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W. H. H. H.

Esku XXXIII

Eduardo Chillida

Not on display

Title/Description: Esku XXXIII

Artist/Maker: Eduardo Chillida

Born: 1994

Object Type: Graphics

Materials: Ink, Paper

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 210 x w. 140 mm) Framed: (h. 515 x w. 485 x d. 36 mm)

Accession Number: 1267

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Spain

Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002) was born in San Sebastián in the Basque region of Spain. Many of his titles are in the Basque language of Euskera. The meaning of the word 'Esku' translates as 'Hand'.

Chillida began making etchings in the 'Esku' series in 1971. [1] These were published in the same year as a similar series titled, 'Trois sur Trois' (Three of Three), the compositions of which comprise angular, linear forms which nest together or interlock like the fingers of a hand. [2]

'Esku XXXIII' is both a realistic study of the human body and an investigation of the line's capacity to demarcate areas, creating enclosed and open fields which are charged with energy. Chillida's studies of hands are guided by the artist's conception of 'limit (and space)', 'emptiness (and silence)' and 'scale (rhythm, musicality and monumentality)'. [3]

'Chillida is not interested in hands as expressive surfaces... but rather in the closing of the fist as a configuration that takes places as a delimitation towards the inside (of the hand) and as a limit towards the outside (the border of the finger as a line that creates it in the spatial abyss of the paper).' [4]

Chillida uses line to suggest internal and external spaces, blurring the boundary between the suggested physicality of the fingers of the hand and the surrounding 'negative' space. This approach invites the viewer to explore the contrasting tensions of containment and release within Chillida's labyrinthine arrangement of lines and enclosures. Dramatically, the impression taken from the etching plate fills only the top half of the paper, the lower half of the sheet remaining vacant (with the exception of Eduardo Chillida's signature and cypher []). The bottom edge of the etching plate runs beneath the outline of the thumb, disconnecting and isolating the fingers from the palm and

wrist, and imbuing the lines with a minimalistic essentialism that is powerfully abstract and sculptural.

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 Círculo de Bellas Artes and joined a sculpture workshop. [5] 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, February 2023

[1] Martin van der Koelen 'Eduardo Chillida: Opus P.I: Catalogue Raisonné of the Original Prints' (Ginkgo Pr Inc., 1999), pp. 26-7.

[2] Koelen (1999), pp. 262-3.

[3] 'Chillida 1948-98' (Sofía: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1999), p. 16.

[4] 'Chillida 1948-98, pp. 38-40.

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

Further Reading

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

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

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

