

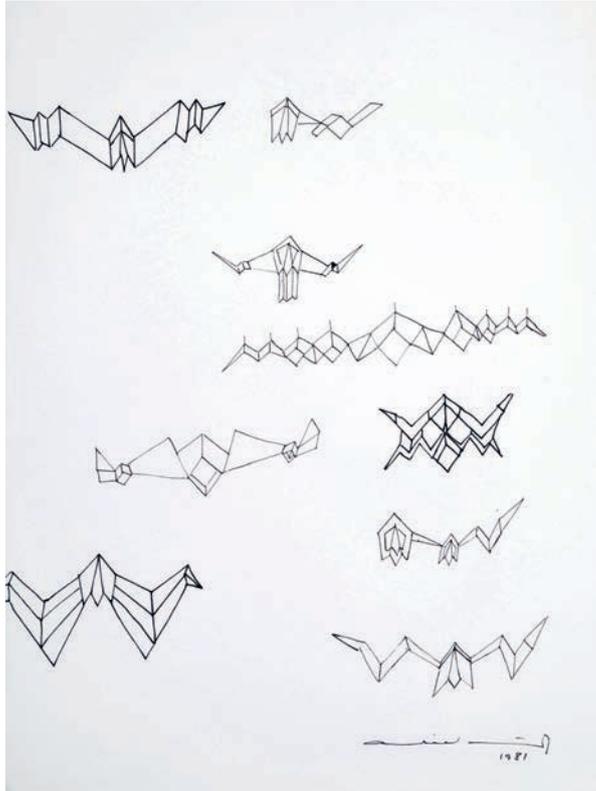
ARTUR RAMON ESPAI D'ART

Labyrinths and textures

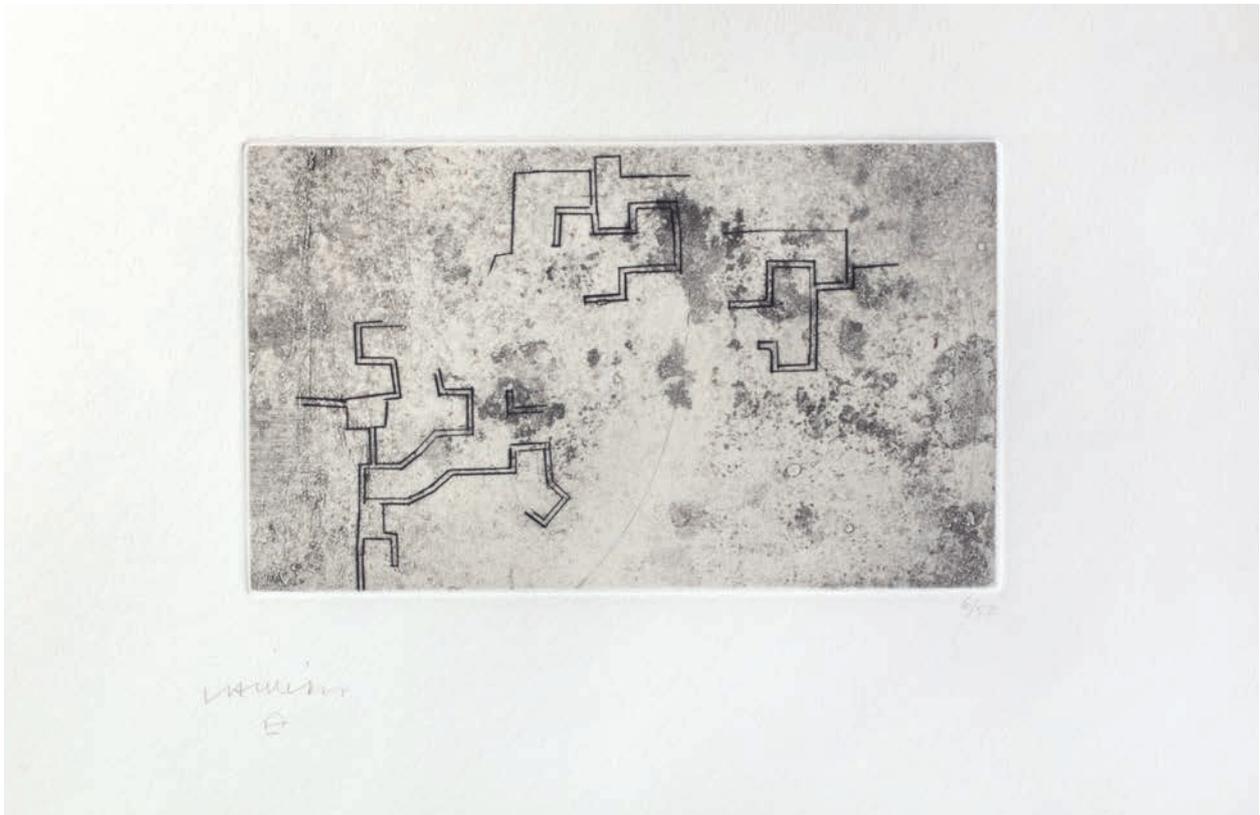
Carla Mañosas, Aurèlia Muñoz, Francesca Piñol,
Pilar Sala, Amparo de la Sota and Marga Ximénez.

Curator: Sílvia Ventosa

15.09.21 - 29.10.21



Aurèlia Muñoz, *Untitled (Series Birds-Comets)*.
India ink on paper, 34,5 x 24,5 cm.



Eduardo Chillida, *Enda II*, 1976. Etching, edition 6/50, P. 11,5 x 18,6 cm, Pp. 65,5 x 50 cm.

Labyrinths and textures

Sílvia Ventosa

PhD in Anthropology. Curator of Textile and Fashion at the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona.

Contemporary arts are multiple and include textile art as well as other artistic expressions traditionally related to crafts. The Artur Ramon Art gallery shows its recognition of the arts that have overcome the 19th century classification of materials and techniques —ceramics, glass, textiles, metal— as new forms of artistic expression work with innovative techniques and materials: paper that looks like fabric, jewellery made of wood, bark and vegetable leaves that are dyed as if they were silk threads, and other surprising outcomes. We have seen it recently in the exhibition *Visions of Catalonia. Crafting Art*, from the First Biennial of Catalan Artistic Crafts (July-September 2021), and at the Loewe Foundation Craft Prize, a sign of international interest in new artisan and artistic expressions.

It is necessary to grant the expression of textile art in Catalonia the status of visual art, as it already has in other countries, because it connects in a direct and sensory way with all kinds of people, since in everyday life we are in continuous contact with the fabric. The Artur Ramon Art gallery now offers us a new look at this type of art with *Labyrinths and textures*, a selection of works by textile artists with the aim of promoting them in our country and launch them on an international scale. From a cultural point of view, the aim is to introduce six female artists who express themselves through textile language, with a selection of works that are relevant for their expressive and conceptual strength. It is a project with a gender perspective initiated by Mònica Ramon, in which all the people involved are women: the gallery owner, the curator, and the artists. With this exhibition we want to empower female artists who operate in the textile world. The selected artists are the Catalan Aurèlia Muñoz, Francesca Piñol, Carla Mañosas, and Marga Ximénez, along with Amparo de la Sota, from Madrid, and Pilar Sala, a Murcian based in Alicante.

Labyrinths

At the moment when, with Mònica Ramon, we intuited that this exhibition would be called Labyrinths

and textures, I detected labyrinths in nature, in the sky, in the sea, in the pedestrian paths that we trace in the cities, and in our non-linear itineraries when visiting an exhibition. But what is a labyrinth? Labyrinths can have a single meaning and solution or be a real enigma, with different routes and exits that pose challenges to the imagination. The labyrinths that I know best are made of bushes —like the one in the Labyrinth Park of Horta, in Barcelona— or of stone, like the ones of Lithica, in Menorca.

You couldn't walk about Todgers's neighbourhood, as you could in any other neighbourhood. You groped your way for an hour through lanes and byways, and court-yards, and passages; and you never once emerged upon anything that might be reasonably called a street.

Charles Dickens. *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. London, Chapman & Hall, 1844.

The London that Dickens describes is the maze of cities like Marrakech or Fez, so different from New York, the Cartesian city of monumental blocks to which Blasco Ibáñez arrived in 1923.

Los grandes edificios, con sus millares de ventanas iluminadas, son inmensos tableros de ajedrez, rojos y negros, que se estiran hacia las nubes. [Big buildings, with thousands of lighted windows, are like large chess boards, red and black, stretching into the clouds].

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. *La vuelta al mundo de un novelista* (3 vol.). València, Prometeo, 1924-1925.

Textures

In the 1960s textile art “comes out” of the walls and becomes three-dimensional, it acquires an artistic status recognized by critics, collectors, museums, and art galleries around the world. Today it is back with strength, accompanied by the rebirth of the DIY (*Do It Yourself*) movement and *Craftivism*, that is, the return to crafts in the domestic and community sphere, with social and even political content.

In 1961 the “Centre international de la tapisserie ancienne et moderne” was created in Lausanne,

which echoed, in its biennial exhibitions, the movement that in 1972 was called *Nouvelle tapisserie* [in Anglo-Saxon countries, *Fiber Art*], a contemporary art form with textile language. Pierre Pauli and Jean Lurçat were the creators of that movement which revolutionized the world of tapestries, and they wrote their manifesto, in which they proclaimed that tapestry was not to be a copy of a painting or a photo, but a creation in itself. Tapestry had to be conceived in accordance with the place where it was installed, preferably in large spaces, and it had to evolve from two-dimensional to three-dimensional. The texture had to be rustic, not flat and regular, but with relief and repetitions, until it was possible to occupy the entire space. The materials did not necessarily have to be textile; in addition to wool, linen, and sisal, we see horsehair, fur, wood, metal, plastic, and synthetic fibres. The texture became a means of expression in itself, a game between weft and warp in the case of fabrics. It was about transforming ancient decorative arts into poetic expressions and at the same time a claim of the material, of women's work and, in some cases, of social and political

issues. That movement had repercussions throughout the world. The artists Jagoda Buić, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Françoise Grossen, Sheila Hicks, and Aurèlia Muñoz, among others, participated in the Lausanne International Biennial to propose and discuss radical ideas of transformation of the art world through the language of textile.

In 2014, the exhibition *Fiber: Sculpture. 1960 – Present*, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, brought the innovative artistic proposals of that movement back to the foreground. In 2019, the recognition of the quality of textile works in the exhibition *Taking a Thread for a Walk*, on the occasion of the reopening of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, once again sparked interest in textures in the international arena. This fall of 2021, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao organizes the exhibition *Women in Abstraction*, formerly presented at the Pompidou museum, with an important representation of textile art. The National Art Museum of Catalonia (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, MNAC) has recently organized a retrospective exhibition of Aurèlia Muñoz.



Carla Mañosas, *Murmillos*, 2018. Linen, cotton, silk, merino wool and xisqueta wool, high 150 cm, diameter 52 cm.



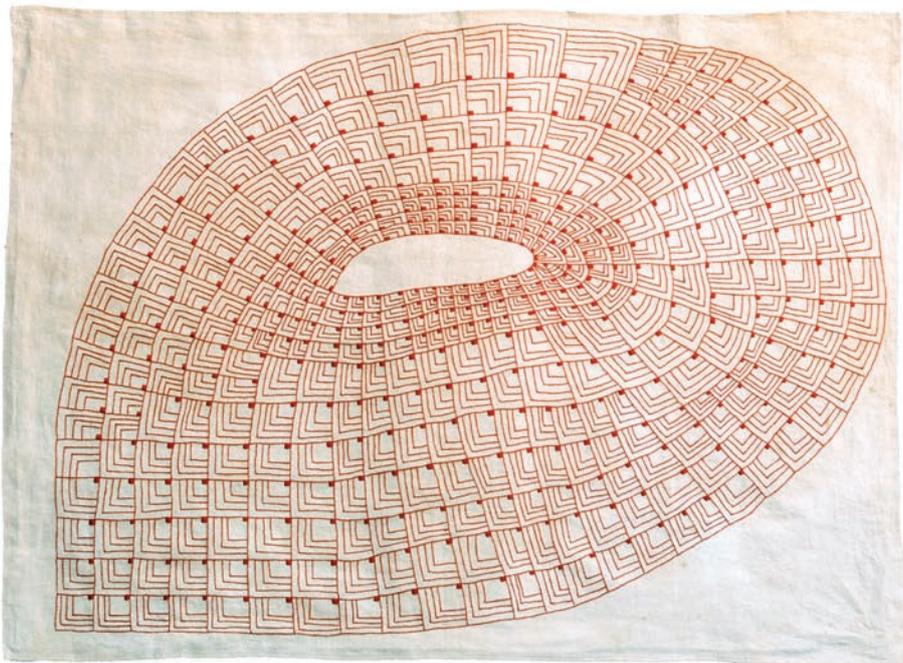
Marga Ximénez, *Escritura*, 1981. Linen and silk, 250 x 130 cm.



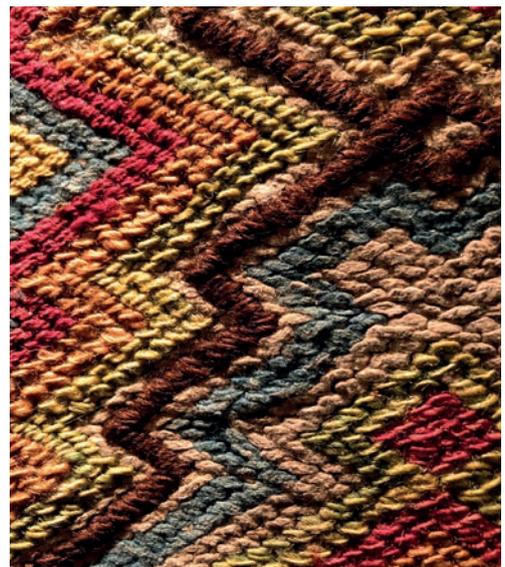
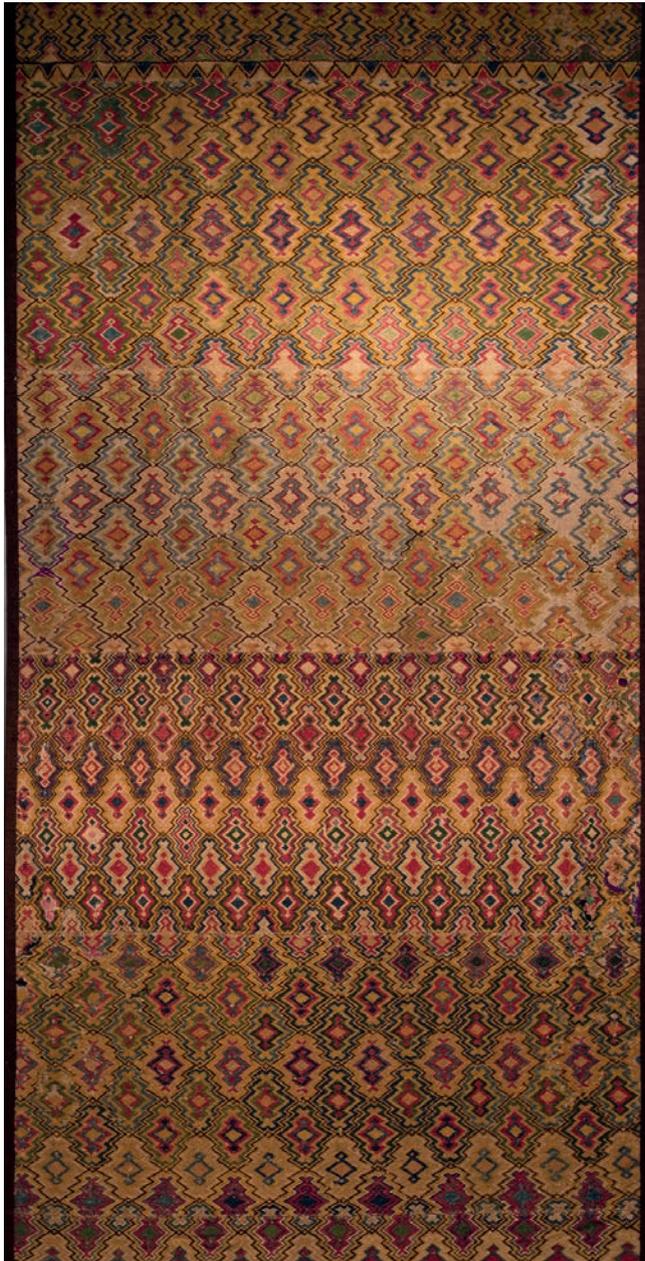
Zaire, *Kuba fabric*, late of the 19th century. Raffia embroidery, 500 x 87 cm.



Pilar Sala, *Large palm tree fabric*, 2001.
High heddle weaving with sisal and palm tree leaves, 180 x 140 cm.



Amparo de la Sota, *BII*, 2012. Linen and polyester, 69 x 92 cm.



Konya (Turkey), *Carpet made with soumak technique*, c. 1800.
Embroidered wool over cotton, 382 x 150 cm.
Right image: detail.

Labyrinths and textures

A In the exhibition *Labyrinths and textures* there is a search for analogies between the cities and the labyrinths that appear in Chillida's graphic artwork and the textures present in current textile art, since the works express with irregular woven materials the sinuosities and intersections of wefts and warps, basic and fundamental elements of fabrics. They recall the crossroads of the labyrinths, between the enigma of the path to follow and the sensual poetry of the paths of the threads, flexible fibres of vegetable or animal origin.

Eduardo Chillida and Aurèlia Muñoz discuss through graphic artwork and drawing the ideas that they later transform into large-format sculptures. Chillida has contributed a sculptural aspect to engraving, as well as a concept of full and empty space, with lines and graphics that intersect and meander, with opaque blocks of dark colour previously made or created to reflect his sculptures. They are aerial views of colossal monuments, castles or walls, or imperceptible lines that recall the alleys of an ancient city to wander aimlessly and enjoy the labyrinth. In 1968 Chillida was creating paper collages —called *Gravitations*— at exactly the same time as Aurèlia Muñoz.

Aurèlia Muñoz (1926-2011) is an international reference in textile art. Her career is distinguished by the constant investigation of forms of expression, concepts, techniques, and materials that enable new outcomes in their interaction with interior and exterior spaces. She worked with different textile techniques without loom: from patchwork to paper, through embroidery, collage, macramé, knitting, and sails, in a personal claim of ancient crafts and artisan techniques, which she uses with a contemporary artistic language. The drawings of projects of the *Birds-Comets* series of the eighties stand out, which from paper become small cardboard models in a space to scale, and finally are transformed into large canvas works sewn with the techniques of ship sails.

Marga Ximénez is a fashion designer, book illustrator, artist, and gallery owner. In her artistic work she uses surprising materials and innovative techniques, with conceptual approaches based on feminist cause, and at the same time she reflects in depth on the world in which we live from poetry, irony, and humour. She plays with multiple identities, with which she creates artistic expressions of different authors, all of them reflecting her personality, introducing the concept of heteronym. *Writing* is a

work made with the high-warp tapestry technique, in natural colours, in which the frame (evoking the loom) is part of the sculpture itself.

Francesca Piñol is an artist, textile designer, and anthropologist. Her work is distinguished by the incorporation of digital jacquard technology to manual realisation. The tonalities of the fibres come from natural dyes obtained with plant and animal materials from their environment. Her work reflects an interest in concepts such as balance, order, and structure. *Keep an eye on*, created for an international exhibition in Turkey, is a work made with jute that Aurèlia Muñoz dyed for her Turkish knot tapestries, with the intention of giving visibility to a textile industry that watches over people —women— who work there. *Stripes* also speaks of reused material, with lines of degraded colours like those of traditional fabrics. *Weaving Dreams I, II and III* are triple and double fabrics of great technical complexity to create new volumes.

The artist Pilar Sala uses plant materials of great density in her tapestries, unusual elements such as fan palm leaves, palm tree stems, grasses or esparto as they are obtained from nature, and mixes them with cotton and silk threads or jute twine, to create an artwork that can be called textile because it includes threads and textures, but that avoids any traditional fabric label. She calls her artworks “primitive weavings”, as she is inspired by the first attempts of humanity to braid or weave stems, barks, and leaves, with techniques as close to weaving as basket making.

Carla Mañosas looks at the shapes and textures of her environment for inspiration. In her work *Whispers*, which is part of a trilogy made in 2018, she wants to represent the bark of trees and their outgrowths. In his own words, “The bark [acts] as a memory container, in constant time and transformation, since it is a reflection of the changes that take place in the tree, the external elements shape it, just as our experiences shape and build our memory”.

Since 2003, Amparo de la Sota has been searching for used fabrics, family heirlooms, and daringly gives them new life, embroidering or crocheting them, forming criss-cross lines, at right angles or in concentric circles. In the creative process she looks for a rhythm, a work pattern. When she finds it, she perfects it and can repeat it ad infinitum. The results are reminiscent of studies of labyrinthine urbanism, garden and city projects, which she calls maps or grids. They also evoke the mysterious line drawings of the Nazca desert. Their presence in this

exhibition creates links or “convergence phenomena” (as Aurèlia Muñoz said) with the labyrinthine drawings of Chillida and Muñoz, and also with the Kuba carpet and fabrics discussed below.

In these parallels, the Artur Ramon Art gallery shows antique pieces, such as the Turkish carpet from Konya (Anatolia) from the early 19th century. It is an original piece, since it was made with the *soumak* technique of flat high-warp tapestry fabric, different from the well-known Turkish knot tapestries, the most widespread technique in carpet making. The term *soumak* refers to a work carried out on a vertical warp, which covers four or two warp threads with colored threads, in a discontinuous way, as if it were an embroidery. Konya rugs, with geometric zigzag patterns and bright colours, are older in origin than knotted rugs, and come from the Caucasus.

In this framework of *Labyrinths and textures*, the gallery presents an extraordinary collection of Kuba fabrics from Zaire, from the end of the 19th century. These fabrics, 8 to 10 meters long by about 75 centimetres wide, were originally female skirts for ritual *ngeende* dances, which were wrapped at the waist. Each fabric is made up of a series of sewn squares, which are part of the same ensemble or of fabrics from different periods, which are interpreted one by one, or together when the motifs cross from one piece to the other. Geometric drawings of lines at straight or sinuous angles, invented arrows or graphics, imitation of the interlocking of the weaving technique, diamond shapes, and lines that mark itineraries are observed. They are inspired by their cosmogony, and are shapes similar to those of their baskets, their wooden objects, and their body tattoos. They are made with delicate embroidery of bleached or dyed tan raffia, sometimes with hair, as if it were velvet, and made with iron needles. As these are pieces used by different generations, they are sewn and resewn with an aesthetic sense: the new patches that are applied are part of the final composition. The different pieces of a fabric are arranged in no apparent order, but in the end the set surprises with its abstract modernity, from our point of view.

In short, *Labyrinths and textures* compares prints and drawings on paper and textile works of threads, strings, and textures, which have in common a labyrinthine vision of space, like a maze of graphics and signs that suggest new or imaginary worlds and paths.

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Francesca Piñol, *Keep an eye on*. Jute, hemp and linen, 110 x 70 x 9 cm.

Carla Mañosas

(Sant Cugat del Vallès, 1992)



Graduated in Art and Design at the Massana School in Barcelona, where she received the mention of Applied Arts. She has specialized in the art of weaving with different apprenticeships in Paris and Denmark. Nature is the source that inspires her work, based on the observation and interpretation of existing forms. Fabric is the material that acts as a connection between the artist and the intervened space, creating a game of relationships and values, a bond of union and respect for other biological rhythms different from ours. Although she is at the beginning of her career, she has already exhibited in several cities in Spain and Portugal.

«*The Trees series alludes to our practices and highlights how much they influence the natural order, the changes it undergoes and its regeneration. I construct speculative scenes that question the relationship between art and contemporary nature, encompassing concepts of transformation, hybridization, symbiosis ... within a process that is (inter)dependent, within an (inter)connected weaving that shows a correlative system of cause-effect.*»

Aurèlia Muñoz

(Barcelona, 1926 - 2011)



Studied at the Montserrat secondary school, the School of Applied Arts and Artistic Crafts, and the Massana School in Barcelona. She approaches the art of weaving in the 1960's when she began to paint burlap. In the seventies she undertook the task of asserting crafts and weaving as forms of cultural and artistic expression. The research process, an almost obsessive quest, has always been the basis of her work, characterized by a reinterpretation of hand-craft/artisan techniques that elevates macramé, patchwork, tapestries and even Japanese origami to an avant-garde and abstract art form. She is a consecrated artist whose work can be found in the leading museums in the world, including the Kyoto Museum of Modern Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Reina Sofía National Art Museum in Madrid, the Museum of Modern Art of New York and the National Art Museum of Catalonia.

«*Some critics have said that I make sculptures, but it is very difficult to find an appropriate terminology to describe my work. I think I use a means of textile expression to execute three-dimensional works.*»

Francesca Piñol

(Puigverd, 1959)



Has a degree in Anthropology and Master's degrees in Textile Design (UPC) and in African Studies (URV). Since 1999 she has been a professor of textile art and techniques at the Center for Art and Design of the Massana School in Barcelona. She associates art with neuroscience, and in 2018 she received an honourable mention in the international Art of Neuroscience competition. Her work stands out by the blend of colours, textures, shapes, and symbols, and by the fascination of the interweaving of diversities. Technically she works with low heddle looms, from the simplest to those with ties, of damask, and jacquard; this allows her to draw lines and shapes on the fabric itself, using the different textures that arise from the contrast between the ligatures and the coloured threads. She has exhibited in France, Italy, Egypt, Portugal, Denmark and other countries, in addition to Spain.

«The intertwining of fabric, the combination of threads, colours, textures, shapes and symbols configures my vision, which contains the expression of various worldviews and explains the thread of life. I combine different techniques, materials and textures, and I use Jacquard digital technology and the colour obtained from natural dyeing with materials from the environment to make unique pieces or short series.»

Pilar Sala

(Lorca, 1942)



Studied Pharmacy and through the seminars of critic Kevin Power and professor Francisco Jarauta she started in the art world. Her work consists in the production of contemporary tapestries, of high heddle weaving, and manual papermaking, working with cellulose fibres from plants. With a very personal view, she transforms her textures into installations, sculptures, collages, artist's books and visual poems. She uses her art to make society aware, especially regarding environmental issues and the search for freedom. In 1980 she obtained an honourable mention in the I National Tapestry Prize in Aranjuez, and she was Spanish representative in the VI International Tapestry Symposium in Graz (Austria). She has exhibited in Belgium, Germany, Taiwan, Russia, and Denmark, among other countries.

«Nature and art, plant textures, primitive fabrics made with fan palms and other palm trees, a creative process inspired by the natural environment. My work is a magical exploration of nature, captured through ancient artisan procedures, in such a way that it brings about a mixture of contemporaneity and primitivism.»

Amparo de la Sota

(Madrid, 1963)



Is the daughter of artists, therefore she began her artistic training very early. She constructs her works with irregular pieces of old fabrics, sometimes torn and worn, recovered from the past and transformed into new realities. She uses threads and warps to develop complex abstract compositions, labyrinths blurred and balanced on the same level, giving rise to geometric rhythms and sequences, harmonized by a serene chromaticism. She has exhibited in Spain, Portugal, Ukraine, Mexico, and Uruguay.

«When I start an artwork, I don't have a concrete idea. I look for a pattern to repeat, I do and undo until I find the right rhythm; sometimes it comes out at the first attempt, very easily, other times it is more difficult. Once I find it, the rest comes by itself, effortlessly. I have always liked the slowness of textile work. I like to use very thin threads, to make each stitch with care and precision. The repetition this movement is, for me, a kind of meditation. It allows space and silence to take place inside me.»

Marga Ximénez

(Barcelona, 1950)



Is a plastic artist, sculptor, cultural manager, book illustrator, and teacher of textile techniques at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Barcelona. Her work, eminently sculptural, proposes a reflection on one's own identity, introducing the concept of heteronym on the basis of a multiplicity of identities. An active feminist, her work also provides a deep reflection on the female condition in the face of life and death. She has exhibited in Spain, Switzerland, Poland and Denmark, among other countries. She was awarded the National Prize for Print Design in Spain, and she participated in the biennials of Lausanne, Poland, and Vicenza.

«My work has gone from exploring the bare craft of the tapestry language, in which each gesture is visible, to projects that enquire into the reconversion of the private and the public, towards a social-collective dialogue. With the new millennium, the ethics of care and its transformative potential frame almost all my works, along with the poor and ephemeral nature of the materials, and recycling as an active part of her plastic artworks.»

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Aurèlia Muñoz, *Ocell rosat i miques*, 1972. Sisal macrame, stone, 70 x 25 cm.

Front page: Amparo de la Sota. *Entramados IX* (detail), 2006. Crochet, linen and polyester, 116 x 109 cm.

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