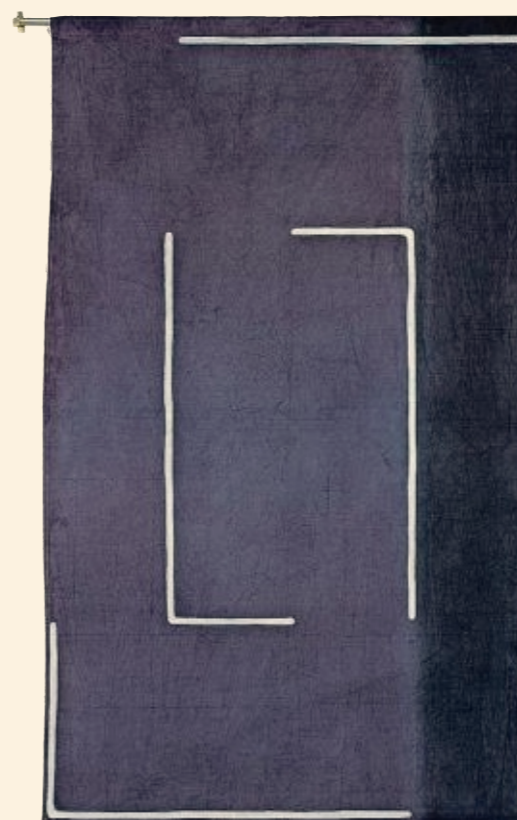
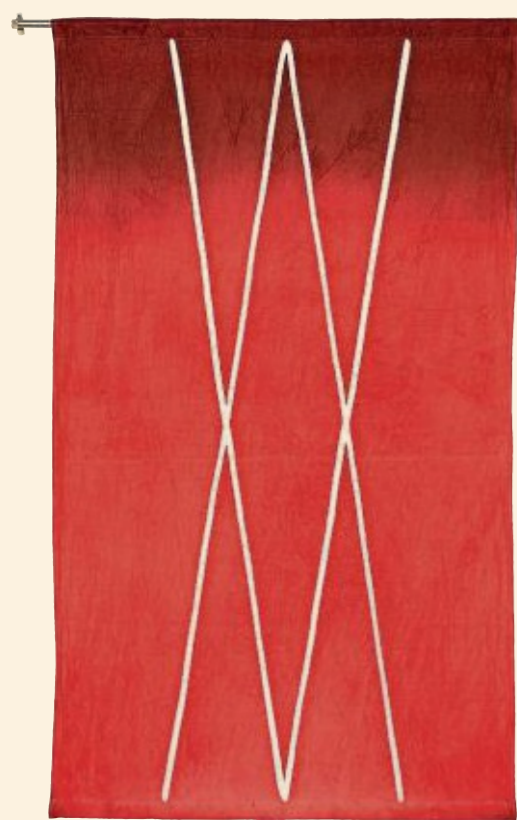


Collecting



Textiles | The Chilean artist brings together European and global traditions with his fabric works. By *Kristina Foster*

Little did Chilean artist Felipe Mujica know when he was preparing for a show in Santiago in 2006 that his search for a curtain to black the room out would lead to a series of fabric works spanning collaborations with artisans from around the world.

"I was experimenting with video at the time and I needed to obscure the space, but I decided not to use a typical black curtain, which I thought was too serious," he tells me over video call from his home in Brooklyn. Interested in geometric abstraction, Mujica thought a colourful curtain would be more appropriate, so enlisted the help of a seamstress in Santiago. "All of a sudden I had in front of me a beautiful artefact, permeable architecture, a drawing in space, with colour and forms."

More than 20 of Mujica's "drawings in space" hang in and around Miami's Pérez Art Museum (PAMM), rectangles of colour which strikingly intervene in the Herzog & de Meuron architecture. These are the latest pieces from his *Curtains* series, where he collaborates with local communities and artists to integrate traditional design and craft into his cloth works.

On this occasion Mujica has partnered with Khadijah Cypress, an artisan from the Miccosukee tribe in south Florida, to stage a cosmos in fabric. Titles such as "Big Storm", "Fire", "Frog" and "Bird" refer to the motifs commonly used in Miccosukee patchwork which now appear on these sheets.

Here, nature is sewn into simplified forms, then further abstracted in Mujica's minimalist geometric arrangement. The artist describes this visual marriage as "two histories of abstraction going into dialogue".

Creating dialogues and building connections seem to be at the heart of Mujica's practice. Throughout our conversation he frequently talks about "opening up" his work to others. It's a collaborative spirit he traces to his art-student days in Santiago, when he was often organising group shows with friends, and to his co-founding of Galería Chilena — "a commercial gallery with no physical space" — in 1997 to help

fill the cultural void in Chile after the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

Another important experience from this period was his art studies at the Catholic University of Chile, or rather the gaps in those studies. "We learned more about Bauhaus and the Russian Vanguard than our local history," says Mujica. "We all wanted to go to New York or Europe and visit all these art centres. We never thought, why don't we go to Mexico and study the history of the Mayan uses of abstraction or colour?"



Above: Felipe Mujica flanked by works from his 'Primeros amaneceres en la tierra (Solentiname)' series (2019). Below: Mujica collaborated with artisans José y Jeamileth Peña — Luis Corzo

These were not subjects in art or design in the 1990s."

The traditional techniques from Latin American and indigenous groups prevalent in Mujica's work can therefore be read as a reaction to a Eurocentric art history only now beginning to include alternative narratives and methods of working. In part a research project, Mujica's art uses fabric and materiality as a way of embodying and disseminating underexamined forms of artistic knowledge, "opening up", in the artist's words, "these other histories through colour, pigments and textiles".

With its grand scale and minimalist designs, Mujica's *Curtains* series recalls the vocabulary of European modernist abstraction, but each project is ingrained with the geographic and cultural contexts of their creation.

Whereas the works at PAMM adopt local patchwork techniques, in a 2016 presentation for the 32nd São Paulo Biennale the artist teamed up with a Brazilian embroidery collective, producing large banners of cyan, mustard and tangerine stitched with triangular patterns. In Mexico in 2018, he partnered with Wixárikas artisans from Zacatecas, expanding the textural dimension of his panels by incorporating their beading techniques.

In order to remain sensitive to local craft histories, Mujica explains how he must be flexible in his process. Alongside his show at PAMM, Proyectos Ultravioleta and Von Bartha galleries will also present a selection of the artist's *Curtains*, created during a 2019 residency in Nicaragua's Solentiname Islands, at Art Basel Miami Beach. "I have to adapt to where I am because some places have a strong tradition of textiles, but in this case, nobody was sewing or doing embroidery. They were painters."

He describes how he was inspired by a painted colour gradation technique used on wood-carved figurines, a process which he then reinterpreted on

His work unites 'one official history of abstraction and one that's been displaced, hidden and ignored'

fabric. The results were hand-painted and hand-dyed cotton panels whose warm, earthy hues and slightly creased surfaces further emphasise the bridge between the poetic world of traditional craft and the sterility of modernist abstraction in Mujica's art.

At PAMM, working with Native American techniques, this dichotomy takes on a more critical stance as the *Curtains* bring together "one official history of abstraction and one that's been displaced, hidden and ignored". But rather than trying to make overtly political statements with his work, Mujica says he is more interested in "the social aspect" behind them, "what kind of connections they can create between different people, institutions and spaces".

All these threads come together at the physical installation in PAMM, where the public are invited to activate the works through touch. Suspended from cable systems, the *Curtains*' moveable, modifiable nature lets visitors transform the gallery space as they play around with different colour combinations. For Mujica, this is another way of opening up his art to others.

"I think it also makes people understand the works on a much more basic level," he says. "It's not intellectual. It's physical. It creates a physical sensation that you're changing something."

Perhaps this will allow visitors to experience a similar revelation about curtains to the one Mujica had in that Santiago art space 15 years ago: they don't have to be used just to cover or conceal; they can be used to reveal, even becoming windows in themselves.

To spring 2022, pamm.org
uvuvv.com
vonbartha.com

All the fun of the fairs

With more than 250 galleries, including 43 first-timers based in countries from Uruguay to Zimbabwe, Art Basel Miami Beach might be the most renowned fair in town this week — but it's by no means the only one.

Untitled Art Miami Beach (November 29–December 4, 12th Street and Ocean Drive) is celebrating its 10th edition by inviting four curators to stage presentations at the show. Natasha Becker of the de Young Museum in San Francisco is uniting 11 galleries around the theme of black voices (below: 'Peace is often lost in the hustle and bustle of modern life' (2021) by Evita Tezeno at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles), while art historians Estrellita Brodsky and José Falconi have focused theirs on less traditional, more outlying ways of understanding the universe.

"We want to reflect on the marginal position of Latinx and Latin American artists within the western historical canon and bring visibility to the region's tradition of otherworldliness, shamanism and



other esoteric forms of knowledge rejected by modernism," says Brodsky.

NADA Miami (December 1–4, Ice Palace Studios) will host more than 170 exhibitors, including a new section focused on artists' book publishers; 39 participants will display both new books and historical material. Visitors can learn DIY approaches to bookmaking, should they find themselves inspired by the material on show elsewhere in the fair.

In NADA's Curated Spotlight section, Ebony L Haynes, a director at David Zwirner Gallery, has chosen eight solo presentations including Joel Gaitan's Mesoamerican-style terracotta vessels, presented in a Nicaraguan *pulperia* bodega (below: 'El Ojo De Chivo' (2020) at KDR305), and Adele Roberson, who documents the black diaspora across the US, Caribbean and west Africa through family and sound archives.

The irreverent **Fridge Art Fair** (November 29–December 4, Esquina de Abuela, 2705 NW 22nd Ave) takes place in Miami's Allapattah cultural district in a location known for its Cuban revolutionary heritage. Artists including Katlin Martin, Nix Function and Phoenix Roberts are given free rein to stage projects in the venue's large central space. Fridge's co-founder, Eric Ginsburg, will be showing some of his portraits of artists' pets.

untitledartfairs.com; newartdealers.org; fridgeart.com



Miami roars back

Continued from page 1

guide, not just about art galleries, but with recommendations of schools, restaurants, places to go and listen to music," she says.

Miami's rejuvenation has encouraged art galleries to commit more to the city than their customary week at the Art Basel fair. "Miami has changed a lot. There's still a very diverse community but now young professionals and large companies have outposts there. Even people who are just visiting stay for longer, because of the ability to work remotely," says Josephine Nash, director of Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery.

Last winter, her New York gallery opened a three-month pop-up in town, in lieu of the cancelled Art Basel fair, and has decided to repeat the seasonal project again this year while also showing at the fair. Joining them in the fair and in the Design District from November 24 until the end of January 2022 are Goodman Gallery (South Africa, London) and Galerie Lelong (New York, Paris).

Art Basel Miami Beach will also feel

refreshed. Some stalwarts are not returning after the break enforced by the pandemic — a couple have sadly gone out of business, some are consciously reducing their art fair attendance, and there's the usual art fair churn. Organisers have also relaxed some of their rules to reflect the more varied art market channels. For example, galleries no longer need to have a permanent space to be accepted.

Newcomer galleries are champing at the bit to be in the US, particularly since the Covid-19 restrictions on travel meant that there were fewer American visitors at other revived in-person fairs. "We already met US clients who didn't travel to Europe when we showed at Nada [in Miami] in 2019. Now there are health concerns and restrictions too, so the split is even more obvious," says Nigel Dunkley, co-founder of Union Pacific gallery.

He has a booth at Art Basel Miami Beach filled with the gallery's recent charge, Soshiro Matsubara. The Japanese ceramicist's installation will include lampshades and a rug, as well as some paintings, all of which are based

on the tumultuous affair between the Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka and Alma Mahler.

Other younger, in-demand and more socially-conscious artists join the fray. Victoria Miro has a new painting by the Iran-born Ali Banisadr that charts how, throughout history, cultures have toppled to accommodate new beliefs ("The



'Pop Coroa' (1966) by Antonio Henrique Amaral. Right: 'Considerati A' (2021) by Rose B Simpson — Courtesy the artist/Mitchell-Innes & Nash; courtesy the artist/Jessica Silverman/Jack Shainman Gallery/Timothy Wampler



Changing Past", 2021). Jack Shainman gallery brings its new charge, the mixed-media, Native American artist Rose B. Simpson, whose sculptures address the "disempowering detachment of our creative selves through the ease of modern technology," the artist says.

Such tech will be hard to avoid in Miami this week as artists and brands that were relatively unheard of in 2019 make their presence felt. Within the fair, the curator-dealer turned Non-Fungible Token (NFT) artist Kenny Schachter has joined forces with Galerie Nagel Draxler to bring a 14-foot high, digital booth display designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. Its crypto artists on view include Kevin Abosch, Olive Allen and Rhea Myers.

Schachter worked with the same gallery at Art Basel's Swiss fair in September, but, he says, this was a "teeny kiosk" compared to what will be in the Miami fair. "This week will be the coming out party for NFTs within the traditional art world."

Just outside the fair, new sponsor Tezos — a blockchain platform — will have a display of NFTs, plus the

opportunity for visitors to create and mint their own self-portrait on-site, courtesy of the German artist Mario Klingemann. Another platform, SuperRare, will have large-scale augmented reality works for digital view in the Convention Center, with an auction due to take place during the fair.

And of course, Bleep (aka Mike Winklemann), the artist who shot to fame when his NFT sold at Christie's for \$69m in March, is in town. He is participating in a talk called "15 Minutes or Forever? Art in the Age of the NFT" at The Bass museum on December 1.

Marc Spiegel, director of Art Basel, downplays the impact of technology on the look and feel of the in-person Miami fair. He acknowledges, though, that the "kinetic energy in town is much higher than it was in 2019", and that there will be "dozens if not hundreds more potential collectors who can now drive rather than fly to the fair... This may be the first fair where we see the outlines of the impact of the digital shift catalysed by the pandemic."

December 2–4, artbasel.com