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Patricia Miranda: *Punto in Aria*

NOV 2021

By [Gaby Collins-Fernandez](#)



Installation view: *Patricia Miranda: Punto in Aria*, Garrison Art Center, Garrison, NY. Courtesy Garrison Art Center.

On View

Garrison Art Center

September 18 – November 7, 2021
Garrison, NY

In 2020, people started sending the sculptor Patricia Miranda lace. She has worked with found and vintage fabrics for years, dyeing them with hand-made cochineal and oak-gall inks, stitching them with images or together. But only in the past year and a half did unsolicited submissions begin arriving at her studio, as more and more people in Miranda's orbit following quarantines and stay-home-orders got around to old tasks, like sorting through boxes of their families' old lace, and determined that they wanted neither to keep it, use it, nor throw it away. Better to give it to an artist.

Miranda's exhibition at the Garrison Art Center, *Punto in Aria*, considers what to do with this kind of gift, which is also an inheritance. The first step is to know what one has, and to this end Miranda has created The Lace Archive, an ongoing index comprising the more than 1,500 pieces of lace she has received, as well as the histories that come along with them. The archive frames the exhibition: it is digitally accessible upon first entry into the galleries, and Miranda's large-scale fabric sculptures and installations are described as pertaining to it.



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This stays in the mind while looking at *Lamentation for A Reasoned History* (2021) and *A Joyful Keening* (2021), wherein various pieces of lace have been over-dyed with cochineal dye and assembled as coverings for a long gallery wall and a front-facing window. Both these pieces are tailored to their enclosures, immediately evoking curtains and tapestries, outfitting the rooms. One sees the expanse of material first, then red, then each individual piece of lace, with its intricacies, splayed geometry, and the material idiosyncrasies of dye absorption. Hung along the surface of *Lamentation for A Reasoned History* are tiny plaster and paper clay ex-votos in the shapes of body parts, which punctuate the piece in a manner reminiscent of the stuffed animals and notes pinned to chain-link fences as impromptu memorials. The inclusion of these ex-votos, traditionally used as offerings to aid a particular limb in recovery from an illness, transforms the lace from a display into a substrate, activating the surface as a place for prayers and promises. This shift is also present in an arrangement of smaller *Ex-votos* (2021), on single pieces of undyed lace. Each lace creates a stage for its tiny bodily fragment, allowing these to wish for whole, healthy bodies by pointing to the part that hurts.

In Miranda's hands, aesthetics becomes a methodology for making language out of mourning: the pain of the body, the grief of losing family and time. Even before being enlisted in artwork, this lace has already taken on properties beyond its original function as apron, handkerchief, table runner—we keep heirlooms because they point beyond themselves to parts of our histories that

we cannot recuperate; they remind us of this gap. Art, Miranda suggests, can give us a framework to understand this loss through material presence as a devotional object.



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Two other series included at Garrison, "Lace Archive: Graphite" and "Lace Archive: Glass" (both 2021), delicate, use hand-drawn rendering to memorialize through representation. In the glass works, Miranda etches images of lace onto surfaces prepared with gold leaf, memories of heirlooms which glimmer ephemerally but cast real shadows. The graphite works, which also include gold leaf and are on panel, are hand-etched and burnished with graphite powder in a laborious process which makes reference to the significant effort of lacemaking itself.

Occupying the center of the largest room is *Where there is serene length* (2021), a domed structure draped with various slips and curtains. The form is reminiscent of *Madonna della Misericordia* imagery, in which groups of the penitent are housed within Mary's gargantuan

mantle, iconography which shares in the child's comfort of hiding amidst a parent's skirts. This sculpture includes a single, head-sized slit for peering within to see the structure's hoop-skirt boning, a gesture as pious as it is erotic. As in the rest of these works, there is only space behind the fabric, which gives way again to architecture and air. Interiority does not reside "inside," but in the encounter between the surface and the self.

Punto in aria, a lace form dating back to the early 15th century, is among the earliest forms of true needlework lace, which means that it is made without the support of an underlying woven material. A literal stitch in air, this method allows for greater complication and curvature, as patterns which are drawn first on parchment or laid out in thin ropes create their own stability in the act of being sewn. It is a useful metaphor for thinking about mourning, where meaning must emerge from gestures succeeding loss. It is an important time for it, as we continue to process these past 19 months of personal and collective grief. Miranda's sculptures teach us how to experience this grief as something we have earned, which can make meaning in porous lattices, rather than something to let sit in boxes, or worse, discard—or worse, forget.

Contributor

~~Gaby Collins-Fernandez~~

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