

Carmen Mardonez Artist Statement

Artist Bio

Carmen Mardonez (1988) is a Chilean textile artist living in Los Angeles since 2017. Her artwork seeks to radically reimagine intimate spaces of memory, dream, and discovery, exploring ways of deconstructing traditional embroidery by combining oversized formats, textile sculpture and the recovery of textile waste. Carmen has studies in History, Arts, and Community Psychology. Carmen's creations have been included in juried exhibitions in Brea Gallery (CA), South LA Contemporary-SoLA gallery (CA), the Museum of Latin American Art-MOLAA (CA), among others. Her work has been featured in several online and printed outlets, most recently in *Femme Handbook* and *ShoutOut LA*.

Artist Statement

As a woman, my entrails have always been governed by others. Before I even menstruated for the first time, I was taught to sew, knit, and embroider, only to become a caring wife and exemplary mother: no one asked me if that was my plan. After unexpectedly becoming a mother, all the rebellion against the conservative and religious education I received since my childhood furiously exploded. I refused to become what I was trained for. My artistic work became a way of expressing my resistance. I engaged with embroidery as a pictorial medium, exploring ways of deconstructing traditional embroidery to allow for less patterned, more experimental techniques, where color and relief are more important than mimesis and practical domestic use. My raw materials turned from classical canvas to discarded objects and surfaces, such as lemon bags, old t-shirts, and more recently castoff bed sheets and pillows. In my current practice, I experiment on going even beyond freestyle embroidery, combining it with three-dimensional pieces such as fabric sculptures, made using textile waste, and increasing the format of my creations to produce textile installations. Using bed sheets and pillows, I seek to connect with these radically intimate spaces that store memories of exploration, discovery, and suffering. These textile objects have witnessed the materialized, embodied repression, byproduct of centuries of indoctrination we have experienced as women through history. But even more importantly, they are the space of our wildest dreams, utopias of liberation and sisterhood.

Statement of Intent

The enveloping and breathtaking experience of the desert is something I first experimented in the north of Chile. Only after being exposed to it one can understand that a city's lights go pale in comparison to a starry night, and that

living beside a highway there is not true silence even during the sleep. In my practice, I seek to recreate this immersive feeling, combining freestyle embroidery and textile sculpture to surround the spectator with imagined landscapes, spaces of freedom that are possible beyond the metropolis, in-between anthropogenic climate devastation, colonialism and human exploitation. Over the last year, I have been working on textile waste, in particular discarded bed sheets and pillows donated by my neighbors. During the pandemic, this has been a way to keep in touch with them, building community while sewing together these intimate objects. I imagine this as a process of creating a common dream, a patchwork that transcends the individual to produce new experiences of connection, trust, and hope. Despite not being a residency requirement, I wish to replicate part of this experience at RAIr, connecting with the local community to collect some of my materials, and reducing the ecological footprint of my stay. I look forward to a year-long experiment in pushing the boundaries of the textile medium. I feel the necessity to create without limiting myself to what can fit my little wall, and to put more time into my art than what I can scrape from my other responsibilities. With the generous studio space and support from the RAIr program, I would be able to develop the oversized and engrossing pieces I envision. Certainly, this residency would be a pivotal experience in my art career: after it, I hope the vastness of the desert will stay with me and my creations.