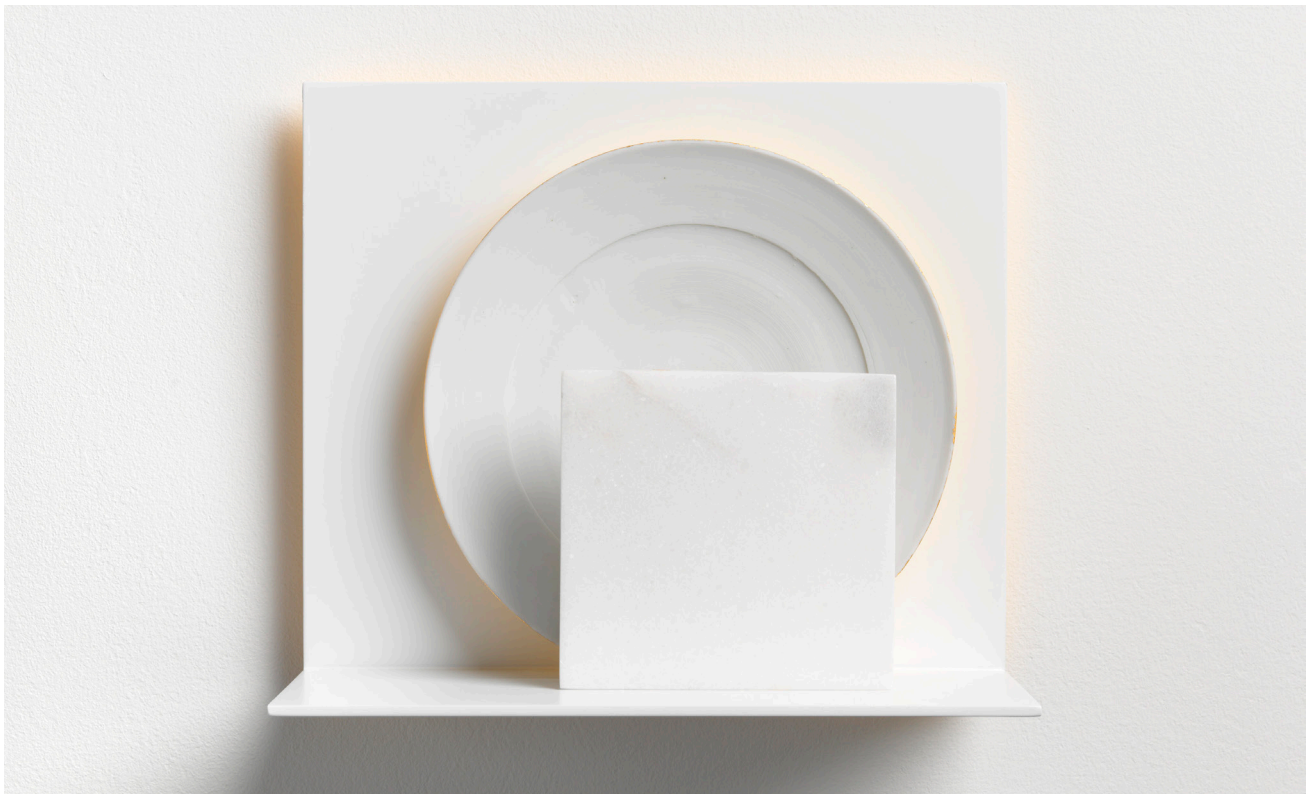


Ivorypress presents

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# Edmund de Waal     *breath*



©Edmund de Waal, *every song*, 2018

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*breath*

Edmund de Waal

**Opening:** 20 February 2019, 8 p.m.–9 p.m.

**Venue:** Ivorypress, Comandante Zorita 46-48 Madrid Spain

**Exhibition dates:** 20 February–11 May 2019

**Lecture by Edmund de Waal:** 20 February 2019, 7 p.m.

On 20 February 2019 Ivorypress will present *breath*, a project created by British artist and writer Edmund de Waal for Ivorypress.

*Breath* is an invitation for Edmund de Waal to work across Ivorypress's three different spaces: the publishing house, the exhibition space, and the bookshop. At the heart of this project is an artist's book, published by Ivorypress: a project that has spanned many years, looking hard into what books are, how they feel and their presence in the world. It is an homage to Romanian-born poet Paul Celan, a book about slowing down. To accompany the artist's book de Waal has made a series of seventeen new works, including vitrines, shelves, and diptychs conceived as open books, which take inspiration from the Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbarán and the writer Federico García Lorca, and also from Celan. There is porcelain, marble and gilding; there is gold leaf and platinum acknowledging the silver dishes on Zurbarán's paintings. There are objects hidden from view and there are repetitions. Alongside these works there will be a reading room, a selection of one hundred books inviting visitors to sit down and read. The artist's book, the exhibition, and the reading room are conceived as a joint project.



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The artist's book comprises three parts: an atlas folio book reminding us of a medieval bible, printed in an edition of six books (plus two artist's proofs and one HC), that is held within a wooden box that unfolds into a lectern for the book to stand on. Within the box there is a drawer with a small onyx shelf in it, another lectern, which holds paper-thin, translucent porcelain tiles with handwritten fragments of Celan's poems inscribed by de Waal.

The choice of materials plays an important role in the creation of the book. De Waal establishes a parallelism between the history of porcelain and the history of paper, two materials that have travelled the world, both beginning in China and Japan, and coming to Europe through the Silk Road. Using papers from the Far East, Germany, and the UK, the book narrates that journey as you turn the pages—a history from the East to the West. *Breath* is also a celebration of bookmaking: the craft of letterpress printers, papermakers, and binders using traditional methods. The artist has collected medieval manuscripts previously used for binding, and has reused them inside the spine of this book. Working with different craftsmen on the making of this book has become part of the DNA of the project.



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Edmund de Waal has written a new text about Celan and has chosen a selection of his poems to include in the book. He explores the idea that books are palimpsests: as we read and reread, we re-create texts. *Breath* is de Waal's rewriting for Celan; he has brushed kaolin (the prime material for porcelain) over parts of Celan's poems so that they are whitened out, and then he has rewritten his words by hand. Porcelain is de Waal's way of using white in the world. The book contains poems by Paul Celan, words by Edmund de Waal, and beautiful white spaces, empty pages—pages brushed with porcelain slip—all kinds of different silences within one book. In the words of the artist:

For the last years my studio has been full of papers, liquid porcelain, scribbled poems on walls, gold leaf and vellum fragments. And I've made a book for Celan. It uses four different papers, each of a different weight, and a different whiteness. They pace the book, so that you move and turn at different speeds. A book of different kinds of breath. A book that becomes a breathing in and out—as you move between the lighter and heavier papers, the text repeating itself. His poems are here in German and in English translation, sometimes printed opposite each other, sometimes overlapping. You see the shadow of one poem on another. It is letterpress so that you are aware of the pressure of the type, the bite of words, "the dance of two words". *Breath* is an attempt to make a book worthy of Celan, using porcelain, paper, marble, vellum, ink, gold. And words. To feel and sound his poems again

Until 11 May 2019, Ivorypress will host an exhibition in which six volumes of this artist's book will be shown alongside the series of seventeen new works created for this project. *Breath* is part of a long line of esteemed artists' books published by Ivorypress since its foundation in 1996. Edmund de Waal is thus added to the roster of artists with whom Elena Ochoa Foster, founder and CEO of Ivorypress, has previously worked, such as Richard Long, Anthony Caro, Anish Kapoor, William Kentridge, Isamu Noguchi, Cai Guo-Qiang, Richard Tuttle, Ai Weiwei, and Olafur Eliasson, among others. These artists' books are part of institutional collections including the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Fundação de Serralves in Porto, as well as selected private collections.



**Edmund de Waal** (b. 1964, Nottingham) is an internationally acclaimed artist and writer, best known for his large-scale installations of porcelain vessels, often created in response to collections and archives or the history of a particular place. De Waal's project for Ivorypress, *breath*, is an homage to the poetry of Paul Celan, which has been a constant inspiration for the artist in exhibitions such as *Atemwende* at Gagosian, New York; or *the collector (for Paul)* at the V&A, London, among others.

Recent exhibitions include a response to the Viennese émigré architect Rudolph Schindler at the Schindler House, Los Angeles; to the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi at Artipelag, Stockholm; and the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, curated on the theme of anxiety. *Kneaded Knowledge*, co-curated with Ai Weiwei, was shown at the National Gallery, Prague, and Kunsthhaus, Graz. De Waal's fascination with porcelain and white was the focus of a series of exhibitions including *white* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London; *On White* at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; and *Lichtzwang* for the Theseus Temple, Vienna. His most recent solo gallery shows include *the poems of our climate* at Gagosian, San Francisco, and *Irrkunst* at Galerie Max Hetzler with the Walter Benjamin Archive, Berlin.

He is also renowned for his family memoir, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), which won the RSL Ondaatje Prize and the Costa Biography. His second book, *The White Road*, was published in 2015.



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If you are interested in attending Edmund de Waal's lecture on 20 February 2019 at 7 p.m., please contact us at [press@ivorypress.com](mailto:press@ivorypress.com). Limited seats reserved for media.

**For further information and interview requests:**

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