

When in 1921 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti highlighted the 19<sup>th</sup> century artistic avant-gardes' interest in mixed media in his "Manifesto of Tactilism", he described visionary material chambers made of sensory floors and walls. He certainly did not imagine that, almost half a century later, fiber artists would make his visions become true by creating the first environmental tactile installations like the famous chambers completely covered with pale pink crepe fabric of New Yorker Colette.

After the rupture of painting, and sculpture's boundaries and the possibility to experiment with the most different materials and techniques, fiber and fabric forcefully became part of the artistic idiom, and consequently celebrated a soft and antirethoric mixed media dimension. Various artistic trends made reference to it: from the undone "Bed" of Rauscheberg's pop art, to the felts of Beuys' anthropological art, from "Venus of Rags" of Pistoletto's arte povera, to Louise Bourgeois' conceptual dolls, and so on.

However, there were some artists who had the privilege to explore the specific qualities of textile processes and materials, and chose to investigate their expressive qualities. As a result, Fiber Art's international movement saw the light at the end of the sixties of last century.

In these last ten years also the youth who tread the Italian artistic scene are invited to become aware of the movement, face its challenges, and focus on its specific characteristics. It must be credited to Gina Morandini, fiber artist and Honorary President of *Le Arti Tessili* Association, and Lydia Predominato, fiber artist and textile event maker in the Roman area - who have tenaciously and determinedly believed in the didactic function of the Award and in the strategic importance of the Award exhibition as a national and international forum - the merit of establishing the *Valcellina Award* in 1996 for fiber art works made by artists under 35 years of age, residing in Italy.

Nowadays, the Award has grown and become renown in such a way that it has turned into an international event of paramount importance attracting the attention of artists, art critics, museum directors, gallery owners, and journalists.

To my great joy, this year I have participated in the jury of this edition. We have examined 114 works coming from 18 different countries, selected 45, and then assigned the prizes and honorable mentions. Confrontation among jury members was rather stimulating: each oeuvre was carefully inspected, the artists' motivations were read, and the jurors discussed about the relevance and pertinence of the works with regard to contemporary art idioms. Confrontation between the different opinions of the jurors has highlighted the various aspects they might otherwise overlook. Final decisions were made in full harmony.

In my opinion, the works on show offer an interesting sampling of what the young fiber artists do now: from video installation to twisted wire, from photographic print to felting, from pictorial to conceptual oeuvres. All works are very different although the general approach is that of using textile materials and-or adopting textile processes. In fact, the variety and versatility of the works reflect the complexity of our society where many idioms, aspirations, and poetical visions coexist - a clear sign of the instability and disrupting changes we experience in our days.

Besides the prized works, whose motivations are shown in the minutes published in the catalogue, I would like to cite, among others, the Turkish artist Gülcan Batur Ercivan's "Clustered". She has used the painstaking and complex Japanese technique to pleat and dye modules of white silk re-arranging them in a final work of great compositive and chromatic refinement. The non-dyed parts create a light effect which goes through the matter and refracts countless tactile and optical fragments in a kaleidoskopic effect.

"Interlacement and Seduction" of the Italian artist Lucia Cerri, who has gathered vegetal flexible elements in the woods, has made them malleable through repeated immersions into the water, and then woven them with marks of uncertain forms - achieving almost the remembrance of something which was covered with this field-scented net, and now no longer exists. I will also note the funny giraffe which the Italian artist Elena Fregni has created by interlacing burnished wire. I want to conclude with the surprisingly unexpected "Lounge Cushion" of the Italian artist Danilo Busia who has patiently inserted human hairs one by one ringwise into a soft pinkish glowing waxed surface according to a concentric composed design which creates a delicate image of a flower. As Jean Clair wrote (2004): "If hairs, odors, and humors are obsessively rejected in our daily life, they however thrive, in the most capturing manner, in those particular moments which are the artistic events."