

PREVIEW

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FIBRE ART AT THE 48th VENICE BIENNIAL

The 48th Biennale di Arti Visive di Venezia being held this year will be distributed over a very large area, including the „Giardini“ zone and new exhibition spaces in the old naval buildings at the Darsena port. It was given the charming multilingual title of „dAPERTutto / APERTO overALL / APERTO parTOUT / APERTO überALL“.

Some highly interesting pieces of fibre art made by 120 selected artists from 60 countries will be on view until 7th November. Since an exhibition devoted to this specific art genre has not been held before in Italy, I shall try to point out some of the works to be shown in the Biennial that favour fabrics and fibres as artistic materials.

Perhaps paradoxically, I would like to start with the great Louise Bourgeois although she cannot actually be called a fibre artist, despite the fact that she works in fabric. She begins by sketching fragments of sensations, nightmares, emotions and tortured memories on paper, later creating sculptures that show the obscure and subconscious side of her personality.

In Venice, Bourgeois received the „Golden Lion“ for her oeuvre. In the exhibition she will display some puppets made of a soft, tender and reassuring fabric. At first sight, the roundness of the stuffed figures, warmth of the textiles and childlike sweetness of the colour pink evoke feelings of fondness and protectiveness, but immediately afterwards the viewer is shocked when perceiving how the bodies have been deformed and mutilated, or even dismembered with cruel fury.

Korean artist Noh Sangkyoon, on the other hand, plays with delicate changes in perception in her silent and seemingly precious installation, a room made of large and colourless panels covered in sequins that are enlivened by changes in lighting. A small Buddha, also covered in sequins, guides visitors to the room.

Artist Mariann Imre created a floor-carpet placed in the hall of the Hungarian Pavilion. She embroiders cement in a secret technique; the hardness and roughness of large square tiles is offset by the delicacy and fragility of the cotton yarn crossing the cement to make graphic decorations.

Wang Jin, a Chinese artist, interpreted sumptuous imperial costumes, cutting and superimposing thick sheets of transparent plastic and embroidering decorative elements over them in nylon yarn. Perhaps our plastic civilisation of disposable goods will give rise to traditions that last for millennia.

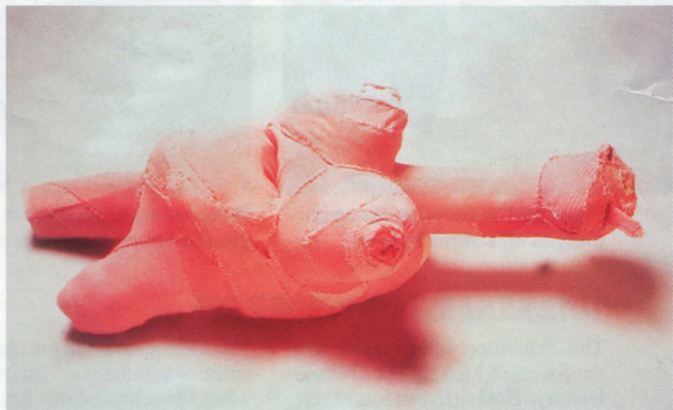
Origins, culture and memory accompany the theme of Soo-Ja Kim's journey, a Korean artist now resident in New York. She arrived in Venice driving a lorry crammed with large bundles of traditionally dyed fabrics, parking it in front of a mirror wall symbolising the unfinished part of every movement.

Swiss artist Lori Hersberger placed a moving and rolling aquatic carpet in the Darsena port basin. Made up of many small doormats, bedside mats and rugs, it was supposed to remind us that textiles contain their entire information in each small pattern.

Chinese artist Liang Shaoji created a sensitive installation consisting of many small cradles made of copper wire, covered in opened and unfolded silkworm cocoons. Was this supposed to show the cradle of Chinese civilisation?

An Egyptian artist now resident in Paris and New York, Ghada Amer embroiders very delicate panels and pillows in light silk, creating almost imperceptible female figures hatched in light yarns, sometimes folded and arranged in geometrical sequences. More careful observation reveals that the composition consists of many naked female bodies with dreamy expressions and positions of self-eroticism: an allusion to unexpressed female desires.

The small costumes made by Mexican artist Paula Santiago are delicate and refined. They are contained in three transparent showcases like museum exhibits. The clothes are made from ivory rice paper, embellished with holes and detailed decorations; their hems, collars and sashes are in sharp contrast to the dark blood-red ground; the precious relief embroidery is made of braided hair. Body, flesh and blood seem to lose their material properties and are sublimated into the perfection of a patient woman's work. ■



Louise Bourgeois: „Quilting“, 1999



Top:
Wang Jin:
„A Chinese
Dream“
1997

Right:
Shaoji Liang:
„Nature series
no. 10“

