

Craft Contemporary

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Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo

January 28 – May 5, 2024

Guest Curator: Alma Ruiz

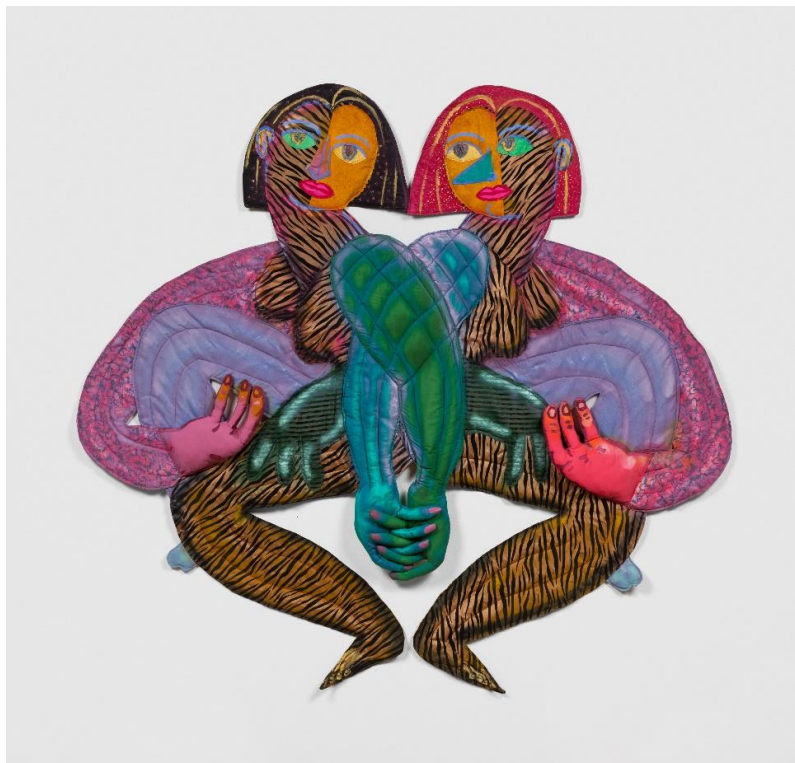


Image: Maria A. Guzmán Capron, *Me Veo en Ti*, 2022. Fabric, thread, batting, stuffing, spray paint and acrylic paint, 56 x 60 1/2 in. Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian

Los Angeles- *Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo* presents two artists, Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo, whose use of textiles unite them in an exhibition featuring a range of impressive two- and three-dimensional works. Minga's work draws attention to environmental degradation caused by textile waste, while Maria's aims to highlight awareness of multicultural identities, empowering those who step out of so-called societal norms. Both artists recycle fabrics, transforming them into unique forms of expression, rerouting their destination from the landfill to museums, galleries, or collector's homes.

The artists work in "artivism," a combination of art and activism that largely promotes social and environmental awareness. Infused with their unique experiences and backgrounds, the resulting pieces radiate powerful feminine energy. Although Minga is passionate about fashion as a form of human expression, she recognizes that its consumption fuels environmental and social inequality worldwide. As a result, she uses art to address this issue. What happens to clothing once it is no longer wearable? The answers vary, but in the end, there is so much that cannot be recycled, ending up in landfills or illegal dumps. Fashion's dark side is unknown to many. Further, Maria uses colors, patterns, textures, and paint to create hand-crafted, vibrant pieces that reference class, gender, and cultural identity. Her hand-crafted works signal to people who have been treated as 'other' that they can make room for themselves. They recognize and celebrate individuals and communities marginalized by mainstream society.

Maria sources materials from thrift stores, discount fabric shops, and her own clothing to access the diverse range of cultures and aesthetics of commercial fabric production. Her tactile fabric figures, collaged together, actively engage the viewer. She refers to them as "Hot Aliens" due to their ambiguous sexuality, origin, and hybrid human-animal appearance, as in *Desátame (Untie Me)*, 2023. Maria's "Hot Aliens" challenge gender binaries and reclaim the othering word "alien," a dehumanizing term often used in the United States to refer to foreign-born individuals. In Maria's oeuvre, "Hot Aliens" dance, frolic, embrace, and hold hands with love and joy. Through their expressive gaze, they establish a connection with the viewer, a warm invitation to explore this multifaceted work.

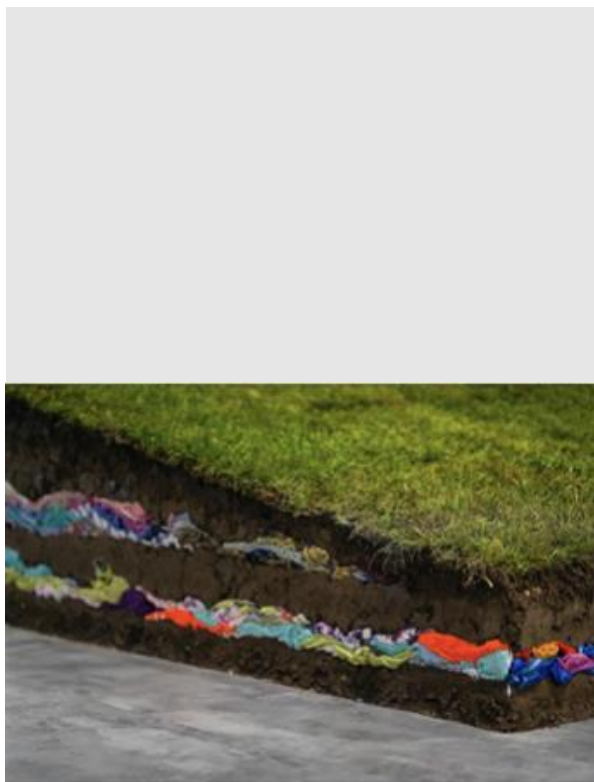
Recent pieces extend from the wall into the space— like *No Soy Florero – Mentira (I'm not a Vase – Lie)*, 2023, which features a woman's form growing from a largely two-dimensional head and torso to a set of three-dimensional legs resting comfortably on the gallery floor. The telenovelas Maria first encountered while staying with an aunt inspired the piece. The female's exaggerated expressions and appearance reflect the dramatic nature of this narrative form. The phrase "No soy florero" in the title is a rebuttal to her mother's admonition "No eres florero" ("You Are Not a Vase"), often voiced to get Maria to be useful around the house and not just a decoration. "Mentira," conveyed in the dramatic style used in telenovelas, expresses disbelief, meaning that she does not believe what her mother is saying. Maria's

fabric collages are vibrant, dynamic, and playful, reflecting her Latin American heritage and connection to underrepresented communities.

Minga Opazo expresses her passion for science through textile sculptures, some of which incorporate soil and grass, and a project using fungi to convert toxic textile waste into regenerative soil. Exploring solutions to excessive consumerism, she repurposes textiles that would otherwise end up in a landfill. After discovering microplastics in fossils found in Hawaii, Minga created *Siempre más (Always More)*, 2023, in which layered fabrics formed into geode shapes present a new kind of geology that meditates on the insatiable consumer appetite for more. The Hawaiian brightly colored volcanic rocks may represent our future geology. Are we ready to accept it? And what will happen with the majority of textile waste we produce?

To answer this last question, Minga began a project she called *Re-dress*, 2021. Working closely with a scientist, she learned about the habitats in which fungi prosper. She began growing oyster mushrooms by feeding them textile waste. She found cultivating oyster mushrooms in synthetic textile containers filled with sawdust was possible. The white fuzz that developed is a root network known as mycelium. The mycelium absorbs the nutrients, in this case, the sawdust, before feeding on the textiles. Minga felt encouraged as the oyster mushrooms grew, though their lifespan lasted less than a month. The exhibition features four fruiting bodies of fungi and three photographs depicting the required environment for cultivation. Minga's art employs textiles, clay, grass, sawdust, synthetic textiles, and live organisms to create a visually elegant and minimal yet transformative experience.

Both artists were introduced to fashion at a young age. Maria was born in Milan, Italy, to Peruvian and Colombian parents. She grew up aware that Milan is a major fashion hub in Europe. Born in Santiago, Chile, Minga grew up spending time in her mother's clothing store, where she developed a passion for fashion. As teenagers, Maria and Minga coincidentally both migrated to the United States and earned art degrees from American universities. While in graduate school, they solidified their interest in textiles as an art form. Maria and Minga share a sensibility and deep understanding of fabric as a medium and harness the power of this material to express their social and environmental concerns.



Left to right:

Minga Opazo, *Re-dress I*, 2021. Recycled textile and oyster mushroom mycelium. Pigment print. Edition of 5 + AP. 24 x 20 in unframed. Collection the Artist

Minga Opazo, *Out of Sight*, 2022. Recycled clothing, mud, wood, grass. 36 x 96 x 108 in. Collection the Artist

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

Maria A. Guzmán Capron (b. 1981, Milan, Italy. Lives and works in Oakland, CA) received her MFA from California College of the Arts in 2015 and her BFA from the University of Houston in 2004. Select solo exhibitions include San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, TX; Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles; Texas State Galleries, San Marcos, TX; and Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco. Select group exhibitions include Boston University, Boston; Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco; Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA; Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles; The Mistake Room, Los Angeles; Public Gallery, London, UK; NIAD Art Center, Richmond, CA; and Buffalo Institute for Contemporary Art, Buffalo, NY.

Minga Opazo (b. 1992, Santiago, Chile. Lives and works in Ojai, CA) received her MFA from CalArts in 2020 and her BFA from the University of California Berkeley in 2016. Selected solo exhibitions include the Architecture Foundation of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA; Carnegie Museum, Oxnard, CA, and Namba Performing Art Space, Ventura, CA. Selected group exhibitions include The Bunker Artspace, Palm

Beach, FL; San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, San Luis Obispo, CA; Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; MAK Center for Art and Architecture; Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, CA; Museo de Artes Visuales, Santiago, Chile; and Worth Ryder Art Gallery, Berkeley, CA.

RELATED PROGRAMS:

For a full list of exhibition programs, visit <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

Exhibition Opening Reception

Sat, Jan 27 | 6 - 9 pm

Museum admission | members free

Join us for the opening celebration of our two exhibitions kickstarting the new year: *ART IRAN: Falling Into Language*, co-curated by Roshanak Ghezelbash and Hoda Nik, in collaboration with Farhang Foundation and *Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo*, curated by Alma Ruiz. Guests enjoy first access to the galleries, complimentary beverages, and live DJ music.

Curator Walkthrough:

Power in Every Thread with Alma Ruiz

Sun, Mar 17 | 11:30 am | free

Curator Alma Ruiz leads an insightful and personal walkthrough of *Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo*. Learn about the various themes that connect Guzmán Capron and Opazo's complex textile-based practices and how each employ different historic and contemporary associations to textiles.

The Power of Mending and Upcycling

with Minga Opazo

Sun, Apr 28 | 12 – 3 pm

\$85 / \$80 members | includes materials

Spend an afternoon transforming and mending clothing with exhibiting artist Minga Opazo. Inspired by Opazo's textile-based work which explores the relationship between contemporary textile production and climate change, participants will use hand stitching, embroidery, and other garment altering techniques to bring new life to damaged or discarded clothing.

CREDITS:

Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán Capron and Minga Opazo is curated by Alma Ruiz.

This exhibition is supported in part by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, and the Bernard Kester Trust in Memory of Edith Wyle.

ABOUT Craft Contemporary

Craft Contemporary, located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile, resides in a three-story neo-Georgian building designed in 1930 by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Once housing Frieda Schroeder Cakes, it was transformed into a restaurant and gallery by painter Edith Robinson Wyle in 1965, gaining non-profit status as the Craft and Folk Art Museum in 1973. Today, its façade, adorned with a vibrant geometric design by Los Angeles artist Brent Spears (Shrine), showcases the museum's dynamic spirit. In 2018, the institution transitioned to Craft Contemporary, aligning its name with a mission that celebrates both the process and outcome of making. Craft Contemporary is a vibrant hub for creativity and cultural enrichment in Los Angeles, embracing diverse audiences. The museum remains committed to Wyle's legacy, curating exhibitions featuring established and emerging artists exploring craft media often overlooked in larger institutions. Wyle's belief in the transformative power of hand-crafted objects echoes through the museum's commitment to representing handmade art, cultural identity, and immersive experiences. The institution continues to evolve, offering educational programs and hands-on multigenerational workshops, creating a space where Los Angeles residents can deepen their connection to art, creativity, and community.

For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; Free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

