



➔ The most discussed innovation among early 1990s feminist sculptors was the abundance of unadorned objects infused with poetics, albeit “minimalism with a message,” a trend made manifest by Lynn Zelevansky’s 1994 MoMA exhibition “Sense and Sensibility.” Zelevansky’s tight show of eight artists neglected many sculptors, including Cecilia Paredes, who were also pursuing this approach. How can 1990s artists invested in poetics make the transition into the twenty-first-century’s obsession with inscrutable horizontal sprawls and vertical piles without abandoning their subtlety? Despite today’s abundance of 3-D work, I would argue that “sculpture” is in short supply, especially if one considers sculpture to be some entity whose overall presence appears coherent, rather than chopped up, fragmented and disjointed, and then randomly re-accumulated. These are the muddled waters that Paredes and others find themselves testing, as poetics yields to pyrotechnics.

Fortunately, Paredes has found reasonable solutions. Rather than enter the chaotic venture of what I have termed “splice, dice, and fasten” art, she has converted her post-minimal vocabulary into an experiential sensibility that engulfs her reductive practice. For example, *El Río* (all works 2010 unless specified), comprised of thousands of variously shaped glass chandelier crystals, each dangling from the ceiling at chest height, conveys the magic of pure water traversing its course. As it dangles in space, one notices shadows dancing unpredictably on the walls. *Percepción*, a missile-shaped cone, constructed from quartered bamboo, references a nineteenth-century Peruvian construction technique (soon to dominate twenty-first-century green architecture) that employs bamboo as its armature. Paredes lit the suspended cone, angled at about 30 degrees, from below, so that a giant starburst pattern sprouted on the wall. *Nido* (Nest, 2009/10), hovering at eye level, features several strands of enchanting silkworm cocoons,

crisscrossing a corner. *Retícula* (Network), a horizontally suspended, large-scale floppy grid of interlinking blue wires, suggests the interconnect-edness of everything, as each moving wire shifts the plane’s overall form.

Several works in Paredes’s exhibition at the ICPNA’s Galería Germán Krüger Espantoso (through October 24) pay tribute to her Latin American heritage. *Manto* (Shawl, 2009), a gleaming golden grid of butterfly chrysalides scooped up off the Amazon rainforest floor, resembles the sheen and bumpiness of Pre-Columbian breast plates on view in Lima’s Museo Nacional. Indicative of the way indigenous styles are appropriated as fashion items, elegant, though potentially lethal porcupine quills encircle *Collar* (Necklace). *Laberinto Interrumpido* (Interrupted Labyrinth), the title of this exhibition’s most enigmatic work, alludes to Octavio Paz’s 1950 collection of essays *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. But solitude appears impossible here, since Paredes has sliced her tabletop labyrinth constructed from foam insulation through the middle. By exhibiting the two halves slightly ajar, she defeats the labyrinth’s usual plethora of dead ends and cul-de-sacs. Finally, *Habitación* encloses the viewer with four heavy, hanging panels, woven from one-inch copper, the mined ore that has most contributed to Peru’s recent wealth.

Just as message-style minimalism and neo-geo instilled previously formalist genres with greater self-criticality, Paredes’s 2008-09 photographs of camouflaged women disappearing into the background pick up where Veruschka von Lehndorff’s body paintings left off—in this case, as a commentary on women’s still lingering invisibility from public life.

~Sue Spaid

