

“Woman, for too long diverted into morals and prejudices, go back to your sublime instinct.” Valentine de Saint Point, “The Manifesto of Futurist Woman”

“Children’s play is everywhere permeated by mimetic codes of behavior, and its realms is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill.” Walter Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty”

To produce her work, Mercedes Azpilicueta appropriates the chants and calls of foreign merchants in the markets of Rotterdam. She uses her body as field of experimentation to grasp a text spoken in a foreign language that she does not understand, but whose vitality moves her. The material she works with is the spoken word, the non-official Dutch of immigrants from many different places of which she makes a translation incarnated in a body with no grammar.

In *Spinoza Poème de la Pensée*, Henri Meschonnic argues that language is steeped in affect. For him, the reading or translation of a text must not focus solely on the detection of logical markers, but heeds as well the affective marks of language. Both types of markers -the logical and the affective- are equally ingrained in language. Just as, for Spinoza, body and soul form a single unit, these two markers come together in recognition of that which gives rise to them; with Walter Benjamin, we envision language as domesticated form of mimesis, as archive of undetectable likenesses and of immaterial correspondences.

Azpilicueta’s work is significant insofar as she reproduces the affective marks of lived language even when she does not understand the logical markers of the language before her. Mercedes uses her own body as space where the affective traces of others’ language are gathered as sediment, traces that she brings back to life in making her work. In the privileged selection of the affective markers for her work, she retraces the evolution of language towards the total systematization of ancient forces of production and mimetic reception, and tends to release those of magic.

The name of the installation makes reference to the article published in *The Evening Word* (New York) in 1916 on the work of Valentine de Saint-Point (France, 1875-1953), the only woman artist who formed part of the Italian Futurist Movement. Through this direct reference, Mercedes brings to bear on the present the call to virility as active female instinct found in Saint-Point’s Manifesto.