



In the fibre of her being

Fairfield City Museum & Gallery

We acknowledge the Cabrogal of the Darug Nation, the traditional custodians of the Country on which Fairfield City Museum & Gallery is situated. We extend our respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging.

In the fibre of her being

10 July – 20 November 2021

Atong Atem / Crossing Threads® / Monika Cvitanovic Zaper

Paula do Prado / Julia Gutman / Nadia Hernández

Kate Just / Linda Sok / Tjanpi Desert Weavers

Curated by Sarah Rose

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Becoming her

***I wrap your story around my shoulders
let it tangle and knit with mine
as defiant gestures of skin
a complex network of roots.*¹**

Cotton, linen, wool, polyester, silk – fibre is felt in nearly every aspect of our lives, and for some, is an intrinsic part of their *being*, attributing to cerebral and divine consciousness, and an awareness of self. French philosopher René Descartes' two-fold definition of substance situates *being* at the threshold of both tangible and intangible conditions, where the *being* of 'human being' can be initially described in terms of a physical presence as a body, parallel to the principle of disembodiment or the notion of being as spiritual.² Echoing this notion, textiles are also culturally situated on the threshold between the functional and the symbolic.³ The common phrase 'with every fibre of my being' nuances this dualism, referring to the very core of our existence, ascribing to the smallest thing that we are made of.

But what is it that we are made of?

I think of skin; a porous network and cellular structure made up of many parts, mediating tissue which enables flow. Fabric has a similar quality - many fibres interlaced, mimicking a membrane, often becoming a second skin we put on over our own. Material, like skin, is pigmented in various shades, patterns and textures. Some have marks, wrinkles and cuts in their surfaces, some possess features that are inherited and some accumulated; swatches of experiences. I think of sinuous, fibrous connective tissues; existing beneath our skin, linking reservoirs of muscles and memories, ligaments and movements. I think of lungs; the movement of breathing, inwards and outwards, reminds us of our existence. Each breath, as vital as the one past, resembles the making process: the puncture of fabric with a needle as the breath in, the pull of thread through the material as the breath out. I think of internal systems; the numerous cycles that operate in the body to maintain equilibrium, the circulatory, menstrual, digestive, nervous systems as examples, and the consequences that prevail in any system when a variable is disrupted or absent. I think of the heart;

circulating blood by way of vascular threads and how this dye connects and tangles us with others. I think of the womb and umbilical cord; a conduit of connective fibres, providing sustenance and growth through an exchange of matter between mother and child. I think of the tongue; the 'mother tongue'- the primary language in which we communicate. For some women, fibre and textiles are the tongue that feels the most natural.

From birth to death, fibre operates as a silent witness to the rhythms and routines of our everyday lives. Revealing and concealing our identities, it performs a vital role in mediating the constantly shifting relationships between the self, others, and the world we inhabit. The values and practices of society are enacted through fibre,⁴ with it being written into the structure of humanity like a language, yet it is a language that is essentially non-discursive.⁵ Language not only expresses our identities, but constructs them. As a mode of transmission or expression which conveys our innermost self, often moving from generation to generation, it can be thought that *being* and language are inextricably intertwined. This is furthered by the imbued linguistic relationship between language and textiles. Think of the familiar expressions: 'spinning a yarn', 'fabricate stories', or 'plot threads', or even perhaps that the English words 'text' and 'textile' have a shared origin with the Latin word 'texere', which means 'to weave'. Academic and artist Sonya Clark equates cloth as a form of DNA, a part of genetic code, which in itself is a language written across the span of a life. Cloth absorbs us, knows something of our humanity, and structures who we are, by providing a unique dialogue.⁶ Textile historian, Elizabeth Wayland Barber has similarly argued that cloth is akin to a coded language, a dialect that has been used for the last twenty thousand years by women to convey social messages - visually, silently, continuously.⁷ In the present, it can be understood that there is a prolonged connection between storytelling and textiles as a forebearer of linguistic traditions, where fibre-based forms can be 'read' like a narrative that chronicles and translates personal experiences, cultural identification,

and socio-cultural life. Cross-culturally, women are often the producers of textile arts, many of whom have inscribed in textiles the text of their lives.⁸ Janis Jefferies refers to this critical use of self, of the feminine and of textile materials and processes as metaphoric signs of new autobiographical patterns within cultural practice. Combined, they operate as a lived tension between the 'I' and the other – the life of the text, the textile and the terrain of the lived.⁹

***In the fibre of her being contemplates
the role of women as anonymous
carriers and preservers of heritage,
intersecting diverse cultures,
geographies, temporalities and
languages. Within many cultures,
intergenerational continuity through the
transference of knowledge and sharing
of narratives – fabrics, recipes, songs –
between women is acutely linked to the
preservation of customary practices,
connectivity and belonging. With fibre
as their dialect, these artists speak to
their personal and collective histories,
exploring legacies of womanhood,
female subjectivity, diaspora, resilience,
healing and community. The position
of textiles as a language is enmeshed
as the artists use fibre to navigate their
cognatic and gendered lineages, their
cultural and hybridised identities, and by
extension their sense of self and being.***

Historically, there has been a prevalent ideological barrier that saw fibre-based practices relegated as 'women's work'¹⁰ or a form of domesticated craft bound to the household economy. **Nadia Hernández's** multi-layered installation *De lo que somos... (Of what we are...)* (2021) subversively celebrates the domestic space, not as an oppressive force, but one of warming comfort and nostalgic familiarity through cooking and food. Through language, both text and textiles, the artist poetically ponders 'of what we are' a thought provoked when examining her mother's recipes, suggesting that perhaps our identities are shaped by external forces. By incorporating eco-dyed fabrics made in collaboration with her mother and iconography paying homage to her great-Grandmother, Hernandez perhaps offers us her maternal lineage as an answer to her inquisition.

Similarly, it is in this domestic 'domain of women' where **Monika Cvitanovic Zaper's** large-scale work *Lineage* (2020) gives form to a complex and layered engagement with her own matrilineal histories. Positioning memories of her mother's and grandmother's window curtains at the foundation of her work forges a sense of intimacy and vulnerability, which sees the artist place her female ancestors at the core of her practice. The artist carries her ancestors into the context of contemporary art as she seeks her own creative voice, distanced from tradition, yet connected through the transmission of personal, intergenerational memory embedded in the material's fibres.

Memory and knowledge are often embodied in the fibres of living material that is found, shared or inherited. Repurposing material that has been in the hands of another has a somatic quality; it operates as substitutes for people and bodies, it has traces, an absorbed identity; it has been folded and unfolded, it's been worn and used. Maxine Bristow argues that these materials are able to bear witness to our lives through their proximity to our bodies, and provide us with 'convincing testimony, not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not see them'.¹¹ These traces in material hold and communicate the stories already embedded within their fibres, which are drawn forth and transformed by the hands of the artist. Ancestral memory embodied in fibre can be passed along willingly, handed down indiscernibly, buried beneath subdued layers, or can evoke inherited trauma. Fibre can also offer nurturance, bondage and repair in these occurrences.

In her new installation *Mending fragments of a memory* (2021), Cambodian-Australian artist **Linda Sok** invites the viewer to navigate her cultural inheritance and the complexities of her familial trauma stemming from the Khmer Rouge Regime. Connecting to these past narratives through fabrics inherited from her grandmother and aunt, Sok attempts to soften the trauma and shift the legacy to one of healing by creating a comforting space of contemplation, ritual and memorialisation. Intentional gaps – in knowledge, memory, and fabric – infiltrate the work, exemplifying the artist's disconnection with her grandmother's generation, something often felt by forthcoming generations as a result of diaspora and the barrier this poses for knowledge to be transmitted. Golden

trinkets attempt to mend these gaps – or wounds – by imbuing a sense of value, reconnection and spiritual healing.

Atong Atem’s photographs, *Adut* (2015), *Paanda* (2015) and *Morayo* (2015) draw upon her South Sudanese heritage to explore postcolonial traditions, and the personal and cultural identities lived by first and second-generation Africans living in the wake of diaspora. Her hyper-patterned textile environments are layered and hybridised through Western influences interwoven with traditional African fabrics and headdresses, reminding us that Atem’s subjects, like herself, are living in a liminal space where their identities are suspended in an ‘in-between’ state between one nationality and another. Taking ownership of her own narrative, Atem uses fibre as a prop within her photography as a means of communicating a sense of self and identity, actively interrogating the ways in which we construct images and stories to understand ourselves and our surroundings.

Artist **Julia Gutman** turned to embroidery as a process of physical and spiritual repair after tragically losing her close friend. In her new work *The Black Jeans* (2021) the artist responds in protest to the erotically-charged 1937 painting ‘The White Skirt’ by late Polish-French artist Balthus. Gutman reweaves female subjectivity and brings attention to the abhorrent representation of women throughout art history. Reclaiming authority, Gutman has placed herself into Balthus’ signature chair, wearing a modest outfit made out of and imitating the clothes she wore while composing her work. The artist has constructed an image of herself on her own terms, one that captures who she is, not what she is. Made from clothing worn and forgotten by Gutman and her friends, the work is a collection of embodied memories that ignite in solidarity together, provoking a sense of intimacy and reminding us of the power of coming together in moments of despair and protest.

Kate Just also turned to knitting as a healing tool when her mother taught her, as a method of dealing with the grief of tragically losing her brother. The *Feminist Fan* series (2015-17) forms an intimate family portrait revealing a non-biological, yet personal genealogy of Just’s artistic influences and those who have informed her. Part retrospection on the past and part speculation for the future, Just fangirls over those who bravely risked it all to pave the path of feminism and challenge art

history discourse. By softening the often ‘confronting’ subject matter through yarn, Just invites viewers to engage with feminist works they may have formerly felt divided from, providing agency for feminist dialogues to perpetuate, and be shared between generations.

For many non-Western cultures, time and history does not move in a linear manner, but rather in a spiral or circular trajectory from an epicentre.¹² These cyclic movements are inherent in the traditions held by fibre-based practices; from the loops, chains and links of thread, to the passing of knowledge across generations, to female-led gatherings in spherical formations where women knit, sew, and weave together. Collaboration and collectivity in this context are often imperative to incite social connection between community members, and to facilitate spaces for discussion and education.¹³

South-American born, Sydney-based artist **Paula do Prado’s** new work *Habla con la luna (Talks with the moon)* (2021) sings a woven song of gratitude to her ancestral ‘motherlines’ and the women who came before her through abundant cyclic references and nuances to the female body, both spiritually and physically. Made up of many fibres knotted together, netting and lace are symbolic of interwoven networks, paying homage to her intersecting lineages and her custodians who are connected across many geographical waterways, but come together as healers and educators of the interconnectedness of all things.

Circular and bodily formations are similarly embodied in *The Passage* (2021), a new work by **Crossing Threads®** - the collaborative initiative of sisters Lauren and Kass Hernandez. Breaking away from their conceptual inclinations, this work instead reflects on their relationship as collaborative partners, and how fibre has helped them grow spiritually as sisters. Representative of both sisterhood and motherhood - with Kass expecting a Baby Girl in August - the dual weavings are symbolic of the morphing sister/sister and mother/child dynamic, and the interconnectedness between them. The corporal resonance of flesh, veins, placenta and vulvic formations, and the overall resemblance of a womb or ovum, reveals the reverence of their expanding matrilineality and their shifting sense of self and purpose subsequently.

Artists **Ngilan (Margaret) Dodd, Puna Yanima**, and **Mrs M. Bennett** are just three of over four-hundred Aboriginal women that make up the Tjanpi Desert Weavers, an enterprise of 26 remote communities located on Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) lands in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.¹⁴ Weaving native grass (Tjanpi) into fibre sculptures, baskets and vessels provides agency for these artists to engage with personal narratives and memories, reviving the techniques of ancestors to develop works from then and now which are unique to their cultural identities. This wide-reaching network of mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters, and grandmothers forms the bloodline of desert weaving and reflects Tjanpi’s rich history of collaborative practice; a conjointly female-specific way of being with one another, and of being in Country.

The artists in the exhibition, intentionally or unintentionally, activate feminism as a praxis, with some considering feminism as a way of being in relation to the world. Through alliances with other women, women can reclaim their right and ability to produce a language that reflects rather than suppresses their desires.¹⁵ *In the fibre of her being* provides an open dialogue for autobiography, connectivity, exchange, and the passing of knowledge between women as an active social document of the female experience. The use of fibre as an authentic language, offers a tactile catalyst in accruing a sense of who we are - something which is interwoven with all other elements that sustain us. Generations overlap and coexist, traversing different voices, times, and guises. The exhibition incites reverence to the legacies felt by and between *all* women; the women who came before and during, those who are being and becoming – those of which we are made of.

Sarah Rose,
Curator

1 Qwo-Li Driskill, *Walking With Ghosts*, ed. Janet McAdams (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2005), p.54

2 Howard Robinson, “Substance”, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford University, 2020. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/substance/>

3 Claire Pajackowska, “On Stuff and Nonsense: the Complexity of Cloth,” *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2005), p.223

4 David Howes, *Sensual Relations, Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, ed. Ann Arbor, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p.xi

5 Christopher Tilley, “Part I, Theoretical Perspectives” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuechler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), p.7

6 Sonya Clark, “A Legacy: Hair, Language, and Textiles,” *American Craft Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2017). <https://www.craftcouncil.org/post/legacy-hair-language-and-textiles>

7 Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women’s Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times*, (New York: Norton & Company, 1994), p.148

8 Dorothy Jones, “The floating web,” *Artlink*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1992), p.11-12

9 Janis Jefferies, “Autobiographical patterns,” *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, no. 4 (1997), p. 17. <https://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue4.pdf>

10 Janis Jefferies describes Women’s Work as follows: “*Textile work is perceived as labour-intensive, slow and painstaking and yet, in a double twist, rendered and devalued as invisible women’s work, non-work, or non-productive labour.*” Janis Jefferies, “Text and textiles: weaving across the borderlines,” in *New Feminist Art Criticism*, ed. Katy Deepwell (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.164

11 Maxine Bristow, “Continuity of Touch: Textile as Silent Witness” in *The Textile Reader*, ed. Jessica Hemmings (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), p.45

12 Julian Baggini, “About time: why western philosophy can only teach us so much,” *The Guardian*, 25 September, 2018, 15.00 AEST <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/sep/25/about-time-why-western-philosophy-can-only-teach-us-so-much>

13 Sigourney Jacks, “The power of ‘women’s work’: craftivism,” 24 April, 2020. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-power-of-womens-work-craftivism/>

14 This Indigenous governed and directed social enterprise of the NPY Women’s Council provides a platform for women to earn an income through contemporary fibre art in their communities.

15 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993)

Atong Atem

The *Studio Series* was initially about the shared experiences of black migrants that I know in Melbourne, but has developed into an exploration of my blackness and my identity and culture through African cultural iconography, black visual languages, and diasporic traditions represented in the act of posing for a photograph.

The photos are traditional, staged studio photographs similar to those found in my family albums and the photo albums of many people in the diaspora - they're bright, colourful and depict a very precarious moment in African history between traditionalism and cultural changes brought on by colonialism.

These images pay homage to black studio photographers in colonial and postcolonial Africa such as Malick Sidibe, Seydou Keita and Philip Kwame Apagya, in an effort to continue the tradition and create a tangible, visual representation of a relationship to culture as a way of proclaiming and celebrating the connection.

This *Studio Series* responds to the ethnographic gaze of colonial photographs of black people and speaks to the importance of creating and owning one's own narrative and depictions. The series also responds to the dehumanisation of the white gaze and the violence of a eurocentric history. Black photography in colonial Africa was more than subversive; it was reclamation, it was celebration, it was powerful, and it always will be.

Atong Atem is an Ethiopian born, South Sudanese artist and writer living in Narm/Melbourne. Atem's work explores the inherent intimacy of portraiture and photography as well as the role photographers take as storytellers. Atem interrogates photography as a framework for looking at the world and positioning people in it. She takes framing into a fantastical direction with the small portals over the subjects' faces, inviting the viewer to look at them through a surreal and constructed lens.

Atem has exhibited her work across Australia, including MUMA Monash, Gertrude Contemporary, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and internationally at Red Hook Labs in New York, Vogue Fashion Fair in Milan and Unseen Amsterdam International Art Fair. Atem was the recipient of the inaugural National Gallery of Victoria and MECCA M-Power scholarship in 2017 as well as the Brisbane Powerhouse Melt Portrait Prize in 2016. Atem has exhibited in the Immigration Museum, the NGV, and as part of RISING in 2021.



Top: Atong Atem, *Adut*, 2015, Ilford smooth pearl print, 59.4 x 84.1cm.
Left: Atong Atem, *Morayo*, 2015, Ilford smooth pearl print, 84.1 x 59.4cm.
Right: Atong Atem, *Paanda*, 2015, Ilford smooth pearl print, 84.1 x 59.4cm.
Images courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery.

Crossing Threads®

Titled *THE PASSAGE*, this multi-layered pair of soft sculptures are circular in form, representing the womb, return to self, and notions of totality. Co-created by the Hernandez sisters as they enter the life stage of motherhood, it speaks to the dynamic, yet positive shift in their relationship as siblings.

With their emotionally charged relationship defined by degrees of intimacy, these fibrous organisms, though displayed as a pair, can still each exist on their own. Linked by a figurative umbilical cord, the impending birth is deepened through shared maternal guardianship. Notably, this chain is deliberately unfixed and can be detached setting both organisms free; in turn, reframing each as their own separate entity and individual story. Layers of handwoven panels of hemp, leather and tussah silk overlap and intersect, embodying the nature of the uterine wall and the physical bodily changes experienced throughout pregnancy.

The technique of reedless weaving and absence of warp regulation symbolises the ever-changing roles Lauren, Kass and their familial relationships will have to navigate when they meet the baby earthside. Sprawling throughout the layers are fragments of a root system, evidential of familial history intertwined in supporting this seed of life. The placental change is both confronting and transformative, learning to accept surrender, in enabling the siblings to break generational patterns and re-weave the next phase together.

In honoring the matriarchy, traditional of Filipino culture, vulvic forms embody the pain, pleasure, and life force of a woman and mother. Being first-generation Australians to immigrant Filipino parents, the artists hold the belief that their '*anak*' (meaning child in Tagalog) will also present the opportunity to reconcile their identity of both cultures and create a new future state. *THE PASSAGE* draws parallels with the Hernandez sisters' unrelenting connection and self-perpetual cycles to ripen in life.

Crossing Threads® is the collaborative work of Australian-born sisters of Filipino heritage Lauren Hernandez (b. 1988, Sydney) and Kass Hernandez (b. 1989, Sydney), both living and working on Wangal and Gadigal Land. These self-taught tapestry artists first explored the practice of weaving in early 2015 by attending a beginner's workshop. Known for their large-scale and highly textural handwoven pieces, the Hernandez sisters seek to emulate the natural forms found in nature. Their carefully curated fibre artworks include Australian merino wool, fairtrade hemp and other plant-based fibres, as well as, up-cycled/dead-stock fabrics and foraged items that aren't traditionally used in fibre art.

Their practice has led them to develop their recognisable '*interknot*' technique, made up of intertwining hand knotted chains of varying texture and thickness which graduate to a relief. The artists continually draw spiritual inspiration from their surrounding landscapes, personal experiences, and familial relationships, which are woven through their abstract designs. Through extensive experimentation fuelled by curiosity, passion and collaboration, Crossing Threads® has evolved into a dynamic partnership that services both domestic and international clientele.

Lauren and Kass Hernandez, Crossing Threads®,
THE PASSAGE (detail), 2021, bamboo, chenille, organic
Egyptian cotton, fairtrade hemp, jute, leather, linen, mulberry
tussah silk, botanically-dyed raffia, upcycled sari silk, and
wire on galvanised steel frame, 90 x 70 x 10cm approx.
Image courtesy of the artists.



Monika Cvitanovic Zaper

***Lineage* is dedicated to my creative connection with my female ancestors. Growing up beside my mother, a professional seamstress, and my two grandmothers who both engaged with some form of needlework, I recall being attracted to threads and fabrics as well as in awe of the transformative power of my mother's skillfulness. Although I remained feeling drawn to textiles, it was while I studied painting that I rediscovered my deep sensibility for cloth and thread.**

The texture and the smell of the polyester fabric remind me of the window curtains both my grandmother and my mother sewed themselves and had hanging in their home, a remnant I wanted to give a new life. The fabric's gridded structure represents a background traditionally suitable for stitching, which I applied to create lines in all directions, playing with the tension between continuity and discontinuity. Multiple gestural painterly marks recall the feel of the mahogany timber window frames in my childhood home and I intuitively wanted to contrast them with crisp white background. I sought to engage with both media in an expressive manner, contemplating both a knot and a dot as points of departure that can extend into a line in every possible direction and even tangle, this process also being symbolic of my own departure from traditional rules of embroidery. My conscious decision to embrace mistakes represents a method of rebelling against the patriarchal context in which my female forebears practiced craft, with the knots harbouring the entangled emotions.

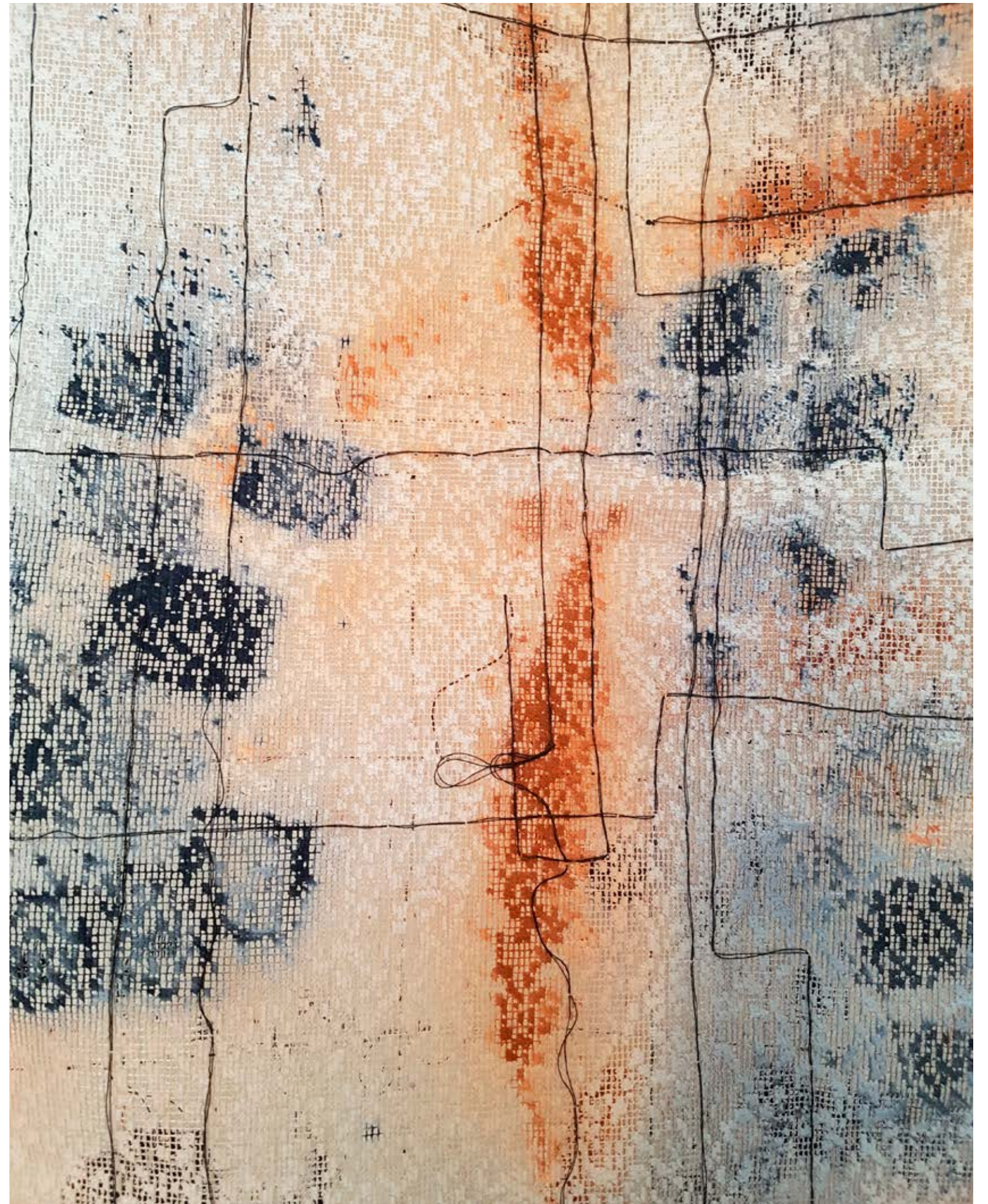
By bringing the overlooked traditions of women's craft into the context of contemporary art, I aim to honour and celebrate the resourcefulness and resilience of the women that shaped me as well as to challenge gendered hierarchy of art materials.

Monika Cvitanovic Zaper is a Croatian-Australian artist exploring the intersection of expanded painting and traditions of women's craft. Informed by ecofeminism, she is interested in rereading women's histories while working through personal, intergenerational memories. Her works seek to transmit the vulnerability and the transient nature of materials and memory. She believes that it is through deep exploration of the material that she can access the space between historical narratives and contemporary art forms, give voice to the unvoiced, bring out the meaning of textures and encourage the sensory experience of the viewer.

She explicitly works with reclaimed fabrics, due to their personal histories and because of her concern for the ecological implications of art making. By referencing the textile practices of her female forebears, she is exploring the therapeutic potential of women's craft and ultimately challenging the gendered hierarchy of art materials.

Cvitanovic Zaper has exhibited her work in *RAS Young Artist Prize, Lethbridge 20000 Art Award, Reimagine, Jenny Birt Award, Intimations, Emergent 2021* and was the winner of the *2020 Tim Olsen Drawing Prize*.

Monika Cvitanovic Zaper, *Lineage* (detail), 2020, thread and acrylic on a recycled polyester fabric, 127 x 108cm. Image courtesy of the artist.



Paula do Prado

I had envisioned making a net. In my mind it alternated in appearance, somewhere between a giant spiderweb and a casting net as it might look in the very moment it was cast, floating and spreading out in the air before it hits the water. Inspired by a version of the cumbia folk song “El Pescador” /The Fisherman that Toto La Momposina performs, I was drawn to the lyrics, “habla con la luna (talks with the moon) /habla con la playa (speaks with the beach)/no tiene fortuna (has no treasure)/solo su atarraya (just a fishing net)”. Like the cycles of planting and harvesting on land, I thought about the lunar cycles, the catch and the sea.

So many of the folk and modern tales devalue the herstories we know birthed us. This work is a woven song to those herstories. To my motherlines etched in the rivers Congo, Nile, Quaraí, Rio de la Plata, Yaguaron and those whose names I do not know that may have flowed in or out of the Rhine or even the Somme. To the daughters of sharks, who survived because they grew powerful sharp mouths and kept going without looking back. To those that took luck into their own hands to manifest other possibilities for their children’s children.

To the weavers, makers, diviners, casters and repairers of nets who came before me and embodied the knowledge that everything is connected. This is a woven song of gratitude to all the Fisherwomen who talk with the moon, custodians of the waterways and the life held within. I sing thanks to the Herring Protectors of Sitka Alaska, the Vezo women of Madagascar, the Mujeres Trabajadoras del Mar of Mexico, the Marisqueiras of Brazil and Barangaroo and the Eora Fisherwomen.

Paula do Prado is a visual artist who creates tejidos/weavings as an active form of reclaiming, remembering and resisting. She was born on Charrúa land (Montevideo), Uruguay, migrating to Australia in 1986. She currently lives and works on Gadigal land. Her practice makes visible the intersection of her ancestral lineages including Bantu (West, Central and South African), Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) and Indigenous South American heritage. do Prado holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Textiles) with First Class Honours and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of New South Wales Art & Design. She has held various solo and group shows in Australia and overseas. She is currently a PhD candidate at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

Thank you to my ancestors, guides and the elementals who co-create with me at the crossroads.



Paula do Prado, *Habla con la luna/Talks with the moon*, 2021, wool, cotton, acrylic yarn, paper covered wire, ribbon, metallic thread, pom poms, poly and cotton sewing thread, collected European lace, repurposed plastic fruit netting, metal sinkers, 160 x 230 x 10cm irregular. Image by Document Photography.

Julia Gutman

In this work, Gutman is responding to 'the white skirt' (1937) a painting by Balthus of his wife Antoinette. The late Polish-French artist, born Balthasar Klossowski, is known for his erotically-charged images of girls on the cusp of puberty.

Balthus and Antoinette first met in 1924 when she was twelve years of age and he was nineteen. His other models were often children, daughters of his staff, usually depicted partially dressed and gazing wistfully into the distance. In the original painting, Antoinette is swathed in the titular white skirt, an open shirt and a translucent bralette.

In Gutman's version, the artist has inserted herself into Balthus' signature green chair, in an outfit made out of and imitating the clothes she wore while drawing the piece. She is dressed to work, dressed to construct an image of herself. Her gaze is more pissed-off than demure. She wants to be looked at on her own terms, sitting in dialogue with Antoinette on agency, power, intimacy and the performance of femininity. Like all of Gutman's 'patchworks' this piece is made almost entirely out of clothing donated by people in her life, in this case including herself – a collection of memories that become significant, alongside the trace of the invisible laborers who produced the garments to begin with. With each stitch, both nurture and rupture occur – the process is as tender as it is aggressive.

Julia Gutman is a multidisciplinary artist living and working on unceded Gadigal Land. She reuses found textiles to produce 'patchworks' that merge personal and collective histories to explore themes of femininity, intimacy and memory. Julia holds an MFA in Sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design and a BFA in Painting from UNSW Art and Design. She was a finalist in the 2021 Finalist in the Ramsay Prize at the Art Gallery of South Australia and the 2020 NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship at Artspace Sydney. Julia's practice has been profiled in the Sydney Morning Herald, Art Almanac, Art Collector and Ocula. Her work has been exhibited across Australia and internationally with shows in Sydney, Adelaide, Rome and New York.

Julia Gutman, *The Black Jeans*, 2021, clothes worn and forgotten by Gutman and her friends, thread on calico, 140 x 188cm. Photographed by Simon Hewson at Fatografi.



Nadia Hernández

On the hunt for poetry, whatever that
is as material...

I decided that my mom's recipes were
very beautiful
a list of ingredients
that called for X amount of this or that...
got me stuck on the "of"
"of" exactly what are we made of?
"of butter at room temperature" -
that is what we are made of...
butter at room temperature takes on
the form of whatever it touches
it shifts its shape to meet and join that
which receives it...
butter at room temperature is so soft,
it melts...
melting rapidly through the walls of a
vessel or frying pan, onto hands,
spoons,
whatever dish it's joining...
unstoppable
pyroclastic

De lo que somos...
de mostaza
de mayonesa
de mango maduro en cubos pequeños
de sal y pimienta negra al gusto
de repollo morado picado
de mezclas y remezclas
de palabras que aún no existen
de nada auténtico y experiencias cotidianas
de pan duro
de oro puro
de puro pan...
de perros bravos
y bravos pueblos

Of what we are...
of mustard
of mayonnaise
of ripe mango in small cubes
of salt and black pepper to taste
of chopped purple cabbage
of mixes and remixes
of words that are yet to exist
of nothing authentic and everyday
experiences
of stale bread
of pure gold
of just bread
of brave dogs
and brave people

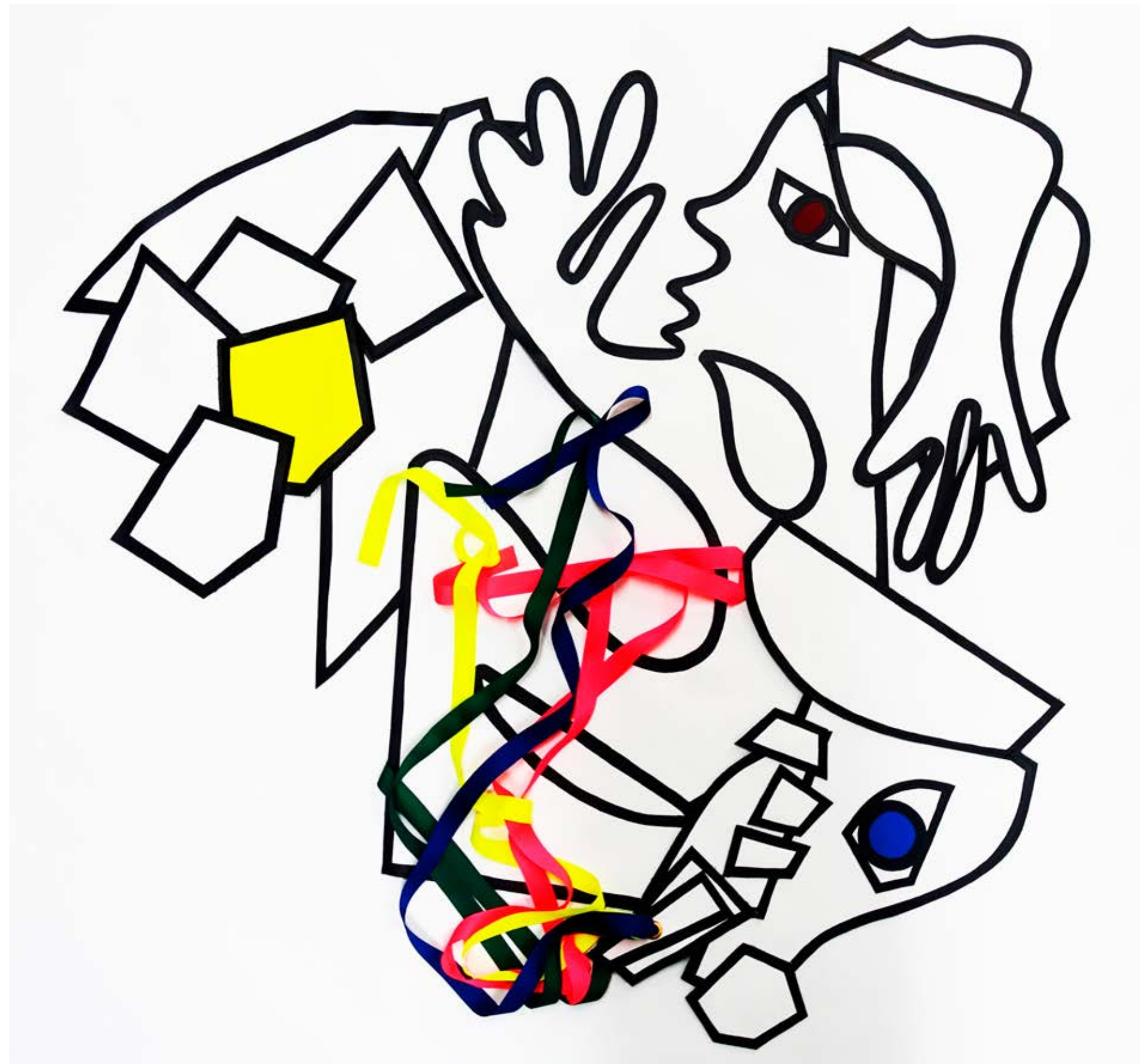
Nadia Hernández's practice is underpinned by narrative, drawn from familial stories, memories, and experiences. Influenced by the sociopolitical climate of Venezuela and her diasporic experience as a Venezuelan woman living in Australia, Hernández depicts abstract forms with an expansive colour palette. Her paintings, installations, textiles and works on paper, while joyful and energetic in colour and line, simultaneously hold a deep longing for her home country.

Hernández holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane (2008). She has exhibited widely across Australia, in solo exhibitions including at STATION Gallery, Sydney (2021) and Verge Gallery, Sydney (2020). She has exhibited in group exhibitions including miffy & friends, Queensland University of Technology Art Museum (2020/21 and national tour).

In 2019 Hernández was awarded the Churchie Emerging Art Prize and undertook a residency with Bundanon Trust. She has been shortlisted as a finalist in several awards including the New South Wales Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship, Artspace, 2020, the John Fries Award, UNSW Galleries, Sydney, 2019 and the Fisher Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2017. Hernández has received public art commissions for Brisbane City Council in 2019 and City of Sydney in 2017. Her work is held in public and private collections including Artbank. Nadia Hernández is represented by STATION, Australia

This work was made on unceded Gadigal and Darug land. The artist acknowledges and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

x100Pre agradecida a mi madre y familia materna. Desde lejos los quiero y adoro.



Nadia Hernández, *De lo que somos... (Of what we are...)* (detail), 2021, synthetic polymer paint on wall, acrylic, cotton, linen, ribbon and eco-dyed material on recycled textiles. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

Kate Just

Feminist Fan is a series of hand-knitted replicas of self-portraits or artworks by feminist artists around the globe I have been creating since late 2014. The title *Feminist Fan* emphasizes my reverence to these artists and feminism, and each carefully stitched picture constitutes a time-intensive act of devotion.

Echoing my use of knitting as an art medium, many of the works I selected for this project highlight the potential of textiles, clothing or adornment to expand representations of gender, sexuality and identity.

I wrote and shared social media posts alongside every completed work. I used the Instagram handle @katejustknits and the hashtags #knitted and #feministfan. I also referenced the pictured artist's name or Instagram handle. These posts led to ongoing connections and conversations between me and other 'feminist fans' and artists, including some of the ones I had knitted. Many of the posts were shared, generating further awareness of each featured artist's work.

As a collection, *Feminist Fan* forms an intimate family portrait of feminism and my own influences, in which threads of connection between artists and across time periods and cultures emerge.

Born 1974, Hartford, US. Lives and works on Wurundjeri/Boon Wurrung Country, Narm (Melbourne)

Kate Just works across sculpture, installation, neon, textiles and photography but is best known for her inventive and political use of knitting. She often works collaboratively within communities to create large-scale public art projects that tackle significant social issues including sexual harassment and violence against women. Just has exhibited extensively across Australia and internationally, and has undertaken artistic residencies in New York, Vienna, Beijing, Tokyo, Barcelona and New Delhi. She holds a PhD in Sculpture and is Head of the Master of Contemporary Arts program at the Victorian College of the Arts.



Top: Kate Just, *Feminist Fan #1 (PUSSY: Casey at the Melbourne Pussy Riot Protest, 2012)*, 2015, hand knitted wool and acrylic yarns, canvas and timber, 38.1 x 50.8cm.
Bottom: Kate Just, *Feminist Fan #7 (Chinese Feminist Five's 2012 Protest against domestic violence in Beijing)*, 2015, hand knitted wool and acrylic yarns, canvas and timber, 40.64 x 55.88cm. Images by Simon Strong.

Linda Sok

***Mending fragments of a memory* utilises discarded fabrics my grandmother and aunt had sewn together many years ago, to produce a cross-generational collaborative work that explores the use of textiles as a means to share language and culture. The work acknowledges the disconnect I feel from my Cambodian heritage, the loss of language as a result of migration, and the breaking down of familial relationships consequently.**

The work looks towards piecing together stories from my childhood, most significantly reflecting on a story about my grandmother. The story tells of her fleeing the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime with her gold jewellery sewn into the inside of her clothing, which in turn funded the means to pay for her and her children's safety.

Little golden trinkets in the form of flowers, swirls, beads, petals, phoenixes, and lotus leaves adorn the fabrics. These metal trinkets have been hand stitched into the material to cover the Khmer text previously painted on to the fabric, which speaks about experiences and encounters with war. These concealed elements create secrets only shared between myself and those who know of the stories.

Initially intended to be used as blankets and bedsheets, the lengths of fabric worked on by my aunt and grandmother have been repurposed, cut and further manipulated to speak to ideas around methods of handing down matrilineal practices and the process of piecing together fragments of familial stories from the Khmer Rouge period.

Linda Sok is a Cambodian-Australian artist focused on investigating the culturally and personally significant period, the Khmer Rouge Regime, which forced her family to flee Cambodia. Her practice navigates the complexities of the trauma embedded in the Cambodian diaspora and aims to shift its legacy from one focused on genocide to one of healing. With careful considerations for cultural objects, rituals, traditions and their materiality, her practice often manifests as sculptural installations. By accessing fragments of the past, she attempts to recontextualise lost traditions and culture to allow living descendants to process the traumatic history experienced by older generations.

Sok graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from UNSW Art & Design with First Class Honours and the University Medal in Fine Arts. She has exhibited in institutions across Australia such as Artspace, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Firstdraft Gallery, and SEVENTH Gallery. She has also exhibited in the U.S. in institutions such as the Multicultural Art Center and Kathryn Schultz Gallery in Cambridge. Sok is currently an artist in residence at the Boston Center for the Arts.

I would like to thank my aunt Thear Sok and my grandmother Ly Sok for providing the textiles and materials for this work.

Linda Sok, *Mending fragments of a memory* (detail), 2021, fabric (assorted), metal trinkets, string, rattan, paint. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.



Tjanpi Desert Weavers

***Tjanpi Desert Weavers* (Tjanpi meaning 'wild grass') is an award-winning, Indigenous governed and directed social enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC). Tjanpi empowers over 400 women across a 350,000 square km area of the tri-state region of NT, SA and WA to earn an income and remain in their communities on Country.**

Ngilan (Margaret) Dodd

Ngilan is one of Tjanpi Desert Weaver's most creative and innovative artists, who has developed her own niche market within the social enterprise. Ngilan dedicates herself to her weaving practise with immense passion and determination, finding joy and comfort in the process of artistic creation on her home Country in Mimili, surrounded by friends and family. In recent years Ngilan began experimenting with the form and shape of her baskets, which eventually lead to establishing her distinctive vessel-shaped art pieces. She has pushed her basket style into new and exciting territory through size, colour and embellishments.

Ngilan (Margaret) Dodd is an artist belonging to the Pitjantjatjara language and cultural group and lives in the remote community of Mimili, South Australia. *Ngilan* has been creating beautiful baskets for Tjanpi for many years and has formed a distinctive aesthetic of colourful stripes and a loose, organic weaving style. Ngilan developed a new and exciting shape of woven basket which can best be described as a vessel and resembles the ancient Greek hydria. Ngilan dedicates herself to her woven art practise with immense passion and determination. A woman who (despite being confined to a wheelchair) has achieved so much through her hard work, artistic creativity and a unique passion for weaving. Ngilan's daughter Sheena Dodd is also a celebrated and skilful weaver.

Puna Yanima

Puna has been prolific in her basket making with Tjanpi for many years. She enjoys experimenting with various shapes – particularly rectangular shapes – and sizes, often opting for large-scale baskets. Puna's curiosity and creativity has allowed her to connect with weaving in exciting and imaginative ways – making her art practise an ever evolving journey of investigation and discovery.

Puna Yanima is an artist belonging to the Pitjantjatjara language and cultural group and lives in the remote community of Mimili, South Australia. Puna was born in Indulkana and moved to Mimili later in her life where she had her four children. Puna is a strong and innovative weaver, creating stunning earthy baskets which are often embellished with wipya (emu feathers). Puna is creative in her style and experiments with basket design, always pushing the boundaries of weaving in exciting ways. Puna also paints at the art centre in Mimili.

Mrs M. Bennett

Mrs Bennett was an artist belonging to the Ngaanyatjarra language and cultural group and lived in the remote community of Tjukurla, Western Australia. Mrs Bennett was a fabulous weaver with a very raw, natural aesthetic. She often wove baskets embellished with wipya (emu feathers) and incorporated various weave and wrapping styles – some open and loose, others tight and neat. Her baskets often resembled bird nests through their beautiful organic textures and design.



Puna Yanima, *Large solid round basket 1*, 2020, raffia, wipya (emu feathers), 60 x 20cm. Image courtesy of Tjanpi Desert Weavers.

Curator’s Bio

Sarah Rose is an independent curator based in Sydney. She has curated extensively across independent and council-run spaces, collaborating closely with artists to develop group and solo exhibitions. Her research often explores the body as both a material and a subject, traversing notions of trace and embodied materiality.

Curatorially, she frequently focuses on the practices and experiences of women, feminist lenses, and technological interventions within the museological space and wider arts ecology. Sarah is co-founder and project coordinator of More Than Reproduction, an artist-run printmaking initiative for women, and a former member of the Art Gallery of NSW’s Youth Collective. Sarah holds a Masters of Curating & Cultural Leadership with Excellence and a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Distinction from UNSW Art & Design.

Acknowledgement

The curator would like to acknowledge all the women who have shaped her and those who continue to inspire her. This essay and exhibition was developed across unceded Dharawal and Darug lands. The curator would like to pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This catalogue was published to accompany the exhibition *In the fibre of her being* at Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, 10 July - 20 November 2021.

Curator & editor - Sarah Rose

Artists - Atong Atem, Crossing Threads® (Lauren & Kass Hernandez), Monika Cvitanovic Zaper, Paula Do Prado, Julia Gutman, Nadia Hernández, Kate Just, Linda Sok, and the Tjanpi Desert Weavers (Ngilan (Margaret) Dodd, Puna Yanima, and Mrs M. Bennett)

Producer - Carmel Aiello

Designer - Kathie Nad

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Fairfield City Museum & Gallery

Open Tue – Fri, 10am – 4pm



Sat 10am – 2pm | **FREE ADMISSION**

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Cover image: Paula do Prado (detail), *Habla con la luna/Talks with the moon*, 2021. Image by Document Photography.

