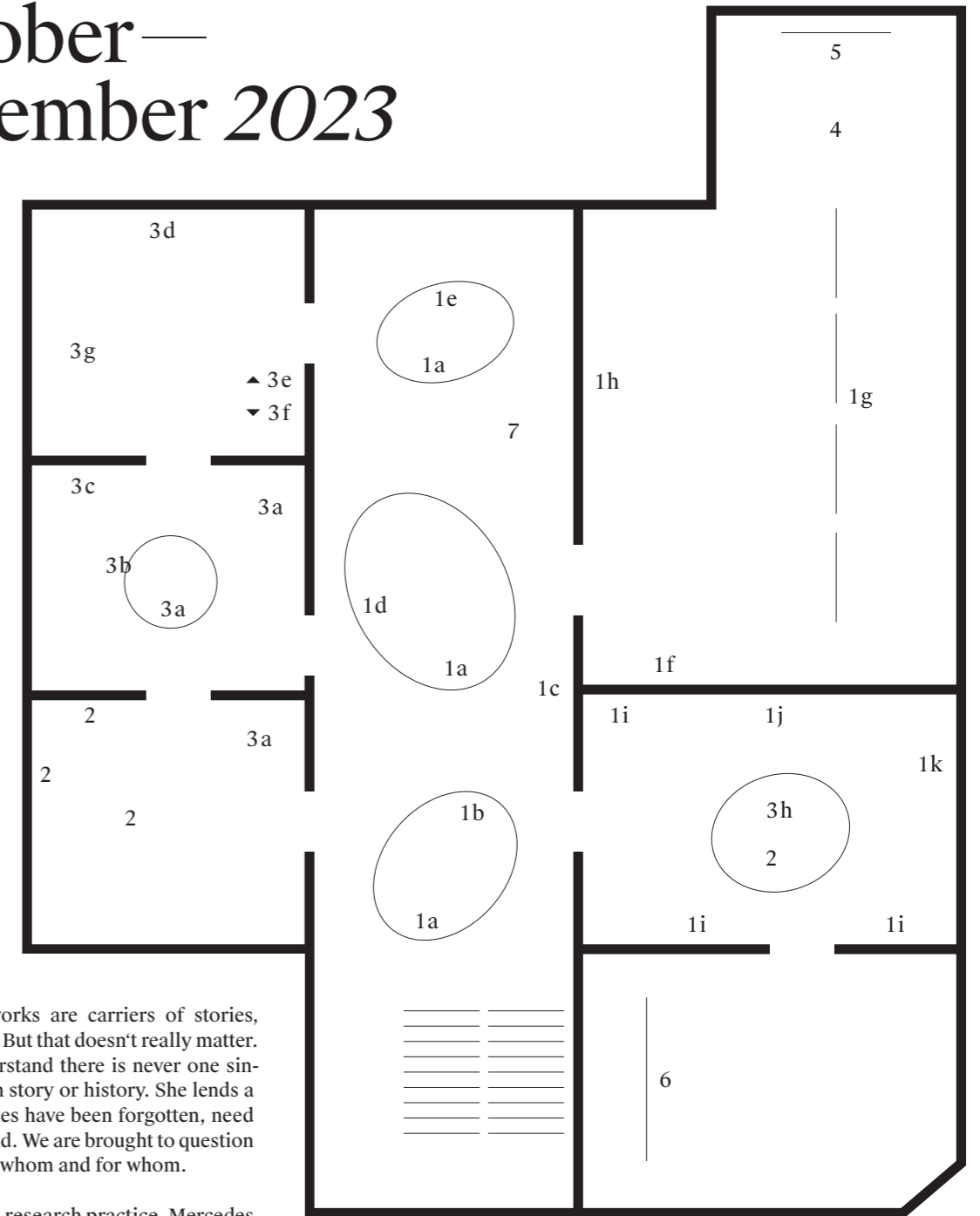


*Mercedes Azpilicueta* is a visual and performance artist from Buenos Aires living and working in Amsterdam. She was an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam in 2015–16, and received the Pernod Ricard Fellowship in 2017. Solo exhibitions include Lumen Travo Gallery, Amsterdam (2023); Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf (2022/23); Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2022); NoguerasBlanchard, Madrid (2022); Gasworks, London (2021); CAC Brétigny, Brétigny-sur-Orge (2021); Museion, Bolzano/Bozen (2020); Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2019); CentroCentro, Madrid (2019); and MAMBA, Buenos Aires (2018). Her work is also currently on view at Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands. Azpilicueta was nominated for the Prix de Rome in 2021.

# Mercedes Azpilicueta

## *Tierra desnuda, cielo desnudo*

14 October —  
10 December 2023



Mercedes Azpilicueta's works are carriers of stories, some true, some fictional. But that doesn't really matter. Azpilicueta helps us understand there is never one singular account of any given story or history. She lends a voice to those whose stories have been forgotten, need rewriting or were never told. We are brought to question how history is written, by whom and for whom.

Born out of her long-term research practice, Mercedes Azpilicueta creates large work groups over extended periods of time that she constantly revisits. This exhibition brings together a selection of works from seven different series, allowing them to converse with one another in space for the first time. By weaving multiple stories together here, the exhibition, with lightness and curiosity, poetically shows how everything is connected between our *naked earth* and *naked sky* - *Tierra desnuda, cielo desnudo*.

English

The exhibition takes place at the *Altes Rathaus* in cooperation with the City of Göttingen's Fachdienst Kultur. We thank our funding partners:



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## 1 *Bestiario de Lengüitas (Bestiary of Tonguelets)*

*Bestiario de Lengüitas (Bestiary of Tonguelets)* shares a story still being scripted and in constant flux. Carpets, textile hangings, drawings, and printed wallpaper are simultaneously exhibition architecture and set décor for a performance yet to take place, if ever. But Azpilicueta preferences the work in progress and favors instability and proliferation over the quest for a single ‘finished’ truth. The artist’s personal stories of multiple encounters, friendships and affections pepper the chorus of sculptural characters inhabiting the stage. The anthropomorphous costumes are protagonists (be they living or dead; existing or fictive; humans, prostheses, animals, demons or plants) with constantly changing roles that obfuscate straight narratives. Azpilicueta creates space for the often sidelined (hi)story of proto-scientific knowledge, blending European medieval imaginaries with Latin American cosmogonies. She brings together witches, goddesses and muses from both sides of the Atlantic. Many of the pieces have been made using ‘poor’ craft-based or handmade techniques that are often associated with the domestic work of women and with subaltern knowledge, such as sewing, embroidering or dying. The materials are either recycled or natural (latex, leather, silk, wax) and add another layer of stories to the objects, that of the circulation of resources and knowledge often acquired through the violent exploitation of humans and nature.

A book on this project is forthcoming with Kerber Verlag later this year: *Mercedes Azpilicueta: Bestiary of Tonguelets / Bestiario de Lengüitas – Processing Process*.

- 1a *Runas Barrosas I, II, III*, 2019 carpet
- 1b *Soft Armour X (The Porcupine)*, 2019 recycled carpet, calfskin leather leftovers, vintage sleeve, beech wood, copper
- 1c *Soft Armour IV (Baroque Ghost)*, 2018–2020 natural latex, cotton dyed with walnut stain, elastic, beech wood, copper

- 1d *Soft Armour IX (The Nun-Louis XIV)*, 2019 cotton fabric partially dyed with walnut stain, cotton, feathers, beech wood, copper
- 1e *Soft Armour VI (Loving Transformer)*, 2018 cotton dyed with walnut stain and Cusco dye, beeswax, calfskin, vintage collar, beech wood, copper, red clay
- 1f *Soft Armour I (El Armadillo)*, 2018 leather leftovers, beech wood, copper
- 1g *Bestiario de Lengüitas - Act I, scene 1, 2, 3, 4*, 2019 natural linen, two tone natural silk, stitched thread
- 1h *Alchemia e Utopia*, 2018–2020 latex skin, pipes
- 1i *Marginalia*, 2018/2020 Ink and cocheneal tint on paper
- 1j *Mille-fleurs dans le Fumoir*, 2018–2020 Wallpaper
- 1k *Soft Armour II (Toxic Skin)*, 2018 natural latex, thread, beech wood, copper

## 2 *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries*

*Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries* shares stories of women’s domestic labour across centuries through household objects and clothes. The immeasurable emotional labour that comes with care work and tasks historically labelled “women’s work” like cooking, cleaning, child rearing and managing a household go mostly unnoticed as they are performed in the home. This often isolating, invisible unpaid labour is not acknowledged as *work*, despite colloquially being labelled as such. Floating white clothes, tools and utensils come together in a collective formation. They rally together in support and acknowledgement of one another. The sound of gossip and whispers, the artist’s voice, speaks to the power of informal exchange in inciting change. The objects become agents and carriers for countless undocumented and forgotten stories. The series is informed by the artist’s research into the Potato Riots of 1917 in the Jordaan neighborhood of Amsterdam, organised by working class

women in response to food shortages during the First World War and also contemporary social movements such as #NiUnaMenos (not one woman less) in Latin America that emerged in 2015 after the femicide of Argentinean Daiana García to protest against systemic gender-based violence. Displaying household items in an exhibition context highlights the interplay of the domestic and public realm while addressing the socio-economic value of domestic labor, and collectivity as a polyphonic force for change.

- 2 *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries*, 2021 objects, garments, sound

## 3 *Kinky Affairs at Home*

*Kinky Affairs at Home* shares the story of the Fluxus artist Anne Marie Jehle (1937–2000) who concerned both her life and work with the nuance of the quotidian and the sociocultural identities of objects. Mercedes Azpilicueta saw photos of the Jehle’s house and was fascinated how art was indecipherable from furniture. Azpilicueta set out to create works made of simple, benign materials often at hand in the home and often related to ingrained gender roles. Island-like furniture sculptures are draped with leather works made of pre-existing garments, off-cuts of material, hair extensions and other bits and bobs. A bed is upturned, pieces of furniture sliced in half. The found materials hold their own stories, taking on a subversive quality seemingly at odds with the “agreeable” (docile, feminine) home environments from which they were sourced. Previously often suppressed in public, the Erotic, gender, sexual expression and notions of the bonded body are brought from the interior and layed out in the open. The assumed innocence of the domestic is quashed. No longer relegated to the private sphere, it is full of individual quirks and unbridled expression.

- 3a *The Gone Bedroom*, 2022 In collaboration with Katharina Kasinger Vintage bed, chair (wood, acrylic)

- 3b *The Spicy Kangaroo*, 2022 In collaboration with Darsha Golova Vintage leather skirt, vintage leather belt, copper
- 3c *The Shy Quote*, 2022 In collaboration with Katharina Kasinger Vintage coat rack (wood, acrylic, metal, leather)
- 3d *The Wise Octopus*, 2018–2022 In collaboration with Darsha Golova Vintage-Lederjacke, Kupfer, Schuhe, Wildseide, Lederschnüre
- 3e *The Coquette Spiders*, 2022 In collaboration with Guillermina Baiguera vintage leather shoe parts, hair extensions
- 3f *The Tasty Quote (The Magic Kitchen)*, 2022 In collaboration with Katharina Kasinger vintage coffee table (wood, acrylic, metal)
- 3g *The Resting Quote (The Magic Kitchen)*, 2022 In collaboration with Katharina Kasinger vintage chair (wood, acrylic)
- 3h *The Magic Kitchen*, 2022 In collaboration with Katharina Kasinger Vintage cupboard, coffee table, chair (wood, acrylic, metal)

## 4 *The Old Dream of Symmetry*

*The Old Dream of Symmetry* shares the story of an usually unseen underside. The textile sculpture of two figures, suspended by chains is a homage to the coat of arms on the reverse of the painting by Pontormo *Natività di San Giovanni Battista* (Nativity of Saint John the Baptist) 1526. The sculpture is Azpilicueta’s interpretation of the two winged creatures that appear on the back of the painting: fantastic, monstrous beings. In Azpilicueta’s version these become bird-bodies,

made out of folds and creases of soft felt, covered by meshe and garlands of oily latex, and punctuated by metal chains. The cloth has been died in a colour palette reminiscent of blood, mud and earth tones, evoking a Baroque viscerality that is no longer just European, but also Colonial, and even Postmodern.

- 4 *Hommage al reverso de Natività di San Giovanni Battista, Pontormo, 1526 (I)*, 2019 wool felt, red oxide and caput mortuum natural dyes, hand-made dyed eco-latex, metal chains

## 5 *Yegua-yeta-yuta*

*Yegua-yeta-yuta* shares the story of womens’ daily experience in Argentina. A litany of pejorative, abusive, and vulgar insults directed at women and derive from the street slang of Buenos Aires are embroidered on a natural linen and silk textile. *Yegua* literally means a mare – a female horse, a slur for a “difficult” woman. A *yeta* is a person who brings bad luck, while a *yuta* refers to the police or someone corrupted or unscrupulous. Azpilicueta reclaims the power to offend, distorting and distending the epithets into something flowing and powerful rather than weak and degrading. The harsh meaning of the words contrast with their subtle materiality of the embroidering act, a technique often associated with minor arts and female labour.

- 5 *Yegua-yeta-yuta*, 2018 linen, silk, thread, sound

## 6 *Cuerpos Pájaros (Body-Birds)*

*Cuerpos Pájaros (Body-Birds)* shares the story of three voices: one personal, one historical and one theoretical. The three voices interweave reflections on the act of writing as an emancipatory act; on the affectations of the human figure in the Mannerist art; and on the impressions of a spectator in front of the gestuality of the baroque work from Artemisia Gentileschi, *Giuditta decapita Oloferne* (Judith Beheading Holofernes) 1620 c. The video projection raises the question of where the collective body begins to emerge and end. Azpilicueta investigates the expressiveness of bodies and uses the power of her voice to probe the individual sovereignty we have over our own bodies, thoughts and speech, as it is weighed up against inquiries into

socio-political structures that shape our behavior. She portrays this collective body in a constant state of transformation, formed by many diverse and demystified bodies, more distorted and affected than the ideal standards of beauty. Azpilicueta’s work is a poetic response to the norms that condition what we say, how we behave, and how we inhabit our bodies.

- 6 *Cuerpos Pájaros (Body-Birds)*, 2018 video, 15 min

## 7 *The Captive: Here’s a Heart for Every Fate*

*The High Comb* shares a story of the neo-Baroque of 19th-century Latin America from today’s perspective. Azpilicueta has created a series of characters inspired by the legend of Lucía Miranda, as told by 19th-century Argentinian writer Eduarda Mansilla. Miranda was the first European woman to be captured by the indigenous people upon arrival in Argentina in the 16th century. In the 19th-century narrative, Mansilla emphasizes the strength of both the resistance Miranda and of the indigenous people. One character, *The High Comb*, counters the 19th century heteronormative aesthetics of Mansilla’s time. A restrictive Spanish colonial collar (peinetón) is mixed with a contemporary wig, rope and mass-produced objects like the side-squeeze buckle, which also references BDSM.

- 7 *The High Comb*, 2019 wig, cord, wooden sticks, sock, side squeeze buckle, wood beams