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AURÈLIA MUÑOZ. *Texture, tension, space*

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Aurèlia Muñoz (Barcelona, 1926-2011) recently became one of the few Spanish women artists to be exhibited in the permanent collection of the MoMA, New York, alongside Anni Albers, while several of her works were again recently included in the exhibition *Women of Abstraction* at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, sharing space with Sheila Hicks and Olga de Amaral. Muñoz has thus finally regained the key position she occupied during her flourishing career, following the renaissance of textile art in the 1960s and 1970s. Galería José de la Mano will be presenting a very special project at Art Basel Miami featuring some of Muñoz's most iconic pieces - textiles and works on paper - from her two principal creative periods.

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Her earliest works, created in the 1960s, make use of traditional embroidery techniques although her formal references were artists such as Klee or Torres García. In the mid-decade she began to experiment with three-dimensionality which would lead to her discovery of macramé, a technique that she started to employ for various sculptural textiles so that the perspex box housing them became part of the work rather than a container. Muñoz then experimented with the monumental and aerial potential of her light constructions of knots. The first type includes *Tres personatges* (1971), which she presented at the 5th Lausanne International Biennial. In contrast to the formalist abstraction of macramé, this work reflects the so-called *nouvelle tapisserie*, opening up experimental directions that included both cultural references (in this case stiff Spanish Baroque clothing) and natural ones.

This was a notably international phase for Muñoz, who showed her work at the Biennials in Lausanne (1971, 1973 and 1977) and São Paulo (1973). Her references were essentially natural ones (trees, stars) but also cultural, as in her cloaks that include social references reflecting the particular historical moment in Spain at that time. These works occupy space in an organic manner: the planes interconnect and the threads perform a type of dance. During this period Muñoz also embarked on a series that is particularly exquisite due to its lightness, comprising miniature textiles. These small pieces, which are adapted to the geometrical space of the perspex box, are poetic experiments on the relationships and tensions between space and the work.

At the end of the decade Muñoz also produced a large series of pieces of cloth which reference sails or birds. For these large-format works the tension in the space becomes more monumental but is always achieved through a constructivist aesthetic. These were lighter, more aerial and mobile works which interacted with the effects of the weather outdoors, for which reason Muñoz researched how ships' sails were made awhile abandoning macramé in this series.

Particularly interesting are the models for these birds, for which the artist used paper, a material that opened up a new world for her from the 1980s and for which her geometrical research would be fundamental. As a sculptor who worked with space she took a step forward, evolving from the flexible and organic textures of textile towards paper. Muñoz now played with the softness, hardness, rigidity and delicacy that she produced from the wide range of papers which she made herself by hand. Her inspiration came from the East, particularly Japan, a country whose culture influenced both her technique and subject matter during this phase, as did the tradition and craft of hand-made paper in her native Catalonia.