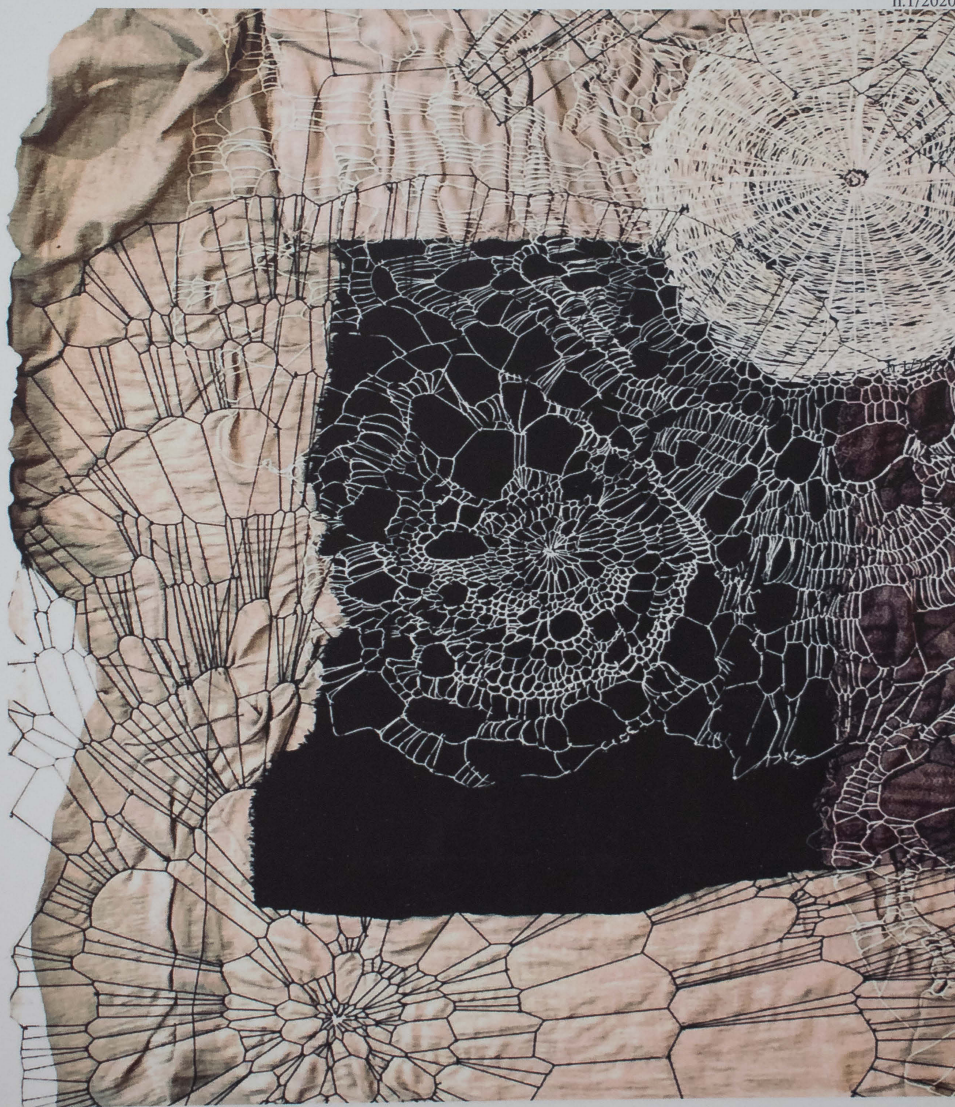


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Interview

THREAD AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE: INTERVIEW WITH MARIA ORTEGA

Maria Rosario Roseo



"Self portrait", 2006, mixed technique, engraved and embroidery, silk, raffia, paper and thread, 200x150 cm, copyright Maria Ortega

Maria, you are a multidisciplinary artist who expresses herself through the use of photography, sculpture, engraving, painting and textiles. What is there in the textile medium that captures your interest?

Textile Art is imprinted in the DNA of each human being and is an artistic medium where I found one of my sources of inspiration.

I consider that Textile Art is a form of expression as well as another artistic discipline.

Today's artists have renewed their proposals in recent decades, creating an immense generation of artists who alternate the different plastic grammars with the procedures of both traditional and contemporary artistic production. Today, it is a means of contemporary conceptual expression that is becoming more and more relevant in the cultural world.

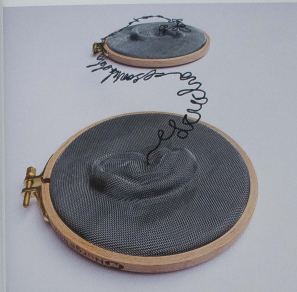
Many of your works are made through the contextual use of different techniques and materials. I am thinking for example of the "Live Motive" works in which you use a "textile" technique, i.e. sewing, combining it with unusual materials such as metallic cloth inserted on a loom like a fabric. How does the textile medium enrich the final work?

Maria Ortega, multidisciplinary artist but also curator, judge in exhibitions and general manager of important international events linked to the Textile Arts, graduated in Design at the School of Design in Madrid and in Fine Arts at the Art Blake School in London.

Her artistic vocation is expressed through the use of different languages such as photography, sculpture, engraving, painting and textiles, inevitable starting point for her entire professional career.

As she herself states: "Textile Art is imprinted in the DNA of each human being and is an artistic medium where I found one of my sources of inspiration".

<http://www.mariaortega.com/>



"Live Motive", 2014, mixed technique, low relief, metallic cloth and sewn with threads



"The Book of Life", 2013, mixed technique, low relief, metallic cloth and sewn with threads, 20x20 cm, copyright Maria Ortega

The work "Live Motive" is part of the series of works "Body Maps".

In this series I reflect on individuality and the study of various parts of myself as generators of experiences and feelings with their own and independent language.

In "El beso" the lips speak of bonds, love, passion... while in "El silencio" those same lips denounce the absence of communication, censorship, the lack of freedom and understanding. In "el abrazo", an installation consisting of three studies on the body, torso and arms, they make up a story about the subtle ties that unite us to others: fusion, affection, empathy... "The book of life" highlights the narrative capacity of the hands, which in the work make up the pages of a book that relates my own biography.

Depending on the concept that I want to express in my work, I look for the technique and materials that are adapted to carry out each of the works.

The metallic fabric that I use in this series of works allows me to mold parts of my body and I use that material in the form of a cuirass. It is a material that can generate the transparencies that is part of the identity of my work and the embroidery techniques allow me to generate a communication channel towards the viewer.

In the path undertaken to become a textile artist was there an event, a project or a person fundamental for your professional growth?

I studied Fine Arts in London and there I was able to discover the Art of Fiber or Contemporary Textile Art.

I used to visit specialized galleries and bookstores where I found the books published by the Telos publishing house that opened up a world unknown to me. They published portfolios of textile artists and thematic books on Textile Art from different countries of the world.

Also the Fiber Art and Textile Forum magazines edited by the ETN association was a reference to investigate even more about this movement, they opened the doors for me and I got to know countless events, conferences and exhibitions.

In these magazines they had a section where they published the calls for international competition and there I was able to find the World Textile Art organization (WTA) and its Biennials that were developed throughout the Latin American continent, being the winner of the 2nd prize of the V WTA Biennial, Argentina 2009.



"El Abrazo", 2014, mixed technique, low relief, metallic cloth, 200x150 cm, copyright Maria Ortega

What role has the experimentation of unusual techniques and materials played in your process of researching a personal artistic language? What can we find of the textile traditions of loom and sewing in your works?

My work begins by first generating "a concept" and then "a process".

Once I have the concept, I analyze and research the appropriate techniques and materials to carry out the final process of the work.

For me it is very important to research materials and to merge traditional techniques with contemporary techniques that we have at our disposal.

The contemporary techniques of engraving, sculpture and photographic printing are mixed with the use of traditional techniques such as embroidery, sewing, shibori, tapestry, spinning, etc. The manipulation of the fibers, fabrics and the transparencies is part of my identity.

I use natural materials like silk, organzas and tulle. Also more solid materials such as raffia, cotton, felt, paper, velvet or metal that generate those transparencies and at the same time the rigidity.

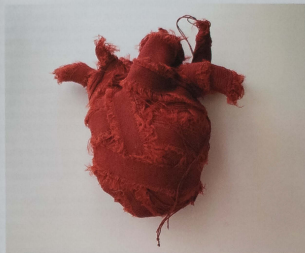
The thread as a means of communication, a universal language in the Art of Fiber.

How are the works in the "Resiliencia 2020" series born?

The state of health alert and the strict confinement that paralyzed Spain for months, made me reflect and analyze some of my previous work on the occasion of isolation to create new dialogues and thoughts with the common thread of "Resilience".

"Resilience is the human capacity to flexibly assume extreme situations and overcome them and be able to emerge stronger from them." "For resilient people there is not a hard life, but difficult moments. They are able to overcome the adversities they have had to go through and aware that all comes after the storm."

Distrust, fear, isolation and lack of solidarity are themes that I deal with in this series of works together with the need for food banks, kisses and hugs, the loss of loved ones, gloves as protection from contagion, the meditation that helps us to reconstruct ourselves, the landscapes of an empty city and the home as a refuge. Let me to carry out this series of works that are reflected in different formats. The project will include ad work together with works carried out in the confinement and after mistrust.



"Transmigración", Resiliencia series, mixed technique, cotton and wire yarn, 15x15x18 cm, copyright Maria Ortega



"Nostalgias", Resiliencia series, mixed technique, cotton and wire yarn, 20x12x18 cm, copyright Maria Ortega

Currently you combine your professional career as an artist with the career as curator, exhibition judge and director of important events such as the 8th International Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art WTA. Can you tell us about this "double role" of yours?

In the year 2000 I returned to Spain and I was surprised to see the ignorance that the institutions and galleries had about Contemporary Textile Art.

For many years I presented my textile works in galleries and they asked me: What is textile? The wallpaper? And from that moment, I decided to combine my artistic career with Cultural Management linked to Fiber Art. It was important to show through exhibitions the artistic quality that this movement generates.

In 2006 I got in touch with Pilar Tobón, president of the WTA. I explained my interest in promoting and disseminating Fiber Art in Spain. My future goal would be to hold a WTA Biennial in Madrid. For this reason I decided to do smaller projects that would generate the interest of these institutions, other artists and create a new public interested in this art.

Since that year I have been working together with the World Textile Art (WTA) organization participating in its Biennials as an artist and cultural manager.

I have curated the exhibition "Hilo a Hilo, Spanish Contemporary Textile Art" at the VI WTA Mexico Biennial 2011 and the exhibition "Double Width, Weaving with art" which was the Guest Country Spain at the VII WTA Uruguay Biennial 2017. I organized as General Director the VIII WTA Biennial 2019 in Madrid and I was also curator of the exhibition of Guest Artists "The Essence, Fiber Art" of the same Biennial.

Today, in your opinion, what is the space that textile art has today in the wider context of the "Major Arts"? Has textile art finally managed to win the right to no longer be considered a "Minor Art"?

Currently we can see the interest of contemporary art fairs such as Arco or the Venice Biennale, Museums and galleries in betting on visual artists who use the textile language in their work.

Important Museums such as the Reina Sofia, MoMA, IVAN and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao are holding individual and collective exhibitions of artists such as Sheila Hicks, Anny Albert, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Aurelia Muñoz and Teresa Lanceta, leading artists of

the Fiber Art, with others considered visual artists, like Joana Vasconcelos, Ernesto Neto, Chiharu Shiota, El Anatsui, Alighiero Boetti and Louise Bourgeois.

I think it was important to be invited and participate in the fairs to countries such as Peru, Colombia, Argentina, etc., and the holding of these exhibitions in important museums made us rethink the stereotypes and prejudices that considered Fiber Art as a "Less Art" and to position it within of some more contemporary discourses.

From these experiences the museums, fairs and galleries decided to bring textile artists and now Textile Art in general is already a reality.

Currently the International Biennial of Textile Art WTA, America and Europe; International Fiber Art Biennale "From Lausanne to Beijing, China; Miniatextile, Italy; International mini-Textile Exhibition, Bratislava; Contextile, Portugal; International Textile Triennial Lodz, Poland; International Textile and Fiber Art Triennial, Riga Latvia and the Rijswijk Textile Biennial, Holland are great references and an important platform for the dissemination of Contemporary Textile Art worldwide.

What is the main source of inspiration from which your works come to life?
Is there a theme, a reflection or a subject common to all your artistic production?

"The human being is capable of contemplating life both from within and from without. The search for the meaning of life leads me to ask myself a series of questions and search for the answers, trying to find some relief and peace. This search brings our doubts to the surface while helping us to know ourselves better and find our inner wisdom."

"The laws of the cosmos and nature were beyond our control and we have to understand what the limits of the human being are. Reflect on and understand the meaning of existence and the meaning of life to build a world that adapts and coexists with nature and our human needs." Maria Ortega

The search for new creative horizons is what leads me to reflect on matter and the senses that they awaken. Then the "textile creation" soon manifested itself as an undeniable starting point.

I reflect for my works on human dependencies, which leads in my following works towards individuality and the

study of various parts of me as a generator of experiences and feelings with a personal and independent language. I reflect on the personal walls and barriers that each person establishes in their own environment and on their projection and consequences in the society in which we live - distrust, fear, isolation, lack of solidarity, etc.. The need to feed the planet. I consider the stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate positions that always relegate women to a secondary role, which have no other reason to exist than to prolong the dominance and importance of the masculine over the feminine.

What are you working on right now?

I am currently preparing an exhibition that will be a retrospective that collects all the work of my artistic career during the last 20 years.

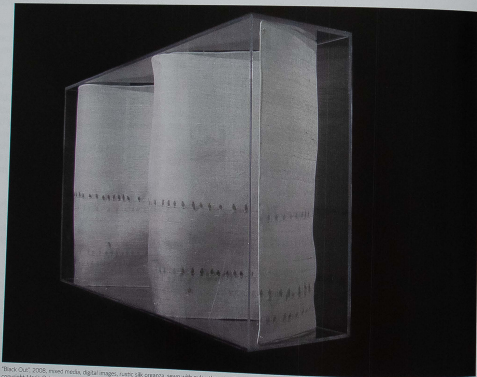
I am also working on a new series of works that I will include in the exhibition, so that it is a mirror where the evolution of Contemporary Textile Art is reflected both personally and at a general level.

At the same time, I am immersed in various cultural management projects with a great commitment to gender equality. My responsibility on the board of directors of the Women in Visual Arts (MAV) association and part of the organizing team of the Bienal MAV 2020 occupies me a lot of time.

Also on the other hand I am actively participating with the collective Mujeres dos Rombos (M2R) in different projects.

There are collaborations underway but at the moment they are in a state of gestation with other artists and cultural institutions.

As you can see, I have no shortage of projects, but not enough hours a day to continue creating and producing.



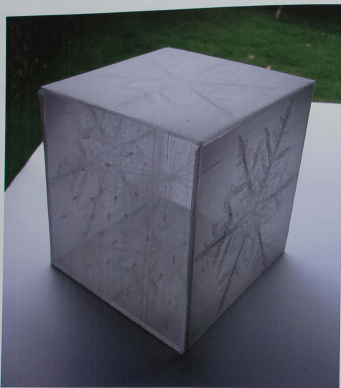
"Black Out", 2008, mixed media, digital images, rustic silk organza, sewn with nylon threads, 2x4x127 cm, copyright Maria Ortega



"Black Out", 2008, mixed media and sewing, rustic silk organza, sewn with threads, 23x4x100 cm, copyright Maria Ortega



"In textile rules on a planet", 2013, mixed technique, silk, hatters and threads, 140x140x190 cm, copyright Maria Ortega



"Black Out Star", 2009, mixed media, digital images, rustic silk organza, sewn with nylon threads, 20x20 cm, copyright Marina Dlacic



"Black Out Star-detail", 2009, mixed media, digital images, rustic silk organza, sewn with nylon threads, 20x20 cm, copyright Marina Dlacic

Tullia's Column

TIMELESS JEANS. A COLOR, A FABRIC, A STORY

Tullia Ferrero

Translation by Marina Dlacic

I have been wearing jeans (I should say blue jeans) since the 1960s; a coveted and not allowed trousers, forbidden for my sex, especially because I was not yet twenty years old then. There is a photo of me, on the terrace of my parents' house, my hair tied in two tufts by a ribbon, striped T-shirt: a style taken with both hands from "Rebel without a cause", the beloved film with James Dean, the outfit given or loaned by a cousin who could afford fashion.

I apologize if I start with myself, it may seem very personal, but ...

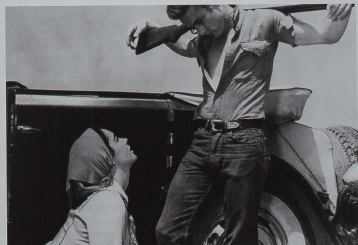
When I started working in a big company, the dress code was very formal, you had to conform especially with the dress code, and trousers or jeans were forbidden for women. We had to arrive to the 1970s to bring down many formalities.

We talked about custom, about the past, but let's go back to the title of the article because it will be interesting to explore the history, the transformations of this fabric, I repeat known throughout the whole world as jeans = blue jeans.

We have to start from Genoa and its neighboring Piedmont. Moleskin, a resistant fabric, which was dyed blue with the 'woad', a locally grown herb, was manufactured in Chieri.



The woad, the herbaceous plant of Asian origin



James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor "Cool"

