Spain and foster connectivity through creative actions with a shared goal: to showcase the breadth of our culture while revisiting traditional trades and vernacular techniques from a contemporary perspective and forging a dialogue with the landscapes from which they emerged.

“A media lumbré” gathers together a set of works that enter into dialogue with materials and forms of knowledge that have historically been considered “minor” arts, such as ceramics, clay, wool, textiles, embroidery and natural fibres. Added to this matter are sound and silence. The voice here is a means of transmission, reclaiming oral tradition as a vehicle for memory, as in the *filandones* of old times – nighttime gatherings around the hearth where handcrafts were made and stories shared.

This exhibition is a hymn to good living and the sovereignty of time; an invitation to stop, breathe and listen to the murmur of matter. The common premise behind the works is that the act of integrating these materials is a means to preserve ancestral forms of knowledge, to rescue narratives that have been pushed into the background, and to activate other forms of knowledge. In this liminal space, tangible and intangible heritage, technique and affect, act and story come together. The exhibition is lit by a gentle flame, to the slow rhythm of manual work and common heritage.

“A media lumbré” unfolds across different regions—Valencia, Mallorca, Aragón and Catalonia—in four independent exhibitions united under a single conceptual framework. It begins at a major urban museum, the IVAM, and extends between the urban and rural in Mallorca, at Casal Solleric, Es Baluard Museu i Sa Refinadora. It then rejoins the land and landscape at CDAN (Huesca) and Museu Terra (L’Espluga de Francolí) museums. The itinerary traces a sensitive cartography that interlaces different contexts and fosters an ongoing dialogue between rural and urban terrain, tradition and experimentation, manual labour and critical reflection. In producing the exhibition, we have followed sustainability guidelines that prioritize natural and non-polluting materials, reuse of different items and the elimination of international transport, among other measures.

Each venue activates the exhibition from its own context, creating specific resonances without losing the coherence of the whole. The pieces and their materiality bring us closer to non-hegemonic forms of knowledge from specific areas: crafts, trades, peasant farming and Indigenous practices, ways of living bound to land and water. To rescue this knowledge does not only mean preserving techniques, but also protecting a living heritage of memories, oral narratives, popular knowledge and collective affect.

Matter here is not an inert resource but a living archive. The memory it holds is inseparable from the places where it originates, from the bodies and communities that have worked it. Materials weave relationships: wool speaks of transhumance and care; plant fibres tell of fragile ecosystems and strategies for sustainability; ceramics remember their earliest function of holding, preserving and accompanying daily life. Materials that were initially utilitarian have given way to poetry.

“A media lumbré” celebrates systems of knowledge that have historically been devalued, and looks at cosmovisions that propose we live in equilibrium with our particular surroundings. From such perspectives, decentralising knowledge is an absolute requisite in order to decentralise territory, so that institutions must recognize our responsibility to question epistemic hierarchies, to fracture single narratives, and to experiment with polycentric models.

Looking at the past here becomes a way to imagine the future. Tangible and intangible heritage merge in a single weave of memories, territories and affect. The exhibition invites us to listen to the voice of matter, and to collectively attempt other ways of making the world; slower, more careful ways, gently under the flame.