

Born in Austria, though settled in Spain ever since she first arrived here in 1967, **Eva Lootz** (Vienna, 1940) played a key role in the development of Spanish art in the second half of the twentieth century. Her innovative contribution to Spanish cultural heritage was acknowledged with the National Fine Art Prize in 1994.

Lootz's works in the BBVA Collection, [Untitled](#) (1978) and [Peine](#) (1983), come from an early period in her output in which her interest in matter somehow connects them with *arte povera* and Minimal Art. In these works, all traces of the artist disappear in order to allude, in differing ways, to the passing of time, thus turning them into a kind of memory of a process or an index of something that has happened.

In later phases of her career, her work became increasingly more socially engaged, dovetailing with movements such as environmentalism and feminism, defending a socially responsible and emancipatory art with the power to transform life. This tendency was further reinforced by Lootz's ability to theorize about her own work, doubtlessly rooted in her studies in philosophy.

Over the last ten years she has been awarded the MAV (Mujeres en las Artes Visuales) Prize (2010) and the Arte y Mecenazgo Prize (2013).

Question. Your works from the seventies, close in spirit to Minimalism or Conceptualism, had an undeniable influence on the Spanish art scene of the time. What made you choose those languages as your means of expression?

Answer. *I'm a child of the post-war period in Central Europe. I grew up in Vienna, a city whose main buildings, like the Parliament and the Cathedral, were left in ruins and the Opera House had been*

devastated by fire. What I am saying is that my first steps were amongst the rubble of the Second World War. A horrific war that, as I only began to understand with the passing of time, had destroyed my parents' generation. I am filled with a sense of gratitude and tenderness whenever I think about that generation, which also included the teachers who taught us so kindly and ably at school. In any case, we had a good library at home with lots of art books. I liked art but I knew that the old academic

canons would no longer serve and that we had to do things differently.

To start with, as soon as I could, I left my home country. I made a clean break and left with whatever was on my back. It wasn't just a case of questioning certain aspects of society. I realize that back then I did not understand what I know now, which is that what happened with the Second World War and which was further aggravated forty or fifty

EVA LOOTZ

Inspirational Women Artists
in the BBVA Collection



Image: Eva Lootz, self portrait

years later with the digital revolution which we are still going through, is a crisis in civilization that can only be compared with what happened with the fall of the Roman Empire or with the Schism in Christianity in the sixteenth century.

But, returning to my arrival in Spain and my way of focusing my art practice: what I didn't want to do under any circumstance was to materialize ideas, perceptions or experiences. I didn't want to make personal statements, because those kinds of statements would have been the expression of a subjectivity which was the product of a society I rejected. That's why I said that "what I might have to say is of no interest to me at all". The real problem was how to eschew, how to sidestep, that subjectivity. And the only way I could find was to empty the works of all content, to free the supports from their conventional forms and to turn the works into proof, testimony and trace of material processes. To present the singularity of the real as neutrally as possible. To let the properties of the material "make" the work. To create a setting of attributes, a theatre of material. Or as my friend the philosopher Patricio Bulnes said at the time: "Produce to be produced."

This approach obviously has its parallels with Minimalism.

Q. The BBVA Collection possesses two of your early works, *Untitled* (1978) and *Peine* (1983), in which one can already discern your interest in process and change. How would you relate these works with what you are doing now?

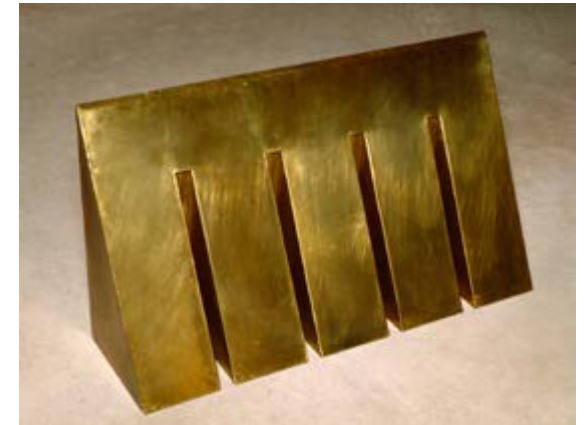
A. While the former comes from a critical moment when I replaced liquid paint with paraffin and eliminated the stretcher, the latter, the brass "comb", has to do with hair and the act of combing.

As an everyday tool, the comb has essentially remained unchanged since the Neolithic. It is used to untangle the material that grows on your head, which is important for all people in general but particularly for women. Hair is the most evident proof of the body's capacity to regenerate itself, and the mark of the passing of time on our body. We cut our hair, and almost always we throw away the cuttings. Hair is a very intimate element that arouses conflicting reactions, both rejection as well as veneration. It contains our DNA and is also related with sexuality. In almost all cultures, people who take vows of chastity—monks, nuns, priests and ascetics—reflect this fact through their hair. Hair is one of the oldest materials par excellence.

Over the years I have made many "combs" and I have also made works with hair. I have "written" on the wall with hair (for instance in the exhibition "...

Con pocas palabras" at Villa Romana in Florence, 2003) and I have made pieces with horsehair, and also what I call "hairy tongues".

Everything goes back to my abiding interest in anthropology ever since my teens, due precisely to a discontent with society as it was. This is closely bound with "The Underside of Monuments and the Agony of Tongues", my latest exhibition at Museo Patio Herreriano in Valladolid which speaks about the vast quantity of languages in danger of extinction and, with them, the disappearance of ethnic groups and cultures in Latin America.



Eva Lootz
Peine, 1983
Brass on wood chipboard
61.7 x 109.8 x 32.3 cm
Inv. no. 651

Q. One can currently note a more concerted effort to reduce the gender gap in the art world, to recover women artists and create new references that will draw a broader panorama. Who were your references when you started out? Were there many women among them?

A. *Speaking of references from the seventies I would underline the members of Black Mountain College with a particular mention for John Cage, but also the work of Morris Louis and his technique of allowing paint to flow over the surface. I became aware of the work of Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois in the eighties, as well as Joseph Beuys. From the seventies I would underscore the importance of the cycle of exhibitions held at the German Institute in Madrid in 1974 called "Nuevos Comportamientos Artísticos" (New Artistic Behaviours) organized by Simón Marchán Fiz, featuring artists like Timm Ulrichs, Stuart Brisley and Wolf Vostell. As far as women artists are concerned, I was conversant with the work of Paula Modersohn-Becker, María Blanchard, Hannah Höch and Käthe Kollwitz, but I did not lend too much importance to that aspect of it.*

Q. The situation over this last year has underlined culture's enduring need to reinvent itself in order to adapt to changing circumstances. On many occasions you have spoken about the dangers of

alienation for humans in the face of the constant bombardment of images we receive, something which has perhaps grown even more over the last year because of the increased use of screens. What do you believe is the role of art in this context? What opportunities have you found in the use of new technologies for art mediation?



Eva Lootz
Untitled, 1978
Paraffin, pigment and cotton
128 x 95 cm
Inv. no. 898

A. *I believe that the addiction to screens, deliberately induced by tech companies who apply nervous stimuli every X seconds to trap users, calls for a public campaign that should be focused as part of our basic education. It requires a vaccination campaign just like we vaccinate against polio or chickenpox. We have to teach people how to use computers, screens and the internet, just as we teach people how to read or how to use a knife, spoon and fork. They are useful tools but we have to immunize people against possible addiction. It is not a task for art but basic education.*

What art can and should do is activate and boost a counter-flow to the generalized reification. What it can do, in a thousand different ways, is to contribute experiences, speak to the senses, pose questions, change ways of looking, create affinities, turn zombies back into people. New technologies are of course very useful for mediation and diffusion and they can also change the ways we make art, and in fact they already doing just that.

Maybe future generations will not be so worried about the singularity of experiences. Those of us who are going through this pandemic probably believe that it is fantastic to be able to see John Coltrane on a screen, but who wouldn't prefer to hear him play at Village Vanguard?