

ektor garcia embraces the world as a texture; his oeuvre resembles individual handwriting or a text, a weave, or a network. His art is a separate language. He knots and links set pieces and fragments to create a powerful cosmos full of allusions. As the mythical Arachne once did, garcia would win the contest in textile handcraft, because his weaves evoke so many stories, carry tradition into the present, and in a way also constitute an alternative, because analogue, "web."

garcia applies a lace border to a copper plate; he decorates a crudely shaped, abstracted male figure made of dark iron with finely woven copper wire; he places a convoluted greenish form reminiscent of an intestine or a snake on a crocheted blanket. A roughly woven rope hangs from the ceiling. Shiny ceramic chains that resemble enlarged knit rows encounter the smooth and matte surface of pieces of leather in which the form of the skinned animal is still recognizable. The artist combines leather, ceramics, yarns, and copper thread in a never-ending process. When an exhibition takes place, it is like a snapshot from this ongoing work. ektor garcia explains that he subordinates himself to his materials while attempting to dominate them at the same time. What come about are palpable contradictions and contrasts. His handmade, at once personal and universal worlds are created in diligent handcraft that seems as ordinary as it does necessary. In the process, garcia takes up the traditional handcraft techniques, above all various Mexican ones, and uses them to make a resistant world. garcia engraved his great grandmother's hands along with a crocheted handiwork onto a copper plate; decades of work have caused her hands to literally become gnarled. garcia's textiles are frequently sexually charged—vaginas and testicles can be made out. Added to these are associations with the queer latex and leather scene that blend with the impression of domestic intimacy and occasionally of naivety and kitsch. His work is political in multiple ways: it comprises simple materials and techniques, works against any sublimeness, is vulnerable and fragile, and occasionally lies unprotected on the floor. garcia furthermore undertakes traditional women's labor, which brings work in a textile factory to mind. In the United States, where he spent part of his childhood and studied, knitting and crocheting are deeply rooted as activities women performed during the war in symbolic support of the men on the front line, but also in order to cope with the trauma of loss. In garcia's works, abysses underlie the sensuality and beauty; he crochets a pleurably abhorrent world. At the same time, it appears as if ektor garcia was still just there and had spun the last threads of the crocheted suspensions. For it is certain that he is already continuing his work somewhere else.

A stitch connects endless interlocking loops of thread, lace, leather, or wire. Sometimes it is completed before proceeding to the next one, and sometimes the weaves remain open. Using a hook, ektor garcia's stiches leave small spaces in the fabric, thus forming patterns that resemble intricate spider webs. Sometimes the interconnecting stiches are contained by and at the same time contain a rigid structure of iron. As if a doorframe, the iron forms a rectangle. It is like a portal, impossible to access because of the crocheting. In one piece, the stitched patterns surround a long copper strip.

In most of the pieces in this exhibition, the contrasts between the materials, such as the rigidity of the iron, copper, or leather as compared with the elasticity and softness of the fabric or the crocheted wire, are striking. On closer inspection, one can sense a certain anxiety running through the copper, the iron, the ceramic, and the soft thread. The rapidity with which the stiches are crocheted together envelop the iron like a cocoon. And with the same anxiety that the insect experiences when pushing its way out of it, the stiches have no apparent logic, as if racing to cover the copper in its entirety, to entrap it in a circle.

Discourses on psychology talk about anxiety as both an affective response to an anticipated project or event as well as an affect that is "projected" onto others, occasionally as a displacement. When this happens, it is because the subject refuses to recognize his or her inner anxiety and transfers it to another person or thing. All the endless crocheting in ektor garcia's work is performed by the artist himself. And the anxiety that runs through each pattern is not delegated to anyone else; there is no displacement. The fact that there is no delegating is important, because it is this process of working anxiety into every stitch that produces the aesthetic object.

On the other hand, although aesthetics emerged as a field in which to reflect on all passions, affects, and emotions— from fear and grief to humiliation, shame, anxiety, and love— aesthetic discourses have encouraged us to move away from anything that is not beautiful and sublime, anything that does not elevate us and separates us from the everyday life. We are encouraged to move away from all those negative affects that we are not supposed to feel, but are nevertheless constantly present, like anxiety. Immanuel Kant's aesthetic judgment is based in objectivity. It is distance from the artwork that prompts the disinterested viewer to make a universal judgment about a work of art. And it is always nature and our experience of nature that set the scenario for the sublime and the beautiful.

In *At once recognized, remembered and anticipated: towards a theory of anxious realism* (2015), Chris Gutiérrez suggests that it is not objectivity and distance but anxiety that is at the core of aesthetic judgment. It is the experience of anxiety that causes viewers to make a decision about an

artwork, since it urges them to arrive at a conclusion instead of leaving them to doubt and be overwhelmed by having to make a judgment.

Each suture in garcia's work carries the pain and the pleasure of anxiety that has been transformed. It is as if every piece bears the anxiety that forces us into an endless entanglement of affects. As observers of garcia's work, we might want to distance ourselves from the object and elaborate judgment, but we are trapped. We cannot go through the portal because it is crocheted so delicately that we might move through affects and emotions. We are also forced to move, like garcia, through anxiety. We can incorporate the anxious aesthetic affects in and outside of the aesthetics of the exhibition.

The crocheted pieces in this exhibition in ceramic, iron, wire, or thread follow this same affective pattern; the endless thread seems to want to go through the roof to continue its quest. Others seem to want to pierce the floor and take root. Small pieces seem to become entangled within themselves. The materials as well as the techniques garcia uses evoke domesticity, not only the domesticity that reminds you of your grandmother's home, but the pain/pleasure juxtaposition of relationships and affects as well. Worked through every single seam is the pain and the pleasure of the materials used, the submission and defiance that characterize relationships.

The pieces crocheted either in rubber, wire, or thread are arranged together with the copper pieces in an installation similar to the family altars in Mexican homes, which serve both as an offering and as a display to be adored by the viewer, and one feels the comfort of a grandmother's home. The crocheted artwork pays homage to his childhood, to the women who brought him up: grandmother, mother, aunts. As a child, garcia looked on as his mother crocheted dozens of doilies as a means of subsistence. The crocheting was not performed in isolation, but created a sense of community, as it was done in the living room along with garcia's aunts. This created a particular bond between the boy and his mother. In each piece, garcia weaves not only fabric but also his fantasies and desires to belong. Each stitch works two ways. Most of the pieces are crocheted, and in each weave pattern visible empty spaces left within the fabric or leather. These small empty spaces allow for a loss, one that when contoured by the same fabrics connects to another. When garcia weaves, he leaves small holes, all connected through the same fabric. This reiteration of pain and pleasure leaves a space in which resistance emerges and creates meaning; "survival," garcia says.

In this particular exhibition, the small pieces crocheted forming little balls are different from the rest of garcia's distinctive crocheting; the spaces between the seams are very small. The losses have diminished. The patterns are crocheted so tightly together that the spaces left are invisible. They are needed to connect to each other, to form patterns, but we cannot see them.

The pain and the pleasure evoked in the textures and materials used are interwoven with the workings of his anxiety. Some of them are very tight and arranged as small balls that give rise to the impression that while the process was not easy, it is complete.

A small black piece, round and thus enclosed within itself, stands on a tripod, separated from the rest. Smaller pieces in this arrangement, one crocheted in wire, have leftovers, a tiny tail leaving a trail.

The installation that garcia created for this exhibition can be read as both the interior of the workshop of the studio as well as the interior workings of the psychic space and body of the artist himself. Witnessing garcia's work is entering his world with no restrictions. Engaging with his practice, feeling the workings of each stitch and the small empty spaces blown into the whole space, is letting the crocheting entrap you, as if caught in a spider web. The continuous thread through garcia's work allows for anxiety and desire to run through the entire installation, circulating in each weave pattern and forcing us into an aesthetic entanglement. What we read in any artwork determines how much we let ourselves be moved, challenged, or inspired by it. In this show, we might allow ourselves to become caught in the crochet of garcia's stitches through affective engagements. Each stitch in garcia's oeuvre permits movement within the aesthetic field, allowing survival to turn into flourishing.

ektor garcia

ektor garcia (*1985 in Red Bluff, California) studied at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and at Columbia University in New York. He lives and works in New York and Mexico City. The exhibition within the scope of the series 6 ½ Weeks is his first institutional solo show.

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