

“WOOL AND NEEDLES”

by Victor Cortina, Ego Gallery, Barcelona, Spain
(Translation by C. Martin Getz)

Patricia Waller's career has grown steadily over the years. Today she's a consummate artist still living in Karlsruhe, Germany where her first solo show some sixteen years ago began to provoke interest in her work.

It is a divine gift when an artist has an intense identification with a theme, a technique or a specific material. Or perhaps it stems from an artistic instinct. Either way, Patricia Waller picked up her woolen yarn and crochet needles early on. Can we, therefore, add her to an elaborate list of a multitude of women artists who use clothing and needlework or recreate a multi-faceted feminine world?

It's considered genre art: Tracey Emin, Ghada Amer, Annette Messager, Louise Bourgeois, Mona Hatoum or Sylvie Fleury internationally speaking, and Victoria Campillo, Susy Gómez, Begoña Montalbán or Ana Laura Aláez in Spain, would all easily fit into a category of works that are considered works made with a definite feminine touch. Patricia Waller's hands primarily intervene. Her hands are those of a sculptor. Patricia neither draws nor sketches. She sculpts directly upon a soul of resistant material. And not even that, why surely she encourages even her bunnies, children, Martians, cranes, food, rats etc. with her final stitches. Maybe they're all just full of air... yet another sculptural element.

Within Patricia's peculiar universe, we can always find drama. Dolls are traversed by arrows, others may find their noses sawed off or tigers devouring their prey. Even three rabbits murdered by huge carrots.

Like in stories, there are calamities to be endured or dangers inexorably consummated. Patricia doesn't avoid any subject matter that may attract her. We might say she cannot resist any, even though the uniqueness of her technique may induce some wary reactions.

Wool and needles prove to be completely adaptable and Patricia's "needle works" grow within her very hands, making her particular visions tangibly manifest. To say that her works are a prodigy of skill would seem to insist on the fact that this sort of labor isn't held up too highly. We may even find ourselves desiring to see Patricia's actual hands, much as the desire to see those of a fine pianist.

Her series of objects for sadomasochistic use such as whips, masks and other paraphernalia poignantly illustrate how she is able, in a concept where technique and subject matter seem worlds apart, to deliciously resolve the equation substituting black vinyl for pink yarn... definitely de-dramatizing the situation.

This artist has "crocheted" TV screens, little Martians, baked piglets, motorbikes, fire extinguishers, bombs, light bulbs, body prostheses and an equal amount of children, animals, organs, gnomes and household items. Practically anything we could imagine. An inherent limitation in the process makes Patricia Waller into something quite unique. Perhaps even into somebody out of another time. The artist cannot delegate or have something done by someone else. It all comes out of her very hands: both the yarn and time. Scarce for most of us, time itself becomes a sculptural element. Consequently, her work is scarce, or shall we say, her work reflects a natural production rhythm. With all the talk these days in contemporary art about production processes, Patricia is a whole other

ball game. She remains true to an archaic process that, as the stereotype goes, takes us back to the beginnings of mankind.

In Karlsruhe, where temperatures may reach -20° C., woolen yarn and needles keep Patricia's exceptional, creative "pathos" warm. Our intuition quickly tells us it's unique. And her virtuosity finds no easy equivalent, all of which makes her into a singular artist.

It's in her contemplation, and I would add in the inevitable act of touching her *lainages* – touch being a sculptural element – where that indefinable artistic essence is born.

Wool, like honey or water, will always speak to us of something primordial and indispensable. Patricia Waller, indeed, speaks to us about the indispensable.