



Gravitation

Eduardo Chillida

Not on display

Title/Description: Gravitation

Artist/Maker: Eduardo Chillida

Born: 1991

Object Type: Collage

Materials: Ink, Paper, String

Measurements: h. 200 x w. 235 mm

Accession Number: 1079

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Spain

Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002) was born in San Sebastián in the Basque region of Spain. This collage is from a series of sculptural works that are made from layers of hanging paper. This group is called 'Gravitaciones' (Gravitations) because these compositions explore the concept of gravity.

Although these works are often described as collages, they are unusual because,

'The different fragments of paper are not "glued" together but rather hang independently from thread.' [1]

In these works, Chillida's intention is to retain a degree of movement, allowing the compositions to respond to fluctuations of air current and the gravity acting on the paper sheets suspended from the points-line. However, for its protection, the Sainsbury Centre's 'Gravitation' is protected by glass and cannot move. This work still feels dynamic as a result of the superimposition and interrelation of lines, voids, frames and enclosures. At the centre of this work, thin, staggered, white lines connect the three voids, unifying the tripartite structure of the composition.

When Chillida constructed his 'Gravitaciones', he preferred to use thick paper (Mexican and Chinese paper) and sometimes cloth-felt, to give the composition's component parts a substantial mass and weight. [2] The artist's hand is visible in the manipulation of the materials, the tremor of the brushed line loaded with ink, and the gestural scissor cuts.

Chillida's restrained compositions are charged with energy and invite the viewer to consider the subtle ridges, depressions and textures of their constructed surfaces. His works on paper explore the tensions created by containment and release through a labyrinthine arrangement of lines and enclosures. The artist draws attention to the structuring of positive (full) and negative (empty) space, and the sculptural effect when these enclosures are combined with varying degrees of density of line. These architectonic works subtly transcend the two -dimension plane by way of their collaged layers and painted surfaces.

In his youth, Eduardo Chillida was a professional soccer player for the team Real Sociedad. After suffering a serious knee injury, he began training as an architect at the University of Madrid (1943-46). However, Chillida never finished this degree, and instead, took lessons in drawing at Madrid's Circulo de Bellas Artes and joined a sculpture workshop. [3] He set up his first studio in Paris in 1948 and started making sculptures in plaster. Returning to the Basque region in 1951, he began to work in forged iron, moving away from figurative sculpture and embracing a more abstract approach to the exploration of space and form. In addition to making monumental sculptures, Chillida created numerous drawings, etchings, lithographs and woodcuts over the course of his career.

Vanessa Tothill, March 2023

[1] 'Chillida 1948-98' (Sofía: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999), p. 42.

[2] 'Chillida 1948-98', p. 42.

[3] 'Chillida 1948-98', p. 286.

Further Reading

Koelen, Martin van der, 'Eduardo Chillida: Opus P.I: Catalogue Raisonné of the Original Prints' (Gingko Pr Inc., 1999)

Koelen, Martin van der, 'Eduardo Chillida: Opus P.II: Catalogue Raisonné of the Original Prints' (Gingko Pr Inc., 1997)

Koelen, Martin van der, 'Eduardo Chillida: Opus P.III: Catalogue Raisonné of the Original Prints' (Gingko Pr Inc., 2000)

'Chillida 1948-98 (Sofía: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999)

'Chillida' Hayward Gallery, London 6 September - 4 November 1990 (London: South Bank Centre, 1990)

'Chillida October 26, 1979-January 6, 1980', Pittsburgh International Series, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute (Paris: Maeght éditeur, 1979)
