

MISTRESSES OF TEXTILE: MASTERPIECE ONLINE

Olga de AMARAL

Jagoda BUIC

Tracey EMIN

HESSIE

Barbara LEVITTOUX-SWIDERSKA

Su RICHARDSON

Miriam SCHAPIRO

Greta SCHÖDL

Annegret SOLTAU



24 – 27 June 2021

Bringing together some of the world's most innovative mistresses of textile, Richard Saltoun Gallery's presentation for Masterpiece Online reveals how female artists took hold of fibre and thread with a newfound freedom of making, adding a unique contribution to feminist contemporary art. Taking its cue from the 1972 exhibition *Old Mistresses: Women Artists of the Past* at Walters Art Gallery, the presentation subverts the reverential term 'Old Master' and showcases work by important women: Jagoda BUIC, Olga de AMARAL, Tracey EMIN, HESSIE, Su RICHARDSON, Barbara LEVITTOUX-ŚWIDERSKA, Miriam SCHAPIRO, Greta SCHÖDL and Annegret SOLTAU.

Canadian-American artist Miriam Schapiro (1923-2015), who first came to attention in the late 1950s for hard-edge abstract geometric paintings, was a pioneering force in the Pattern and Decoration movement that emerged in the late '70s. *Tidy Art* (1976), from Schapiro's series of painted fabric collages collectively known by the artist as *Femmages*, takes centre stage at Masterpiece Online. Her *Femmages* paved the way for the critical reception of craft as a respectable medium in feminist art circles of the time, as set out in Schapiro's manifesto on the subject, *Waste Not, Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled — Femmage*, written in collaboration with Melissa Meyer. The antithesis of male-dominated Abstract and Minimal art movements, these works are colourful, hyper-feminine, kitschy and, above all, decorative.

British artist Su Richardson's *Goodbye Rug* (1980), a crocheted wall-mounted rug, with stitched gloves and mementos from the First World War, similarly illustrate the possibilities of collage and textile. The work was inspired by Richardson's uncle, who returned from the war while many of his friends didn't, and incorporates handkerchiefs sent from the frontline back home to sweethearts. The gloved hands wave men off, like many wives, fiancées and mothers did at the time.

Italian nonagenarian Greta Schödl (b.1929) and the Franco-Cuban artist Carmen Lydia Đurić (known by her artist name Hessie, 1936-2017) took textile a step further, using it as the basis for 'mark-making.' Hessie, a self-taught Cuban immigrant who lived in France until her recent passing, combined embroidery and collage to create a new language that incorporated domestic materials found in the home, such as paper, clothing, hair, dust, fabric, buttons and toys. Schödl, on the other hand, used text to cover her supports, layering fabric, canvas and handmade paper to create abstracted concrete poems on textile surfaces.

Similar to the work of British artist Tracey Emin (b.1963), whose cotton-embroidered canvas *I Can't Let Go* (2007) is featured as part of the presentation, German artist Annegret Soltau (b.1946) embraces thread as her primary medium, embroidered on or through supports – whether a piece of fabric as with Emin or on photographs, often of her own body. Both artists use their own personal histories as inspiration, literally stitching their life stories into visible forms.

Colombian Olga de Amaral (b.1932), whose major touring exhibition 'To Weave a Rock' opens at MFA Houston in July, and the late Polish fibre sculptor Barbara Levittoux-Swidarska (1933-2019) are linked together through their monumental ambitions, each making works measuring up to three-metres-wide. Working independently, both incorporated materials such as horsehair, sisal and cut fabric, constructing free-standing sculptural forms that extended the capabilities of fabric and the loom. Informed by the weaving traditions of their individual homelands, de Amaral and Levittoux-Swidarska equally embraced space, extending their textile-based architectural installations beyond both home and wall. The Croatian artist Jagoda Buic (b.1930), a contemporary of de Amaral and Levittoux-Swidarska, worked on a similar scale but with a more cross-disciplinary focus drawing on her wider creative practice that encompasses scenography, set and costume design.

View the online exhibition as part of [Masterpiece Online](#) and on the gallery's website:
www.richardsaltoun.com/viewing-room

Gallery information

Opening hours:

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Image: Miriam Shapiro. *Tidy Art*, 1976. Femmage (acrylic and fabric collage) on Strathmore Aquarius paper, 76 x 56 cm.