

Claudia Pagès Rabal Feudal Holes

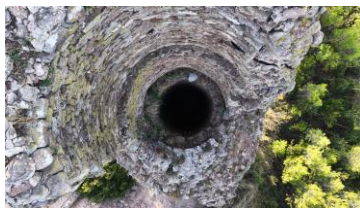
December 4, 2025 to May 17, 2026

Press conference

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 10 am

Opening

December 3, 2025, 7 pm



Claudia Pagès Rabal
Feudal Hole, 2025
Videostill, work in progress
Courtesy of the artist

Claudia Pagès Rabal (born 1990 in Barcelona) is a visual artist and writer. In her video installations, performances, sculptures, and drawings, she often addresses themes such as the protean history of the Iberian Peninsula, global migration movements, territorial appropriation, and the cultural diversity and mix in the Mediterranean region. At mumok, Claudia Pagès Rabal expands on her longstanding research into the Silk Route, the legendary network of trade routes that stretched from Central and East Asia to the Mediterranean region, transporting not only goods but also capital in the form of knowledge for centuries.

In the exhibition *Feudal Holes*, the artist's research transports visitors to the so-called Hispanic March, a historical border region established by European Carolingians in the ninth century as part of a protective wall against the Arab al-Andalus. This territory, marked by Moorish influences, served as a military buffer zone between what is present-day Spain and France. Its history shaped the identity of the autonomous region of Catalonia, where the artist lives. In this region of the Iberian Peninsula, with its long unsettled borders, Muslims were ruled by Christians and Christians by Muslims. The corresponding social entanglements and contradictions have had a lasting impact on European cultural and intellectual life and continue to resonate to this day.

Claudia Pagès Rabal's installation *Feudal Holes* builds on the exhibition *Five Defence Towers*, which was on show at London's Chisenhale Gallery in early 2025. The accompanying catalogue—a co-production between mumok and Chisenhale Gallery—documents the presentations at both venues. The starting point in London was research on five prominent defence towers that adorn the landscape of Catalonia. These structures for (self-)defence were built to protect Christian Europe north of the Pyrenees from the Muslim Arabs in the south. "I'm interested in these towers because all the stories around them are very vague. They are said to have been used to fight against the Saracens and to defend against them. But on closer inspection, you see that they were actually built before that time. This means a clear collapse of the narrative: Do the towers belong to one side or the other? Or perhaps they served to defend both?" says Claudia Pagès Rabal about the significance of the fortified towers. While the artist developed a five-act theater piece for *Five Defence Towers*, recounting the silent settler violence and its contradictions and ambivalences in a script from the perspective of the towers, she explores the remains of a sixth tower in the video work *Feudal Holes*. With the help of a drone, she penetrates the interior of the Torre del Moro de Castellnou and exposes moments of surveillance and control in its architectural form. The discrepancy between the verticality of the tower and its horizontal representation on digital applications such as Google Maps builds a thematic and formal anchor point.

"*Feudal Holes* are forms of topographical control strategies that trap viewers in a loop," states the artist about the eponymous video objects developed specifically for the exhibition at mumok. "I don't believe we are returning to an earlier feudal system, but when I look at what is happening in the world today, we are in a hole of violence for which we have not yet found a new word. Both sculptures show how the camera

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enters and exits the hole of the tower. It has something sexual, it is violent and penetrative, definitely abject.” The convex shape of the constructions derives from mathematical figures like the Möbius strip, a topological surface that visually has no discernible inside or outside. The image carriers of the two video sculptures consist of flexible LED displays mounted to metal structures that bulge outward and form surfaces with a hole in the middle that engulfs the surroundings. They rise from the floor of the exhibition space much in the way that the tower dominates the landscape near Barcelona. These “image machines” for impossible forms of cartographic representation each open up its own perspective: either its distinctive shape prevents the viewer from seeing the bottom of the hole, or it transforms the flat, map-like image into a kind of three-dimensional space or enclosure.

In the exhibition *Feudal Holes*, Claudia Pagès Rabal not only gives the stage to historical and contemporary identities that are constructed and marginalized from a European perspective as foreign, different, or “other”: in her artistic practice, she reveals the constraints of measuring instruments and one’s own knowledge production. She also questions the mediated conditions under which knowledge is produced in the first place and reflects on the apparatuses shaping our perception and interpretation. Her work can be understood as artistic research into landscape as a culturally and linguistically charged space of experience. Her goal is to transcend the boundaries that determine our (historical) foundations of knowledge and the (still prevailing) power relations inscribed in them.

Curated by Franz Thalmair

Claudia Pagès Rabal lives and works in Barcelona. Selected exhibitions include: *Catalonia in Venice: Paper Tears*, 61. Venice Biennial, 2026; 18th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 2025; *Aljub*, Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm, 2025; *Five Defence Towers*, Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2025; Manifesta 15, Barcelona, 2024; *Scene I. Making landscape*, IVAM, Valencia, 2024; *Typo-Topo-Time Aljibe*, Sculpture Center, New York, 2023; *Uno*, CA2M, Madrid, 2023; *Banditry*, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2023; *Gerundi Circular*, Tabakalera, Donostia, 2022; *Some of It Falls from the Belt and Lands on the Walkway Beside the Conveyor*, Vleeshal, Middelburg, 2022; *Panorama*, MACBA, Barcelona, 2022; *Rats and Roaches*, CAPC, Bordeaux, 2022; and *The Living House*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig, 2021. She published *her hair* in 2020 with Onomatopée, her first novel *Més de dues aigües* in 2024 with Editorial Empúries, and will launch her new book *Gerund Violence* with Wendy’s Subway in 2025. Pagès was awarded the Ojo Crítico Visual Arts Award in 2022 and has been an artist in residence at Gasworks, London, 2017 and Triangle France, Marseille, 2020.

Support and Cooperations

Exhibition: *Feudal Holes* was produced as part of the “la Caixa” Foundation Support for Creation’24. Production call for entries. With support of Hangar, Centro de Producción e Investigación Artística.

Catalog: A publication accompanying the exhibitions *Five Defence Towers* in London and *Feudal Holes* in Vienna is being published by the Chisenhale Gallery in London and the mumok in Vienna.

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