

Mònica Planes

Ellas, las otras y todas las demás

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àngels barcelona. C. Pintor Fortuny, 27



The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings.¹

Engaging with movement, space, and the erotic connection between material and the body, Mònica Planes's sculptural work transcends traditional notions of image and form, representation and abstraction, situating itself as a process-oriented exploration of sculpture as a dynamic medium of embodied consciousness.

Planes emphasizes the material act of creation, where her body and movements are integral to shaping her works, grounding them in human scale and lived experience. Her primary mediums—construction sand and cement—reflect her connection to the urban landscape and the tactile realities of her surroundings, imbuing her works with a sense of place and context. These industrial materials, often associated with utilitarian structures, evoke the fragility and strength inherent in the sculptural process, mirroring the delicate balance between permanence and impermanence.

Her use of these materials is not merely functional but deeply symbolic. Granular and transient, sand contrasts with the solidity of cement, which gains structure and permanence through its setting process. This duality echoes her exploration of the interplay between form and experience. She foregrounds the hazardous and unpredictable nature of the creative process, which generates connections and unfolds relationships. Inspired by her interactions with friends and collaborators, she sculpts their movements and her own, delving into our bodies' so-called muscle memory—their capacity to repeat actions over time, infusing her works with a temporal, performative quality.

The result is transformation: each sculpture transcends objecthood to become an event—an unfolding of rhythm, tension, and what Audre Lorde defined as the erotic. As Lorde writes, the erotic is a deeply personal and transformative source of power, creativity, and connection. Lorde's definition expands the concept beyond narrow, sexualized interpretations, aligning with Planes' mission to reclaim sculpture as an expressive and intimate medium.

This recontextualization overturns the classical history that first inspired Planes to create *Ellas, las otras y todas las demás*: her reflections emerged during a residency at the Spanish Academy in Rome, where she first engaged with the notorious *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*. This ancient nude sculptural figure, caught in a moment of intimate repose, resides in the Villa Pinciana at the Galleria Borghese. In 1620, Gian Lorenzo Bernini significantly altered the sculpture by integrating a marble mattress, amplifying its sensuality and naturalism. Those who were later commissioned to reintegrate sculptures of a similar subject inevitably looked to that work. Subsequent reinterpretations of the Hermaphroditus, such as Andrea Bergondi's 1774 commission for another version owned by the Borghese family, similarly emphasized soft, fluid forms through the addition of draped bedding.

The *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*, with its slight twist of the torso and raised pelvis, invites a twofold perspective. The viewer perceives a feminine face, hips, and sinuous curves from one angle and, from another, the duality of its male and female sex organs. This Roman-period reworking of a Hellenistic original (attributed by Pliny the

¹ Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 1978.

Elder to the Greek sculptor Polycles in the second century BCE) is celebrated for its ability to provoke curiosity and debate, powerfully raising questions about the rigidity of gender categories.

Planes' *Ellas, las otras y todas las demás* engages with this legacy in a transhistorical dialogue. By vertically arranging casts of her body alongside mattresses dissociated from their art historical context, Planes invites viewers to reconsider both the forms and the ideas constructed in classical sculpture. Placed in front of these, four wooden plinths display amorphously sculpted and pressed haystacks—a new development in Planes' practice—inviting a circular movement akin to the viewing experience of the *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*. Contrasting with its classic, formalist outlook, the haystacks intuitively suggest the pure potential for the development of form. This composition recalls the fluidity of modern dance, where movement becomes both expression and spatial response, in this case spanning centuries of art history.

By shifting focus from idealized forms and fixed perspectives to sculpture's relational, unpredictable, and processual qualities, Planes challenges Bernini's legacy and broader tenets of figuration and representation. Her use of raw, industrial materials—construction sand and cement—eschews the refinement and permanence of marble, grounding her work in today's realities. While Bernini's intervention emphasizes the stillness and formal perfection of *Sleeping Hermaphroditus*, Planes invokes movement and temporality, accentuating the event-like nature of sculpture. In her practice, sculpture is not a passive or static object but a dynamic expression of rhythm, pleasure, and agency. She reclaims the body as a site of power and transformation, countering the passive sensuality of Bernini's gendered figure with an active engagement.

In many ways, Mònica Planes' practice represents a reimagining of what sculpture can be. By grounding her works in the body and its movements, she transforms sculpture into a site of intimacy and vulnerability. Her process-oriented approach challenges a Western canon that prioritizes idealized, fixed forms. Through rhythm and embodiment, Planes opens new possibilities for understanding and interacting with the sculptural form. Her work challenges and disrupts classical traditions, offering a compelling vision for contemporary sculpture as an exploration of materiality and experience.

—Sofia Lemos

Mònica Planes (Barcelona, 1992) completed her Master's in Artistic Production and Research (2016) and graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona (2014). She has presented her work individually at the Suñol Foundation (2017), the Arranz-Bravo Foundation (with Alejandro Palacín, 2018), the Can Felipa Civic Center (2020), àngels barcelona gallery (2021, and 2017), Pipistrello (2021), and at the Gelateria Sogni di Ghiaccio in Bologna (2022).

Over the past few years, she has received scholarships such as the Felícia Fuster Foundation (2016), Han Nefkens – UB Postgraduates (2016), Guasch Coranty Foundation (2017), Injuve Grants for Young Creation (2018-2019), and Barcelona Crea (2022). She has also received the Art Jove Award (2018), was selected for the III Cervezas Alhambra Award (2019), for the Miquel Casablanques Award (2020), and for the Biennal d'Art Ciutat d'Ampostà BIAM (2020, 2018).

She has been part of collective exhibitions at Halfhouse (2019), Artiatx in Bilbao (2022), Can Felipa Arts Visuals (2022), and at the Sala de Arte Joven in Madrid (2022). In the past year, she was included in the Generación 2023 award presented at La Casa Encendida; she also took part in the collective exhibitions 'Lo que pesa una cabeza' at TEA Tenerife and 'Remedios. Donde podría crecer una nueva tierra' produced by TBA21 at C3A Córdoba. Recently, she was in a residency at the research space Bulegoa z/b in Bilbao and Accademia di Spagna in Rome.

Some of the works presented in this exhibition are the result of a residency at the Academy of Spain in Rome, within the framework of the MAEC-AECID scholarship for Art, Education, and Culture for the academic year 2023-2024