



ANINAT  
GALERIA DE ARTE

## In Conversation

Catalina Swinburn & Shaan Shahani VIP Representative India - Art Basel

Art Basel OVR Miami Beach dec 2020 @aninatgaleria

SS

*You say "weaving is a symbol of female expression, a substitution of a woman's voice and weaving can portray what words cannot say." I think that is so beautiful. I was wondering did you perhaps have a knowledge of weaving before, passed down from your grandmother perhaps?*

CS

Weaving has always been an alternative discourse and makes reference to female resilience.

Women used to weave together, it's a living tradition that is passed through time and if we go back into history, it was a space of freedom for women to express themselves among them and also to be able to create pieces with symbolical meanings, associated with ritual offerings.

I once learned that in the Greek times, women used to send encrypted messages on their textile creations, so actually I think I learned from the women I've been surrounded by, that there is always an alternative discourse, that can be really powerful.

SS

*For some people, the destruction of a book is comparable to the demolition of a building. Yet it forms the crux of your work, how did you decide that books would be a medium of expression for you? Also when you pick a particular musical score does that opera have significance itself or to the end piece?*

CS

I have always liked working with the duality of something aesthetically beautiful, but that hides a subliminal message; in this case, it is almost a heretical or terrorist act to destroy these books.

These works emphasize the moment of a cultural catastrophe, because the destruction of a book, as you mentioned is equivalent to the demolition of a building; even more so, if we find out that in one of the cases, one of the dismantled books contains the score of an opera by Monteverdi, where "Penelope", seals a certain idea of sentimentality that can be seen in the underground plot of power. Mostly I have chosen musical scores of operas with exile thematics, and with emblematic women characters, such as Penelope, Aida and Dido, from Dido and Aeneas, some of which you can see in this presentation.

Most of the books I have found to produce my works, came from Europe at the beginning of 19 hundred, with the migrants that came to Latin America. This people, came with only the items they were able to port for the long journey across the Atlantic – and with them lots of books ended up in our Continent. They brought with them, the knowledge, the history of an unknown art, the ancient Empires, the classical Music, the scores, and much more.

As a Chilean born and raised artist, I learn the culture of the Old world, from books, I think books became a medium when I realized that the ones I've chosen have narratives of displacements themselves as objects that have their own narratives and the history as well of the places they have been... Regenerating these narratives articulates a sense of urgency and a mode of resistance.



ARCHAIC CONTINGENCY – Detail  
Book empty covers totem free standing sculpture.  
70 cm w x 250 cm h x 60 cm depth (metal plinth 70 x 60 x 77 cm)  
2020

SS

*This ritualistic arrangement of objects and folding, reminiscent of Origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, was this self-taught? Or rather what was the inspiration to use paper folding as expression in your work?*

CS

The inspiration that drives my work is : THE RITUAL.

I pursue to rescue ancestral rituals related to sacred places, ancestral geography and original memory; and take them into my own exploration where the work is presented as a syncretic *bricolage*, as an attempt to reconcile different doctrines, a process of transculturalization, the union of the sacred and the secular. Textiles are among the most visible signs of sacred space and sacred roles.

This weaving technique I have developed, that is like an "IN SET" or Embedding – Encastre - allows the delicate material of paper to acquire durability and becomes a robust structure.

The weaving is designed with a stepped pattern inspired from the sacred ruins and old scaffold textiles used in the Andean cultures. Referring to the suyu whipala structure each module its cutted and join together manually.

This connects the ancestral knowledge and scientific thinking relieving a new poetic line with the ecological movement. I believe that opens a dialogue between conservation and innovation, continuity and transmutation; by combining the local crafts with the global trends; and showing how selected geographies share universal and mutual creative affinities.



**NO LAND**  
Woven paper investiture from vintage maritime cartography documentacion.  
150 cm w x 180 cm h x 40 cm depth  
2020

SS

Regarding the titles of these works – Arachne and Penelope, is there a narrative behind that as well or are they just fictional names?

CS

Yes! There is...

“PENELOPE” is a woven paper investiture made from vintage music scores of *Il Ritorno di Ulisse in patria*, by Claudio Monteverdi and belong to a series of works on paper alluded to emblematic women from the classical world and their archaic contingency.

Not only do Homer and Ovid challenge the conventional idea of womanly virtue in the classical world, but they recast these women as authors of their own destinies, resisting social pressures, challenging patriarchal and Olympic authority, and defying the expectations of those who would exert control over them. Penelope and Arachne define on their own terms how they will respond to their physical circumstances. By exercising traditional roles in untraditional ways, Homer and Ovid’s female characters still wield extraordinary social power, with profound social consequences.



#### PENELOPE

Performative photo with woven investiture PENELOPE with scores of *Il Ritorno di Ulisse in patria*, 1640 by Claudio Monteverdi.

120 cm w x 180 cm

2020

SS

I recall seeing your exquisite work in Art Basel Hong Kong last year and being mesmerised immediately. The great thing about the OVR is that it facilitates seeing the technique and detailing of your work up close, I would have been a bit nervous to approach it at such proximity at the booth! Also it comes across as a work with weight, little does one realise it is made up of paper and this very complex arrangement can be easily folded up – can you tell us if portability of your work is intentional to the work from go?

As I have always lived between different countries, in a transhumant way, I have learned through experience to be able to work in all possible ways and in any place. I think it is because of this condition of life that I have developed this series of new works on paper; since I can take them everywhere with me. I have developed with my work team a way to turn them into modular constructions so that we can work no matter where, when and how.

Although most of the production has its roots in a specific time and place, my works on paper become objects that work within an exchange system, they need to be portable, at some point domestic, they are designed so that they can be used. They are investments. I have been working with the geopolitical concept of displacement, and I always think what will I take with me in a case of an emergency escape? I dreamt to be able to make works to be as portable as books are.



Art in Progress @catalinaswinburnstudio

SS

Contrasting that, I wanted to add, I absolutely love your black & white photo prints on travertine marble where you include yourself in the work as well. Do you always immerse yourself in your works?

CS

Yes! Not always but mostly... I need to be part of, to be able to activate the work itself.

I like creating new and fictional narratives. And I like my works to look like findings from an anticipated archeology. The use of marble to print images of my performances and rituals is again a duality and contrast between the ephemeral and the perdurability, between the fragile and the strong, the lightness and the heaviness. I intend to develop research on historical narratives and investigate living traditions, something my practice has been dedicated to is searching to evoke what is no longer present. There is a play between reality and fiction, bringing together performative actions.

I think this works on marble are not far from my woven paper interlaced sculptures, which are initially done to be worn by myself in what I have called: "Rituals of Identity". They become a fragile light heavy armour ported over female sholders as a metaphor of resistance.



**THE PERFECT BOUNDARY**  
black & white photo print on Travertine marble  
40h x 47w x 3d cm Unique