

29.09.2026–27.03.2027
EXHIBITION HALL
BANCO DE ESPAÑA

BANCO DE **ESPAÑA**
Eurosistema

THE

THE PLIABLE

PLIABLE

PLANE

THE TEXTILE COLLECTION OF THE BANCO DE ESPAÑA

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P L A N E

The Pliable Plane

Yolanda Romero

Tapestry-making was once considered a fine art that produced symbols of political power and royal status, luxury goods woven from materials few could afford, such as silk, wool, gold and silver. However, the prestige of tapestries began to decline in the eighteenth century, and they were consigned to a subaltern position until the twentieth century reversed that historical trend. The truth is that this art form never really disappeared and often acted as a disruptive counter-model. Think, for instance, of the Arts & Crafts movement and its subversive anti-industrial component in late nineteenth-century Britain; the Bauhaus in interwar Germany, where tapestry became an independent medium that lent itself to material and formal experimentation in the hands of artists like Anni Albers and Gunta Stölzl; and, starting in the 1960s, various initiatives that introduced new ways of working with fibres and fabrics, looking past their practical or domestic uses to their value as autonomous outlets for creative expression. But the comeback of the textile arts owed a special debt to feminism, which introduced a new interpretation that dispelled the negative connotations of the sphere to which it had been relegated—the realm of the decorative, the domestic, the collective, the manual and the feminine—and reinstated it as an apparatus of cultural, political and gender discourse. Once that happened, fabric, thread and fibre were able to upset conventional hierarchies by challenging the distinction between fine arts and applied arts or crafts, incorporating a powerful message about gender, reparation, community and social justice.

This exhibition is the latest tangible expression of the bank's ongoing efforts to research, document and promote the art-historical heritage in its care. To mark this occasion, the Banco de España has also published the catalogue raisonné of its textile collection, which the Heritage and Collections Division has been preparing for nearly three years. Featuring selected pieces from that collection, the itinerary of *The Pliable Plane* juxtaposes classical and contemporary works to explore weaving as a space where art, architecture and industry converge. The title is borrowed from the 1957 essay 'The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture', in which the pioneering Anni Albers explained that fabric is an active plane rather than a rigid wall: a functional system capable of organising space, regulating light, absorbing sound and creating a physical experience. In contrast to the stable permanence of the wall, fabric offered a different architectural logic based on mobility, change and the possibility of transforming a space without altering its structure. Albers explained that textiles, from the first nomadic shelters to modern interiors, have accompanied the evolution of architecture—and even become architecture—thanks to that pliability, the ability to adapt to the changing needs of human beings.

Even today, Anni Albers' reflections provide useful insights into the Banco de España's textile collection, not because this exhibition aims to illustrate her theories, but because textiles constitute a way of thinking, and their history cannot be reduced to a timeline of evolving techniques or a succession of styles. It is also the history of the relationships that

fabric establishes with architecture, production systems, knowledge transmission, identity construction and the forms of exchange that define societies.

This relational dimension explains why fabric has historically played a part in constructing spaces of power. Long before they hung on the walls of palaces and institutions, textiles facilitated an essentially mobile form of architecture. Because it could be folded or rolled up, fabric made it possible to transport, set up and transform a space quite quickly, creating impressively formal, comfortable or intimate settings wherever they were needed. The pliability at the centre of Albers's reflection is also one of the defining leitmotifs of the Banco de España's collection of textiles. From large tapestries and traditional carpets to contemporary interventions designed specifically for the bank's architectural setting, woven creations demonstrate their ability to change how a space is experienced without overtaking it.

That proximity to architecture and everyday life may explain the secondary status that textiles have historically been assigned within the arts. Unlike painting or sculpture, weaving remained associated with collective labour, artisanal production and technical expertise often concealed behind the name of a workshop, factory or designer. The subaltern position of the artistic medium also affected the social standing of those who worked with it.

It is no coincidence that this impacted many women, for whom the textile arts were one of the few creative professions they could pursue. Thinking of Albers, the history of the Bauhaus is a particularly telling example. Despite the spirit of renewal in which Walter Gropius founded the school, many of the female students were directed to the textile workshops, while architecture and industrial design were still considered masculine, more prestigious fields. That division of labour mirrored



Antonio Sama,
Yolanda Romero et al.
*La colección de textiles del
Banco de España*. Madrid:
Banco de España, 2026.

a deeply ingrained social hierarchy, one that identified weaving with home-making, manual dexterity, attention to detail and even caring.

Anni Albers's career was a product of that paradox. What started out as a gender-biased assignment became a laboratory of modernity. Albers proved that textile practices had a logic of their own, capable of transforming our understanding of the relationship between matter, structure and space. Not only did she highlight the merits of an overlooked medium, but she showed that the properties of materials were also a form of knowledge. Instead of limitations that had to be overcome, the resistance of a fibre, the tension of a thread or the structure of a weave became the starting points of the creative process. Thought did not precede matter; matter engendered thought.

The core segment of *The Pliable Plane* is a selection of historical tapestries, carpets and sketches from the textile collection of the Banco de España. Designed to be integrated into architectural settings, they played a vital role in shaping interior spaces, serving practical, representational and hierarchical purposes. Far from being merely ornamental, these textiles have actively defined their architectural environment by ordering spaces, modulating light and sound, and projecting a certain image of the institution. Their ability to transform interiors, affect how different areas are experienced and give architecture meaning, in the way Albers meant, is one of the most remarkable features of the collection that is the focus of this exhibition.

On the basis of these historical pieces, the exhibition proposes an expanded interpretation of textile art as a field of symbolic, material and affective production, encompassing a wide range of contemporary practices that displace the conventional categories from which this discipline has traditionally been examined. The works on display show that the woven medium is much more than mere technique or ornament: it is an apparatus where memory, labour, physicality and knowledge converge. If, as Albers suggested, architecture is our third skin, then fabric is the lining between our body and the world, making it more legible and habitable. The works assembled in *The Pliable Plane*, grouped into four sections, offer us a broader vision and understanding of textile art.

The Needle Like a Pencil

This first section, whose title was inspired by the words of artist Elena del Rivero, is dedicated to works that revolve around the act of sewing. Instead of an implement for working with fabric, here the needle is portrayed as a tool for drawing, writing and building spaces from a feminist perspective. Lead is traded for thread, lines for stitches and tracing for sewing, moving techniques traditionally associated with textile work closer to the realm of the visual arts. After the mid-twentieth century, many artists revived these idioms to question the hierarchy that had relegated sewing to the domestic sphere and 'women's work'. The most interesting part of the pieces assembled here is not the finished textile creation but the act of sewing. The needle ceases to be the seamstress's instrument and becomes a tool of artistic reflection. Isabel Oliver criticises the roles assigned to women under Franco in *De profesión: sus labores* [Occupation: Housewife] (1972–1974) [p. 20] and *La mercantilización del arte* [The Commodification of Art] (1975) [p. 22], two paintings on canvas and embroidery frames that imitate cross-stitch patterns.

Cross-stitching classes were a mandatory part of the feminine instruction offered by the Women's Section of the Spanish Falangist Movement that marked the artist's youth. And Elo Vega uses red thread to embroider on canvases printed with historic manifestos demanding equal rights for women. For both artists, embroidery is no longer a minor craft but a means of rethinking history, identity and power relations.

Some of these works also relate the act of sewing to working conditions, industrial production and the transformation of contemporary labour. For instance, Victoria Gil's embroideries recover the memory of female workers and knowledge tied to the textile industry. In *Los locales trabajan 3* [The Locals Work 3] (2023) [p. 13], an embroidered tablecloth becomes a canvas on which she paints stories of resistance with a needle. Gil, who defines herself as a painter and seamstress, sees the home and household linens—napkins, sheets, tapestries, tablecloths—as the perfect place to stage a revolution, but it is also the cherished setting where, as a girl, her mother and aunts taught her to use needle and thread. Similarly, Carole Frances Lung uses sewing as a tool of activism, ironically defying the machine as well as the production policies of global capitalism that dehumanise human beings. In its slowness, the very act of sewing becomes a form of resilience in the face of speed, mass production and consumer culture [p. 15].

Narelle Jubelin appropriates a work by the painter José Guerrero, *La brecha de Vízcar* [The Gap of Vízcar] [p. 24], and effects a dramatic change of scale and medium. Once again, the needle becomes a means of healing trauma—in this case, the traumatic loss of Federico García Lorca, murdered in the Vízcar ravine. Jubelin uses petit point embroidery to achieve an almost pictorial quality that adds new layers of meaning to the work, such as challenging the traditional hierarchies of art or defending the value of handicraft in our highly technified contemporary society.

Esther Ferrer's works in the exhibition underscore her ability to construct minimal architectural places simply by cutting through assorted materials or spaces with threads, thereby questioning the boundaries between body, action and architecture. In her *Proyectos espaciales* [Spatial Projects] (c. 1975) series [pp. 18–20], Ferrer uses threads to create a kind of random graphic that alludes to, among other things, her 1978 action *El hilo del tiempo* [The Thread of Time], where she united elements inside a railway carriage by metaphorically stitching them together. The same precarious quality informs the collages of Elena del Rivero's *Wound* series, one of the most productive in her recent body of work. In *# 9 Safety Pins Wound* (2014) [p. 15], Del Rivero turns the fragile suture of seemingly antithetical materials—Japanese paper, staples, safety pins, rust, gold leaf—into a powerful metaphor where memory, absence, wound and reparation are intertwined. Sewing is portrayed as a symbolic act, a mending that forges ties between stories and individuals.

Defeated Minorities

Anni Albers wrote in 1965, 'The crafts retreated, a defeated minority.' However, this statement should not be construed as a lament for a vanished world. Quite the contrary: the works in this gallery prove that even the oldest textile knowledge has continued to evolve and find new methods of transmission. In contrast to the speed and standardisation of

industrial manufacturing, they defend weaving as a space for passing on wisdom, memory and cultural resistance.

The research of pioneering artists like Teresa Lanceta and Aurèlia Muñoz is based on learning textile techniques linked to folk customs and weaving communities, in order to situate fabric in the field of cultural transmission. Macramé occupied a decisive place in the artistic practice of Aurèlia Muñoz, along with other crafts she was simultaneously exploring (for instance, the art of female net-makers in the coastal village of Blanes). She transformed lore passed down from generation to generation, no longer confined solely to the realm of craft, into spatial or sculptural structures like *Manto* [Mantle] (1973) [p. 31], which shows how tapestry can gradually distance itself from the two-dimensional plane. Teresa Lanceta's *Tejido* [Fabric] (1999) [p. 32] is, like many of her creations, a product of her intense research and observation of the textile practices of women in Morocco's Middle Atlas region. For Lanceta, weaving means participating in a network of material and symbolic exchange where the value of the work is defined not only by the finished product but also by the collective learning processes that made it possible.

In *The Power of Two or Three Suns* (2020) and *Hourglass II* (2023) [pp. 29–31], Yto Barrada interweaves traditional Moroccan fibre processing and dyeing processes with a critical reflection on the contemporary textile industry. *Hourglass II* contrasts the slow, situated temporality of artisanal knowledge with the extractive dynamics of globalised production, exposing the environmental and political consequences of both. From this perspective, Barrada revises the narratives of modernisation and progress inherited from colonialism, championing forms of knowledge that have been historically overlooked and proposing an alternative reading of the material history of textiles. This proposal is undoubtedly related to the local demands voiced in Antonio Pichillá's works. The Tz'utujil Maya artist uses fibres or wool to revive and highlight Indigenous conceptions of time, so often obscured by the Western worldview. In *Kukulkan (serpiente emplumada)* [Kukulkan (Feathered Serpent)] (2017) [p. 34], the artist, whose grandmother taught him to weave, arranged coloured yarn on a warping board, a flat wooden structure invented by early human societies to make fabric. The feathered serpent thus becomes a tale of cultural resistance.

These proposals, without indulging in gratuitous nostalgia, defend handicraft as a vibrant, living practice. The understanding of weaving has changed: it is not merely the act of making fabric but a learning process, a space for experimentation, and a way of challenging the standardisation of contemporary production models and tempos.

Indoor Existences: Dressing Architecture

Anni Albers used the phrase 'an indoor existence' to refer to the fact that, for centuries, textiles were instrumental in defining a very important aspect of architecture: interior space. Tapestries and carpets did more than just protect against the cold, muffle sound and provide comfort: they imbued architecture with meaning. Like the great fresco cycles that filled churches and palaces, textiles turned buildings into narrative stages where history, mythology and allegory accompanied daily life and ceremonial pomp. More than decorative objects, they were a way of making architecture speak.

The close relationship between weaving and building explains why tapestries and carpets were often conceived as integral parts of an architectural plan. Designed for a specific location, they guided foot traffic, announced the relative importance of each space, and altered the sensory experience of its occupants. Their images symbolically amplified the architecture, while their physical presence attenuated light and absorbed sound, making textiles both functional and symbolic elements.

The history of the Banco de España offers a particularly eloquent example of this alliance between art and architecture. Textiles have been used at the bank since its earliest days. One year after the founding in 1782 of the Banco de San Carlos, forerunner of the current Banco de España, the Count of Floridablanca officially notified the Duke of Medinaceli that King Charles III had given permission to install tapestries and benches from the royal household in the hall where the general shareholders' meetings would be held [Patrimonio Nacional, Archivo General de Palacio (AGP), Sección Administración, leg. 376, San Lorenzo, 25 November 1783]. Inventories of the bank's assets also mention carpets and hangings adorning different rooms in the building that served as its first headquarters in Calle de la Luna [excerpts from an inventory most likely compiled around 1806–1807. Archivo Histórico del Banco de España, 713 N.1128, F.12] [p. 57].

However, the oldest items in the bank's collection, some of which are on display in this exhibition, are the carpets ordered from the Royal Tapestry Factory [p. 43] after the mid-nineteenth century to embellish the new headquarters which opened on the Paseo del Prado in 1891. Subsequent renovations, carried out after the first third of the twentieth century, led to the acquisition of the magnificent set of six Flemish tapestries by Geraert Peemans, depicting the months of the year [p. 50] and their corresponding zodiac signs. They clearly played a structural role in the new and improved Shareholders' Assembly Hall, where they were installed when architect Juan de Zavala [p. 62] remodelled the premises. The tapestries were not conceived as mere decorative backdrops but as part of a larger architectural composition that also served the practical



Office of the governor of the Banco de España with the tapestry *Susannah Accused of Adultery* (1751–1781) by Jacques Neilson, and a carpet possibly manufactured at the Royal Tapestry Factory (1895–1905). Juan Miguel Pado Barrero, Archivo Pado, IPCE, Ministerio de Cultura, 1956.

purpose of improving the hall's acoustics. The building embraced the textiles, and they in turn reshaped the building.

From that moment on, tapestries were a familiar sight in different areas of the bank's headquarters and branches. Classical Flemish, French and Spanish tapestries coexist with armorial hangings and carpets of diverse provenance. Some were placed in the most prestigious halls; others occupied circulation and working areas; and a few were even hung on the ceiling, an unusual way of integrating them with the architecture. Together, all of these textile creations helped to define an institutional language that was decorous, representational and effective. Capable of dressing buildings and imbuing them with history, they turned a lifeless structure into an eloquent, habitable, institutionally distinguished space.

Times, Narratives and Economies of Value

While textiles in the historic halls of the Banco de España helped to construct the institution's identity, the works featured in this section shift the focus to another question with a direct bearing on the bank's activity: how is value produced? Different artists use fabric to explore the connections between economics and culture, addressing the exchange systems, forms of labour and narratives that underpin those processes. Textiles offer particularly rich imagery for thinking about those connections. The warp intertwines times, places and experiences, and every thread leads to another thread; in the same way, value does not emerge independently but grows out of collective trust mechanisms, shared conventions and stories capable of corroborating its legitimacy.

The project by Dora García that opens this final section in the show [pp. 66–69] is one of the many pieces that the bank has commissioned from artists throughout its lengthy history. The primary purpose of this commission was to improve the acoustics of the Collections Hall at the bank's headquarters. It tied in with a project mentioned earlier in this essay: the 1934 renovation of the Shareholders' Assembly Hall. Dora García created pieces that integrated with the architecture, transforming the space and giving it new symbolic significance. Inspired by the act of giving and receiving, her tapestries use the image of a hand outlined against the woven ground to reflect on the idea of exchange. The artist explained it as follows: exchange is what gives money value, and interpersonal relations are what determine the value of the economy, in dialogue with Adam Smith's controversial 'invisible hand' theory. The itinerary continues with the work of Andreas Maria Fohr [p. 65], who explores the ties between the textile industry, production and economy through the material traces that comprise his piece: an antique cash box, a photograph, a ceramic key and twelve embroidered pieces of fabric that prompt us to reflect on systems of payment and debt. Fohr's work is presented as a technology of time. His embroideries, which represent time notes, express the relationship between activity, time and value, because this particular type of promissory note is not just a financial instrument: it is a written promise about the future that has value in the present.

Manuel Chavajay [p. 69] brings Western modernity face-to-face with Indigenous conceptions of time that never disappeared. As María Jacinta Xón Riquiac has explained, 'The incomplete roundness of the moon embroidery is related to the lunar calendar based on a combination of twenty day signs and thirteen numbers, a 260-day cycle. The



Collection Hall with
tapestries by Dora García,
2026



embroidered moon [...] embodies a dream he had, “or possibly the other way round,” the artist muses. A tribute to the experience of Grandmother Moon, who is forever embroidering and weaving time, who plays with the tides of the sea and Lake Atitlán.’

Although they come from very different geographical and cultural backgrounds, Mercedes Azpilicueta, Patricia Esquivias and Manuel Chavajay all share Fohr’s interest in displaced histories and subaltern temporalities. Their works challenge the official narratives of nation, territory and modernity by reactivating feminine memories, histories of displacement and Indigenous cosmovisions. Using different narrative strategies, the three artists make textiles a space where seemingly separate times come together to envision other ways of inhabiting the past. Azpilicueta strikes up a dialogue between the sixteenth-century colonial era of the captive Lucía Miranda, the nineteenth century of Eduarda Mansilla and the queer present. Patricia Esquivias’s work *Fiesta de la trashumancia* 2020 (2020) [p. 71] revisits ways of interacting with

the land that endure on the fringes of the modernised world, like her unrealised idea of bringing the sheep that walk down Madrid's Calle de Alcalá during the annual livestock migration festival onto the Banco de España's Trading Floor, where they would encounter the shepherd and sheep that Maumejean depicted over one hundred years ago on the stained-glass skylight. Chavajay confronts Western modernity with Indigenous conceptions of time that never really vanished in this globalised present, while also warning us about the environmental impact of today's production systems (tourism).

The breadth and scope of the works in this exhibition show that the contemporary textile revival is not just about asserting and expressing identity. It also calls for a reconsideration of everything that has been overlooked or underestimated for far too long: processes rather than results, techniques as opposed to styles, hands versus authors. In this respect, the fact that many contemporary artists have turned their attention to textiles is directly related to one of Anni Albers's most meaningful insights: her belief that woven material is not a passive support on which ideas are cast but an active plane where those ideas take shape.

ROOM A

THE NEEDLE LIKE A PENCIL

Victoria Gil

Carole Frances Lung

Elena del Rivero

Esther Ferrer

Isabel Oliver

Elo Vega

Victoria Gil
(Badajoz, 1963)

1 ***Los locales trabajan 3* [The Locals Work 3], 2023**

Embroidery on tablecloth. 300 x 160 cm
Colección Banco de España

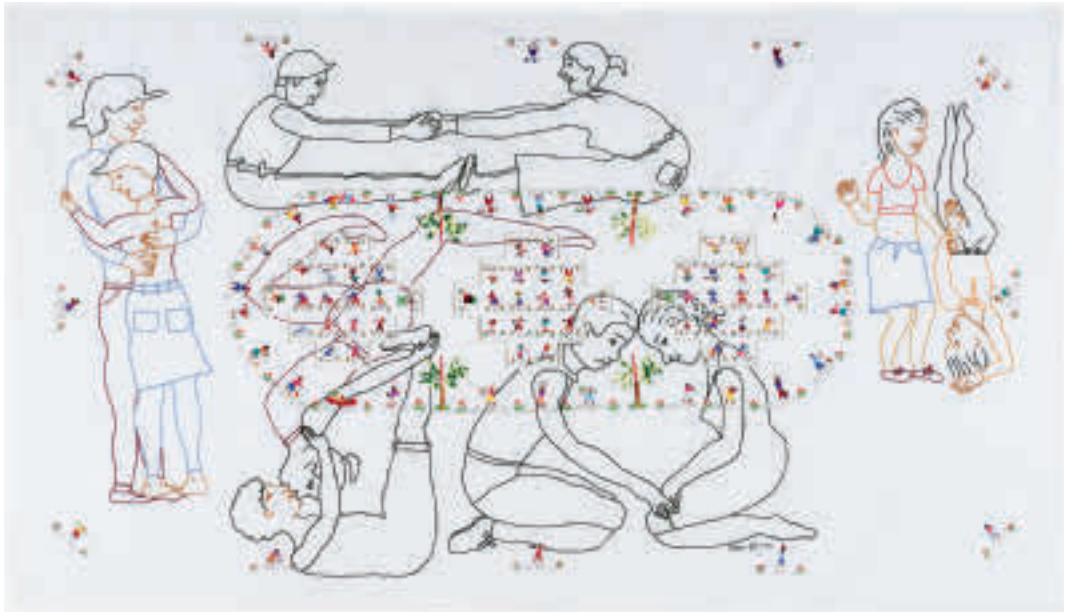
Victoria Gil's career began in Seville in the late 1980s, amid a whirlwind of political and artistic activity. Since then, and particularly after a stint in New York in the 1990s, her work has embraced feminist discourses that go beyond mere formality and rhetoric to question the very structure of the system. As part of her methodology, the artist experiments with themes and supports, subjecting them to constant recoding. For a time, painting and drawing were the media she used to illuminate that place between the historical and the subjective, the rational and the emotional, but in recent years her practice has expanded to other formats, always drawn by the symbolic weight of their materiality and their ability to intervene in the field of representation.

The series titled *Los locales trabajan* [The Locals Work] builds on several projects that use sewing to approach 'a simple language that belongs to nameless women'. Gil describes this

gesture as a way of 'rethinking the idea of the commons', another fundamental issue that has shaped her career. As in *Casas gitanas* [Roma Houses] (2019–2023) and *Black face. Homenaje a Violeta Parra* [Black Face: Tribute to Violeta Parra] (2021), the thread in *Los locales trabajan* records stories of resistance on elements directly related to the domestic environment. Sheets, rags and tablecloths become pages and canvases, turning the private and ordinary into the true warp of memory.

Comprising five embroidered tablecloths made for the project/exhibition *Coser el río*, the piece *Los locales trabajan* confirms a shift towards decolonial critique and the impact of imperialism on identity and territory. Although one of the most immediate thematic precedents is a group of works inspired by reading Frantz Fanon (2014), this anti-imperialist tendency has also surfaced in *Retratos saharauis* [Sahrawi Portraits] (2008–2010) and the aforementioned

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Casas gitanas, in which the artist compiled lores, bodies and ways of living compromised by capitalist and neocolonial policies.

The material quality of the work unfurls a convergence of persons, experiences and times, weaving an intricate web of relationships that emerge from Réunion Island as a physical and conceptual space. Embroidered by female artisans on this isle in the Indian Ocean, the tablecloth features a procession of figures performing different types of farm work. Over the colonial echoes of this item—once a symbol of bourgeois luxury, now a tourist souvenir—Victoria Gil has placed several characters whose playful choreography cannot be contained within the borders of the central ellipse. These pairs, depicted using chain stitches to emphasise their lively, sinuous outlines, are kissing,

embracing, caressing each other, and enjoying moments of recreation and rest.

In an act of epistemic disobedience, the work ties in with the ideas of thinkers like Françoise Vergès, Fred Moten and Édouard Glissant who advocate reclaiming life in response to the dis-possession emanating from the central modules. In addition to challenging the notion of authorship, these entwinings produce a form of narration that identifies the plantation as the birthplace of modern capitalism (inseparable from the class-gender-race triad) while simultaneously opening a window of escape, desire and possibility. This work once again proves that, for Victoria Gil, the main thing is not the art-object but everything that permeates and imbues it. BEATRIZ MARTÍNEZ

Carole Frances Lung (San Francisco, 1966)

2 *Frau Fiber vs. the Circular Knitting Machine*, 2015

Video, b/w, sound. 270 min
Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms

Would you rather knit a sock by hand or man a machine that produces socks? Fans of fiber arts might be quick to respond: by hand, of course! But watching Frau Fiber spend four and a half hours (without a bathroom break) producing one sock—while factory workers occasionally check on the circular knitting machine's progress—might change a person's mind, or at least get them thinking.

Carole Frances Lung has stacked the deck. The competition between their avatar, Frau Fiber, and the machine is farcical. Who would pay Frau a pittance to handknit just one sock when the machine can churn out 99? A union job, listening to the radio, making sure the machines are running, are obviously preferable to sweatshop labour. The problem is that the union jobs are hard to come by, and the sweatshops keep proliferating.¹

Frau Fiber vs. the Circular Knitting Machine belongs to Lung's activist practice that, for the past 20-odd years, has revolved around their collaboration with (performing as) Frau Fiber (she walked into Carole's storefront shop one day looking for a job, or so the story goes).² Through performances, workshops, radio shows, pamphlets, and video, Lung and Frau have worked hard to shift mindsets

regarding clothing consumption and its necessary corollary, production. As with this video, the work typically hooks viewers with deadpan humour and a light touch that encourages like-minded, and maybe not so like-minded, consumers and makers to reflect on and maybe reconsider decisions regarding clothing and labour.

Like many of her role models, who include John Henry and Ned Ludd (the likely apocryphal namesake of the Luddites), Frau's projects are Sisyphean. Knitting a sock by hand will not do away with the Industrial Revolution. The Luddites, clothing producers working within a cottage industry that provided a reasonably acceptable work-life balance, battled the exploitative capitalist use of machines to replace their skilled labor.³ The ramifications of the commodity fetish now are just as monstrous, if not more so. But Frau, unlike John Henry, does not die when competing with machines (he won against the steel drill at the expense of his life), and Lung has not given up.⁴ As they joked in 2019, 'I have a vision for world domination and I'm trying to accomplish it.'⁵

In this world that Lung would dominate, fashion would belong to the dustbin of history.



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'Fashion is triggering for me. What people think is fashion is not any of the things clothing is about to me.'⁶ Instead, people would care for the clothes they have and make new ones with the materials at hand (such as T-shirts, which Lung describes as a 'natural resource representing consumer culture of late western capitalism').⁷ International laws would ensure fair wages for all. Like the Luddites, Lung is not against technology (they just wrote their dissertation in collaboration with generative artificial intelligence). They are in favor of a world where technology helps to facilitate a good life for humans (and plants and animals) rather than being wielded as a weapon of oppression. 'I have big plans and who knows if they'll ever be fully realized, but it's fun to try.'⁸ In coming years, Lung will keep trying, not by inventing new durational performances for Frau, but rather by extending Frau's reach as a superhero, through animation and other means. Stay tuned! BIBIANA K. OBLER

Footnotes on page 27.

Elena del Rivero (Valencia, 1952)

3 **#9 2014 Safety Pins Wound, 2014**

Ink, string, collage with 23-carat gold leaf, fragment, primed cotton, safety pins, staples, rust, different handmade papers (abaca and cotton rag), tartan on torn Japanese paper. 41,3 x 29,2 cm
Colección Banco de España

This piece is part of *Wound*, a series that Elena del Rivero began in 2005 during a residency at the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy, which now constitutes one of the most significant corpuses in her artistic output. It is a small-format work made by assembling a variety of delicate materials—handmade abaca and cotton rag papers, string, safety pins, staples, rust and gold leaf—on torn Japanese paper. The very materiality of the piece invites us to reflect on the ideas of wounds, mending and memory.

For Del Rivero, who has lived in New York City since the 1990s, the 9/11 attacks, which resulted in the destruction of her studio, were a watershed in her career. The artist salvaged debris from the fallen towers and began a painstaking process of repair, using her artistic practice to literally and metaphorically mend what had been broken. Although trauma features prominently in her work, Del Rivero does



not want it to be interpreted as testimonial in the strict sense of the word: in addition to narrating the event, she physically works through it. This particular piece shows a still-visible wound held together by safety pins and staples, which act as provisional containment measures. This precarious quality is essential to the artist's assemblages, where there is no definitive closure or ideal reparation of harm, only an acceptance of frailty as a chronic condition.

Elena del Rivero's interest in amends can be traced back to a feminist tradition of care that focuses on the process rather than the outcome. Here, sewing, stitching and assembling scraps are forms of situated knowledge which, according to Julia Bryan-Wilson, serve to 'give texture to politics, to refuse easy binaries, to acknowledge complications'. The artist has stated that, for her, the needle works like a pencil and sewing like a form of drawing. In this respect, her work is

predicated on a gaze historically linked to the domestic and the feminine that questions the distinction between fine arts and crafts, and it highlights the reproductive work performed by women and systematically ignored for centuries. Safety pins, traditionally associated with temporary fixes and makeshift repairs, thus become a symbol of resistance and caring.

Writing about memory and trauma, Marianne Hirsch has asked how stories can be passed on without appropriating them or making them about oneself, while also preserving the position from which they are remembered and shared. In *#9 Safety Pins Wound*, Del Rivero attests to the wound as a shared experience. The reduced scale and anti-monumental quality of the piece underscore this intention. Her collages aim to establish an almost tactile relationship of proximity with the viewer. The work requires an attentive gaze and the insight to recognise its

simple materials and minimal gestures as universal metaphors for grief and healing.

The paper scraps, with their different sources and textures, also allude to this conception of memory, for they bear the marks of past times and uses. This focus on materiality and this assemblage logic, verging on archival and restoration practices, permeate a large part of

Del Rivero's oeuvre, denoting her interest in seriality and classification as strategies for reflecting on the passage of time. The piece sums up the ethical and aesthetic proposal that Elena del Rivero has been developing for over three decades now: a feminist practice that invites us to meditate on existence itself by exploring everyday materials. CLARA DERRAC

Esther Ferrer

(Donostia / San Sebastián, 1937)

4 *Proyectos espaciales. Maqueta* [Spatial Projects: Scale Model], 1980

Thread on foam board. 18 x 30 x 15 cm
Private collection

Esther Ferrer has often remarked that her *Proyectos espaciales* [Spatial Projects] grew out of commonplace linear elements, like roads and electricity poles, that transform a landscape almost without meaning to. 'In reality,' she explains, 'the natural or architectural space I appropriate, generally using as few elements as possible, is the 'raw material' of the work, not its support.' This is one of the reasons why cotton threads or slender wires criss-cross her spaces; they are an unobtrusive way of revealing the elemental gesture she performs in her creations.

In addition to her preference for these ordinary materials and her commitment to the principle of 'not intervening too much,' another constant that underpins Ferrer's practice is repetition: a repetition inseparable from difference. In her mind, a single idea can blossom into a generous bouquet of formats, from scale models or models on paper and cardboard to mural interventions. Variations in scale, placement or support, permutations of a particular motif, and iterations of the same movement all attest to an emphatically open production that is rooted in the serial and regards the process as an end in itself.

This piece is from a relatively late stage in the series, as we can tell by the fact that the void-matter interaction is substantially more complex than in early works, and by the presence of foam board, a material she began using in the late 1980s. Although she has given up the discarded cardboard boxes that featured in her

early models, the artist does revisit previously explored issues, as is apparent by comparison with *Proyectos espaciales* #5 [Spatial Projects #5].

In some of the countless sketches produced in the previous decade, Ferrer had experimented with the possibility of arranging threads in a serial progression, like the Fibonacci sequence or prime numbers, but in both *Proyectos espaciales* #5 and this scale model she chose to sound out the workings of chance, no doubt inspired by Cage's concept of aleatoric music. Unlike *Proyectos espaciales* #5, which unfolds on the two-dimensional surface of the cardboard, here the artist introduces a complex structural arrangement of taut and suspended lines that create an interplay of volumes and perspectives.

While this is the only piece in the exhibition to engage directly with a three-dimensional setting, that does not necessarily make it a study for a specific architectural context. As the artist explains, 'I've never been very interested in seeing my designs materialised in a real space on a large scale. If the model works, the piece is finished as far as I'm concerned. If I have the chance to realise the idea in a real space, great; but if not, it doesn't matter. For me, art is a process, and the process is precisely what interests me.' BEATRIZ MARTÍNEZ



5 *Proyectos espaciales #5* [Spatial Projects #5], c. 1975

Thread and aluminium on cardboard. 39,5 × 49,5 cm
Colección Banco de España

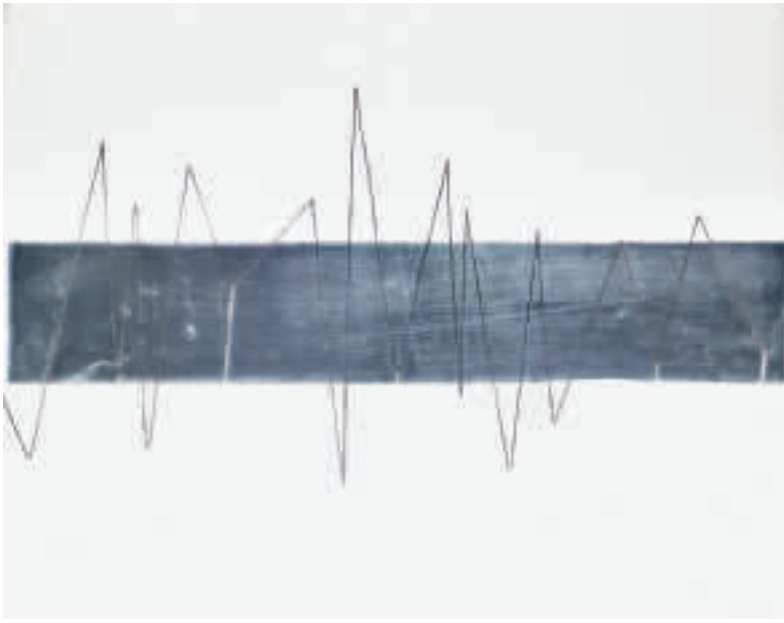
In one of her earliest scores, Esther Ferrer aimed to traverse a space by filling it with 'sounds and traces', whether visible or invisible. The brief instructions for the action were accompanied by notes on the possible outcome: faintly sketched, intermittent lines—some structured, some mildly chaotic—which, by dint of repetition, drew and erased the boundaries of the chosen place. At that time, circa 1974, Ferrer participated in two projects that used thread to actually 'fill' space: a performance at the Atelier de l'Ourcq in Paris, and an installation connected to an exhibition at the Château de Nampcel.

However, if we had to identify one initial moment that encapsulated the intersection of action, object and process which would define her entire career, it would be *Hilo musical* (1978), a title that literally translates as 'musical thread' but is also the Spanish term for piped music. This piece was her contribution to the legendary happening *Alla ricerca del silenzio perduto. Il treno di John Cage*. On a train that had previously been 'prepared' according to the composer's instructions, Ferrer

improvised a thread structure spanning the entire width of the carriages while passengers looked on in astonishment. A blend of sculpture, intervention and performance, the piece did not just blur the distinctions between disciplines; it also showed how, with Esther Ferrer, even the simplest act—walking, traversing or counting—could expand into a large number of works.

While she carried out these actions, Ferrer was also working on one of her first and most extensive series: *Proyectos espaciales* [Spatial Projects]. From the 1970s to today, the variations and iterations that comprise it have composed an entire anthology of geometries and forms that contain each other in search of a unique language. Whether via scale models, sketches or installations, this *modus operandi* unites the three pillars that underpin her artistic practice: space, time and presence. In these projects, usually made with materials that are fragile or taken from her immediate surroundings, thread is the only constructive element. When assembling the syntax of her creations, sometimes she follows a specific pattern, like Napoleon's triangle, the Fibonacci sequence or the progression of prime numbers. In other cases, she obeys a subjective impulse that produces forms bordering on randomness.

Proyectos espaciales #5 is, in fact, the result of a freer approach to space and time. In



addition to cardboard, here Ferrer used aluminium foil as a mirror. The foil creates a central band over which the thread charts a rhythmic cadence: jagged, wavering lines that 'mark out space, occupy it and, most importantly, define it, transforming it simply by virtue of their presence'. The piece's *minimal* feel and subtle way of recording time invite us to think about the shift in the concept of the score that Cage and other artists introduced. As previously glimpsed in *Huellas, sonidos, espacio* [Traces, Sounds, Space], for Ferrer and for many of her contemporaries, sheet music—like her *Proyectos espaciales*—ceased to be an instrument of notation and instead became an expanded visual, linguistic and performative field. BEATRIZ MARTÍNEZ

6 *Proyectos espaciales #6* [Spatial Projects #6], c. 1975

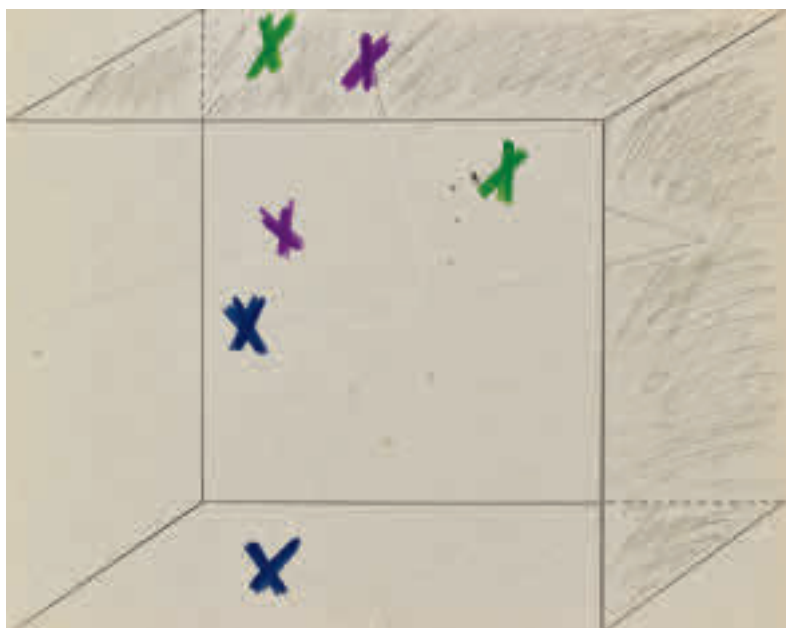
Pencil, felt-tip pen and thread on cardboard.
39,5 × 49,5 cm
Colección Banco de España

Esther Ferrer's practice is informed by the conceptual turn that defined the 1960s, a movement which embraced the eradication of conventional forms and blazed new trails of artistic creation

and enquiry. Insistently questioning the object, this expansion of the arts prioritised the notion of process and shifted its focus to the ordinary, to sounds, devices or gestures that were once deemed unsophisticated or commonplace but thereafter found themselves at the centre of attention.

In a text written in the mid-1980s, the artist explained that choosing to use elements from her immediate surroundings in her works and actions is 'both a stance and a starting point'. This is one of the reasons why, in her *Proyectos espaciales* [Spatial Projects] series, a simple line on a piece of paper or the combination of cotton strings in the precarious setting of a box transform them into scenarios for testing the possibilities of the geometric and the performative, environments between the physical and the mental that can be used to model space and time.

Due to the inherently fragile nature of most of these works, some of them, especially the earliest ones, no longer exist. The artist would improvise them in temporary locations or cobble them together from humble materials, such as thread or cardboard salvaged from rubbish bins, and her studio's physical constraints forced to get rid of many of them. Yet what interested her most was not the survival of her models or sketches or even the possibility of transposing them into



‘real space’, but the process of conceiving and devising them.

Proyectos espaciales #6 [Spatial Projects #6] was made during this early stage, when Ferrer regarded these attempts as a way of recording her thoughts in and about space. An orthogonal composition on the flat cardboard surface depicts a space that is empty except for six swiftly applied dashes of colour. The image may seem random, but there is a specific underlying intention: in an attempt to traverse the space using the fewest possible elements, the goal is to combine two or more angles of different widths and place a differently coloured mark at their ends. By introducing chromatic variety in these proposals, the artist seeks, in her own words, to juxtapose ‘the rigour of geometry with the anarchy of colour’.

Ferrer’s characteristic use of repetition and variation meant that this piece continued to evolve over time. The template of *Proyectos espaciales #6* outgrew its cardboard support and expanded onto the walls of the exhibition *Entre líneas y cosas*. Even though Ferrer insists that this is not the purpose of her models, it is still an indication of the constant give-and-take between action and object—further confirmation that, most of the time, the work of art is the process itself. BEATRIZ MARTÍNEZ

Isabel Oliver
(Valencia, 1946)

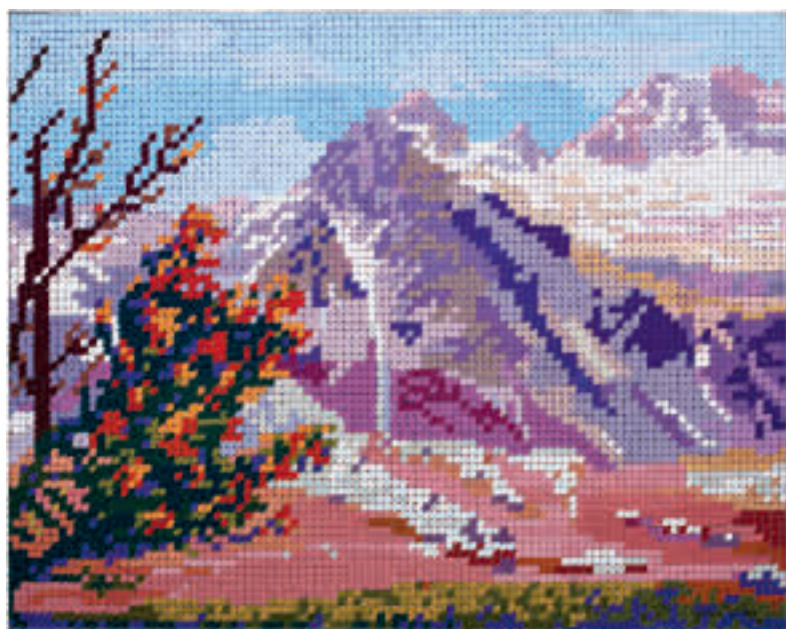
7 *De profesión: sus labores* [Occupation: Housewife], 1972–1974

Painting: oil on canvas. 74,5 x 94 cm
Frames: acrylic on fabric and wood
Dimensions variable
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Isabel Oliver’s work has recently been recognised as one of Spain’s pioneering feminist discourses. In the mid-1970s, this artist’s practice changed dramatically when she decided to explore landscape painting, virtually uncharted territory for Pop art. Her unconventional approach to this genre introduced a markedly feminist perspective and, in later decades, a growing environmental awareness.

The artist has explained that she left Equipo Crónica because she was tired of being seen as second fiddle to other members of the group. She refused to continue playing a subordinate role, even in nominal matters like the order of appearance on promotional posters, which shows how determined she was to carve out a creative niche of her own.

In those years, her production was grouped in three major series: *Paisajes pop* [Pop Landscapes],



De profesión: sus labores [Occupation: Housewife] and *La mercantilización del arte* [The Commodification of Art]. Although the artist has often dated them to 1972–1975, she probably continued working on them until 1978. These series were not strictly consecutive; in fact, they all overlapped, reflecting an open creative process in which experimentation and transformation were constant.

One of the most innovative aspects of her work from this period was the decision to make the support an essential part of the piece's meaning. Not content to merely paint on canvas, she added embroidery frames and other supports related to the domestic, financial or retail sphere. These choices were not arbitrary; actually, they served to reinforce the critical message. The frame alludes to domestic chores and female education, decrying the limited instruction that women and girls received under Franco. At the same time, the use of supports associated with consumerism or accounting

introduces a commentary on the value of art and the structures governing its circulation. In this regard, her work is a platform for denouncing multiple issues: gender inequality in education, the systematic invisibility of domestic labour, environmental degradation, rampant consumerism and even the inner workings of the art world itself. She expresses all this in a visual language inherited from Pop art but reinterpreted from a personal, critical perspective.

Oliver also created an installation by reproducing the same landscape on multiple frames and making the images look embroidered. This systematic repetition, with colour variations, offers a reflection on reproduction, seriality and the boundaries between painting, screenprinting, embroidery or other media. With this piece, Oliver questions the traditional categories of art and expands the expressive possibilities of pictorial language. ISABEL TEJEDA MARTÍN

8 N.º 34. From the series *La mercantilización del arte* [The Commodification of Art], 1975

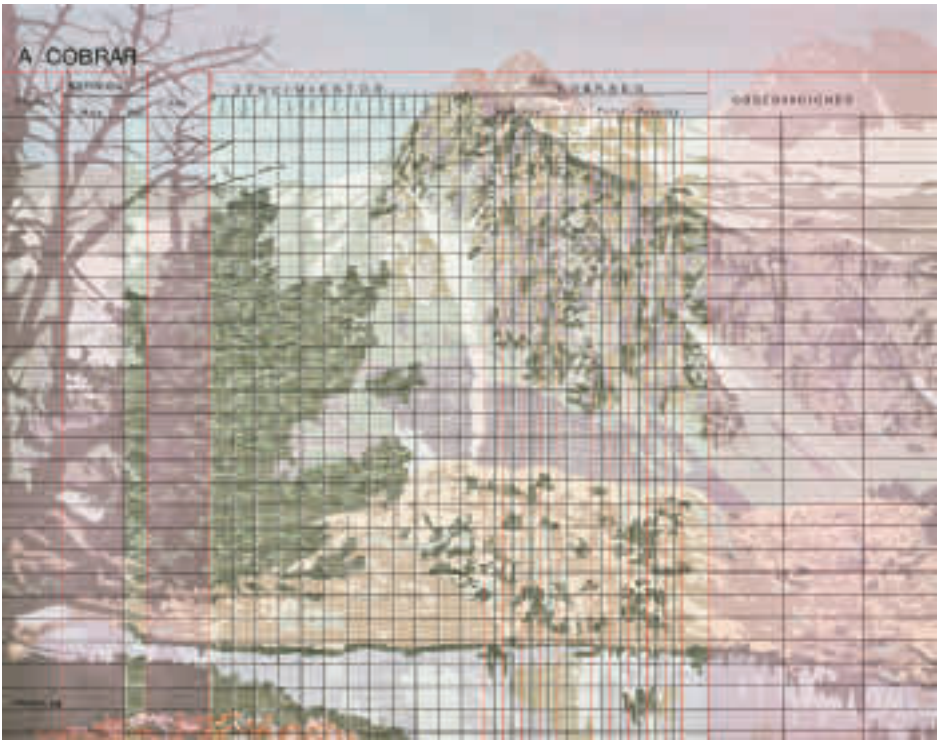
Acrylic on canvas. 82 x 104 cm
Colección Banco de España

In 1975, the year the dictator Francisco Franco died, the painter Isabel Oliver started her *La mercantilización del arte* [The Commodification of Art] series. Since the beginning of that decade, she had been producing overtly feminist works under the generic title *La mujer* [Woman].

La mercantilización del arte consists of three pieces, three feminist landscapes (the central one belongs to the Banco de España Collection), and grew out of two other series made between 1972 and 1975: *Paisajes pop* [Pop Landscapes] and *De profesión, sus labores* [Occupation: Housewife]. These series were not strictly consecutive; in fact, they all overlapped, reflecting an open creative process in which experimentation and transformation were constant. As the artist stated in a 2014 interview, '[In 1972] I went off the theme of women; that was a colossal failure... and then I began painting landscapes.' But even though Oliver switched to another genre, she maintained the same political discourse that had accompanied her since the beginning of her career.

Oliver's intention was critical. She turned to what had been one of the most successful genres for Valencian painters from the nineteenth century to Sorolla: landscape painting, albeit with a Pop idiom. Oliver chose a stereotypical image of the kind of popular landscape art found on calendars and postcards: a mighty snowcapped mountain surrounded by giant fir trees, and a small lake reflecting the entire scene. Instead of Sorolla's orange groves and Mediterranean Sea, the painter opted for a distant nature scene that elicited no emotional sense of belonging in her. She almost always used the same landscape, only varying the size and the vocabulary: 'To make it plain that what really interested me was the visual language, not the theme, I always paint the same landscape.'

This piece contains two superimposed images. The base is a grid drawn in ink with a rotting technical pen that mimics the regular weave of cross-stitch fabric, although that pattern also matches the squared paper of an accounting



ledger. The work unfolds in three different stages and builds to a crescendo. In each new stage, the grid of 'debit' and 'credit' columns is increasingly visible, while colour is confined to a cell that becomes a straitjacket, limiting the brushstrokes and the form itself.

Oliver offers a critique of speculation and the instability in which artists are often forced to work—a situation that was even more difficult for women artists, who struggled to even break into the market and make a living as painters. She placed her Alpine landscape over this ledger grid, drawing a parallel between the formal demands of the market and the creative limitations of her regimented education in the embroidery classes offered by the Women's Section of the Spanish Falangist Movement.

ISABEL TEJEDA MARTÍN

Narelle Jubelin

(Sydney, 1960)

9 *As Yet Untitled* (José Guerrero, 1966),
from the series *Flamenco primitivo*
[Primitive Flemish], 2014

Cotton and silk petit point rendition
14 x 17, 5 cm (image); 31 x 33 cm (sheet)
Colección Banco de España

It is best to approach this work by Narelle Jubelin from the perspective of an earlier show, *Ungrammatical Landscape* (Centro José Guerrero, Granada, 2006), where the artist proposed a revision of museum conventions when she placed *Reconciliación* [Reconciliation] (oil on canvas, 521 x 236 cm, 1991) by José Guerrero (1914–1991) directly on the floor so that it could be viewed from above, exactly as it was painted, establishing a connection to pictorial traditions in Australia. At the same time, by choosing to work with this specific piece at an institution dedicated to preserving and safeguarding the Granadan artist's legacy, Jubelin highlighted the similarities with her home country, where

reconciliation remains an unsettled political debt with Aboriginal communities. After fifteen years in New York, Guerrero was finally able to be reconciled with his country's past, and with him Jubelin discovered the weight of the time that she herself had needed in order to comprehend Spain's social and historical background, which in turn led to an understanding of her own displacement.

While doing research for this project, Jubelin came across *La brecha de Vízcar* [The Gap of Vízcar] (1966). When Guerrero returned to Spain in 1965, he came with his wife, the journalist Roxane Whittier Pollock, and the photographer David Lees, who were preparing a feature for *Life* magazine on the anniversary of Federico García



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Lorca's death. And they visited the Vízcar ravin, the place where the poet was murdered in 1936. He made several drawings there which became the basis of that painting and other versions. Narelle Jubelin retraced his steps: she went to the ravin and visited the village of Frigiliana, where Guerrero had built a family home (Bernard and Berta Rudofsky also built a house there, and the families of García Lorca and Jorge Guillén did the same in nearby Nerja). She felt they were relevant places for striking up a conversation with the artist.

Fast forward to 2014, when Jubelin made *As Yet Untitled* (José Guerrero, 1966). An exhibition was organised to mark the centenary of José Guerrero's birth, *The Presence of Black, 1950–1966*, which the artist heard of through one of its curators, Yolanda Romero, and whose title she borrowed for a show of her own at The Commercial, Sydney, in 2019. That memorial exhibition included the aforementioned work by José Guerrero, an oil on canvas (196 x 238 cm) that Jubelin rendered in petit point with cotton thread on a silk ground (31 x 33 cm), rewriting abstraction into an *agrammatical landscape*: black, white and red; death, life and blood.

Narelle Jubelin's body of work is characterised by the use of petit point (French for 'small stitch'), a very fine, delicate style of embroidery with a labour-intensive process: a cotton thread is repeatedly passed through a silk ground with a needle to achieve a precise, highly detailed final result. This needlework condenses her critical and conceptual enquiry, producing work of such accuracy and flawless execution that both front and back reveal distinctly contemporary reformulations of the pictorial medium.

She chose this embroidery technique for its versatility, compact format and minimal scale, in contrast to the painterly semantics of her student years in Sydney. She resignifies this craft which, like weaving and sewing, is an activity associated with the domestic labour of women. And in doing so, she prompts a questioning of cultural codes steeped in social history.

Jubelin's artistic practice has always proposed conversations with other women artists, other female voices, making dialogue central to her work. She invites us to reread and reinterpret the memories etched into artworks, objects and places by investigating their historical, cultural, political and social contexts. NATALIA PONCELA LÓPEZ

Elo Vega

(Huelva, 1967)

10 **Serie Manifesti (#I, #II, #III, #IV), 2023**

Printed text on linen with red thread embroidery. 130 x 90 cm each

Manifesti #I. Text: 'Droits de la Femme' by Olympe de Gouges

Manifesti #II. Text: 'Woman's rights' signed at the Seneca Falls Convention (NY) in 1848

Manifesti #III. Text: 'The Bitch Manifesto' by Joreen, 1968

Manifesti #IV. Text: 'Manifesto' of the Rivolta Femminile, 1970

Colección Banco de España

On 14 September 1791, in response to the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, activist and writer Olympe de Gouges published her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* from what would now be called a gender perspective. This declaration was a radical demand for equal political, legal and social rights for women. A pioneering abolitionist who also worked to end slavery in the French colonies, Olympe was sent to the guillotine just two years later during the Terror, accused of championing counter-revolutionary causes. The list of charges portrayed her as a woman who

had abandoned the virtues of her sex, defying the gender order of the French Revolution.

Nearly sixty years later, in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organised the famous Seneca Falls Convention in the state of New York, where another group of women again demanded the right to vote. In the twentieth century, these two ground-breaking declarations were joined by 'The Bitch Manifesto' (1968), in which Joreen proposed that a traditionally insulting term be critically embraced as a symbol of autonomy and resistance; and the manifesto of the Rivolta Femminile (1970), spearheaded



by Carla Lonzi, Carla Accardi and Elvira Banotti, one of the seminal texts of contemporary Italian feminism. In 2023, the artist Elo Vega brought us four present-day manifestos (*Manifesti #I, #II, #III and #IV*) as a reminder that even now, nearly 250 years later, the long, arduous battle for gender equality is not over.

Elo Vega often uses wordplay in her works, and here she juxtaposes the two meanings of the Italian *manifesti*, which can mean ‘manifest’, in the sense of something obvious, clear or evident, or ‘manifestos’, written declarations that publicly announce the ideas or purposes of an individual or group. As she has before, in these pieces the artist also performs an exercise in historical memory, bringing texts, images or people from the past to the present on which she superimposes different visual resources—a textile addition, in this case—that displace or multiply the meanings of the altered images.

In the four *Manifesti*, Vega uses block lettering to print what look like revolutionary leaflets reproducing these fundamental texts from the history of feminism, which still speak to us today,

and adds a textile intervention that gives them other layers of significance. Those violent loops that defy easy interpretation (are they intended to underscore or cross out?), mechanically embroidered on the fabric in red thread, force viewers to focus on the script. Their shape is suggestive of the idea of spinning in circles, a repetitive act that thwarts any attempt at progress.

The technique of embroidery also evokes, as the artist has pointed out, the tradition of labour predominantly performed by women throughout history—specifically the myth of Penelope—which involves repetition, endless weaving and unravelling, a job that is never done. Alongside this interpretation, Elo Vega seems to defend an ‘alternative’ rationality, something other than the linearity typical of patriarchal culture, and warn us not to treat issues within the feminist struggle as if they had been settled when in fact they are still unresolved and must be addressed.

YOLANDA ROMERO

Notes accompanying Bibiana K. Obler's essay on Carole Frances Lung (pp. 14–15).

- 1 On layoffs at Wigwam Mills, where *Frau Fiber* vs. the *Circular Knitting Machine* was filmed, see AnnMarie Hilton, ‘Sock-maker Wigwam Mills received a \$1.6 million PPP loan despite laying off 85% of its employees’, *Sheboygan Press*, 31 July 2020, <https://eu.sheboyganpress.com/story/news/2020/07/31/sock-maker-wigwam-mills-got-1-6-million-ppp-loan-after-mass-layoff/5518602002/>. On exploitative labor, see Frau Fiber, ‘ILGWU Labor Report for the week of 29 June 2026’, <<https://frauiber.wordpress.com/2026/06/29/ilgwu-labor-report-for-the-week-of-june-29-2026/>>.
- 2 Carole Frances Lung, conversation with author, 24 June 2026.
- 3 Brian Merchant, ‘Understanding the Luddites in the age of AI’, *Blood in the Machine*, 19 June 2026, <<https://www.bloodinthemachine.com/p/understanding-the-luddites-in-the->
- 4 For further reading on Henry and Lung, see Bibiana K. Obler, ‘Not Your Grandmother’s Labor’, in *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction*, ed. Lynne Cooke (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, distributed by University of Chicago Press, 2023), 207.
- 5 Asia Morris, ‘Artist Carole Frances Lung wants you to stop shopping and start sewing’, *Long Beach Post*, 12 May 2019, <https://lbpost.com/esd/hi-lo/art/artist-carole-frances-lung-wants-you-to-stop-shopping-and-start-sewing/>.
- 6 Lung, conversation with author, 24 June 2026.
- 7 Sewing Rebellion, ‘Syrian Coat’, from the campaign *Motifs, Migrations and Misappropriations*, 2019.
- 8 Asia Morris, ‘Artist Carole Frances Lung wants you to stop shopping and start sewing’, *Long Beach Post*, 12 May 2019, <https://lbpost.com/esd/hi-lo/art/artist-carole-frances-lung-wants-you-to-stop-shopping-and-start-sewing/>.

ROOM D

DEFEATED MINORITIES

**Yto Barrada
Aurèlia Muñoz
Teresa Lanceta**

Yto Barrada
(Paris, 1971)

11 *The Power of Two or Three Suns, 2000*

16mm film transferred to digital, sound, colour
Duration: 11 min 11 s
Courtesy Pace Gallery; Sfeir-Semler Gallery;
and Galerie Polaris, Paris

Shot in an industrial laboratory that specialises in resistance and endurance testing, this video piece is a blend of scientific observation and poetic reflection. The starting point is a technical device designed to artificially replicate specific environmental conditions in order to gauge how materials will perform over time. In the film, we see hands methodically attaching coloured panels to a metal structure. These panels are actually printed fabric swatches, which will be subjected to the radiant power of a central lamp and rotated at high speed. Cloths and dyes are exposed to ultra-powerful light sources capable of emitting years of solar radiation in the space of just a few days. The video documents this procedure to offer a reflection on technology, the passage of time, and the impact that human actions have on nature.

The title of the work refers to the brightness of the xenon lamps used in these industrial

testing labs. The light that shines on the swatches technologically simulates the intensity of 'two or three suns'. The laboratory works like a time-condensing machine, allowing us to observe in the present what would ordinarily take years or even decades to happen.

Speaking of this piece, the artist has said that 'colour can also be a measure of time'. Here, the progressive fading of the dyes becomes a visible sign of the passage of time. This logic is, in turn, incorporated in the work's own support. Barrada works with analogue film, whose ability to record images depends directly on its sensitivity to light and how long it is exposed to it. The inclusion of fogged frames, like colourful bursts, reminds us that what we are seeing is a physical object, the result of a technical, light-based process. This also draws attention to the fact that the cinema and the filmed machine are

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both products of industrial development and express the same human determination to control nature. The piece therefore takes a cautious view of technological progress.

This focus on material processes underpins Barrada's entire practice. Through projects related to natural dyes, botany, embroidery and the transmission of local know-how, the artist has championed situated learning methods that lie outside the prevailing paradigms of technical production. In the same vein, the accelerated exposure to artificial radiation in *The Power of Two or Three Suns* seems to echo the consequences of the climate crisis. The piece is a metaphor for the effects of human technological breakthroughs achieved by exploiting natural resources. Barrada invites a reflection on the difficulty of maintaining natural rhythms when dealing with a system that tends to intensify production and consumption, with rapidly scaling effects that are becoming increasingly hard to reverse. CLARA DERRAC

12 *Hourglass II, 2023*

Black silk noil and natural dyed silk twill
lightweight triangle quilt
102,9 x 101,6 cm
Colección Banco de España

Hourglass II is a textile piece made using black silk noil and naturally dyed silk. Geometric shapes and a contrasting palette of warm oranges and blacks form a pattern of paired triangles that meet at their vertices. The artist's choice of materials and use of natural dyes enhance the tactile quality of this work, creating a visual/material interplay that is essential to its interpretation. In the context of Barrada's creative career, *Hourglass II* builds on her research into identity, collective memory and the cultural history of North Africa. Influenced by postcolonial theory, feminism and Pan-Africanism, this multidisciplinary Franco-Moroccan artist has forged a practice using media such as photography, film, sculpture and installation. The quilt expresses her interest in microhistories, subaltern knowledge and everyday acts of resistance.

Hourglass II was created at The Mothership, an ecofeminist research and art residency centre founded by Barrada in Tangier. Artists, environmentalists and cultural agents collaborate at this creative hub, where natural dye workshops are offered and people can experiment with different

ways of growing, preserving and sharing plants and seeds. The fabrics Barrada used in this piece were dyed with pigments extracted from native plant species grown in The Mothership's garden. The different shades of orange and black were obtained by means of a long, slow tinting process with plants like camomile, rose madder and turmeric. In this way, the work connects colour with its botanical roots and highlights the unhurried rhythm inherent in cultivation and artisanal creation. In contrast to the accelerationist dynamics imposed by Western systems of productivity, Barrada revisits the traditional processes of the Moroccan textile industry, largely kept alive by women through the years.

As we can infer from the title, the notion of time is central to this piece on both the conceptual and the formal level. The geometric patterns in the composition, influenced by typical Moroccan fabric prints, recall the shape of an hourglass, the archetypal symbol of passing time. This imagery, combined with the aforementioned use of artisanal techniques, elicits a reflection on the transmission of ancestral knowledge that has been consigned to peripheral contexts over the centuries, as well as a new appreciation for the work of anonymous women whose creative efforts have been omitted from the Western mainstream narrative. As in earlier works, here Barrada addresses temporality and memory, reminding us that the art object can also contain personal and collective stories.

Barrada's use of traditional craft methods is also an act of cultural and environmental resistance, a way of preserving artisanal practices in a world dominated by mass production and extractivism. This approach advocates sustainability over the capitalist exploitation of natural resources, slowness over immediacy, and a connection with nature over hasty consumption. *Hourglass II* is a call to slow down, to calmly experience and experiment with our surroundings, to recover an organic sense of time. It invites us to consider not only history and memory but also the urgency of acknowledging and preserving traditional techniques and know-how. The work is a meditation on the continuity and transformation of cultural practices in Morocco and how they are embedded in the flow of time.

CLARA DERRAC



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Aurèlia Muñoz

(Barcelona, 1926–2011)

13 *Manto* [Mantle], 1973

Macramé, natural unspun jute
100 x 140 cm
Colección Banco de España

When Aurèlia Muñoz received one of the artist grants offered by Fundación Juan March in 1969, her initial idea was to research the history of embroidery. For this Catalan artist, theory sometimes came before practice, and in these processes she never lost sight of the historical precedents for her experiments with fabric, found in objects from our past. Her first steps brought her face-to-face with antique textiles, most of which she found in churches and cathedrals but also in museums. She was particularly fascinated by the chasubles, copes, dalmatics and other richly embroidered vestments used in Catholic liturgical rites, and by the radical transformation they underwent following the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

Manto [Mantle] acts as a bridge between the period when Muñoz focused on studying embroidery and her early forays into macramé. Her last embroidered piece was *Homenaje a Jerónimo*

Bosch [Homage to Hieronymus Bosch] (1971), and her first macramé creations were *Homenaje a Gaudí* [Homage to Gaudí] and *Macra Tótem*, both from 1969. Muñoz was going through a transitional phase where she experimented with different methods and media at the same time. Allusions to historical figures like Isabella the Catholic and to fictional characters that had appeared in her set designs from the 1960s were present in the worlds she created in her pieces and explicitly referenced in her titles. And if there was one essential attribute that identified these figures, it was their clothing. *Manto* may have been inspired by the capes worn by Renaissance aristocrats or men of the cloth, garments that provided cover, protection and warmth.

This work has obvious formal similarities to some of the small sketches encased in acrylic glass boxes found in different collections. It can also be linked to *Tres personajes* [Three Characters] (1970–1971), three large, free-standing, fully three-dimensional mantles that share affinities with the contemporary work of Magdalena Abakanowicz. This large piece was displayed at the 5th International Tapestry Biennial in Lausanne, Switzerland, the most important global textile art event in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. At a time when the rigid separation



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of disciplines was splitting at the seams, the *Nouvelle Tapisserie* or New Tapestry movement (of which Aurèlia Muñoz was a leading exponent) engaged and interwove itself with other forms of expression while remaining true to its specific idiom and a history dating back to the Neolithic.

In this regard, and despite *Manto*'s allusions to liturgical vestments, Aurèlia Muñoz refused to be constrained by the two-dimensionality of the tapestry, traditionally hung on a wall or laid on the floor, and branched out into sculptural volumes which she would spend the next several decades exploring. However, while the long fringe does add three-dimensional depth, *Manto* is a transitional piece still made to hang on a wall, unlike subsequent works that sought the centrality of space.

At the same time, the artist was starting to move towards formal abstraction in pieces which, while they might retain echoes of recognisable objects, did not directly represent them. In fact, the use of macramé and natural jute distanced *Manto* from the earlier embroidered copes that had been the basis of her inquiries in churches and museums. Muñoz achieved an almost Franciscan simplicity in this work.

ISABEL TEJEDA MARTÍN

Teresa Lanceta (Barcelona, 1951)

14 *Tejido*, 1999 [Fabric, 1999], 1999

Woven wool and cotton. 250 x 150 cm
Colección Banco de España

The tapestry *Tejido*, 1999 [Fabric, 1999] is a product of Teresa Lanceta's extensive observation of the textile traditions of female weavers in the Moroccan Middle Atlas. More specifically, it was part of the second phase of this project, titled *Tejidos marroquíes* [Moroccan Fabrics], presented in the year 2000 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, where she was invited to work with Moroccan textile pieces from the Museu Etnològic in Barcelona, the Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie and Musée de l'Homme in Paris, and three private collections.

This piece is big enough to cover a body; there are no straight lines, and the threads have so many different colours that counting them poses quite a challenge. It is based on traditional motifs, but the composition celebrates disruption instead of following a rhythmic pattern. Weaving attuned to traditional ways of doing makes it possible to

discover and reflect on the lived experiences of production and their underlying practices. Lanceta suggests that forms are the outcome of these experiences, though not dissociated from their use and context. Weaving is a reading exercise, because it interprets the tensions held in the difficult task of collectively assembling a warp, recognising the curves that the structure creates in the design. What the untrained eye might see as a mistake, Lanceta views as the expression of the countless creative decisions that weavers make each day: the design emerges in the making, based on how those decisions respond

to the behaviour of the materials. We realise that the structure, the warp, is modified by a weft that embraces it at times and skips over it at others, and so we understand the tapestry beyond its consideration as a decorative element.

Woven fabric and the experience of weaving become known in conversation and in duration. That way, the language that accompanies it has time to materialise. In the course of the conversation held to write this entry, Lanceta decided that the untitled work would be called *Tejido*, 1999. ALEJANDRO SIMÓN



Antonio Pichillá Quiacaín

(San Pedro La Laguna, 1982)

15 *Kukulkan (serpiente emplumada)* [Kukulkan (Feathered Serpent)], 2017

Mahogany wood and wool yarn. 195 × 124 × 21 cm
Colección Banco de España

Antonio Pichillá made *Kukulkan (serpiente emplumada)* [Kukulkan (Feathered Serpent)] in 2017. The work is an aspiring textile, a feathered snake in a warp universe that is also the history of resistance of the peoples of Abya Yala. It is a visual voice from Tz'utujil Maya territory, reaching out to converse with the historically Other world, the contemporary West. The piece is mounted on a flat wooden structure with deliberate protrusions indicating where yarns and their paths meet and diverge. This work is a reinterpretation of the *q'inb'al* or warping board, an organising frame that was one of the first technologies developed by early human societies across the globe. According to David Marín, the warping board allowed people to weave different plant fibres into garments while also facilitating the development of biodiverse systems of agriculture, storage technology and complex forms of social organisation.

There is an intention behind this snake-shaped warping board that fills planes and corners. Its jagged, angular anatomy resignifies the representation of time, space, water and rain for the Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala. *Kukulkan* or *Q'uqumatz*, the snake bird, is not a satanic being. In the sixteenth century, in the part of the world now called the Americas, there was no antithesis to the Christian God, because God and Christianity arrived in those lands with the first Europeans. *Kukulkan* is not a deity, either. The thing is that, in the process of constructing the Other, the West mistakenly identified the Indigenous peoples as polytheistic. The Indigenous inhabitants of Abya Yala are not polytheists; they are communities who define and interact with life forms that differ from them in time, shape, structure, weight, etc. Therefore, to them, the plumed serpent *Kukulkan* is a different entity of life that tends to time, space, water and rain. Juan Xón, an *Aj q'ij K'iche'* (spiritual guide or keeper of days), defined it as a messenger who can teach us cunning and wisdom, because the serpent 'flies without wings, eats without hands, walks without feet' (1996). *Kan* (snake), another name *Kukulkan* goes by, is also

the guardian of fertility and the possibility of life in the *juyub'taq'aj* (mountains and valleys), for if water were not evaporated by the sun and returned to the land and air in the form of rain, wind, dew, lakes, clouds and sea, neither the smallest nor the largest creature on the face of the earth would be able to live.

This work has come to Madrid as a contemporary conceptual object, as a second presence, after the so-called *Madrid Codex* or *Tro-Cortesianus Codex* in which a serpent features prominently. *Kukulkan* is the snake bird that has come to resignify the history of a people, a *Kukulkan* that seeks to warp and weave words, thoughts, voices, silences, corners and colours in its determination to exist and to be. It is the beginning of a weaving, a metaphor for possibility.

The yarns arranged in the space of the warping board, the colours organised to become warp, yarns that need more yarns to be weft and meet at the *ri u k'ux* (conjunction) of the threads that will make sense of the weaving, which only the *q'inb'al* can give. *Kukulkan* by Antonio Pichillá is a fictional morphology of the warping board that is deformed and reformed in order to hold *q'in* (yarns) organised to become woven fabric.

The *q'inb'al* that holds the yarn serpent or *Kan* in its traditional shape represents the relationship between space/time and the Pleiades in the sky. Earth watches the warping board in the heavens while her peoples call it *Q'in* (Pleiades). It is also a metaphor for the memory and knowledge that remain dynamic when Antonio Pichillá represents them as the continuation of his relationship with his weaver-grandmother and the legacy she passed on to her descendants. 'Who were the weavers among the Tz'utujil? It was the men,' Pichillá muses. To weave, to upend the warping board, and to have a man weave is to redefine the historic status quo within Indigenous societies. For a man to take up the warping board, to weave, is a contemporary reality which defies the traditional notion that only women should set warps and weave. 'I am a man, I can set a warp, I can weave, I can create and recreate



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my grandmother's legacy by being present in a space established far away to continue weaving Tz'utujil Maya memory,' Pichillá says. *Kukulkan* is an encounter with memory to weave space/time through shapes and colours, a time and a people in perpetual resistance and motion to remain contemporary Tz'utujil Maya in the everyday global reality. MARÍA JACINTA XÓN RIQUIAC

ROOM B

INDOOR EXISTENCES: DRESSING ARCHITECTURE

**Real Fábrica de Tapices
Fábrica Nacional de Tapices
Geraert Peemans
Jacques Neilson
Urbanus Leyniers**

Historical Textiles in the Banco de España Collection

Antonio Sama

Some of the most remarkable pieces of historical heritage safeguarded by the Banco de España are textiles. Tapestries, carpets and armorial hangings attest to more than two centuries of history in which the decorative arts and architecture are interwoven with the bank's own evolution. This exhibition features historical carpets and tapestries chosen from a collection that is exceptional for both its chronological range and the exquisite quality of many of its pieces. The bank also owns a number of notable armorial hangings, which are closely related to the institution's corporate image and identity but have not been included in this show due to space constraints and the need for narrative consistency.

Despite coming from different traditions and serving distinct purposes, tapestries and carpets are both textile arts that have long held symbolic value, as their high production costs made them recognisable signs of power and wealth.

However, carpets have usually had far more functional connotations than tapestries, particularly in the West, where their practical utility as floor coverings took precedence over their aesthetic appeal. In contrast, with the dawn of the early modern era, tapestries ceased to be utilitarian and became one of the most prestigious luxury arts, used at European courts as the ultimate expression of opulence.

Javier Campano
Shareholders' Assembly
Hall, from the *Banco
de España Building*
series, 2000–2001.
Commissioned from
the artist in 2000



This history makes it easier to understand why tapestries were a relatively late addition to the Banco de España Collection. The bank's new headquarters in Calle de Alcalá, which opened in 1891, were designed to convey an image of 'quiet wealth', keeping decorative flourishes to a minimum and avoiding any hint of lavish excess. Period accounts praised the building for its elegant severity and total lack of ostentatious ornament. Carpets, on the other hand, have been part of the institution's daily life since the late eighteenth century.

Tapestries

The history of the Banco de España's tapestry collection began in 1934 and is intertwined with the history of the building. That year, the bank acquired an important Flemish series depicting the months of the year, woven in Brussels in the last third of the seventeenth century after designs by David Teniers III. The purchase—facilitated by the fact that family who owned them was winding up their banking firm, Bauer y



Governors' Boardroom,
2025

Compañía—marked the birth of a collection that was destined to become quite important in time. Those six hangings were acquired during the renovation of the Shareholders' Assembly Hall, whose faulty acoustics inspired the architect Juan de Zavala Lafora to use the tapestries as more than just decorative features. Thanks to the sound-absorbing properties of wool, those fabrics improved the acoustic conditions and played an important role in the solution devised for this room.

What made this case so unusual is that the tapestries actually ended up defining the architectural plan. Pilasters, light fixtures and hanging systems were all positioned and tailored to the requirements of the textile pieces. The changes Zavala made in 1934 and 1935 illustrate the degree to which these tapestries became the true centrepieces of the renovation project. The architect even researched the history of tapestries and traditional ways of displaying them, and he came to the conclusion that they should be hung instead of adopting the newer custom, introduced in the 1700s, of having them mounted on stretchers and framed. The result was an extraordinarily modern renovation that prefigured the *Muralnomad* concept formulated several decades later by Le Corbusier (who always wrote the word with a capital M).

The acquisition of *The Months* series opened the door to a newfound appreciation for tapestry at the bank. While the rich Flemish hangings in the Assembly Hall had successfully combined beauty, allegory and function, tapestries later came to be regarded as symbols of prestige and representation (although some also retained their allegorical value). In the decades that followed, the institution enriched its holdings through acquisitions on the art market and private offers, always relying on the advice of specialists and the directors of the Royal Tapestry Factory. Thanks to the bank's insistence on enlisting experts to examine the works and verify their authenticity and condition, it was able to build an exquisitely curated collection.

Spanning over four centuries of European tapestry-making, this collection is remarkable for its diverse origins. The Flemish weavings, made between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, trace the evolution of the great Brussels workshops during that period, from Renaissance classicism to Baroque ostentation and the Regency style. The series dedicated to biblical, historical or mythological themes highlight the importance of literature as a source of iconographic programmes, as well as the progressive rapprochement between tapestry and painting.

A notable set of French tapestries offers a particularly comprehensive picture of the principal manufactories that operated in Spain's neighbour to the north. The collection contains pieces linked to the Paris workshops of the first half of the seventeenth century, the great Royal Gobelins Manufactory, and various establishments in the Aubusson area. Indeed, one of the collection's most distinctive features is the presence of these French hangings, relatively uncommon in Spain due to the predominance of Flemish tapestries.

The Flemish and Belgian pieces clearly illustrate how tapestry aesthetics and display formats changed over four hundred years. We can see how the allegorical and floral borders of the 1500s gave way to architectural *trompes-l'oeil* in the following century and ended up imitating picture frames before disappearing for good in the late 1700s. The nineteenth-century French works perfectly embody a new idea of tapestry associated with the emerging bourgeois class. These 'woven



Alexandre de Comans,
*Odysseus at the Court of
Alcinous*, 1635–1650. Wool
and silk. Warp density:
70–80 threads/dm,
354 × 255 cm. Colección
Banco de España

paintings' had picture-like formats, lacked borders and were meant to be framed.

A special point of interest is the fact that some of these pieces once lined ceilings. Two large tapestry-woven carpets from the 1800s were later reused as textile ceiling panels in the Boardroom and the former Hall of the Forty, a highly unusual decision because of their size and the late date at which they were installed. Although there are precedents in some European buildings and homes, the adoption of this solution at the Banco de España is one of the most curious anecdotes from the collection's past, proving that tapestries can be integrated with architecture in many different ways.

Through the years, historical tapestries have played an increasingly important role within the institution and ultimately became prominent symbols of prestige and dignity. Even today, these richly storied textiles continue to grace its offices, conference rooms and stately halls, upholding the venerable tradition of treating architecture and tapestry as an indivisible whole.

Carpets

While tapestries were latecomers to the bank's collection, carpets have accompanied the institution practically from the beginning. The earliest recorded acquisitions date from the period when it was still called Banco Nacional de San Carlos, and since then these textiles have served two purposes: to protect and cover floors, and to indicate the relative status and importance of different areas.

Carpets are probably the most obvious expression of the 'quiet wealth' that has traditionally characterised the image of the Banco de España. Their presence was dictated by considerations of comfort as well as the need to make a visual statement. Halls, offices and rooms of varying importance were identified by carpets of diverse quality, establishing a veritable textile ranking inside the building.

The collection spans over two centuries in the art of carpet-making and documents changes in decorative tastes from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Many of the pieces were designed specifically for certain halls or offices, as part of decorative programmes tailored to their architectural settings. The Royal Tapestry Factory played a fundamental role in this history, frequently supplying and restoring numerous pieces for the bank, and its directors acted as advisers and expert consultants on textile-related matters for decades. This close relationship explains the presence of important pieces from the Madrid manufactory in the collection and attests to the continuity of an exceptionally accomplished textile craft tradition.

The main decorative trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are represented in the collection, from pieces inspired by Spanish Renaissance designs to recreations of Baroque themes and French compositions borrowed from eighteenth-century creations. The fascination with oriental carpets that defined the late 1800s and early 1900s is also



Examples of manufacturers' names woven into carpets: RFT, FNT, La Cartuja, Los Pontones and Gobelinos

represented by Turkish and Persian imports and local versions made at Spanish factories.

The expansion of the bank's headquarters overseen by José Yáñez Larrosa, which lasted from 1928 to 1936, was a particularly important moment in the collection's history. Records in the bank's historical archives allow us to reconstruct the competitions organised to commission new carpets and find information on many workshops and firms no longer in existence. They also reveal that the people in charge of those selection processes considered factors other than cost when they awarded contracts, evaluating the artistic merits of each design and whether it accurately reflected the relative importance of the space for which it was intended.

The variety of techniques, geographical origins and styles make this collection an invaluable record of the evolution of textile arts in Spain. The carpets in the bank's possession also offer insight into the close relationship that exists between these pieces and the spaces for which they were designed. Like the tapestries, they embody a combination of practical and representative values, artisanal tradition and decorative refinement. The Banco de España's collection of historical textiles is a truly significant part of Spain's historical heritage. Studying it enables us to trace the evolution of these decorative arts over more than two hundred years and understand how closely they are connected to the architecture and to the functional and symbolic needs of the institution.

Royal Tapestry Factory

16 *Carpet, 1861*

Knotted pile (Turkish or symmetrical knot). Warp: wool. Weft: wool. Pile: wool.
Knot density: 15 knots/dm². 1096 x 581 cm
Colección Banco de España

This is an excellent example of the magnificent carpets woven at the Royal Tapestry Factory during the reign of Queen Isabella II of Spain (1833–1868). Its composition reflects the eclectic influences that characterised the decorative arts of that period. The marks woven into the guard border, 'Real Fca d. Tapices MD 1861.' and 'Livinio Stuyck', confirm that this large rug was made at the royal manufactory near the very end of the queen's reign, when Livinio Stuyck y Martínez was its director.

The decorative pattern in the field is organised around several large mixtilinear medallions formed by enormous gold acanthus scrolls. The vivid sky blue behind the scrolls contrasts with the pristine white ground of the field, on which we see smaller blue scrolls framing colourful rose bouquets. Garlands of the same flowers form small medallions connecting the larger ones.

The border features a pattern of alternating lozenges and gold fleur-de-lis ornaments on a blue ground. This colour contrasts with the deep maroon inside the lozenges, which frame smaller gold ornaments. The squares at the corners contain rose garlands on a greenish-blue ground, and a guard border imitating light reddish jasper runs all round the edge.

The carpet is striking for its bright colours and a certain richness of pattern that is entirely consistent with nineteenth-century ornamental tastes. Some elements are borrowed from the Rococo (the large acanthus scrolls) and neoclassical

traditions (the rose bouquets and garlands), while the border, though apparently more typical of the Empire style, is even more reminiscent of elaborate Romantic painting frames and sets. This decorativist eclecticism is in the same vein as, for example, Amédée Couder's designs for the Aubusson factories, albeit with even greater classical restraint.

Number A_158 in the Banco de España Collection has an ordinary knot density (15 x 15 knots/dm²), but the subtle shading on the ornaments and flowers is truly outstanding, a testament to the skill of the weavers who made them. The remarkable intensity of the blues, pinks, greens and golds in certain areas of the carpet could only have been achieved by expert wool dyers working with natural dyes, which the Royal Tapestry Factory continued to use until around 1915. In other areas, however, that brilliance is absent and the colours are duller and more muted. This is because the rug we see today is the result of an enlargement effected well into the twentieth century. Fortunately, those responsible kept the two original ends, with the maker's marks woven along the top of one, and inserted a panel in the middle to increase the carpet's length by roughly one third. This added a central rose medallion to the pattern that was not there before.

The historical archives of the Royal Tapestry Factory contain a splendid sketch with one quarter of the design for what must have been this carpet's original format [p. 58]. ANTONIO SAMA



National Tapestry Factory

17 *Carpet, 1934*

Knotted pile (Turkish or symmetrical knot). Notes: Warp: cotton. Weft: jute.
Pile: wool. Knot density: 14 x 14/15 knots/dm². 424 x 395 cm
Colección Banco de España

This carpet is a reflection of the renewed interest in traditional design that characterised the early 1930s at what was then called the National Tapestry Factory. The marks woven along the top guard border—'FNT' on the left side and 'STUYCK = MADRID 1934' on the right—identify the place and date of manufacture. The design is certainly unique and possibly even exotic compared with the Madrid factory's standard repertoire. The layout follows the classic arrangement of a central medallion with decorative stems and floral elements in the field, framed by a wide border. However, the lines of the decorative

motifs are far from conventional. The pattern is so simple that it almost seems naïf, and the colours are completely flat, without any tonal variation.

If we examine the composition closely, we find that it is actually a simplified, updated version of the models Pierre-Josse Perrot created for the Savonnerie manufactory during the reign of Louis XV. Indeed, its design incorporates several typical elements of the ornamental vocabulary of French Rococo carpets. The pattern is a deliberate attempt to modernise the Rococo aesthetic by stylising or distilling eighteenth-century

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decorative motifs, so that elaborate acanthus scrolls are reduced to their simplest form.

The palette is confined to just six flat tones. The field alternates between two background colours, light blue and maroon, combined with the off-white of the scrolls and rosette, the taupe of the flowers and the Veronese green of the stems and fans. On the border, taupe and Veronese green are combined with a dark brown used on the ground and the guard border. Interestingly, this dark brown is a very distinctive and consistent feature of certain carpets made in the 1930s and 1940s.

The historical archives of the Royal Tapestry Factory (AHRFT) contain several sketches that are more or less related to this carpet. They all have a very similar design, although the colour scheme in each one is different. Based on different sources, the work can be credited to Faustino Álvarez Quintana, a draughtsman who made other sketches for the Zóbel's around the same time that were influenced by the Orphism of the Delaunays.

It should be noted that these drawings are very similar, in both pattern and palette, to Plate LIV in the catalogue of *Tejidos españoles anteriores a la introducción del Jacquard*, an exhibition organised by the Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte and held in Madrid in 1917. Simplified for production on pattern-weaving looms, this version of the French artist's designs for the Savonnerie manufactory was undoubtedly the direct source on which Faustino Álvarez based his own sketch. Styling the drawing made it easier for the artist and the directors of the National Tapestry Factory to distil historical styles as part of their mission to revamp modern carpet design.

The large number of similar sketches that have survived is a good indication that, despite its modernity, this creation was well received at a time when the avant-garde movements were already beginning to influence the Spanish cultural scene. ANTONIO SAMA

National Tapestry Factory

18 *Carpet, 1935*

Knotted pile (Turkish or symmetrical knot). Notes: Warp: wool. Weft: jute.
Pile: wool. Knot density: 19 x 18 knots/dm². 366 x 487 cm
Colección Banco de España

Marked with the initials of the National Tapestry Factory ('FNT') and the date of manufacture ('MD 1935'), this carpet can be considered a product of the historic manufactory's efforts to update its designs during the Second Spanish Republic.

In reality, the decorative programme follows pre-existing compositional patterns established for rugs in the neoclassical, Directoire and, above all, Empire styles. For instance, the three-part structure of the field, with a more elaborate central section, is a neoclassical feature, while the interplay of forms and the geometric compartmentalisation is more typical of Empire carpets. This compartmentalisation is evident in the formal typology of the lozenge set inside a square, with profuse decoration in the triangles formed by the corners.

The field is structured around a large central medallion (lozenge-shaped in this case) aligned

with two noticeably smaller ones which almost look like addenda to the first. Each medallion occupies one of three clearly differentiated sections into which the field is divided: a square space in the middle and two rectangular areas on either side. The square section, the principal and largest, frames the lozenge-shaped medallion, which has a large rosette in the centre and a border of tightly clustered floral garlands. The triangles formed by the corners of the square contain large pink arabesques of rosettes and acanthus scrolls set against a Veronese green ground. The other two rectangular sections are decorated with two symmetrical panels flanking the smaller medallions. These medallions each feature a geometric rosette, while the panels contain lozenges on a pink ground adorned with small rosettes and stems. Each compartment is separated and framed by very pale grey strips or borders, in striking contrast to the very dark

brown border. An atypical pattern of stems with large serrated leaves, tendrils and long-petalled flowers in light ochre grisaille stands out against that dark brown. A mottled guard border of predominantly brown and orange hues runs around the entire perimeter.

With the exception of the pattern in the main border, all ornamental motifs are standard for carpets from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: acanthus scrolls, rosettes, floral garlands, stems with laurel leaves, etc. Yet all of them, especially the large central rosette, denote a tendency to simplify or stylise visual language which echoes the simplification seen in modern carpets that reinterpret the Louis XV style. The most original feature or departure from historical precedent is undoubtedly the decorative

motif of the border, with its atypical and wholly untraditional formal design and its iconic novelty. Remarkably, the tips of the flowers extend beyond the main border and invade the guard border, creating an unusual three-dimensional or textured effect.

The carpet was woven using the Turkish knot with a fine or medium-fine knot density (19 x 18 knots/dm²), which would have permitted a more nuanced use of colour and form; however, the author made the artistic decision to flatten the design as a way of modernising ornamental language. As this piece was made in 1935, it makes sense to attribute its design to Faustino Álvarez or one of the draughtsmen who worked with him, such as Julián Casado

ANTONIO SAMA



The Months tapestries

The six tapestries dedicated to the months of the year in the Banco de España Collection are a perfect example of how the poignant theme of *vanitas* was reconciled with Baroque symbolic culture in the Flemish tapestry industry of the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Indeed, in the series designed by David Teniers III, an obsession with the passage of time converges with emblems and moral allegories to compose an iconographic programme based on Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, although it may also have been influenced by the astrological beliefs so in vogue at the time. After the medieval period, humanist courts had taken a renewed interest in astrology, giving rise to complex allegorical horoscopes based on zodiac signs. Later, during the war-torn seventeenth century, astrology became increasingly enmeshed with meditations on human nature and the good governance of society. This prompted the creation of tapestry series like *The Planets*, after cartoons by Antoon Sallaert, and *The Life of Man*, in which allegories contained moral lessons and expressed ethical concerns.

This is the critical and artistic context in which *The Months* were created, where images, according to Ripa, served as metaphors for 'things which are without a person' and 'those things which are joined therewith, and which in reality are called Essential', as well as all 'virtue or vice, or all things which have with them of those things some equality'.

Ripa's *Iconologia*, a genuine dictionary of emblems, was a fundamental source for the composition of these woven metaphors. Their most immediate precedent is *Allegory of Time*, a series that Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria commissioned from his court painter, Jan van den Hoecke, around 1647. Woven in Brussels by Everaert Leyniers III and Gillis van Habbeke, those tapestries featured a complex time-themed iconographic programme consisting of the months, day and night, the elements and the seasons. Their innovative compositions,

which replaced the conventional border with a classical architectural frame covered in garlands and allegorical figures, had a decisive influence on later Flemish tapestries. In fact, they were the model used by David Teniers III when making the cartoons of the series woven by Geraert Peemans to which the Banco de España tapestries belong. The painter even added his signature to several of the hangings, expressly claiming authorship of the designs: 'D. TENIERS. IVNIOR. INVE. PI.X.'

Though inspired by Van den Hoecke's earlier work, Teniers's compositions present a number of significant and novel differences. For one thing, they are brighter, and he opened up the architectural frame to make more room for the landscape. Teniers kept the winged personifications of the months, intended to represent the inexorable passage of time in the iconographic tradition described by Cesare Ripa, but made one innovative addition: the scenes in the background depict the agricultural labours associated with each time of year. These genre scenes, in the signature 'Teniers' style, were enormously popular in both paintings and tapestries towards the end of the seventeenth century and for much of the eighteenth. David Teniers III was thus able to successfully combine the medieval 'labours of the months' tradition with the new allegorical models developed in the Baroque period, simultaneously incorporating international classicism and a distinctly Flemish pictorial language.

The workshop where the series was woven is no mystery, as every piece has a maker's mark: 'G. PEEMANS' on five of them and 'GEERAET PEEMANS' on the sixth (*November and December*). Both point to Geraert Peemans, a weaver active in Brussels, as confirmed by the two Bs woven into the bottom selvedge of each hanging. The fine workmanship of these tapestries tells us that Peemans had a team of master weavers who were able to transpose the younger Teniers's delicate paintings onto a loom with

extraordinary results. The abundance of metal threads enhances the luxury and prestige of this series, intended to glorify the client's noble bloodline.

Thanks to the research conducted by various scholars, the iconographic singularities of the hangings and the records in the Banco de España archives, it has been possible to reconstruct the history of *The Months* with considerable confidence.

Documentary sources indicate that the Duke of Villahermosa commissioned the series. A letter written by a tapestry merchant in 1679 mentions that Geraert Peemans's workshop was weaving 'a lovely tapestry set for the Duke of Villahermosa' with Teniers's twelve months divided among six hangings. He also indicated that this was the second time the series had been made, as an earlier edition was woven for the Duke of Pastrana. Those tapestries have been identified as the ones currently owned by the Banco de España, in part because the names of the cartoonist and weaver match, but also because of the heraldic devices on each piece. The coat of arms is that of the city of Mons, capital of Hainaut, in whose liberation the Duke of Villahermosa played a decisive role in 1678. The Latin inscription around the shield specifically references that military victory.

This evidence confirms that the set was commissioned by Carlos de Aragón de Gurrea y Borja (1634–1692), 9th Duke of Villahermosa, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, viceroy of Catalonia and state councillor to King Charles II. He probably ordered it shortly after being made a knight in the Order of the Golden Fleece, a distinction that explains the highly representative nature of the series.

Additional research has shown that the commission involved more than the six *Months* hangings. Various tapestries dedicated to Day, Night and similar allegorical themes in other

Spanish collections reveal that the Banco de España set was originally part of a larger cycle, again inspired by Jan van den Hoecke's designs for the *Allegory of Time*. This confirms that David Teniers III adapted not only the depictions of the months but the entire iconographic programme created for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm decades earlier.

After the 9th Duke of Villahermosa died without issue, the series went to the Duke and Duchess of Ayerbe and was later dispersed. The six tapestries of *The Months* ended up in the collection of the Bauer family, who hung them in their palatial home in Calle San Bernardo, Madrid, as period photographs show.

A new chapter began in the early 1930s that culminated in the addition of this series to the Banco de España's holdings. When the Bauer banking firm was being voluntarily wound-up, the liquidation committee offered the governor of the bank a 'splendid collection of Flemish tapestries' woven by Geraert Peemans after cartoons by Teniers. After a period of negotiation, on 4 May 1934 the General Council approved their purchase for 400,000 pesetas. A few weeks later, it authorised the payment and necessary measures to preserve them until they could be installed in the Assembly Hall, which was being remodelled at the time.

The extraordinary quality of the pieces and their eminent suitability to the decorative programme of the new Assembly Hall were two very good reasons for this acquisition, which prevented the dispersion of one of the most important groups of seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries. Today, there are only two complete sets of *The Months* woven by Geraert Peemans after David Teniers III's designs: one is at Prague Castle, and the other belongs to the Banco de España. ANTONIO SAMA

Geraert Peemans

(Active Brussels, c. 1660–c. 1710)

19 After designs by David Teniers III *The Months series, c. 1679*

Wool, silk and metal-thread wefts. Warp density: 80–90 threads/dm

6 tapestries. 418 x 476 cm each

Colección Banco de España

The set of tapestries dedicated to the months of the year in the Banco de España Collection is a perfect example of how the poignant theme of *vanitas* was reconciled with Baroque symbolic culture in the Flemish tapestry industry of the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Indeed, in the series designed by David Teniers III, an obsession with the passage of time converges with emblems and moral allegories to compose an iconographic programme based on Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, although it may also have been influenced by the astrological beliefs that were widespread at the time. After the medieval period, humanist courts had taken a renewed interest in astrology, giving rise to complex allegorical programmes based on zodiac signs.

The tapestries of *The Months* are products of this cultural context, in which images (according to Ripa) represented the virtues, vices and fundamental traits of human beings. The Italian essayist's work, a veritable dictionary of symbolism, was an invaluable source when composing these woven metaphors, in which allegory is used to convey moral messages and ethical concerns.

The compositions of David Teniers III introduced significant novelties not found in earlier models. The new scenes are brighter, with a wider architectural frame that leaves more room for the landscape. The personifications of the months are similar and all winged to signify the inexorable advance of time, an iconographic device that Cesare Ripa borrowed from Petrarch. However, the principal innovation was the introduction of background scenes that depict the labours and fieldwork associated with each season and month of the year. They are genre scenes in the signature 'Teniers' style, which was immensely popular in paintings and tapestries

from the late seventeenth century until well into the eighteenth.

David Teniers III was thus able to successfully combine the custom of medieval 'labours of the months' with new iconographic models developed to represent the months and with different figurative traditions, from international classicism to the specific idiom of Flemish painting. The Banco de España series was woven at the Brussels workshop of Geraert Peemans, whose signature appears on every hanging. The abundance of metal thread confirms that these tapestries were luxurious prestige items.

Scholarly research and extant records have made it possible to reconstruct the history of the series with considerable confidence. Originally commissioned by the 9th Duke of Villahermosa, it later passed through the hands of several aristocratic owners before ending up with the Bauer family. The hangings graced their palatial residence in Madrid's Calle San Bernardo for decades.

A new chapter, beginning in the first third of the twentieth century, ended with the acquisition of the pieces by the Banco de España [pp. 62–63]. In 1934, the General Council authorised the purchase of the six tapestries and all measures necessary to preserve them 'until they can be installed in the Assembly Hall'. The quality of the set and the intention of using them to embellish that space, which was being remodelled at the time, convinced the bank to acquire a series that had also been offered to other collectors. Like so many other large tapestry cycles throughout history, these pieces were displayed as symbols of prestige, but they also served the practical purposes of furnishing and insulating the room and improving its acoustics. ANTONIO SAMA



19



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Jacques Neilson

(Edinburgh [?], 1714–Paris, 1788)

20 **Royal Gobelins Manufactory, Paris,**
after a design by Antoine Coypel
***Susannah Accused of Adultery*, from the**
***Old Testament series*, 1751–1781**

Wool and silk. Warp density: 80 threads/dm. 400 x 570 cm
Colección Banco de España

In a monumental architectural setting defined by massive columns and wide arcades opening onto a garden, we see a group of gesticulating figures. They have come to witness the trial of the chaste Susannah, a biblical story narrated in Daniel 13 and set in the city of Babylon. In the centre of the composition we see the lovely Jewish woman, dressed in spotless white and with her face uncovered, as the elders judging her have demanded. Her daughter clings to her in desperation. Two of the bearded judges theatrically point at the woman they are accusing of adultery. On the left side of the composition,

another elder rends his garments, while an obviously pained couple stands in front of him. The woman is trying to restrain the man as he reaches out to touch Susannah: it is Hilkiah, father of the accused. In the foreground, a woman seated on the floor wipes away tears while holding her child on her lap. In front of her, a boy accompanied by a dog tugs on the robe of his mother, who is standing among the accusers and glaring at Susannah.

The theatrical, extravagant hanging is a perfect example of the pictorial style of its author, Antoine Coypel, and of the new concept of



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tapestry that Gobelins began to explore in the late seventeenth century. Part of a family of artists with close ties to the French court, Coypel helped to consolidate a transitional style in court art that evolved from the Baroque classicism of Charles Le Brun towards a more theatrical expression and more literary visuality.

We know Coypel unveiled his oil painting *Susannah Accused of Adultery*, now in the Museo Nacional del Prado, at the Paris Salon. This and other paintings on biblical themes were so successful that the Royal Gobelins Manufactory decided to make a series of eight tapestries depicting episodes from the Old Testament. The cartoon for the tapestry was delivered in 1712 under the title *L'Accusation de la chaste Suzanna*, and work on the *editio princeps* of the series began in 1711 under the supervision of master weaver Jean Jans the Younger.

Several more editions followed. The third, when Jacques Neilson took over production of the *Old Testament* series, and subsequent editions used a different border than the first two. The design reflects a desire to imitate the carved and gilt frame of a painting, with simpler decoration than

the first version. The corners of the frame feature carved fleurs-de-lis, symbols of the French monarchy, and the same motif appears in the central cartouche on the top border. The cartouche on the bottom contains an inscription identifying the subject of the tapestry: 'Susanne'.

This way of framing the picture, combined with the fact that Antoine Coypel's paintings were not initially conceived as cartoons, illustrates the novel idea that gained traction at the Gobelins manufactory after Louvois was appointed *surintendant des Bâtiments du Roi* in 1683: tapestries as 'woven paintings'.

Several of the pieces woven by Neilson after Antoine Coypel's designs have survived to the present day. The Banco de España tapestry may belong to the third edition, Neilson's first, made between 6 March 1754 and 4 June 1757.

ANTONIO SAMA

Urbanus Leyniers (Brussels, 1674–1747)

21 After a design by Augustin Coppins and Victor Janssens (Brussels) *Cimon's Battle, from the Plutarch's Famous Men series, 1729–1745*

Wool and silk. Warp density: 80–90 threads/dm. 354 x 651 cm
Colección Banco de España

This tapestry has all the epic monumentality of the great battle scenes woven at Brussels workshops during the eighteenth century. It depicts a pitched battle, presumably the one fought at the mouth of the River Eurymedon between the Persians and the Delian League led by Cimon of Athens. The main source of information about this battle is Plutarch's 'Life of Cimon' in his *Parallel Lives*. The Greek biographer says that Cimon defeated the Persians twice in one day: first in a naval battle, and immediately afterwards on land. The tapestry shows the moment when the Persian soldiers are starting to retreat before the Greek advance spearheaded by Cimon, who is

pictured in the centre astride a spirited steed. The confrontation is set against a landscape where, on the far left, we can make out a distant battle scene and beyond it what looks like a river mouth, probably a reference to the Eurymedon. On the opposite side we see clustered buildings, perhaps meant to represent a Pamphylian city near the battle site.

The tapestry's border is an effective imitation of a picture frame with carved and gilded ovolo moulding, very typical of the 'painterly tapestry' style that became widely popular in the eighteenth century. In the lower right corner of the field, the weaver's mark 'V.LEYNIERS' identifies

Urbanus Leyniers, a prominent representative of the Brussels dyeing and tapestry-making industry.

The thematic series to which this tapestry belongs was immensely successful in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was initially called *Greek Histories*, but later documents referred to the set as *Plutarch's Famous Men* or *Plutarch's Histories* because the subjects were based on the Greek writer's work.

The earliest written record of the series, from 1711, is an order received by the painter Victor Honorius Janssens for six cartoons on different themes from Greek history. More subjects were added over time, and the edition completed in 1734 had a total of eleven different compositions.

Victor Honorius Janssens was a Brussels painter known for his emphatic and monumental classicism. On several occasions in the course of his career, he worked for the Brussels manufactories as a supplier of cartoons and pictorial models,

a role in which he was assisted by Augustin Coppens, primarily identified as a landscape painter. Under the terms of the contract signed between the Leyniers, Reydam and Janssens in 1711, Janssens agreed to have Coppens do the landscapes of the cartoons; the entrepreneurial weavers wanted to be sure that their works would have the Arcadian backdrops and countrysides for which this painter was known. The technical prowess of these Brussels workshops and the artistic quality of Janssens and Coppens's designs were both instrumental in making the series a success, and numerous related tapestries are still in existence today. One similar to the Banco de España piece found its way into the Matsukata collection and is now at the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, and another is preserved at the Designmuseum Danmark in Copenhagen. ANTONIO SAMA



The origins of the Textile Collection

These documents survey nearly a century and a half of the history of carpets at the Banco de España. The first is an invoice from 1782 documenting the purchase of a carpet from the Royal Tapestry Factory by the Banco Nacional de San Carlos for its headquarters in the Madrid palace of the Count of Sástago. In addition to recording a sale, the document attests to the early importance attached to these textiles as institutional status symbols. The fact that the carpet was bought from the royal manufactory is indicative of a determination to display the decorum and prestige befitting a newly established national bank while also creating a comfortable working environment. An exceptional twentieth-century drawing held at the Royal Tapestry Factory shows the design for one of the collection's largest carpets.

The *Catálogo de la Exposición de Alfombras Antiguas Españolas*, published in 1933 by the

Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte, reflects a decisive moment in the revival and study of Spain's carpet-making tradition. Edited by José Ferrandis, this catalogue of an exhibition of antique Spanish carpets became an invaluable source for bringing back historical models in the decades that followed. Even the Banco de España was not immune to its influence: the cover, featuring a 'Toledo brocade' pattern, inspired the design of a carpet in the bank's collection, which even replicated its distinctive colour scheme.

Together, these documents point to an unbroken bond between the Banco de España and Spanish textile tradition. From the first acquisitions in the eighteenth century to the revival of historical designs in the twentieth, carpets have served the bank's practical needs while also playing an active part in shaping its image and identity.

BANCO DE ESPAÑA HERITAGE AND COLLECTIONS DIVISION



Cuenta General de las obras, muebles y adornos para el establecimiento del Banco Nacional de San Carlos en la casa del conde de Sástago
[General account of the works, furnishings and decorations for the establishment of the Banco Nacional de San Carlos in the residence of the Count of Sástago]

31 October 1783

Manuscript. Two-leaf booklet. Ink on paper

29,4 x 21 cm (closed); 29,4 x 41,7 cm (open)

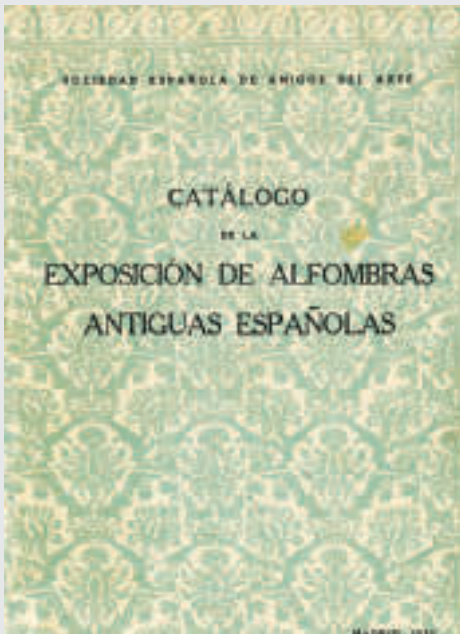
Archivo Histórico del Banco de España. Secretaría, C. 1124



Attributed to Julio Casilda Crespo
(1912–1981)

Carpet design inspired by nineteenth-century models,
second third of the 20th century

Watercolour, gouache, ink and blue pencil on card
53,3 x 43,1 cm
Royal Tapestry Factory (552 ALF)



José Ferrandis
(Cocentaina, Alicante, 1900–Madrid, 1948)

Catálogo de la Exposición de Alfombras Antiguas Españolas
Madrid, Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte, 1933

Colección Bibliográfica del Banco de España

DISPLAY CASES

Carpets and Their Spatial Function

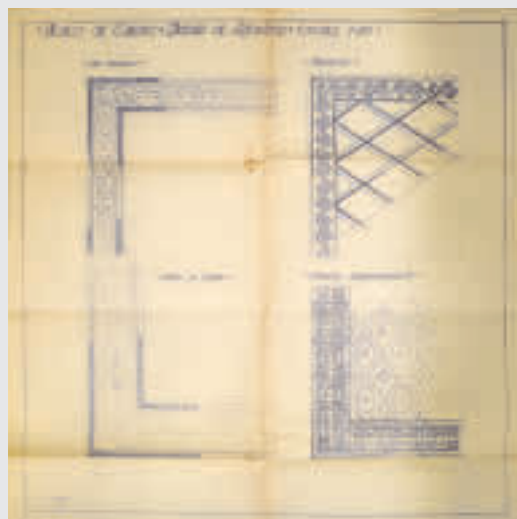
From sketches to built environments, the items in this section shed light on the role that carpets played in the architectural conception of the Banco de España. The drawings made by José Yárnoz (the architect behind the enlargement inaugurated in 1936) for the 1935 competition to select a carpet supplier show the extent to which these textiles were built into the design of the new spaces. The architect gave specific indications regarding their layout, ornament, wool quality and colour gradations, even requiring that each carpet be woven in one piece, in order to achieve a seamless integration of architecture, furniture and decoration.

The photographs taken by Antonio de Zárraga to mark the grand opening of the new and improved headquarters show how those ideas soon became reality in different rooms. In addition to documenting the new architecture, his lens captured the interiors in all their complexity: the angles at which he photographed

halls, offices and conference rooms were chosen to give the carpets pride of place. Rather than accessory elements, they are portrayed as an integral part of each room's visual identity, delimiting representative areas, organising the furniture and helping to create the atmosphere of quiet wealth that was the bank's historical hallmark.

These images also constitute exceptional visual records of how the carpets were used before the building was transformed in later years. We can see the wide variety of models conceived to suit different purposes and spaces, as well as the close relationship between the textile designs and their architectural settings. Viewed alongside Yárnoz's sketch, these photographs reveal a complete journey, from paper design to everyday life at the institution, confirming that these carpets were conceived as an essential part of the Banco de España's image and prestige.

BANCO DE ESPAÑA HERITAGE AND COLLECTIONS DIVISION



José Yárnoz Larrosa

(Pamplona, 1884–Madrid, 1966)

Detail of carpets for the office of the second deputy governor (anteroom, waiting room, private area and office), 1935

Blueprint. 1:20 scale. 48 x 47,7 cm

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España.

Administración y Obras, Conservaduría, C. 5



Antonio de Zárrega

(Madrid, 1885–Ciudad de México, 1957)

Photographs taken for the book *El Banco de España: información gráfica*

Madrid: Asociación General de Empleados del Banco de España, 1936

Left to right: Panoramic view of the conference room, View of office, View of assembly hall, View of office waiting room and hall, View of hall, View of hall, View of hall, View of hall, View of office waiting room and hall

Silver gelatin print on baryta paper. Vintage copies. 16,4 x 23 cm

AGUN. Fondo José Yárnoz Larrosa

The Tapestries That Silenced the Echoes: Renovating and Remembering the Shareholders' Assembly Hall

The former Shareholders' Assembly Hall was one of the most iconic rooms in the Banco de España's original building, constructed by Eduardo de Adaro between 1883 and 1891. Located on the first floor, it was designed as a solemn setting for annual shareholders' meetings, and its architecture and decor were meant to reflect the bank's prestige, stability and robustness. The elongated floor plan, cavernous interior, presidential dais and Francisco Molinelli's rich sculptural decoration worked together to create a space that was highly symbolic, although it also had significant functional issues.

The first major renovation was carried out in the 1930s, coinciding with the final phase of the bank's expansion led by José Yáñez Larrosa between 1928 and 1936. Outwardly, the expansion respected Adaro's original architectural language, but the interior was given a more modern, practical makeover. This new architectural spirit also influenced the decision to update some of the spaces in the original building, including the Assembly Hall, although the primary reason for overhauling this room was the need to fix its terrible acoustics. The hall was so high and so deep that it acted like a genuine 'echo chamber', making it difficult to hear anything at meetings.

In 1933, the bank began inviting architects associated with the institution—Luis Menéndez Pidal, Romualdo de Madariaga, José Yáñez Larrosa and Juan de Zavala—to submit proposals. Some were ruled out as too costly and ambitious, with plans that even called for the incorporation of adjoining rooms. The most viable plans focused on reducing the hall's cubic volume and using sound-absorbing materials to muffle the echo. The idea of lining the walls with tapestries was especially significant, as an effective acoustic solution that simultaneously introduced a new decorative approach.

In 1934, the bank acquired six Flemish tapestries—belonging to *The Months*, a series woven

by Geraert Peemans after compositions by David Teniers III—from the Bauer family, a decisive step towards defining the new Assembly Hall. The purchase, approved once experts had assessed and confirmed their artistic quality and condition, was not a mere decorative addition: the tapestries were incorporated in the remodel and assigned a vital role in the visual and functional reorganisation of the room. Thanks to their size and material substance, these pieces were able to transform the walls into sound-absorbent surfaces, silencing echoes while also giving the hall an impressive new image.

In the end, the bank decided to go with Juan de Zavala's proposal, which he had submitted in 1934 and modified to accommodate the tapestries in 1935. The ceiling was lowered by installing a cylindrical vault, which brought the height down from 14 to 11.5 metres and significantly reduced the interior volume. A semi-dome was placed over the dais to project sound towards the back of the hall, and the flooring was replaced with a noise-reducing material. The arrangement of the tapestries was studied very carefully: walls and pilasters had to be repositioned for a new design that revolved around the hangings.

The renovation work, concluded in 1936, improved the acoustics and dramatically altered the perception of the former Assembly Hall. The tapestries served the practical purpose of helping to solve the acoustic problem, but also a symbolic one, giving the bank a fresh institutional image that reflected its modernisation in the 1930s. From a heritage perspective, however, the renovation came at a high cost, as it completely eliminated Molinelli's original sculptural decoration. Even so, the intervention shows how a practical requirement ended up reshaping the architecture, memory and representative nature of one of the most remarkable rooms at the Banco de España. ELENA SERRANO GARCÍA



Juan de Zavala Lafora

(Pamplona, 1902–Madrid, 1970)

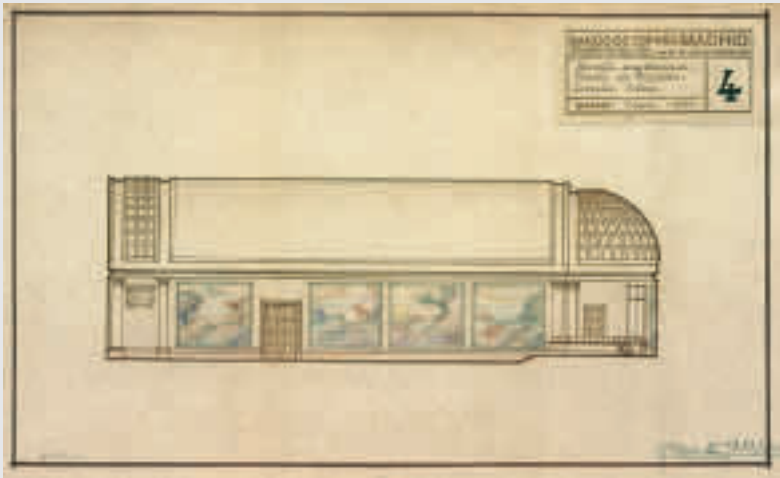
Design report on the renovation project for the Shareholders' Assembly Hall. Drawing showing the arrangement of the tapestries. Madrid, December 1934

Pencil and black and red ink on paper and typescript

33,1 x 24,5 cm

Administración y Obras. Madrid. C. 73

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España



Juan de Zavala Lafora

(Pamplona, 1902–Madrid, 1970)

Renovation project for the Shareholders' Assembly Hall.

Longitudinal section. Wall with tapestries. Madrid, January 1935

Ochre ink and coloured pencil on paper. 31 x 50,5 cm

Colección de Planos de Arquitectura, sig. 81, 11, 4

Archivo Histórico del Banco de España



Antonio de Zárraga

(Madrid, 1885–Ciudad de México, 1957)

View of the Shareholders' Assembly Hall.

Photograph taken for the book *El Banco de España: información gráfica*

Madrid: Asociación General de Empleados del Banco de España, 1936

Silver gelatin print on baryta paper. Vintage copy. 16,4 x 23 cm

AGUN. Fondo José Yárnoz Larrosa

ROOM C & E

TIMES, NARRATIVES AND ECONOMIES OF VALUE

**Andreas Maria Fohr
Dora García
Manuel Chavajay
Patricia Esquivias
Mercedes Azpilicueta**

Andreas Maria Fohr
(Freiburg, 1966)

22 *Eingänge/Ausgänge* [Income/Outcome], 2022

Vintage wooden box, ceramic, 12 Zeitnoten (time notes) stitched on fabric, photograph and printed text. 25,5 cm x 16 cm x 8 cm; 22 cm, ø 3 cm; 12 cm x 19 cm; 21,4 cm x 14,3 cm
Colección Banco de España

Eingänge/Ausgänge [Income/Outcome] is part of a long-term working process called *Sewing and Naming* in which the artist explores sewing as material and as a conceptual pursuit. This work reflects on the construction of value in connection with the economy of time, 'subaltern' activities and the complex notion of abstraction. At the intersection of artistic practice and labour, it explores how normally invisible or marginal acts become comprehensible as forms of value production and social interaction.

From a formal perspective, the work consists of a wooden box with four 'occupants': a photograph, a ceramic 'key', a printed text and twelve time notes (promissory notes with a specified date of repayment). The container is an early twentieth-century cash box obtained from a textile retailer in the Black Forest. As a historical artefact, it evokes accounting methods, circulation, storage and change. It is a repository and a threshold, a place where values and valuables are entered, accumulated and transformed. The

central elements, twelve time notes sewn on cloth, reflect the material inscription of labour time. Conceived as interrelated fragments, they offer a reflection on incoming and outgoing processes, production and circulation. Their shapes allude to both monetary instruments and labour records, attempting to symbolically superimpose use value and exchange value. While the money indirectly represents labour, the time notes are a visible expression of the expenditure of time from which value emerges.

This gesture touches on a fundamental contradiction that Karl Marx identified. In capitalism, concrete labour must be transformed into abstract labour in order to enter into relations of exchange. Time is detached from lived experience and reappears as an equivalent measure capable of organising production and exchange. The piece thus raises an interesting question: can the traces of labour ever be fully recovered, or does every attempt to do so remain trapped inside the very systems it is trying to expose?

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Sewing becomes the place where this tension is manifested. Every stitch represents an interval of time, a gesture and an expenditure of energy. The sewing combines the material trace and the record of time, oscillating between singular experience and generalised equivalence.

The photograph shows Eduard von der Heydt (1882–1964) inside his bank vault. This banker, collector and owner of Monte Verità seems to be gazing at the time notes, playing an ambiguous role somewhere between guard and supervisor. The image introduces a figure of financial abstraction in a work based on material labour, creating tension between the spheres of production and circulation. By invoking this historical context, the work becomes the latest in a long line of attempts to rethink the relationship between labour, community and exchange outside the prevailing economic frameworks.

Rather than illustrating labour, the stitched forms follow a logic of relation, accumulation and inscription. Their abstraction is materialist rather than formalist, a product of the conditions in which they were made and the social relationships sedimented within them. Sewing is therefore neither an ornamental gesture nor a symbolic motif but a material practice that expresses the relationship between activity, time and value. Through repetition and duration, the piece turns sewing into a means of investigating how actions become social facts and how value is embodied in material forms. As part of a materialist practice, these stitches point towards forms of interaction that defy quantification yet remain grounded in the realities of labour and time.

ANDREAS MARIA FOHR

Dora García
(Valladolid, 1965)

**23 *Manos que dan, manos que reciben (seis tapices para el Salón de Cobradores del Banco de España)*
[Giving Hands, Receiving Hands (six tapestries for the Banco de España's Collection Hall)], 2025**

100% virgin wool and 100% cotton. Manual tufting
350 x 350 cm (4 tapestries); 350 x 140 cm (2 tapestries)
Commissioned from the artist in 2025
Colección Banco de España

The proposal to create six tapestries for the Banco de España's Collection Hall was partly motivated by the need to improve the acoustics of that room: sound waves bounced off the architectural surfaces, creating echoes and noise pollution that would disrupt the meetings and assemblies held there. These artisanal virgin wool tapestries were intended to prevent this reverberation and absorb unwanted noise. Once installed, the six pieces proved to have excellent acoustic properties thanks to the technique (manual tufting) and materials (natural fibres, virgin wool) used to make them. Virgin wool is highly sound-absorbent because its dense, fibrous structure traps and dissipates sound waves, reducing echoes, impact sounds and airborne noise. As a naturally flame-resistant material, it also meets all fire safety requirements for public or semi-public spaces.

The iconography of the tapestries revolves around the acts of giving and receiving, interactions between a hand and an object or the absence of that object, and the 'invisible hand' metaphor inspired by the philosopher Adam Smith, which refers to the incentives that the free market creates so that people, acting out of self-interest, unintentionally end up serving the common good and public interest. For example, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith discusses the hypothetical case in which all wealth is concentrated in the hands of a single person, who squanders that wealth and, in doing so (perhaps even to his dismay), redistributes it by employing others. Even more famous is the idea he developed in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776): that every individual, in the pursuit of self-interest, is guided by an invisible hand which causes that interest



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to benefit the general welfare and economic efficiency of society. It can also be interpreted the other way round: Bishop Joseph Butler believed that seeking the common good is the best way of advancing one's own happiness.

Other commentators on Smith, like Noam Chomsky and John D. Bishop, have pointed out the flaws in his theory, arguing that the interests of those who accumulate capital and those of society at large are always different and often irreconcilable, and that, far from being beneficial, an unregulated market is actually highly detrimental to the common good and, ultimately, to capital accumulators themselves.

In any case, the image of the hand is associated with capital and the circulation of money. One hand giving and another receiving, a transaction, value changing hands, the object of desire—the coin that is shown, the hand reaching for something it desires, and which it is given. But is giving even possible? Can anyone give without

immediately entering a circle of exchange that turns the gift into a debt which must be repaid? This question led Jacques Derrida to posit an irresolvable paradox: in order for a gift to be received as a gift, it cannot appear as such, because the mere appearance as gift pulls it into the cycle of repayment and debt.

Derrida's analysis was guided by a short story by Charles Baudelaire titled 'Counterfeit Money' (1869). In any event, value is created not in the thing but in the social relationship of credit and debt between two parties. No form of money has intrinsic positive value. Value is only created in the act of giving and receiving, of requesting and granting. This is the inspiration behind the forms on these tapestries, lines drawn freehand on monochrome surfaces whose colours were taken from the Collection Hall's original glazed tiles. They are giving and receiving hands, petitioning and granting hands, hands that show and reach for the shown. DORA GARCÍA

24 *Dismembered (hand with coin)*, 2021

Sketchbook with 1 original drawing and blank pages and a 925 sterling silver coin plated in 18-carat gold.
Sketchbook: 25 x 44.5 x 6.5 cm (open); 25 x 35 x 1 cm (closed).
Coin: Ø 30 mm x 2 mm
Colección Banco de España

Dora García's conceptual practice is permeated by a constant tension between narrative and reality, using fiction as a tool to expose the limits of our ability to apprehend the real. With a substantial literary and performative dimension, her work draws on narrative devices that reveal our need to make sense of things as well as the impossibility of ever fully satisfying that need. In this respect, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory has had a decisive influence on the artist's career: the idea of the subject's constitutive lack translates into works that activate viewers, confronting us with the inevitably partial mechanisms with which we try to interpret our experience.

A case in point is *Dismembered (hand with coin)*, which consists of a sketchbook with a single drawing of a hand holding a 925 sterling silver

coin plated in 18-carat gold. This piece, acquired by the Banco de España in 2021, is linked to the set of tapestries that Dora García made for the bank's Collection Hall, where the imagery of the hand also features prominently.

Dismembered (hand with coin) contains an explicit reference to the Lacanian concept of *objet petit a*, that which induces desire but never truly satisfies it. The coin held in the hand is a symbol of economic value, but it is also an embodiment of that constant displacement of desire, functioning as something that seems to fill a gap or assuage an anxiety even though that gap or anxiety does not actually disappear.

At the same time, the depiction of an isolated hand and the title of the piece invite a Lacanian interpretation related to the notion of

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the fragmented body, i.e. a loss constitutive of the subject. In *Dismembered (hand with coin)*, the body is incomplete, reduced to a single hand suffering from a lack that cannot be remedied. The image also recalls Christian iconographic tradition and hagiographic depictions of martyrs in which eyes, heads or other body parts appear as independent fragments. In García's work, the hand holding the coin makes the separation visible, situating desire in that precise gap between the severed body and the object that tries, and fails, to fill the lack.

The gold-plated coin included in this piece bears the likeness of the Mexica goddess Coyolxauhqui. According to pre-Hispanic myths, this deity was butchered by her brother Huitzilopochtli, so her fragmented body introduces an explicit figurative allusion to dismemberment.

In addition to the Lacanian notion of the fragmented body, the piece also references a more specific historical record, eliciting shared memories of the violence inflicted on bodies, particularly women's bodies. Dismemberment thus ceases to be an exclusively psychoanalytical category and becomes part of an art-historical tradition in which depictions of violence against women reflect structures of patriarchal domination and oppression. From this perspective, the work invites a feminist reading that points directly to femicide. As in some of her other pieces, here García brings us face-to-face with our own complicity in the systems of desire, representation and violence that structure our world. CLARA DERRAC

Manuel Chavajay (San Pedro La Laguna, 1982)

25 *Untitled, from the K'o q'ij ne t'i'lto' ja juyu' t'aq'aaj series, 2019*

Burnt marine and automotive engine oil, watercolour and embroidery on cotton rag paper. 159,5 x 106,5 cm
Colección Banco de España

Manuel Chavajay pauses moments of everyday life in his works. His series are continued images of those halted instants. Every element in the series he makes has an assigned role that complements the one before or after it. Every piece is a captured moment of an ordinary day; a moment never has the same colour, temperature, composition of elements in the landscape, etc. 'There are days when the mountains are closer and others when they're farther away: perhaps it's just the viewer's perception, or maybe the mountains really are nearer or farther. Today is no longer yesterday, nature changes, and so does the way we see it and what we see in it. The title is something imposed by the Western capitalist system,' Chavajay explains. That is why the moments he depicts have no titles; they are memories. According to the artist, 'When the record of a memory in a piece is given a title, the work dies with the title, because today is no longer yesterday.'

A work with a title could never show or explain what it means for the Tz'utujil people to see

the mountains getting closer or moving away as they observe them from the shores of Lake Atitlán. This piece is a visual translation of an instant in the artist's memory, an attempt to illustrate moments of mere contemplation, recollections of when he used to accompany his father, a fisherman on Lake Atitlán. Would taking a memory frozen in an image that floats in the consciousness of the Tz'utujil Maya and trying to explain it in Spanish, or giving it a Spanish title, be a permanent translation error? This is a question that comes up when Chavajay talks about his work.

To observe this piece is to immediately step inside it... When the southern breeze blows, when the mist intermittently thickens and dissipates, when the clouds weep, while the mountains and volcanoes shiver with cold, when they scream if there are wildfires. 'The mountains are there, but nature's time seems to affect our perception of space, even though space is where nature is. Maybe nature doesn't care how we humans perceive it,' Chavajay reflects.



The moon emerges from the shadows, at the beginning or end of the day. Its round shape is never finished in any of Chavajay's pieces. It is always missing a stitch or a knot or has a bit of leftover thread: a visual expression of the possibility of the admissible and the viable, a hope that never quite believes it has a chance. The incomplete roundness of the moon embroidery is related to the lunar calendar based on a combination of twenty day signs and thirteen numbers, a 260-day cycle. The embroidered moon that appears in Chavajay's works embodies a dream he had, 'or possibly the other way round,' the artist muses. A tribute to the experience of Grandmother Moon, who is forever embroidering and weaving time, who plays with the tides of the sea and Lake Atitlán.

Watching Grandmother Moon embroider time while the lake plays with the full moon or new moon is a moment that Manuel Chavajay has recovered with his family. He, his wife and his children go out to welcome the moon in her different phases. On *Imox*, the lunar day of water, they present gifts of incense, flower petals and candles to the lake and the moon.

The burnt oil in Chavajay's works reminds us that humanity's impact on the earth can be as diverse as the colours that oil itself acquires, depending on how long it is used. MARÍA JACINTA XÓN RIQUIAC

26 *Fiesta de la trashumancia 2020, 2020*

Wool, silk, ink and gold with cotton lining, 9–10 warp ends, 60 cotton threads/dm.
Woven and dyed at the Royal Tapestry Factory. Master weaver: José Ignacio García.
Assistants: José Luis Sánchez and Cristina Hurtado. 112 x 160 x 2 cm
Commissioned from the artist in 2020
Colección Banco de España

In Patricia Esquivias's work, everything means something. The piece titled *Fiesta de la trashumancia 2020*, a standalone tapestry that commemorates an event, contains multiple narratives. In the field or central area, we see a shepherd guiding sheep along Calle de Alcalá, a major artery in Madrid that coincides with an ancient livestock road called the Cañada Real Galiana. The scene also shows the flock entering the Trading Floor of the Banco de España, beneath the massive Art Deco stained-glass skylight made by the Maumejean firm, whose iconography is an ode to both industrial and agrarian labour as the backbone of the economy and modern progress. It is accompanied by references to the Fiesta de la Transhumancia [a festival held in different towns

and cities across Spain to celebrate the history of seasonal livestock migrations], to the tradition of farming and animal husbandry, and to the enduring social, cultural, environmental, ecological and economic value of pastoralism.

Esquivias's pieces have multiple layers that contain traces of past investigations. Once again, the artist examines the ways in which ideology is transmitted through cultural forms and pieces together narratives from the jumble of historical facts, anecdotal details and fabrications. The doings of masons, anthropologists, architects, weavers and herders are the basis of a new set of stories which she weaves affectively, stitching scraps of reality to legends and rituals from oral tradition.

26



On this occasion, the artist begins with the allegory of pastoralism depicted in a corner of the stained-glass skylight. It dates from the 1930s, when agriculture supported a large chunk of Spain's working population—thanks to which the financial hardships of the Great Depression were less severe here than in other countries. Esquivias added a legend along the border of the tapestry to commemorate the centenary of the publication of Julius Klein's book *The Mesta: A Study in Spanish Economic History, 1273–1836* (Harvard University Press, 1920), a seminal study of the Honourable Assembly of the Mesta of the Shepherds and of the livestock industry's impact on Iberian economic development in the medieval and early modern eras. Since no one had thought to do it before, why not offer an homage?

Migratory pastoralism and the rural world, the book about the Mesta and the iconographic programme of the Maumejean skylight are just some of those smaller stories which, along with the tapestry's multiple meanings as a cultural object, prove that history is not a single, simple,

objective account. Indeed, Esquivias's work is framed in a critique of the supposed linearity of progress and weaves an exercise in narrative invention where several times exist at once. She plucks from the past to imagine other possible worlds, adopting a speculative approach.

Patricia Esquivias chose tapestry as a narrative medium to formalise the tribute to migratory pastoralism that began with a stained-glass fragment above the Trading Floor. The drawing, made with a Bic pen on a paper napkin, situates us in the present of 2020, a year of lockdowns and cancelled livestock festivals, but also a year in which the work of the fields could not be postponed. The sketch is the first and final design, transferred to the cartoon which the weavers at the Royal Tapestry Factory copied in merino fleece and gold thread, directing linking the wool tradition to the Castilian and Spanish economy. Summoned by the call of the stained-glass shepherd, the sheep—'white gold'—trot across the Trading Floor. Below, at a depth of thirty-five metres, sit the gold reserves of the Banco de España. AGAR LEDO

Letter from the artist Patricia Esquivias to Yolanda Romero, curator of the Banco de España Collection. 16 May 2024.
Postscript added in January 2026.
Courtesy the artist



16/05/2024

Dear Yolanda,

How are things? I hope this finds you well.

I am writing to you because, for quite some time now, I've been thinking about the tapestry I made for the Banco de España in 2020. I know one day we talked about the size not being ideal, but there's something else.

Now that the James Lee Byars exhibition has opened, I keep thinking back to when we would meet several times a day to talk about the production and then go to the Royal Tapestry Factory, where they wove the piece. On one of those occasions, we were walking and you jokingly told me the Banco de España's golden ball was a work by James Lee Byars, and I immediately gave one of my typical responses: 'Noooo!! Really?!' I love reminiscing about that moment of misguided naivety.

Anyway, I recently read La forja by Arturo Barea, and in Chapter 5, 'El testamento' [The Will], there is a very James Lee Byars scene. The chapter is about the inheritance that a rich man's relatives receive upon his death. After that windfall, Arturo gives Manuel his old bed, and Manuel insists that he must come to his house to see how it looks there. The book describes his home as a wooden shanty where the gaps between the planks of his bedroom walls are plugged with a mixture of paper and paste, and the dirt floor is a multicoloured mosaic of tiles salvaged from rubble heaps. The bed has made a huge difference in his life, and to show his gratitude, he gives Arturo a ten-peseta gold coin from when he was a boy, a centén. Back home, Arturo thought to himself:

'I'd like to take a hammer to the centén to see if it's true that you can make a thin sheet many metres long from five grams of gold if you hammer it

enough. Then I'd stick that gold leaf on my wall, and I'd have a wall of gold in the attic.'

That fantasy reminded me of my own dream of taking the sheep that walk down Calle de Alcalá every year during the Festival de la Trashumancia onto the trading floor of the Banco de España, where they would meet the sheep and shepherd depicted on Maumejean's stained-glass skylight over a hundred years ago. Since the festival was cancelled due to the pandemic, it was never anything more than a fantasy sketched on my tapestry, but what I can't understand now is why I put a face covering on the shepherd. That shepherd shouldn't be wearing a mask, and now my fantasy is that the moths which attack my jumpers and tapestries year after year will one day attack the bank's tapestry and only devour the line that forms the mask; then, when it's sent to be restored, the design will be altered so the shepherd can proudly show his nose and mouth, as in the enclosed image.

Many thanks and warmest regards, Patricia

P.S.

January 2026

Last year, Rocío Gracia contacted me to request the video Generalísimo/Castellana and the tapestry that goes with it, Cuadro del Mar [Picture of the Sea], for the Goya show in Brussels. When they examined the tapestry in Brussels right before putting it on display, they found moth eggs. At the time I was dreadfully sad that it couldn't be a part of that exhibition, but now that I've gotten over the disappointment, the possibility of my shepherd losing his mask seems closer than before.



10-peseta coin of Alfonso XII.
Madrid, 1878. Gold. 3.2 g;
Ø 19 mm. Archivo Histórico
del Banco de España.
Coin Collection

Julius Klein

(New York, 1886–Washington, 1957)

***The Mesta: A Study in Spanish Economic History, 1273–1836*
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920**

Colección Bibliográfica del Banco de España

In 1920, when Julius Klein published *The Mesta: A Study in Spanish Economic History, 1273–1836*, systematic archival work had not yet become standard practice among Spanish economic historians. His work made a significant contribution, particularly through the systematic use of historical records to study an institution whose past was only imperfectly understood at the time. The book also offered a comprehensive overview of several centuries of economic, legal and territorial life, showing that the Mesta was not an isolated entity but an important cog in the machinery of medieval and early modern Castile.

Today, over a century later, Klein's book remains a seminal source on migratory pastoralism and the role of the Honrado Concejo de la Mesta or Honourable Assembly of the Mesta in the Castilian economy. The translation into Spanish, published in 1936 as *La Mesta. Estudio de la historia económica española, 1273–1836*,

increased the work's circulation among Spanish scholars, although in some cases it was met with different interpretations and even criticism. The copy on display here is that first Spanish edition from 1936, released at a time when people were increasingly interested in economic history and the institutions that had shaped Spain's territory and production activities.

The Honourable Assembly of the Mesta, formed in the thirteenth century, is described in this book as an institution linked to the rise of migratory pastoralism or seasonal livestock migrations. Klein examined the organisation of flocks, royal privileges, legislation and the network of sheep walks, roads and highways along which animals were moved from summer to winter pastures and vice versa.

However, migratory pastoralism involved more than just livestock. For centuries, it operated as a larger economic system connecting regions,



resources and markets. Sheep walks were also used to move people, goods and even information across vast stretches of the Iberian Peninsula. The Mesta united the interests of the crown, large sheep owners and local communities, although that union was not always stable and conflicts frequently arose.

Wool played a pivotal part in this system. During the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern era, it was one of Castile's biggest exports, creating trade networks between the Iberia Peninsula and various European markets. The path that wool travelled, from migratory flocks to production centres and ports of export, illustrated the relationship between economy, land and legislation.

Published by the cultural magazine *Revista de Occidente*, Klein's work landed in the midst of an ongoing debate about the causes of Spain's economic development. Since the eighteenth century, scholarly interpretations of the Mesta had varied widely: some saw it as a hindrance to agricultural progress, while others highlighted its role in the wool industry. Klein's book provided a firmer documentary basis for this debate. Although his conclusions have been revised by subsequent research, his most valuable contribution was posing enduring questions about the

connection between institutions, natural resources and economic growth.

Over one hundred years later, Klein's work remains a reference for scholars of Spain's economic history, territory and institutions. Its value lies not only in the sheer amount of information it contains, but also in its ability to show how the processes of exploiting natural resources, organising political life and shaping the territory informed and conditioned each other over the centuries.

Part of the bank's Special Value Collection, this copy of *La Mesta* is among the works that the Banco de España Library preserves as treasures of bibliographic heritage and makes available to scholars and researchers. This volume is special for several reasons: it is a valuable historical artefact; it is a useful resource for studying Spanish economic history in general, and the history of migratory pastoralism and the Mesta in particular; and it is a testament to how Spain received a seminal work by an international economic historian. PATRICIO CERRO DE LA FUENTE

Mercedes Azpilicueta (La Plata, 1981)

27 *The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate*, 2019

Jacquard (wool and cotton). 157 x 300 cm. Base: 48 x 4,50 x 1,47 cm
Colección Banco de España

This piece, made in the Textiellab at the TextielMuseum, Tilburg, is a large tapestry of cotton and wool jacquard mounted on a wooden structure. *The Captive* is reminiscent of a stage backdrop and has the measurements and elements of a history painting. The artist wove a vast constellation of references to literature, history, mythology, pop culture and art into her tapestry, combining all these resources to challenge and debunk stereotypes rooted in the construction of the Argentine national identity.

Azpilicueta's artistic practice, characterised by syncretism and the reinterpretation of styles and icons from art history, usually explores dissident figures and journeys to tell alternative

stories. In this case, she proposes a rereading of the legend of Lucía Miranda, a European woman captured by Indigenous people in sixteenth-century Argentina, whose story helped to build the archetype of the captive white woman and had a significant impact on the country's literary and cultural tradition, especially from the nineteenth century onwards. The female captive acquired iconic status as a symbol of the nation's own identity, metaphorically representing 'the body of the motherland'. Azpilicueta plays with images to complicate the legend and warn that our perception of history is always a construct, reminding us that there is never just one truth. At the same time, the artist aims to bring other

marginalised figures out of obscurity and give them a voice: figures like Eduarda Mansilla, one of Argentina's first women novelists, relegated to the background by the dominant historical narrative.

The tapestry becomes a canvas where multiple historical references and figures converge. Nods to the genre painting of the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata and nineteenth-century pictorial naturalism abound. We see fragments of the allegorical canvas *The Captive* by Juan Manuel Blanes, a Romantic representation of the myth of Lucía Miranda, and imagery borrowed from *The Return of the Malón*, another work related to the same legend by Ángel Della Valle. This iconography is accompanied by animals and mythological creatures like Ao Ao, a legendary being in Guaraní cosmology.

Azpilicueta uses these stylistic resources to compose a motley, visually dense work that evokes the intricacy of Baroque art and combines colonial European elements with postmodern forms. This 'transhistorical' approach, as she calls it, reflects a fluid, dynamic vision of history. Inspired by Latin American Magic Realism, she

presents a scene where the boundaries between human and non-human, reality and myth are blurred. The images that comprise *The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate* shatter and mingle, questioning dichotomies of gender, race and species. Through this juxtaposition, Azpilicueta reconstructs and unpacks the narrative of the white female captive, but she also envisions a space of resistance and subversion where dissident, fluid identities coexist.

Even the choice of title—*The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate*—suggests multiple destinies and possibilities, inviting us to explore the contradictions inherent to the human experience. By invoking the myth of Lucía Miranda and the multiple interpretations it has inspired over the years, Azpilicueta creates a space for critically examining the construction of national identity and the colonial narratives on which it is predicated. The work proposes a recasting of visual culture that transcends its specific historical and geographical context to pose broader questions about memory, identity and resistance.

CLARA DERRAC



With Anni Albers

Carles Guerra

1

In 1973, the filmmaker and political activist Pere Portabella shot the process of weaving a huge tapestry designed by Joan Miró. Josep Royo, at the time a young artist from the Casa Aymat tapestry factory in Sant Cugat, oversaw that ambitious undertaking financed by Aimé Maeght. The purpose of Portabella's film was to document the work performed by Royo and his assistants inside a former flour mill in the port district of Tarragona. The enormous tapestry, which ended up hanging in the lobby of the World Trade Center in New York, was the first major production of La Farinera, as they dubbed this workshop set up to help Miró fulfil the commissions he was still receiving as an octogenarian. Several tapestries of unprecedented size were made in the same location over the course of that decade. The World Trade Center piece (1973) was followed by another huge tapestry for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (1977), and others, including those now owned by Fundació Joan Miró (1979), Fundación "la Caixa" (1980) and Fondation Maeght (1980).

The scale, dimensions and weight of these works required a double-roller loom that was specially designed to let weavers work on both sides of the tapestry and to withstand the exceptionally high tension of the warp. Portabella's camera captured an atmosphere of feverish activity, as the tapestry—which measured six by eight metres and weighed nearly four tonnes—was to be presented, before departing for New York, at the Miró exhibition that the Grand Palais organised in Paris in 1974. Portabella's film focused on depicting the labour involved in manufacturing such an unusual textile piece. To make it, Royo developed a new type of loom that would allow him to weave as no one had ever done before, which was initially what piqued Portabella's interest. In the finished film, Royo is portrayed as 'an expert figure' unconnected to the artist. Miró does not appear even once.

While he was filming at La Farinera, Portabella may have been reminded of the parallels that Dziga Vertov drew between textile manufacturing and cinema. He could have had images from Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) in the foreground of his political unconscious. In that Soviet avant-garde film manifesto, spinning stands out as the most iconic of all images: one with the ability to impose hierarchic order on a modern industrialised society. As Annette Michelson observed, 'the rapid and intensified alternation of the image of the spinning bobbins of the cotton factory with the image of the cameraman engaged in shooting both the hydroelectric installation and the mines that provide power for those bobbins in the factory' together formed an immense, revealing structure that exerted a powerful centripetal force.

However, that analogy became irrelevant in the 1970s, when textile media were making an effort to break into the contemporary

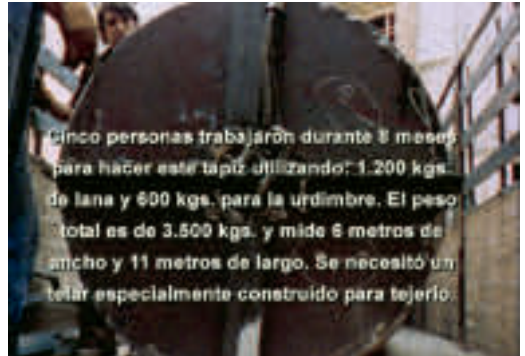
art world. That decade marked the beginning of an accelerated de-industrialisation process. By then, tapestry and all the other textile arts had severed their ties to artisanal crafts. Contrary to what it might seem, the textile art revival coincided with the rise of a new production model. In post-industrial society, textile work is defined in relation to tasks that involve computer programming, and woven images, as Ida Soulard has observed, are therefore 'programmed images'.

2

In 1965, the publication of Anni Albers's most frequently cited book, *On Weaving*, marked the end of her career as a weaver. Apparently, as soon as she grasped the specific historicity of textile practices, she gave up something she had been doing since the Bauhaus years. Her research into the textile heritage of Mesoamerican cultures gave her a radically different understanding of technological progress. Instead of considering the steady development of the loom and legitimising its industrialisation as the most evolved form of production, Albers looked back to textile practices that were situated and embedded in communal spaces. The return to the body as the loom's axis and anchor point signalled a reversal of the traditional idea of progress, something she saw in Peru's most ancient cultures. Her non-linear vision of history led her to highlight moments of technological and aesthetic brilliance across the centuries, just as she did throughout her book. In this way, certain past forms became the most effective and representative forms of the future.

However, Anni Albers's impact on textile practices in the 1970s also affected painting in a way that had little or nothing to do with her historical assessment. Instead, the textile practices of that decade became part of the feminist restitution initiative that Griselda Pollock launched in 1999 with her book *Differencing the Canon*. Her text called for a revision of the logics that continued to underpin received ideas and reinforce mythical structures in art history, but that necessary and urgent critique of historical writing models had already been formulated by Albers years earlier. Pollock did make a vital contribution by noting that certain cultural practices 'are typically downgraded because they are (mis)-identified with the domestic, the decorative, the utilitarian, the dexterous—that is, with what patriarchal logic negatively characterises as quintessentially "feminine"'. And that observation had a profound impact on the way people assessed the work of many women artists, such as Aurèlia Muñoz, Maria Assumpció Raventós, Teresa Lanceta, Maria Teresa Codina, María Cueto and Marga Ximénez, to name but a few.

They were all part of the 'renaissance of this important expressive medium', to quote the special tapestry issue that *Batik* magazine released in 1983. One decade later, Griselda Pollock's book revealed why the creations of those women were overlooked. In addition to accurately diagnosing the nefarious effects of art history, her thesis exposed a truth that was nowhere more painfully apparent than in the textile arts. Even male textile artists could fall into oblivion. Josep Grau-Garriga



Pere Portabella, *Miró tapís* (1974). Films 59.
 Courtesy of the Pere Portabella Archive

“Five people worked for eight months to make this tapestry, using 1,200 kg of wool and 600 kg for the warp. It weighs a total of 3,500 kg and measures 6 metres wide by 11 metres long. A special purpose-built loom was needed to weave it.”

and Josep Royo, for example, both trained at Casa Aymat, the tapestry factory in Sant Cugat del Vallès where the Catalan school of tapestry was forged. Their contributions to contemporary textile art have suffered the same fate as those of many women artists—further proof that textile practices have been structurally feminised.

3

By way of example, we can look at what happened with the work of Josep Grau-Garriga, regarded since the 1960s as a leading international figure in the most experimental vein of tapestry art. However, his textile techniques and processes veered off in a new direction after 1970. Suddenly, his work began to pursue a wide range of artistic, educational, community and social objectives. As a result, his standalone pieces gave way to what he called 'environments', the staging of which involved a large number of people. He used the term 'environment' to signify a practice situated in natural or historical settings that were typical of the art world, in some cases, or entirely unrelated to it in others. His 'environments' were often ephemeral and consequently entailed a process of dismantling and destruction.

The ones made with textile fibres could be mistaken for large tapestries or soft sculptures, installations that turned the architecture of his chosen site into a gargantuan loom. In this way, Grau-Garriga's 'environments' became examples of communal action. Their goal was to infiltrate and modify the very narratives that underpinned the identity of those places, not just the physical context or surrounding landscape. The intense dialogue that surrounded these works, while they were being made and also when they were received, put them in an unusual artistic category. They were made up of materials and conversations in equal measure. And that is where the most radical ingredient in the textile paradigm appeared: its ability to absorb heterogeneous practices, at the margins of the value chain, and nevertheless use all that to assemble a practice that transcends the making of textile objects.

In a recent conversation between Nuria Enguita, Laura Vallés Vilchez and Teresa Lanceta, published in the catalogue of one of Lanceta's latest retrospectives, the curators reminded the artist of her predilection for primeval techniques. Following Anni Albers's line of thought, they then asked her about an unusual notion of progress 'which connects different historical eras and ways of life on a single spatio-temporal axis'. But Lanceta replied that she had very specific reasons for embracing textile practices, which she summed up by saying that this type of art 'was collective and popular'. In a way, it is as if Teresa Lanceta and Josep Grau-Garriga, each from diametrically opposed practices, had decided to resurrect Albers's project of seeking a new anchor point for forms of weaving outside the framework of industrial technology.

THE PLIABLE PLANE
The Textile Collection
of the Banco de España

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