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Orly Cogan
 Textile Artists Today
 by Kristine Schomaker
 September 2, 2020
 Textile Month as part of Textile Arts | Los Angeles. I remember the first time I saw the work of Lee Bontecou and Eva Hesse and Yayoi Kusama. These artists blew me away with their use of every day materials and traditional women's work of sewing and weaving to create fine art objects that would be talked about in the Art Historical Canon for many years to come. They inspired and empowered many artists working today to experiment, play and create using whatever is at hand. Of course, we can look at the powerful prints of Harriet Powers whose work from the late 1800s empowered the fabric and design movement along with the second wave of feminism in the 1970s which brought domestic art into the artists every day practice. This article isn't about making any new revelations in the world of art involving textiles. It is about sharing the work of contemporary artists who may not be known. With the pandemic, artists have been experimenting more and more with items they have in their homes. It is natural to go back to craft work such as sewing and weaving and finding materials around their home they can play with. This article has also been crowd-sourced. I already had a file on my computer of Textile artists to watch. I wanted to know more. I posted on Facebook that I was looking for artists who use textiles in their work. I left the question open to interpretation because in today's world textile art is more broad than ever. My community did not disappoint. Yasmine Diaz, Loislay Radojanovic, Tina Layville, Theresa Knorr, Morgan Terry, Arana Tanya Aguinaga, Tamara M. Aldry, Swilda Reichelt, Susan J. Kurland, Susan Henry, Stephen Frost, Shinnuo Smith, Sherri Lynn Wood, Stefania Girard, Shelley Heffle, Sandra Vista, Sandra Lauterbach, Danielle Edwards, Galina Reck, Nell Ruth Katzstein, In Souza, Rosalyn Myles, Ross Katlam, Renne Emiko Brock, Rebecca Smith, Raghubir Kaur, Khalsa Polly, Jacob R. Archra, Peggy Wedemann, Patricia A. Niki, LMingston, Orly Cogan, Nike Schroeder, Julie Bayer, Michelle Schwengala, Michelle Montjoy, Michele Jaquis, Michael Rohde, Melanie Walker, Marleene Rubenstein, LJ Roberts, Liz Young, Liz Nurenberg, Liz Collins, Leonard D. Greco Jr, Lea Feinstein, Laura Paley, Krysten Cunningham, Kimberly Morris, Kayla Cloonan, Katie Ruiz, Kathy Nida, Kate Klet, Kate Bieschke, Karen Hochman, Brown, Karen Hampton, Julia Maria Sirelnikova, Julia Couzens, Joy Ray, Johanna Crowell, Norry, Jiseon Lee, Ishara Jim Arendt, Jessica Poser, Jeffrey Gibson, Jane Brucker, Jami Weir, Jamea Richmond-Edwards, Irma Sofia Poeter, Jackie Bell Johnson, Gina Herrera, Gloria Kirk-Hanna, Gena Rynae Smith, Fielden Harper, Gail Fraser, Famin Adamites, Ellis Siler, Ellen Schinderman, Ellen Phillips, Elisabeth Higgins O'Connell, Connor, Elana Herzog, Dosh, Diedrick Brackets, Diane Williams, Diane Silver, Dia Bassett, Dellis Frank, Debra Scacco, Debra Disman, Debbie Carlson, Dawn Ertl, Darlynn Susan Yee, Cudra Clover, Connie Rohman, Coco Hall, Cindy Rinne, Christy Nelson, Cysea Boxwell, Chalotte Bird, CHARI MYERS, Cha Cha Magida, Carrie Burckle, Carole Frances Lung, Frau Filler, Carol Shaw, Sutton, Carol Powell, CAROL NILSON, Carly Chuback, Camilla Wiley, Blaylock, Arezoo Bharthania, Antonia Price, Annie Seaton, Annie credit Gary Brewer, Mercedes Dorame – In the Present
 rism through which to see the world.~ Robin Wall Kimmerer, rlds of ideas and emotions that will be transported into the future, at shape and condition our reality: forces that attempt to erase a ave been here for thousands of years, long before the arrival of Los Angeles. The artist Mercedes Dorame is a native Tongva, one nstallations and photographs documenting her interventions into narrative that describes her people as something from the past. e people used acorns as part of their diet~ the Tongva Her works use the language of contemporary art as a means to hat their presence be known and their rights to ancestral land be ge. Though there is little evidence of this site today, one can feel is a place where her ancestors lived- though she has not created the most part. I create cast-objects made of concrete that are rson named them when they were first found by anthropologists. objects, but in my imagination they are ceremonial forms used for ts that are important materials for the Tongva. I arrange them in

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and photograph the installation, which I see as a collaboration with the landscape. Photography is a form of memory; it is a way to record these private rituals and create permanent records, coding the spaces as Tongva.~ I first saw Mercedes's work in the "Made in LA" exhibition at the Hammer Museum last year. I was moved by the depth of her poetic touch; of how a seemingly simple gesture could activate the heart and mind on so many different levels. To engage one in recognizing a great amnesia that we as non-native people accept: that the land upon which we live, work, love and dream just a few generations ago, belonged to people whose culture and world unfolded over thousands of years. Her works are not a hammer or a sword, but a song that awakens the living presence. Indigenous people are here now- and that the rituals and connection to this land still pulses in the hearts and minds of thousands of living souls, striving to gain recognition and access to the land for their culture to unfurl a new chapter. Mercedes Dorame; Image courtesy of the artist. In her installations, Mercedes uses string to articulate a space that she said is a reference to a Yovaar, a circular structure open at the top, used by the Tongva to enact ceremonies, connecting people to different spiritual planes. Of these structures Mercedes said, "I make reference to the Yovaar, but I am also thinking of light, a beam of light, starlight. I make them differently each time I create one, to respond to the environment, and the location. The star stones are placed along with abalone and different objects and I use cinnamon to cover them. I want to connect them to the land but also the stars. I am trying to re-imagine how our people connected physically and spiritually with the night sky.~ It was the installation at the Hammer that particularly caught my imagination: part painting- part object, its temporal nature giving it the metaphysical aura of a memory; of time and the elements erasing and revealing archetypal forms that contain the thoughts and beliefs of a culture. In this piece, Mercedes laid down several colors in a circle on the floor. It is outlined with cinnamon, which looks much like ground red ochre, then it is filled with the deepest blue of the night sky. Luminous turquoise highlights encircle several star stones placed along a path suggestive of the Milky Way, and the three stones of Orion's belt. Other star stones are placed though out the field, as well as red ochre stones and a grouping of abalone shells that seem to contain pigments or elements for some ceremonial purpose. The vibrant red strings articulate a cone-like structure, rising from points around the circle, coming together to contain the space. It is a linear articulation of space that is open, yet contains a magical universe. In other installation works, Mercedes lays down one earth pigment with the star stones placed on top, then another pigment is sprinkled on top of that. By lifting and moving the stones, the silhouette of the shape is left- becoming a memory-echo of its form. She then arranges the stones and the strings to create a symbolic image, which functions as both an abstract work whose meaning is open and a living expression of her culture. She said of these, "I see these creations as personal ceremonies, of a way to connect with my culture and to respect and represent the presence of my people.~ The string that she uses came out of my experience as a consultant. As a living descendant of the Tongva, she works at times to advise archeologists and developers who have been called to a site where work crews, doing road construction or a new building, have unearthed a burial site or artifacts from a village site. Where this is happening, the system of unearthing pottery, tools, artifacts and ancestors would be done by laying out a grid of string onto three-foot square counts. Carefully, a three-foot deep hole would be dug, as the archeological team would systematically sift through the ground.~ When I worked as a consultant, it was a conflicted position. I would be there to advise on what they should do with the remains or objects that were found. Some would say, "Thank you, we will use your input and do our best to accommodate your suggestions.~ Others would just acknowledge the request but not follow the request, as there is no legal obligation to actually do anything I recommend. I felt a responsibility for my culture and my ancestors, but also felt incredibly powerless. It is part of the reason I became an artist and what motivates my ideas and vision.~ Mercedes's photo documentations of her ephemeral installations into the landscape and personal muck where she constructs simple arrangements of string, star stones, abalone shells, red ochre and other objects used in ritual and in the daily life of the Tongva people. The locations of these installations are places that are important to Mercedes personally or to the Tongva people, and are always places that she has temporary access to. In one work, To the Land of the Rain, Chiebunga, she sprinkled cinnamon on a hole Funnel Web Spider's web, highlighting the opening, transforming it, to become a portal into the earth. The mythic metaphor of a passage into the underworld or a spirit world is suggested through this subtle gesture. These are political and spiritual actions that use a subtly persuasive force of poetry and metaphor to make their statement. It is with a metaphysical touch that Mercedes generates a powerful presence; both past and present merge in visions that intone the song of this earth and of the people that have lived here for millennia. Art is a conversation through time. It reaches into the past and carries forward into the present, the language of those who came before us, their visions and dreams. It is a poem written for a future whose very existence is always uncertain. This earth and the heavens are shape-shifters and artists are th

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