

Zurich, 18 July 2019

Press release

**Lara Almarcegui. Deep Inside – Out
28 August 2019 – 17 November 2019**

Opening: Tuesday 27 August 2019: doors open 6 p.m., introduction 6.30 p.m.

It's a familiar sight – countless construction cranes in the big cities. Urban development is advancing inexorably and rapidly, and it seems to be almost unstoppable. Spanish artist Lara Almarcegui (b. 1972) takes a critical view of the phenomenon. She questions the scale of the comprehensive urban redesign processes that are taking place and investigates the complex relationships between raw materials, construction and the decay of the built world. The artist has previously been known mainly for her installations, but the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich is now for the first time focusing on her art works on paper. Drawings, photographs, newspaper cuttings and statistics provide a new and unexpected insight into her work.

The internationally known Spanish artist Lara Almarcegui made a name for herself by deliberately contrasting excessive urban design with formless elements – for example, by heaping together the same amount of building materials that would be required for a house. In other projects, she has engaged with temporarily unused zones, and has calculated and listed the weight of the building materials used for a building or even for an entire city. She rose to international fame in 2013 with her work for the Spanish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In the interior of the Pavilion, she assembled all the materials needed to construct the Pavilion itself, in the form of builder's rubble. Both the completed building and the raw materials for it were visible simultaneously. This made it possible to experience the building's material qualities and construction with an immediate physical directness, and the shapeless heaps drew attention to the unbelievable amount of raw materials required to construct the building. In works of this type, Almarcegui creates a commentary on our overplanned and built world, without having to shape it herself: 'I am looking for a way of talking about architecture without using images.' She achieves this through a specific approach in which – like a scientist – she first carries out meticulous research and brings together a dense complex of facts.

Since the mid-1990s, the artist, who lives in Rotterdam, has been collecting information on the history of buildings and peripheral areas, on their geographic and urban-planning context and also on the ecological and economic conditions underlying them. She carries out research on the components and raw materials used. In the process, Almarcegui is constantly moving in transitional zones and drawing our attention to abandoned, usually empty and often forgotten plots. The areas are unused and may or may not have modern ruins on them, running wild – and at the same time beginning to show new steps in urban development. She makes inquiries of specialists regarding these 'terrains vagues' and records all the information in 'guides' – small art guides in which she combines matter-of-fact alternative readings of the past, present and future of an area. In 2009, for example, she published a guide to twelve still empty, abandoned areas that were to be developed for the Olympic Games in London three years later. In addition, Almarcegui has for some time now been concerned quite specifically with the sources and

professional dismantling of building materials. In what ways are natural resources used, and indeed exploited, to construct the world? Among other things, the artist has acquired mineral rights in Norway that she does not use, in order to remove iron – an important building material – from the economic cycle. The topics that Almarcegui addresses always have the greatest possible current relevance: the artist makes it clear that the world of built and manufactured materials can never be separated from political, economic and ecological changes.

In the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, special attention is now being given for the first time to the role of her drawings and other works on paper. Almarcegui's 'wasteland guides' are being presented, as well as abstract drawings produced for example in connection with her exploration mineral rights. Also included in the exhibition are some almost expressive sketches concerned with projects using heaped-up building materials, and the lists of raw materials used for a building or for a city such as São Paulo.

The art works on paper make the artist's process-based approach and also her reflections visible in a very special way. These works make Almarcegui's approach superbly comprehensible and also allow a large selection of her projects to be experienced afresh. With this focus on paper, the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich is expanding our view of the work of this important artist and at the same time presenting a previously less-known area of her work.

Almarcegui's work stands at the interface between various disciplines (including the natural sciences), since in it she explores urban space and the relationship between construction, decay and regeneration in the built world, and she is concerned with the ownership status of mineral resources. It is therefore also intended to provide an interdisciplinary extra during the exhibition: at a symposium to be held on 17 October 2019, international scientists and scholars will be discussing Almarcegui's work and setting it in a broader context.

Practical information

Curator	Dr. Linda Schädler, Head Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich
Events	During the exhibition, two guided tours by the curator, five lunchtime guided tours , an 'Artist Talk' and an 'In Focus' event will be held. On 17 October 2019 , there will also be a symposium with international specialists, with a clear interdisciplinary emphasis. Details are available at: https://gs.ethz.ch/agenda/
Opening hours	Daily, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. Closed: Mo, 9 September 2019 (Knabenschiessen; museum closed from 12 noon), Su, 16 November 2019 (ETH Day)
Entrance	free
Press office	Julia Burckhardt, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich Tel +41 44 632 40 46 presse@gs.ethz.ch
Website	www.gs.ethz.ch
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