



# Lurra 61

Eduardo Chillida

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## On display

**Title/Description:** Lurra 61

**Artist/Maker:** Eduardo Chillida

**Born:** 1981

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Ceramic, Clay, Stoneware

**Technique:** Wood-firing

**Accession Number:** S.85

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** Spain

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Chillida's *Lurra* (Earth in Basque) series of works, of which this is a charming example, evidence the artist turning away from his established materials of metal, stone and wood, and returning to explorations of clay, a material he had rejected early in his career for its "pliable, soft, non-resistant qualities." [1] At a glance it appears to be made of multiple parts slotted together, the deep grooves in the sculpture's surface suggesting a hidden space within. Closer inspection into the dark of these fissures reveals them to have a bottom and confirm that the sculpture is in fact a single piece of fired clay.

This wholeness of the material is characteristic of Chillida's pursuit to represent the material almost as a natural emergence. "Chillida saw the earth as revealing itself in the work of art. But in his *Lurra* pieces it is the earth placed up-right." [2] The reduced evidence of the artist's hand is especially noticeable when compared to his contemporaries like Giacometti, Frink and Arp (also in the collection) and ironically makes Chillida's work just as recognisably his own.

Ceramic works such as this were produced later into Chillida's career and foreground more soft, sometimes bodily, forms occasionally visible in earlier works. This piece appears all at once solid and squishy, almost giving the appearance of unfired clay or dough. Whilst pieces like this are more intimate than monumental, they share with Chillida's other sculpture, and indeed, his works on paper, a sensitivity for the interplay of empty space and solid material to create "a place formed of light, the architecture that the light creates". [3]

Chillida was introduced to “Terre Chamotte”, the material for all his *Lurra* pieces, at Foundation Maeght in the village of St Paul de Vence, in the same studio used by Joan Miró and Josep Llorens Artigas in the creation of their ceramic sculpture. [4] Chamotte (also known as Grog), is ground and sifted powder from previously fired ceramic, which is added to raw clay, granting the double effect of reducing the risk of cracking and giving the pieces the gritty, stone-like texture or ‘tooth’ that attracted Chillida and is most evident in the artist’s incisions into the surface. Chillida experimented with various firing techniques to enhance different mineral qualities of the material, with wood-fired kilns drawing out more of the metallic, mineral aspects of the clay, and electric kilns giving an almost anaemic, raw clay finish. [5]

Thom Haley, January 2023

[1] Selz, Peter, *Chillida*, Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, New York 1986, p.45

[2] Selz, 1986, p. 46

[3] *Chillida 1948-1998*, Museo Nacional Reina Sofia/Aldeasa, Madrid 1998, p.24

[4] Selz, 1986, p. 45

[5] Madrid, 1998, p.40

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## Exhibitions

'Chillida', Hayward Gallery, London, 06/09/1990 - 04/11/1990 (illus 108, no.21.)

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## Further Reading

Chillida, Hayward Gallery, London 1990, illus 108, no. 21

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## Provenance

Bought by David Sainsbury in November 1996 from Annely Juda Fine Art in London, as a gift for Sir Robert's 90th Birthday.

Donated by Lady Sainsbury in 1999

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