
Ixone Sádaba. Escala 1:1 (Scale 1:1)

The Lemoiz Nuclear Power Plant has stood idle since construction was halted in 1984. Today, the remains of that massive structure bear the marks of relentless abandonment and decay. However, its contentious legacy continues to resonate. It was here that plans for a massive infrastructure project conceived during the Franco dictatorship clashed with the rise of new environmental and civil resistance movements opposing its construction, as well as the violent actions of ETA.

The power plant built on the Basordas coastal inlet between 1972 and 1984 is today an elusive legacy. Access to the area around the plant is still closed. Nothing can stop the expansion of the vegetation that grows there, in a place whose history is marked by violence and civil strife. Lemoiz rises up as a case of historical memory that poses difficulties for the management of its ruins. All the layers of its history and the potential future that the battered structure still allows us to envision are combined in the concrete behemoth.

From 2021 to 2024, Ixone Sádaba (Bilbao, 1977) photographed the remains of the power plant and its immediate surroundings. Those photographs triggered a research into the material, symbolic and political legacy of the site. In the course of this work, Sádaba used photography as a documentation tool in order to establish an empirical connection with the nuclear power plant, its complex formal anatomy, and the layers of an object so dense that it was difficult to capture using a traditional photographic device.

The two light boxes titled *Echar el olvido al futuro* (*Casting Oblivion into the future*) #1 and #5 are examples of a photographic practice that merges with the objects found among the ruins of the power plant itself. These works serve as the immediate precedent for challenging the photographic medium and reimagining it in a way that allows the power plant to find a proxy for itself, a substitute that neither minimises nor reduces any of its dimensions. This is how Lemoiz is displayed inside the Alhóndiga on a life-size scale.

The result is a series of photographic sequences showcasing one after the other vast segments of the complex that includes the power plant buildings and the surrounding area. Yet, all the images combined do not provide a complete and exhaustive overview of the site. Because 1:1 Scale is not only a testament to one of the most controversial objects in the history of the Basque conflict, but also an account of the injuries that this history has caused, in particular, on the body of photography.

Three file boxes, ninety photographic prints, 2021-2024
Archival ink on cotton paper
40 x 50 cm cu.

These photographs were taken between 2021 and 2024. With the research undertaken by Ixone Sádaba at the time, which she titled *Echar el olvido al futuro* (*Casting Oblivion into the Future*), her intention was to delve into the definition of what she called a new political scenario. It is a term used frequently by the artist to allude to tense spaces, real places that evoke violent encounters. These spaces appear time and again, as they did in *Gulala* (*Anfal*), a project on Kurdish women's prisons.

On this occasion, it was a question of giving shape to an object conducive to the practice of political archaeology, and that object was the Lemoiz nuclear power plant. These images are among the first photographic approaches to the power plant and its surroundings. As such, the aesthetics are that of a photographic report. Just as Lemoiz is a transitional object that allows us to reopen a historical process embodied in that concrete mass, so photography is the object that facilitates research and debate.

Echar el olvido al futuro #1, 2023-2024
Echar el olvido al futuro #5, 2023-2024
Light boxes, neons, photographs and miscellaneous materials.
172 x 82 x 22 cm cu.

These two compositions recycle objects found at the abandoned site of the Lemoiz nuclear power plant. The light source used for backlighting comes from the same place. By merging the remains found with the photographs taken at the site, Ixone Sádaba produces a new type of object. In a way, this is the first step towards thinking of photography as a device.

In fact, many of Ixone Sádaba's past projects have consisted of devising specific uses of photography. Each problem or object requires the operation of the photographic device to be conceived differently. These works serve as the immediate precedent for challenging the photographic medium and reimagining a new and more appropriate one that allows the power plant to find a proxy or substitute for itself.

**Observation platform over the ruins of the Lemoiz nuclear power plant,
1974-2024**

Mechanotube construction

In 1974, in the midst of the construction of the power plant, Iberduero built a temporary observation platform. This observation platform was to be used to supervise the work. Therefore, each time the company's president, Pedro de Careaga, Count of Canagua, would visit, the observatory came to resemble a watchtower located on a hill near the road leading to the Lemoiz plant.

Placed in the context of the exhibition, this structure - which evokes the overlook of yesteryear and replicates the original dimensions - is reminiscent of a privileged vantage point that brought together the sum of technical, financial and political capital.

Sequences I and II, 2024

Medium and large format photographs (analogue and digital).

Epson 4K projector

Sequences I

- 01 Corridor between group 2 and waste (to the East)
- 02 Central corridor to group 2 (North)
- 03 Shade tree (North)
- 04 Generators area gardens (East)
- 05 View of gardens (South-east)
- 06 Green 2 (East)
- 07 Green 1 (West)
- 08 Entrance view (North)
- 09 General view from dike (South-east)
- 10 Reactor group 2 (East)
- 11 Reactor group 1 (South-east)
- 12 Front view of water intake entrance (North-west)
- 13 Inside water intake tunnel (East-west)
- 14 Exempt structures (North)
- 15 Wall of waste building 1 (South)
- 16 Wall of waste building 1 (South))

Sequences II

- 01 Diptych: Reservoir
- 02 Diptych: Eroded hill to the West
- 03 Diptych: Gardens in generator area
- 04 Diptych: Pampas grass in front of dike
- 05 Diptych: View of dike
- 06 Diptych: Close-up corner of dock
- 07 Diptych: Close-up flysch near dock
- 08 Diptych: Dock and water intake
- 09 Diptych: Inlet drain
- 10 Diptych: Drainage structure

The purpose of any museum is to accommodate a world which, by default, exceeds in size and scale everything that can be exhibited inside its halls. To bring Lemoiz into the Alhóndiga requires, above all, that the scale of the plant and its buildings be preserved. This requirement cannot be considered a strictly technical issue. It must

also be understood as a political demand to remedy the inaccessibility and hermeticism that have characterised the history of the Lemoiz nuclear power plant.

These two series of photographic sequences reveal the difficulty of preserving a 1:1 scale representation of the plant itself. Ixone Sádaba admits that this complex exercise only allows her to navigate a sort of technical conventions that, in the best of cases, bring her closer to a plane of reference with which to produce this 1:1 scale image. Plants and ruins get in the way of that ideal distance that preserves the most realistic scale and end up interfering with the result.