Physics distinguishes between three classic states of matter. Depending on pressure and temperature, chemical elements and the compounds that they form exist as solids, liquids or gases. A change in these external conditions can jeopardise the relevant state or cause it to collapse. All stability is relative. Spanish artist Carlos Irijalba is interested in the inherent dynamic of such purportedly stable systems. He observes them in nature, but also in cultural contexts and makes them the subject of his art practice. The Galerie Sherin Najjar is delighted to be hosting Carlos Irijalba's second solo exhibition in Berlin.

High Tides emerged within the framework of the Urdaibai Art project, curated by Alberto Sánchez Balmisa in 2012 in the Basque country. Almost 30 years ago, the region of Urdaibai, an area on the Bay of Biscay extending over 220 square kilometres, was declared a biosphere reserve by Unesco. The region is also home to industrial landscapes and the town of Guernica, which was destroyed during the Spanish Civil War. In his work, Irijalba symbolically marks the substantive and temporal overlap between nature, culture and politics. “Human culture and nature are part of a common flow,” he says, “and the less we know about that common origin the less we know about ourselves.”

Irijalba focuses on the duration of processes, the deformation of their components and how we perceive them. “The starting point of the critic in my work is the anthropocentric perspective,” he explains. “I focus on the importance of the states of matter because of their relativeness. So I use solid and liquid or fast and slow as elements to show how relative those ideas are.” Thus, the dynamic of a volcanic event can also be reflected in social processes, such as in the course of a revolution.

In the High Tides exhibition, for example, Irijalba alludes to the changing tides. A series of photographs initially seem to show a wave washing up on the beach. However, the photographs actually depict two overlapping layers of asphalt with an irregular outline. A 17-metre-long drill core is displayed in a vitrine, forced from a vertical into a horizontal position and broken up into several sections. This work references the sealing of the landscape by humans but also to the geological layering of the ground, which not only has a material quality but also denotes the dimensions of time. A map-like, cast aluminium object on the ground represents less the map itself than the loss of the information that was once stored in maps.

Carlos Irijalba was born in Pamplona in 1979. He graduated from Universidad del País Vasco and Universität der Künste in Berlin in 2004. He has received a number of awards including a photography prize awarded by the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Explum prize for young Spanish artists. Irijalba has exhibited in galleries, art institutions and museums worldwide, including CCCB Barcelona, Herzliya Museum Israel or The Yokohama Art Center and LMCC New York. He is currently Artist in Residence at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam.

For more information, please contact the gallery: contact@sherinnajjar.com

Gallery hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 12-6 PM, and by appointment