

## 1. Introduction

With the exhibition Cristina Iglesias. Passages, the Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera presents the sculptor's unique work while offering a poetic reimagining of the space created by Gaudí, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior, and between the organic and the artificial.

Born in San Sebastián in 1956, Cristina Iglesias is among the most significant figures in contemporary sculpture. With a repertoire that blends fictional and natural forms, she creates immersive environments that bring together disciplines such as architecture, engineering and literature with natural elements and cultural influences specific to the location for which they were designed. Iglesias' works feature in major international collections and she has also created significant public installations spaces around the world. She has participated in leading art competitions and has received prestigious awards in recognition of her original sculptural language.

In this exhibition, featuring more than 30 works created between 2002 and today, the artist proposes a route that juxtaposes earlier works with new creations, tracing a journey that threads through them. At the same time, she relates the pieces to one another and establishes a dialogue with Gaudí's space. It is a journey that unfolds as a sequence of movements through the fluid spaces of La Pedrera and the enclosed and open spaces of Iglesias' work and, at the same time, creates a succession of immersive, sensory landscapes. The artist's work transforms the perception of the environment, which in turn shapes the perception of the work itself; this gives rise to a dynamic interplay that is completed by the viewer's gaze and presence.

## 2. Light and shadow

In some of her works, Cristina Iglesias creates walk-in spaces that often incorporate light and shadow as an intrinsic part of the installation. Some of these pieces employ lattice screens or trellises to create open architectural structures or suspended ceilings, within which the artist also incorporates fragments of literary texts, generally from science fiction. Light and shadow play a central role, contributing to a narrative that draws the viewer into a dreamlike, fictional realm.

This exhibition features two large-scale installations of this kind: *Corredor suspendido II* (*Suspended Corridor II*) and, towards the end of the route, *Pabellón de los sueños* (*The Pavillion of Dreams*). These two works challenge the viewer's gaze through a game of hidden and revealed spaces, where echoes of the Eastern world are subtly evoked, inviting us to enter and explore the work.

The texts selected by Iglesias for these works depict fantastical places and, although they often resemble nearly indecipherable hieroglyphics, their meaning lies in the very essence of the artist's reflections on creating spaces through a combination of real and fictional elements. In the case of *Corredor suspendido II* (*Suspended Corridor II*), the chosen text describes the crystallised vegetation from the novel *The Crystal World* by J. G. Ballard, while in *Pabellón de los sueños* (*The Pavillion of Dreams*), she reproduces a fragment from the novel *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem.

### 3. Passages

Cristina Iglesias' fascination with encouraging the viewer participation is evident in the pieces she conceives as corridors, doors and rooms. She often recreates imaginary worlds in these works, clearly inspired by plants and minerals. Several examples can be seen throughout the exhibition, including *Habitación vegetal (Vegetation Room)*, *Camino vegetal (Vegetation Path)* and, the most recent work, *Bosque mineral (Mineral Forest)*, which Iglesias created especially for the occasion.

Presented as a passage through Gaudí's architecture, the works in the exhibition at La Pedrera acquire their full meaning and open up new readings. Iglesias' work transforms the perception of Gaudí's space, while Gaudí's space shapes the perception of Iglesias' work, depending on how visitors move through the pieces. The passage designed by the artist generates a dynamic relationship, in which each visitor's gaze truly establishes a dialogue between the exhibition pieces and the building. For Iglesias, the viewer's freedom of perception is vital; she encourages visitors to follow a path that invites them to experiment without directly intervening in it.

### 4. Prints and reflections

Screen printing is one of the techniques Cristina Iglesias uses most frequently in her two-dimensional works. This procedure allows her to work with warm, reflective materials, such as copper and silk, which give off a light that lends the images a certain theatrical illusionism.

She constructs ephemeral cardboard models that serve as three-dimensional laboratories for rethinking the notion of space. She screen prints the

photographs of these models on a backlit support, which strips them of their photographic quality and gives rise to fictitious spaces that, at first glance, appear real, but on closer inspection prove to be false. These views create an illusion of depth, which is heightened by the viewer's reflection in the copper plate, while simultaneously blurring the lines between real and fictitious space.

This technique results in mysterious, poetic pieces, with a magical and timeless atmosphere reminiscent of theatrical scenography that invites the viewer to enter and move through them. In fact, the mirror-like effect of the copper reflects us, allowing us to become part of this unreal space. Other, more recent screen prints on copper are studies of marine geology. Once the images are printed, the artist manipulates them with acids to oxidise the copper and create blues, greens and turquoises that allude to seawater in the form of whirlpools. They resemble dreamlike explorations of caves in the Cantabrian Sea that fill with water with the force of the waves and the ebb and flow of the tides. This is true of the works *Sea Cave I* and *Sea Cave II*, as well as the engravings in the *Hondalea* series, all of which are included in the exhibition.

## 5. Water

Water, a challenging material to mould, features in much of Cristina Iglesias' work; she uses it as a sculptural material in a wide range of pieces, including wells and installations that evoke groundwater or the coastline. The artist shapes water to suit her purposes, adapts its resistance to fixed forms, and treats it as just another of the materials she uses in her works. It allows her to incorporate sensory and dynamic elements into her sculptures: sound, rhythm and time. The temporal rhythm of filling and emptying is an integral part of these

pieces, shaping the viewer's perception and making the passage of time palpable.

The artist has made use of water in five of the pieces in this exhibition. There is a well—one of the most iconic themes in Iglesias' work—in the entrance courtyard and three more along the route. Her wells draw us into a vision of depth, both real and illusory, and prompt us to reflect on the planet, vertigo and the passage of time. Water flows through the cavities, creating the illusion of erosion in a hypnotic manner that evokes the immense timescales of geological formation.

In the work *Littoral (Lunar Meteorite)*, water flows through the cavities, suggesting geological collisions; the sea eroding the coastline and lunar meteorites eroding the Earth.

The moving water adds a sonorous, dynamic dimension to the enigmatic atmosphere of the installations. Unbound by a fixed space, it flows, glimmers, resonates and reflects among plant forms—leaves and roots—producing different sounds depending on the intensity of the flow.

## 6. Growth

Cristina Iglesias explores the idea of natural growth in many of her works. Recently, she has created cast aluminium sculptures that appear to emerge from the ground like dense, invasive vegetation, their shoots intertwined. The exhibition features three pieces from the *Entwined* series, from 2022, which grow from the subsoil and creep sinuously across the wall. Similarly, the 2018 piece *Growth I*, positioned at the end of the route, forms a freestanding structure composed of large elements that invite the viewer to enter the interior

of the ensemble. Both the *Entwined* series and the piece *Growth I* confront the viewer with a hybrid organism, part nature and part industry, evoking a sense of movement that is free, rapid and aggressive, utterly alien to order and human control.

The dense tangle of forms in these sculptures follows no perceptible pattern or rhythm; rather, they suggest the relentless logic of plant life, generating its own structures as it grows. Iglesias has always been fascinated by this idea of proliferation, of growth, which has its own rhythm and is unstoppable; the branches, the creep of lava or fungi or the underground roots and rhizomatic growths that suddenly develop or emerge.

Although these sculptures appeal to the unconscious memory of viewers—who project their own experiences onto them—and trigger a whole host of associations, the presence of glass inlays in amber, green and other colours, arranged as rhizomatic growth clusters, interrupts us and redirects us back to the artist's vivid imagination, so influenced by science fiction literature.

## **7. Public installation. *Hondalea***

Cristina Iglesias has created numerous installations for public spaces. These pieces draw on both the language of architecture and references from the natural world, exploring the intersections between physical, fictional and psychological space. Her pursuit of a poetic and symbolic dialogue between the works and the spaces they inhabit is consistently realised in strikingly aesthetic, visually compelling and dynamic displays. In all her works, which frequently explore water or incorporate literary or cultural references, she

achieves a sense of monumentality and rethinks her own concept of space by blurring the boundaries between the fictional and the real.

Iglesias has achieved international recognition for large-scale commissions, such as *Deep Fountain*, in the city of Antwerp—the first of the artist's major public artworks—, the ceremonial gates for the new building at the Museo del Prado and works in Toledo and the City of London.

Cristina Iglesias is interested in creating places that encourage us to reflect on the importance of protecting the environment and has also produced works that are fully integrated into the natural landscape, such as a sculpture installed on the seabed in Baja California, a sculptural labyrinth in the Brazilian jungle, and *Hondalea* in San Sebastián.

*Hondalea*, which was inaugurated in 2021, is one of Iglesias' most important public installations. The artist created a striking sculptural environment inside the lighthouse on Santa Clara Island in San Sebastián. The building, which had lain abandoned for years, was hollowed out and excavated to great depths to install a bronze work that resembles coastal rocks and alludes to a seabed that fills and empties with water, emulating the rhythm of the tides.

Situated in this iconic location of the city, the piece is understood as a symbol of environmental concerns and conveys the idea of art as both a refuge and a meeting place, a message consistently present in Cristina Iglesias' public works.

To learn more about Cristina Iglesias' work, images of all her public installations can be viewed via the map in this exhibition application.