

BODY LANGUAGE (2 sqm, 5 kilos)

Skin, our skin, is the most extensive organ of the human body (2 square metres, 5 kilos); it's a membrane that feels and protects us, a barrier that keeps our organs together and filters our relationships. Deeper down, under the skin, it's difficult to define ourselves. When Paul Valéry observed ironically "*What lies deepest of all in man is the skin*", he meant that everything happens on the surface, like leaves turning green or soil that is only fertile in its thin top layer.

Culture is a skin structure that asserts its impacts. The immediate is the most profound and ancestral. And the immediate is found in language. We alter our bodies in extreme ways to express our tribal bonds, we scarify it and tattoo it.

When a scalpel penetrates skin, it produces a new attribute: marks are qualities that settle on the body without changing its nature.

All cultural groups across the planet have practised incisions on the bodies of men and women at some stage. Ethnic groups from Africa, like the people of Ouidah and Bessoribe, from Abidjan on the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria or Benin, the Mayan people and the Huastecs, the Australian Aborigines or the so-called "crocodile men" (Sepik) from Papua New Guinea, use scarifying as a sign of identity to honour their ancestors, as a symbol of fertility in women and strength in men, or simply as a message that there is pain in life and we need to resist. In the West, it is principally a countercultural expression, a fashion, or has a relational use in body art.

Body language rediscovers the scar as a stigma and event in the Sánchez Ubiría collection of African art, in conversation with the project *Bearers** by Almudena Lobera, whose drawings invert the time-honoured logic of art: the author, model and owner converge in the mobile surface of a body vitally fastened to present time. Fragmented arms, torsos and legs are then reconstructed in an extensive, collective body; where language slips and slides up and down, left to right, free of barriers or density.

**Bearers. The image in the expanded field of the body* is a project that Almudena Lobera developed in collaboration with Isabel Martínez Abascal in São Paulo thanks to the award Premio Generación 2012 from the Montemadrid Foundation. It was exhibited for the first time in La Casa Encendida (2012) and has continued growing thanks to the support of various institutions: Diablo Rosso (Panama), Centro Cultural de España in Mexico (Mexico City), The Bronx Museum of the Arts (New York) and Emergent (Furnes, Belgium).