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**Mercedes Azpilicueta**  
*Fire on the Mountain, Light on the Hill*  
20 June – 7 September 2025

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*Fire on the Mountain, Light on the Hill* brings together a new presentation of Mercedes Azpilicueta's monumental tapestry *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries* (2021) alongside new ceramics and costumes created in response to Collective's site on Calton Hill.

Azpilicueta's work explores themes of care and resistance, often revealing less well-known stories from history, and platforming the role of women who have made a difference in the past, and who continue to inspire in the present.

These themes are explored in the large-scale Jacquard tapestry *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries*, which takes its title from the 1917 potato riots in Amsterdam's Jordaan neighbourhood, an area close to where the artist now lives. The potato riots were organised by working class women of the Jordaan community in response to the extreme food shortages they faced during the First World War, and the knowledge that ships carrying potatoes for export were leaving the city while families went hungry.

Archival images from the early 20th century showing young working women, who may

have taken part in the potato riots, are woven together with contemporary images of women's collective action and protest, particularly the Ni Una Menos (translated as 'not one less') feminist grass roots social movement from Azpilicueta's home country of Argentina. Azpilicueta has played an active role in Ni Una Menos which campaigns against gender-based violence, and whose advocacy for reproductive rights resulted in abortion being legalised in Argentina in 2020.

The installation is accompanied by a sound piece that layers noises of sewing machines, zippers, and protest songs from the Ni Una Menos demonstrations, including the powerful chant "Nos quitaron tanto que nos terminaron quitando el miedo" translated to "they took so much away from us that they ended up taking away our fear."

The result is a vibrant tapestry with a fascinating mix of historic and contemporary images all linked by Azpilicueta's own biography, place and migration. Black and white photographs of housemaids in white aprons appear next to mobile phone screens and the

sound and images of young women from modern-day demonstrations. All are playfully interrupted by graphics and 'other imaginaries' of shrimps, capybaras and eels.

The distinctive sculptural presentation of the tapestry, with one end collapsing onto the gallery floor, allows the audience to walk around the artwork and explore the craftsmanship of the tapestry. Jacquard looms weave coloured threads together to produce intricate and complex designs, *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries* was made in the professional workshop at the Textile Museum in Tilburg, Netherlands.

White sculptural objects, which are both symbolic of care and resistance and have a functional use, are suspended around the central structure. Made from everyday materials such as string, dish cloths, and make-up sponges they represent practical tools for protest, doubling up as carriers for belongings and supplies.

Artistic collaboration is central to Azpilicueta's practice. For *Fire on the Mountain, Light on the Hill*, Azpilicueta worked closely with artist Anna Leoni Klas.

COLLECTIVE

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## Mercedes Azpilicueta

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Together, they created new textile sculptures and ceramics for the exhibition inspired by Calton Hill and our surroundings, quite literally adding bits of broken glass and stones from the hill.

A live performance on 22 August, created in collaboration with Scottish choreographer Janice Parker and dancers Carmen Berbel-Lapaz and Federica Cologna, will form a key part of the exhibition. Costumes, tools, and ceramics will be taken from the gallery display and brought to life in a series of actions linked to the themes of the exhibition and referencing stories of protest and political expression connected to Calton Hill.

The exhibition extends into our Library in the City Observatory with drawings, reading materials, and the edited text of a conversation with Sorchá Carey, Collective's Director. A video interview with the artist will also be available from late June.

A large print version of this text is available and an audio version can be accessed online. There is also a tactile library and a kids activity available in the space – just ask one of our Welcome Assistants for more information.

#### About the artist

Mercedes Azpilicueta is a visual and performance artist from Buenos Aires, now based in Amsterdam. She draws inspiration from literature, history, pop culture and theory, often working in collaboration and across different disciplines. Her work blends handmade crafts with industrial productions and can also act like props or stage sets. Her art creates space for personal and political stories that are often left out of mainstream history.

She was an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam in 2015-16, and received the Pernod Ricard Fellowship in 2017. In 2021 Azpilicueta was one of four nominees for the Prix de Rome. In the same year she was also appointed Head of Department at TXT, the BA in Textile of the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Recent solo exhibitions include Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía-C3A, Cordoba (2024), Kunstverein Göttingen (2023) and Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2022). Her work has also been featured in the UK at the Barbican, London (2024), Site Gallery, Sheffield (2023) and a solo presentation at Gasworks, London (2021). This is her first solo exhibition in Scotland.

With thanks to Mercedes Azpilicueta, and everyone who has supported the realisation of the exhibition, including:

#### *Fire on the Mountain, Light on the Hill, 2025*

Anna Leoni Klas  
Janice Parker  
Carmen Berbel-Lapaz  
Federica Cologna  
Rob Kennedy  
Angelo Castiglioni  
vuur collective, Amsterdam  
And the whole Collective team

#### *Potatoes, Riots and Other Imaginaries, 2021*

Sjoerd Kloosterhuis  
Anik Fournier  
Yael Davids  
Judith Peskens [TextielLab]  
Toni Brell  
Lucile Sauzet  
Katharina Kasinger  
Constanza Castagnet

Special thanks to Ohad Ben Shimon and Itamar

The exhibition's title *Fire on the Mountain, Light on the Hill* – is inspired by Donald Smith's words for the Lyceum Youth Theatre's performance of 'Light Assembly –2000' on Robert Burns Day, 2000.

*The exhibition is supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands and the Mondriaan Fund.*