

Can you hear me?
It is the music of my voice.
The invisible silence.

In 2000 I wrote a text in which I defined what has, over the years,
been the main subject of my work:

‘Each human being is a *place*. Each woman, man, child, old person,
is a habitable space in themselves that moves and develops; a *place*
in time, in geography, in volume and in colour.
Entire cities built of bodies that open and close like doors.
Lights that flash.
Every time a human being dies, a house closes and a *place* is lost.
My work is their memory. The frozen fixation of so many bodies
developing and disappearing in the transience of light.
My work is their volume.’

We might think that creation is a series of meditated ideas and
structures in search of a precise end, but nothing could be further
from the truth.
Creation is based on contradiction, friction between opposites,
permanent doubt, duality, the impossibility of completing a work...
the blurred reflection of one’s image in the mirror: you and your shadow.

I have often spoken about the body and the soul, about the container and the contained. About the message and the bottle.

One day I was walking around Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The weather was stormy. It was raining heavily and the wind was whipping up huge waves on Lake Michigan. A day not fit for a dog, as they say. Suddenly, a bird perched on top of one of the wooden poles driven into the bed of the lake that, emerging from the water, mark the way for boats. Everything was churned up and moving: the water, the clouds, the lightning in the sky, the torrential rain. Everything was moving! Everything except the wooden pole on which the bird sat. I realised that this extraordinary image perfectly defined what *sculpture* is for me: a *place* to which we can always return. The hand of the person you love, your mother's house that you left so many years ago, the book you reread, over and over... Our own personal *place* in time and space that embraces and protects us. Sculpture is the *place* to which we can always return.

In the house where I was born, we lived surrounded by books. My father was a great reader, and, perhaps for that reason, poetry has always accompanied me.

Text was the fertile substance on which I built dreams and images. Poets were the legs of the table supporting my development as a person, from whom I learned so much: the tragic prayer of Charles Baudelaire,

William Shakespeare's denial of sleep, the invisible architecture of Dante Alighieri, Elias Canetti's use of imperfection, the soul and the space of José Ángel Valente, the eternal immensity of William Blake, our beloved Vicent Andrés Estellés, and many others. Words and words that, like notes on a stave, write the score of our voice, the music of the body, the vibration of thought.

I still remember the old upright piano in which I would hide as a boy when there was a storm at home. The space left inside by the harp was the exact size of my body. My father often played the piano without knowing I was curled up inside in a state of extraordinary excitement. Covered in dust and suffused with the smell of felt and wood, the instrument and I vibrated together! The vibration of matter! The vibration of the body! Thought that expands to fill the space with invisible energy.

A single letter may not seem like a big deal, but in connection with other letters, it can build words; words with other words become texts; texts with other texts create thoughts; thoughts with other thoughts are culture, and so on.

The biology of the text, the letter as a germinating cell that, with its individual memory, can, together with others, create more complex organisms: alphabets as nations, texts as continents, words as cities... What a precise metaphor for the human being's relation to community!

The portrait of a culture based on its alphabet. The close link between specific and general, the step from one to all.

Since 2004, when I finished the *Crown Fountain* project in Chicago, in which a thousand faces of anonymous people from that city were filmed on video, I have continued passionately to work with portraits. Using as a support the classic and traditional materials, I constructed a universe of portraits of young women (I think that memory and future are feminine) with their eyes closed, inviting us to look inside ourselves and rediscover the wealth of information we keep hidden unconsciously within.

Portraits that, like those in Chicago, represent us all, describing a dream state where internal and external reality come together inside the head.

The head, palace of wisdom and seat of knowledge, is also the wildest and least controlled place in our body, where, in spite of us, if two ideas want to meet, they will, and they will do so in the dark, wet corners of the brain.

The darkness and wetness of our brain, where dream and desire are born.

The darkness and wetness of the mouth, where words are born.

The darkness and wetness of the maternal womb, where infants gestate.

The vital trilogy of our body that, embracing spirit and matter, merges into one latent, modular element.

Art is useless; that is why it is so important!

Its lack of utility or practical function makes it essential to the life of human beings.

Art or, let's say, Beauty; I think we're talking about the same thing.

Difficult concepts to explain, but ones we can all recognise.

Death, pain, uncertainty, uneasiness in the face of what scares us in life, seems to tremble when confronted with beauty.

But what is beauty?

Years ago, in an interview, I defined beauty as the great bond that ties us to everything and everyone, the great *place* where everyone's memory comes together. It is stamped on our foreheads. Awe-inspiring!

Introducing beauty into everyday life. From streets to squares, from theatres to museums, I attempt to bring sparks of light to communities to light up their daily life, our shared daily life.

Gradually, with the slowness of a lifetime, I have spread my work around the world, trying to make sure, as an old teacher said, that the students do not realise they are learning and that, when they do, it is too late, because they already know!

The story goes that when Rodin was commissioned to create a sculpture in tribute to Balzac, he was asked what information he needed to be able to carry out the work. Rodin merely asked to speak to the writer's tailor, the person who knew Balzac's body best.

A fascinating story, talking to Balzac's tailor; to Rodin's tailor, too, but it would be even more fascinating to talk to the tailor of the tailor, who must surely know the Universe.

I may be a son of Barcelona, born beside the sea, but I cannot float! This was a source of concern for my mother, who took me to the municipal swimming pool to learn to swim, sadly without success. What for my family and me was a major failing suddenly vanished the day some friends in Jerusalem took me to the Dead Sea: it was a celebration, a party! I floated and swam like a fish. Unforgettable! I have often used this personal anecdote as a metaphor for the human being. As a teacher at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris or at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, and in many, many talks, I highlight the importance to each of us of finding *our sea*, *our place*, where defects become virtues, where the wind blows in our favour and helps us grow, where life's difficulties become the most extraordinary, exciting adventures.

Water has always been present in my life and in my work: the sea, rivers, the rain, oceans, tears... I have always thought of water as the quintessential public space. Perhaps the most lovely and perfect of all the spaces we might call public. Its symbolism tells us that we never see the same water twice, that its perpetual movement does not allow us to situate it

in a precise geographical point. Water, without belonging to anyone, is part of all of us!

I think it is impossible to separate art and life, beauty and nature, light and darkness, dream and desire, spirit and matter, soul and body. My work has always sought silence; silence as a desire that our body obstinately denies us.

If life is permanently tattooing our skin with messages written in invisible ink, it also tattoos us with invisible silence.

The noise of the world is so intense that we must physically make silence if it is to exist. A powerful silence that allows us to listen to and understand others; that allows us to salvage the image of all those who have been trapped by that noise in the folds of indifference.

Every morning, when I open the door of the studio, an earthquake agitates my heart. An earthquake that, bringing down walls and windows, leaves everything wide open; scattering desires and dreams everywhere, raising clouds of wind that mix my dust with the dust of others, my life with the lives of others. Words, faces, spaces, lights, silences...