

## On Mirta Kupferminc's Soft Sculptures

Essay by María Carolina Baulo

*Translated by Silvio Gitter*

Everything starts with an invitation to participate in a working experience in a space exclusively dedicated to the development of studies related to the arts in all its manifestations. LABA: House of Study is a cultural laboratory located in New York City, where classic Jewish texts are studied during the year-long fellowship from a totally secular point of view. Kupferminc is the first invited fellow who is not a New York resident. Nearly ten participants, among them writers, visual artists, musicians, actors and dancers, would then gather regularly to debate Jewish texts around a hegemonic theme and then pour the resulting insights onto their own works. With absolute creative and ideological freedom, each artist could pose a personal point of view parting from those texts towards new horizons and interpretations. The central theme on this occasion (2013-2014) is "Mother". One can imagine that personal experiences on this subject are unique and unrepeatably, while all of humanity is united in a bond with the maternal that shares knowledge on the subject albeit in different ways.

With everything that represents the role of the mother in general and in Jewish culture in particular, Mirta Kupferminc elaborates work that is revealing even to the artist herself; the repercussions surrounding the presented work exceeded all expectations. Mirta approaches the mother from various angles seeking to highlight this multifaceted role, especially emphasizing its individuality as woman but also as a collective and even mythological subject. She also chooses to stay loyal to her own eclectic style, where the breakdown of structures and aesthetic formalities prevails: she resorts to the use of diverse materials and techniques responding exclusively to her conceptual ideas and practical needs. The artist says: *"My proposal is to make soft sculptural objects that can function as attire, clothing, or dress, considering that clothing covers us, but also allows us to reveal who we are. That 'second skin' projects an image, but entering 'that body' I am submitting myself to the experience of being inside 'that' mothers body".* As concentric circles living one inside the other, the artist creates a sculpture with a specific gravity of its own, but with a redoubled symbolic proposal when one manages to get inside the artwork, literally. This is an inhabitable sculpture that can give us refuge or absorb us, both physically and symbolically. Soft sculpture whose name contains a pun: "Eve: Chair of all mothers" refers to the chair as an object as well as the foremost, the primeval. Mother of all mothers, Mirta Kupferminc's Eve received recognition from both her peers and the press, as well as attention from institutions such as New York City's Museum of Motherhood, interested in exhibiting this work.

In this context, another work is notable for its elaborate symbolic and conceptual game, following the line of work on classical texts and the approach each artist takes in translating them into their work. Kupferminc presents *"S-NAKED"*. Once again we should approach the work understanding the message contained in its English title, referring to both the serpent (snake) and the bare body (naked). Two life-sized, fully created with textiles and socks, depict a naked man and woman standing in a

forest, more precisely by the tree of knowledge, presented in the Myth as the tree of good and evil. Between them slithers the figure of the snake. The faceless characters in fact allow us to identify the iconographic theme: Adam and Eve, Creation, and all that surrounds desire and the concept of "sin". The artist sought to represent all the characters of the story: humans, animals, plants, all created by the same being and all stemming from the same matter. In this work there is a theoretical positioning clearly approaching a quite controversial reading of the biblical story of Adam and Eve. There is a combination of visual narrative, clearly figurative, where the story is developed by means of tulle and sheer stockings, with a second story coming forcefully through with the inclusion of a mirror, leading us to observe the work in an inverted image by the use anamorphosis – a resource that Mirta uses repeatedly in order to reveal non-evident concepts. The result is fabulous: the snake we saw intertwined among the branches now depicts the Tetragrammaton in the mirror: God's name appears in the reflection, a name that Hebrew culture prohibits from being written or pronounced. And going one step further into the depths of this cryptic reading rife with symbolism and hidden winks, the controversial and challenging becomes evident when Kupfermirc invites us to access one of the many Old Testament exegesis, one by Rabbi Eleazer, one that particularly emphasizes a reading of good and evil as part of the Divine plan itself. This is an interpretation that challenges preconceptions, inviting discussion and reflection. And as if that were not enough, for this lost paradise to transmute itself into a forbidden word when viewed from a different perspective, the message is reinforced by the presence of the written text, highlighting Rabbi Eliezer's interpretative hypothesis. The quote on the back of the work is written in three languages: Spanish, Hebrew, and English.

It is very interesting when an artist challenges the commonplace, has the courage to read a subject outside the established limits, and proposes the possibility of looking at things from an angle never attempted before. Mirta Kupfermirc's soft sculptures allow her to wear them, to inhabit them, to feel them as part of her skin, and can also dwell within us if we let ourselves be carried away by this sort of creative game that ends up being a complex conceptual interweaving, raising questions, doubts, affinities and even rejections, why not. But it does not generate indifference, marking the difference with works that just pass by and those that passing by leave a footprint attesting to their presence.

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