

Press Release

Needles

Txema Yeste

14 February – 23 May 2025



Needles, 2019-2024.

We are thrilled to announce our highly anticipated exhibition, "Needles" showcasing a new series of works by Spanish photographer Txema Yeste.

In conjunction with the exhibition, we are excited to unveil a new book published by Editorial RM, featuring an insightful essay by the esteemed writer and curator David Company.

The exquisitely designed book, poised to become a treasured collector's item for art enthusiasts, will complement the exhibition and deepen your understanding of Yeste's artistic vision.

Needles of the Afternoon

Let us begin somewhere else. In the book *The Sculptures of Picasso*, published in 1949, there are some intriguing photographs that appear to be there to make us wonder what photography is, what sculpture is and how strangely and beautifully intertwined the two can become. After about thirty pages, the photographer Brassai (Picasso's good friend) shows us in close-up what looks like a twig, or maybe it is an old cigar, with one end resting on a matchbox. Is this really a sculpture by Picasso, or is it a casual arrangement that Brassai happened to notice somewhere in the corner of the artist's studio? Were the objects placed with some kind of sculptural and artistic intent, or is it Brassai's camera and the resulting photograph that make them feel sculpturally significant? Photographs intensify, turning objects into signs of themselves. Dramatic and enigmatic signs. A few pages later, we see a flower shaped from paper, its stem pushed into the end of a crusty baguette, like a little plant in a pot. Surely, none of those material objects lasted very long. It is photography that hold their forms in place and give them permanence. But even in such permanence, such holding, photographs can summon for us the fragile and ephemeral nature of things.

Well, even if you have never seen that book, I am sure can understand why it might come to mind when looking at Txema Yeste's *Needles*. Both come from, or suggest, a similarly fluid and hybrid kind of art making. Somewhere between image and object, found material and formed material, accident and intention, physical space and pictorial space, observation and creation. And yes, there's the same gentle, unnameable collaboration between sculpture and photography. Sculpture with an eye for how the camera sees things; photography with an eye for how an object might present itself. Yeste is both sculptor *and* photographer here, which puts him in a long and rich tradition of artists who have combined the two.

Part of the pleasure of Yeste's work is its sense of play, which of course means play for its own sake. The French cultural critic Roland Barthes once wrote that the most playful and therefore the most *human* gesture he could think of is the striking of a match for no reason beyond simply wanting to see a flame spark into brief life and die between one's fingers. A little stick of wood from a tree. That flame should be kept well away from dry pine needles, but Barthes' insight is important here. When would we light that playful, pointless match? In a moment of boredom, perhaps. In a moment when we are alone. In a moment when matches are plentiful. In that part of our day between obligations, when time stretches out and play can take over. I may be completely wrong but I am guessing this is the kind of mental time in which Yeste played with those needles and made these photographs. And I'm guessing it was in the hours of the afternoon.

It does not matter whether or not it was *really* the afternoon. This the mood and the sense of time Yeste suggests. Long afternoons with nothing more to do than play. He may not have been alone. There may have been others around him, but again that's not the point. The work evokes solitary creation. An activity seen only by the artist. Pine needles seen only by the artist. Sculptural and photographic decisions taken alone. Even so, the camera brings something of the time of creation to us. I am reminded of the much-loved series of photographs by Peter Fischli & David Weiss in which they pass the hours in their studio balancing everyday objects precariously on top of each other. Their camera acts as a kind of visual brace, fixing the assemblages as images. (It is fitting that the duo named their series *Stiller Nachtmittag. Quiet Afternoon.*)

At times, Yeste's needles look more like wire, evoking the work of the sculptor Alexander Calder, who had a very similar sense of play. At other times, the needles suggest the simple line drawings that Picasso and Matisse would make daily. But whether they look like wire or drawn lines, the pine needles always look like pine needles too. It is not a matter of transformation but of keeping the material reality and the poetic suggestion alive, together. Every single pine needle is recognizable as a pine needle, and every single one is unique. Moreover, each one can present itself to the camera in infinitely different ways. A needle might be curved but appear quite straight when seen from a particular angle, and perhaps only its shadow will reveal its hidden form. This is in part why the shadows seem to be as important as the needles in these images.

We think of the camera recording ‘things’ --objects, spaces – but in truth all it records is the light that bounces off those things, gathered by the lens and projected onto the light sensitive surface. The result is a perfect illusion, and not unlike eyesight itself. Our vision does not reach out and touch things, the way our fingers do. All we ‘see’ is light. Perhaps this is why shadows are no more or less material than anything else we see. And in photography, it’s all just a matter of light and dark, all shadow play. As images, Yeste’s needles seem to enjoy their moment. They know they are mere needles, but for a fraction of a second, they know that can resemble ballet dancers, or athletes, or children, or lovers, or lone wanderers. Isn’t that the miracle of all figurative art?

David Company
Writer, Curator
Creative Director of ICP

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Additionally, we are proud to announce that a selection of works from “Needles” will be featured by our gallery at the AIPAD Photography Show in New York City from April 23 to April 27, 2025, at the Park Avenue Armory.

This event marks a significant milestone as it will be our inaugural appearance at America’s premier photography fair.



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For more information and images please contact pancho@galeriaalta.com