



Text by Chus Martínez

Haven't you been moved by the care you see in human gesture? On Hana Miletić's work

I have a book of short stories of Catalan writer Pere Calders at the side of my bed. His short stories constitute the most amazing collection of small individual gestures capable of repairing the whole universe. In one of his stories, a man cares so much about the state of the things and people around him that he barely manages to get a little food into his stomach. The very moment he steps out of his house, a person, an animal, a wall, a bench needs a little bit of fixing and the day ends only few meters away from where he started it. Having lived almost all his life in the same building, every time he bumps into an older neighbor who complains about a little problem, he concentrates all his efforts in trying to assist: holding shopping bags, belittling the fact that grandchildren do not visit too often anymore, making sure there is enough food for the few street cats still in the neighborhood... A life dedicated to care implies a predisposition to think about one's time as the time for others.

I always loved how Calders' short stories describe the universe of acute observers of the real. Almost always men like himself, who seem to be unable to move on with their lives since the lives of others are always in front of them. These characters force us to see every detail, from the peeling of a wall in a building that needs a good coat of paint to the complaints that we constantly express in our everyday lives.

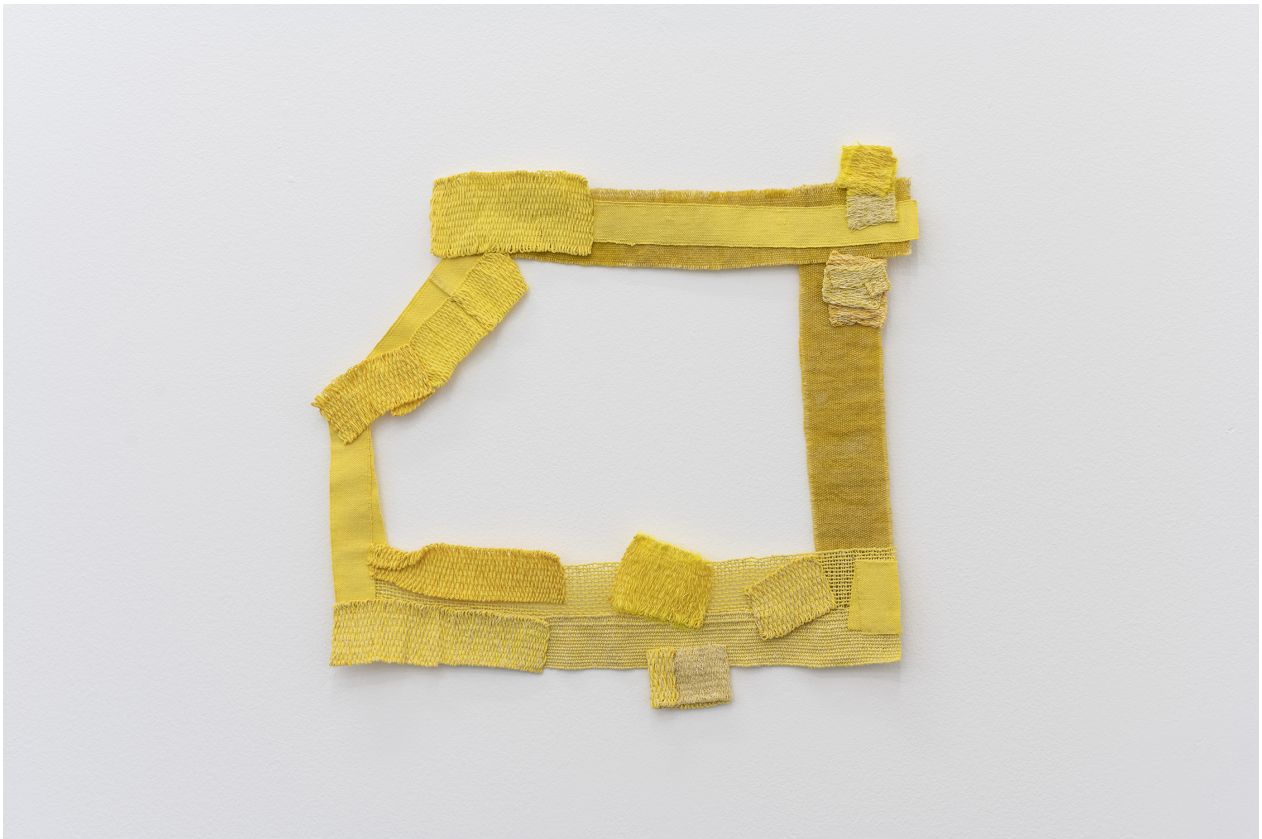




Who would think of a practice capable of being attentive to the universe in its smallest details? Who would invest in repairing every material and situation that needs our personal investment knowing that solving these rather small problems will never bring any big reward? That's why I think the practice of Hana Miletić is so special. If you look without paying attention, you may think she is doing a version of conceptual art or a take on textiles. And yet, the outcome does look conceptual because our eyes are unable to see the whole world she is touching when she touches a material. Her work is an amazing essay on the insistence of western humanities on general ideas and universal concepts without training the minds, hands and bodies of scholars, thinkers, readers into the interventions needed to spend time on the millions of particulars that do need our action. We learned to write the world as a general text and separate its arguments from the voices and the broken tissues that constitute a more immediate network of storytelling in our life. These broken tissues, carrying the pain of inequality or scarcity, or the pain of a paradox in the system or just the mark of the impossibility of continuing with life, constitute literature, visual arts, cultural theory, mass culture, etc. Miletić's work—through photography, weaving and sculpture—constitutes a personal take on the need to invent a proper medium able to provide an account of the social changes that swept millions of people into the capitalist world and the impact of its rapid transformations. Her work expresses something very humble that contradicts the hubris of modernity: before of thinking to replace the old worlds with the magical appearance of new ones we may need to stop and repair, and confront what is already there. Healing may mean just this: to open the senses and train the gestures to the effort needed to accept the task of building on a damaged world. Modernism's program prefers to replace, to dismiss. No time and no love for the damaged. But we are all damaged. Hana Miletić's practice breaks up human activity—artistic activity—into the task of becoming the agents of looking into the fragments, taking notice of the times, places, languages, materials, and genres that constitute the discipline of repairing. With her work she creates the conditions for a dialogue with the past that general discourses and analytic-dialectical practices do not. Cutting across textures and materials, understanding the physical as a premise of the social spaces we inhabit, she reveals solidarities between the different layers that constitute our experience of the real, but also between art and the ordinary, art and the people.







Her works activate several methods of seeing—the photographic image, the haptic, the hand weaving, the object standing, the work presenting itself, the wall activating a background. But also the colors she uses are very particular, creating some sort of

illusion of conceptual centers that resonate with certain histories of art and materials that are linked with a memory of politics. Her works intentionally erase any literal reference to the public space that constitutes their origin. And yet they arrange themselves as a sort of main square with the ambition of touching us and make us create an assembly. Her works intend to create sculptural environments where the perpetual self-critique of past systems gets replaced by the possibility of a self-renewal force emerging from immediate touch and care. Have we really outgrown the dilemmas that arise with the dream of a life in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all? I do not think so. And therefore it is so important to invent through juxtaposing and capturing the material realities of the world with the visceral feeling of acceleration and compression, social conflict, and cultural upheaval that define the current urban and non-urban existence. With its focus on materials, Hana Miletić's work also manages to produce strangely physical dream images and ghostly appearances. Memory politics and the mental environments they create are the focus of her work, motivated by the transformations that originated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but not only. The contemporary transformation of metropolitan and rural areas worldwide under neoliberal siege and digital triumphalism raises questions about the earlier development of metropolitan experience in its relationship to certain media, industrial production and, today, digital dissemination. The work of Hana Miletić is not interested in bringing any of those past imaginations back to life. She is, above all, interested in the permanent negotiation between the visual, the haptic, the verbal, and the ancestral which was already constitutive of certain abandoned traditions in 20th-century modernism and which has reached a new crescendo in today's exercise of recovering certain feminist art practices. Her work is unapologetically about an artist aware of this genderized way of looking at languages and media, intimacy and space, big and small narratives.





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Portrait by Neven Allgeier

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HANA MILETIĆ

was born in Zagreb (1982), she lives and works in Brussels. Solo exhibitions at MUDAM in Luxemburg, The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMSU) in Rijeka, and Kunsthalle Mainz are planned for 2022, as well as a group show at MAXXI L'Aquila. Her most recent solo exhibitions were Patchy at Bergen Kunsthall (2021), Mistik at La Loge in Brussels (2021), and Dependencies at WIELS in Brussels (2018). Her work has been presented in numerous group exhibitions, including the Belgrade Biennial (2021), Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (2021), Kunsthalle Wien (2020), Kunstverein Hannover (2020), Metro Pictures in New York (2019), S.M.A.K. in Ghent (2018-19) and the 13th Sharjah Biennial (2017). Miletić was a resident at Van Eyck in Maastricht (2014-2015), and at Thread, the cultural centre of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in Senegal (2019). In 2021 Miletić was awarded the Baloise Art Prize.

CHUS MARTÍNEZ

has a background in philosophy and art history. She is currently the Head of the Institute of Art of the FHNW Academy of Arts and Design in Basel, Switzerland. From 2021 she will be the Artistic Director of the Ocean space in Venice, a project initiated by the TBA21 Academy. She is also curator at large of The Vuslat Foundation in Istanbul.