

The Contemporary Art Modern Project is pleased to announce the opening of *Feminism South to North*, a boutique exhibition featuring textile works by Latin American artists **Rosana Machado Rodriguez**, **Carolina Weisz**, **Federico Casalinuovo**, **Gabriela Ferrandez**, **Maria Cristina Medina**, **Maru Ulivi**, **Patricia Saporiti**, **Sandra Onetti**, **Silvina Apfelbaum**, **Aurora Molina**, and **Vivian Mayo**. The exhibition runs from November 10 through November 27 at the brand-new CAMP Gallery, a spinoff of our last exhibition, *40 Women Pulling at the Threads of Social Discourse*.



Textile work, especially in Latin American tradition, has always been a realm of careful construction and deconstruction, where memory and reflection, specifically that of feminine experiences and passing them on, are of the utmost importance. Moreover, textiles' purposes are to carry this within patterns, technique, color, and subject—in Latin America, this extends to political expression. Exploring humanness and the more intricate, almost socially molecular details of it, guides *Feminism South to North*. Taking experience to a profoundly public level, the realm of social engagement, is explicitly intentional, yet implicitly embedded into the very purpose of textile work itself.

The works in this exhibition are both entangled within and challenging the gender power dynamics and struggles facing a reckoning in South America, namely Argentina, Brasil, Venezuela, and Cuba, from which the featured artists hail. Their works touch upon alarming increases of femicide in the region, self-emancipation from social and familial expectations, the intersection of gender and experience and the effects it has on self-esteem and awareness, and the genesis of postmodern feminist movements demanding justice, equity, and consciousness. The essence of this exhibition lies in the power of necessary, radical action and conversation through the use of textiles, a widely recognized and long-valued space for political dissent and collective, cooperative identity.

Silvina Apfelbaum believes there is a "marked DNA" aspect to textile practice, one that is malleable and open-ended, and simultaneously private and incredibly public. **Apfelbaum** toys with the infinite possibilities she finds in textile work, making *Hacer Visible lo Invisible (Making the Invisible Visible)* a narrative piece wherein the complex relationship between the feminine experience and silence is traced through hand embroidery of silk, satins, cottons, and buttons.

Likewise, **Gabriela Ferrandez**, **Maria Cristina Medina**, and **Vivian Mayo** examine the transformative potential of textile work as it relates to experience in a less intimate sphere. **Medina's** *Bordando Ilusiones (Embroidering Illusions)* explores opposing forces on a macro-level, integrating the resilience and elasticity of textile as an encounter, rather than a battle, asking the viewer to engage rather than confront. **Ferrandez**, in a similar way, aims to engage with balance through the use of collage in *Gaia Equilibrando Poderes (Gaia Balancing Powers)*, displaying that even the most disparate of forces, entities, and forms are necessary for harmony, balance, and wholeness. **Mayo** employs the history of handfans as a "spokesperson" in *Fragilidad y Fortaleza (Fragility and Strength)* Historically used by women of higher social classes in the West, as ritual objects in ancient Incan practices, and even symbolizing connection with a divine spirit, her mix of beads and organza on the piece fuses the ideas of "feminine" as both fragile and fierce, coexisting within a person and enriching one's experience rather than tormenting.

Rosana Machado Rodriguez asks "What makes me human? What defines me as a person?" Blending photography and embroidery, two disciplines that seem to oppose one another, *Your Body, Your Gender* interrogates the friction between identity

and the external environment, citing internal desire and social demands as constrictive to the Self. **Machado Rodriguez** uses this tension to encourage the viewer to find power in vulnerability and take charge of the push and pull of the conditions of consciousness.

Alongside it, **Aurora Molina** presents minimalistic threaded figures of *Pro-Protester* on raw canvas, examining the result of this tension: social movements that transcend the individual as well as geography, more so in an increasingly digital experience that is isolating and uniting in tandem. **Molina's** piece reflects the ease with which dissent can become a revolution, and that which makes space for meaningful change, and the need for it to come from a collective.

Taking an intimate approach to textile, **Patricia Saporiti** intertwines generational knowledge in historical and familial contexts, paying homage to the generations of Argentine feminists before her and those in her own family, including her daughter and her niece. **Saporiti's** hand-embroidered book speaks to the interconnectedness of community, especially that of feminine community through embroidery work, wherein the voice of one is more often speaking for the whole. As such, **Carolina Weisz'** *Veo, Veo, No Veo (I See, I See, I Don't See)* is directing the viewer's attention to a struggle that functions in tandem with contemporary life, born out of a desire to "make the invisible, visible"—women, Indigenous peoples, the lower class experience. **Weisz'** canvas print is beaded and embroidered, featuring soft sculptures that evoke ancient Latin American votive figurines, a piece in which she intends to highlight the joy and gratitude she finds in textile work, as well as create connections with groups that "are not seen, and thus not cared for."

For this exhibition, the artists work with textiles as a tangible expression of experience. In this case, **Federico Casalnuovo** is exploring women's experiences as objects, property, and othered in the environments they inhabit from a socioeconomic perspective. His piece, *La sutilidad de lo evidente. O como un vestido de novia puede ser una cadena perpetua, una condena de muerte y un mecanismo de control (The subtlety of the obvious. Or, How a wedding dress can be a perpetual chain, a death sentence, and a mechanism for control)* is a patchwork of materials found on Western-style wedding dresses: lace, ribbon, tulle, embroidery, satin. He singles out the institution of marriage as a ritualized, often sanctified, and oppressive space, saying "the cloth sheltered them, caressed them, protected them, but it also witnessed the aberration that they still suffer today." **Casalnuovo** uses textile techniques to link the histories of domestic hostility and feminine rebellion, inconspicuous and enduring. His goal is to honor the creativity born out of persistence.

Maru Ulivi, by the same token, sustains that "silence is not an option." If **Casalnuovo's** patchwork veil is only hinting at the muted suffering a woman experiences in her lifetime, and **Silvina Apfelbaum's** embroidered narrative is guiding one through the process of speaking loudly, **Ulivi's** taking it a step further and putting the depths internalized misogyny on display, as seen in her piece, *Private Property*. In this exhibition, she embroiders images of the body with seams and wounds, phrases that recall oppression, both intangible and tangible, threaded through and highlighting the mechanisms of embodied trauma and righteous defiance.

Sandra Onetti's textile collages, a quadryptich titled *Representantes (Representatives)*, pays tribute to figures and deities of cultures "past", celebrating the capability to desire and work for protection and justice, not just for oneself, but for others. Her

depictions recall the enduring imagery of an empowered woman, honoring Maat, Egyptian goddess of Justice; Athena, Greek goddess of strategy and artisanship; Mama Quilla, Inca goddess and protector of women, the Sun, and the Earth; Justice of Tarot, who represents fairness. **Onetti's** pieces illustrate the longstanding veneration of femininity as divine and powerful, setting the tone for an exhibition that encompasses how fairness, compassion, and justice are inextricable from one's quality of life.

Written by Maria Gabriela Di Giammarco