

Ángela García and feminist painting in Spain in the 70s. From the *Tuyyo* to the *Yo*!

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The history of art has been rewritten over and over again since it was first invented back in the 18th century by Winckelmann. At that time the German archaeologist constructed a reading that reigned supreme in western thinking for many decades in which the ascendancy of perfect art tied in with a Greco-Roman based classicism while looking down on creative manifestations from the so-called Dark Ages. The history of art, like history itself, has been a reflection of what the times, the spirit of the age in Hegelian terms, have marked with their peculiar viewpoint. The eye cannot see everything, only what it looks at, what it is trained to see and told to look out for. We are not photographic cameras literally freezing, or able to freeze, what has been framed. If we accept the evidence that the frame is already in itself a filtering device, we will surely agree that the gaze is even more so.

One of these last rewritings over the final decades of the 20th century was articulated by gender discourses, within a slow yet steady process that we have inherited today. Artists such as Ende, Sofonisba Anguissola, Marietta Robusti, Lavinia Fontana, Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith Leyster or Edmonia Lewis¹ were rescued from total or partial obscurity just over twenty years ago. Only then was it shown that their production, or at least part of it, had been wrongfully attributed to their male contemporaries in most museum catalogues and specialised bibliography, while the rest of their works were simply registered as anonymous. So, it is not that there are no great women artists in history – categorically answering the pertinent question posed back in the 1970s by Linda Nochlin² – but rather that their lives and their production had been rendered invisible by the context, by vested interests, by the chronicles of their time or by the historians of their future, biased by their own particular ways of seeing. Naturally, we should add the fact that awareness of them, and subsequently of their quality, has been conditioned by circumstances which have not been at all favourable for creation³.

On the other hand, it remains evident that the history of art, the one written in upper case in the text books recommended to our students, is exclusively made up of men's names – it would seem that centuries of accepted hypotheses and commonplaces bear more specific weight than the results of research in recent decades. Any attempt to deny the fact that men were preponderant, not only in art, but in practically all spheres of public life would be utter nonsense. However, it would also be equally misleading to believe that they make up the totality of it, a fact most text books seem determined to overlook. A summary glance over history will soon bring to the surface the conditions of ostracism imposed over our female ancestors, not to mention the high price paid by those subverting the strict rules of convention. All in all, a fleeting look at the lives of our mothers, and even at our own childhood, might be enough to clarify the matter categorically. And I believe that things would be crystal clear if only both men and woman engaged in a sincere exercise of voluntary memory, avoiding the temptation to wallow in the role of victim, or an exercise attempting to do away with chronic complexes and assumptions. That is the reason why everything done to foster visibility is so crucial, as is the endeavour to radically deconstruct the discourse of History and its constructs.

Feminist critique has focused, on one side, on rescuing from obscurity the above-mentioned artists in order to forge a chain of referents, a genealogy paving the way to the current contributions by foreclosing any possibility of considering them as merely isolated cases or anecdotes. On the other side, it undertook a concentrated effort to highlight the contributions of its *other* gaze, defined by its different condition, a fact that, on many occasions, was underhandedly questioned when they succeeded in making themselves heard. The viewpoint and the gender of whom, for once, is portrayed and portrays, visibly transformed the iconography of such standard subject matters in painting as *Susanna and the Elders*, or *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, for instance, in the extraordinary work of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1652/53). Transformations which, notwithstanding, were intelligently executed without dramatically breaching the literary discourse cemented by tradition and contained in mythological treatises or in the Bible.

The first painting we mentioned, *Susanna and the Elders* (Pommersfelden, Schloss Weissenstein, 1610), was attributed to the painter's father, in spite of the fact that it had been signed by Artemisia herself⁴. In opposition to the consented voyeurism and the coquettish sensuousness of the biblical character usually portrayed in the works of her male contemporaries, Artemisia Gentileschi painted a woman categorically rejecting with both her hands the glances of the old men with a horrified expression on her face, in this case not carnally emerging from a placid lake surrounded by vegetation and wrapped in gauzy silks, but hidden behind a wall. In turn, the elders are not glimpsed half concealed in the distance, but aggressively poised over Susanna, almost groping her. This is no Eden-like garden, nor does it delight in her nudity. On the other hand, and within the practice of her self-portraiture, Gentileschi's various Judiths were strong muscular women portrayed in the foreground, slitting their victim's throat with striking realism although devoid of superfluous detail or decoration. In contrast with imagined and "distinctively" feminine weakness and frailty, they are examples of strength and determination. Finally, her self-portrait at Hampton Court shows the artist in the act of painting, thus vindicating an identity both as an individual and as an artist – with her name and surname – and also an identification with painting itself at a time when allegories represented by anonymous female figures were so habitual⁵.

Centuries later, when the French artist Suzanne Valadon (1867–1938)⁶ painted those *toilette* scenes with women so frequent among her colleagues of Parisian Impressionism, for obvious reasons she also avoided any aspects pandering to the beholder's voyeurism over the female body. Similarly removed from the eroticism, fetishisation and idolisation of the *fleur* behind which Degas or Renoir showed their women combing or washing themselves at the washtub, Valadon returned to the naturalist resources used by Artemisia and rendered bodies which were young but real, with flaws like large feet or a back with the ribcage showing; physical women from the moment, awkwardly entering the bathtub, with one leg outside and the other vulgarly resting on the edge of the tub in order not to slip (*Grandmother and Young Girl Stepping into the Bath*, ca. 1908).

The two cases mentioned above can be located within the casuistry of artists who were popular in their time, and for whom a certain permissiveness, precisely based on their very exceptionality, existed⁷. However, they had to pay a high price for their audacity. And not only in their professional careers, but also in their private lives.

These two painters, whose work evidently remained overshadowed by that of their contemporaries, and whose contributions, from a gender viewpoint, focused on a transformation of the traditional iconography or imaginary of the female body seen through the eyes of a woman, can be taken as a precedent for the artist concerning us in this essay. And this is true both from the viewpoint of her personal circumstances – barely altered by the professional practice of women throughout those long centuries of patriarchy – and of her iconographic innovations. In the early 1970s, Ángela García Cordero (Valencia, 1944) was beginning her professional career as a painter in her native city using a language that at that time was very much in fashion in the local art scene: we are referring obviously enough to Pop⁸. Here in Spain it was a much more politicised version than its Anglo-Saxon counterpart, with its practitioners using it to raise social consciousness, and undoubtedly the Equipo Crónica group was the leading exponent of Spanish Pop art from the 1960s onwards. We should also mention Equipo Realidad, another group who were contemporaries of Ángela García and, like her, also from the city of Valencia⁹.

We are dealing with a particular historical moment, the 1960s and 1970s, with the upsurge of the Feminist movement in Europe and the United States. At that time, Anglo-Saxon female artists and art critics were struggling to emerge from the darkness and the peripheral position in which their predecessors had remained, adopting stances much more combative than those used by the previous generation. Although the historical avant-gardes had already, as in fact had happened in the past, begun to normalise the participation of a certain amount of women among their ranks, the truth is that, in the short term, it was only male artists who actually achieved recognition. It was pretty standard during many years to see, in the captions under the photographs of groups of "isms" illustrating manuals or specialised bibliography, how the

women artists were referred to as "unidentified". In this very same context there are cases revealing even more serious symptoms of discrimination for reasons of gender: Meret Oppenheim's famous fur-lined cup (*Breakfast in Fur*, 1936) passed from the status of object to that of photograph because the object had been made by this artist while the photograph of the object was the work of a man called Man Ray (in fact, it is not unusual to find this piece attributed to Ray in old books on Surrealism).

The years passed, but the situation did not seem to go through any substantial change. Women painters taking part in the so-called Second Avant-garde recall how the *Cedar Bar*, a meeting point for New York's Abstract Expressionists, was a place in which women were accepted as partners of painters such as De Kooning (Flaine) or Pollock (Lee Krasner), rather than for their work as artists¹¹. The rest, such as Helen Frankenthaler or Joan Mitchell, were considered to belong to a second category. *Cedar Bar* was a realm of white, heterosexual men who not only confined the above-mentioned women painters to a ghetto, but also drove away Robert Rauschenberg, a gay artist *avant la lettre*, unable to tolerate his creative reaction against their movement. The clearly fresher language he chose was precisely that of Pop art.

The silent castration of female practitioners of Abstract Expressionism was followed by the noise, proclamations, demonstrations and direct action of the next generation, that to which García belongs. A generation which was not prepared to be sidelined and fought to conquest its own space. The 1970s saw an intense politicisation in the Western world, a situation particularly acute in the United States with the protests against the Vietnam War coming to an end, and the post-68 euphoria in its death throes. It was a time when day by day mass public demonstrations proved that they were able to transform unacceptable realities, and when alternatives to power were rehearsed in all directions. During this time many non-institutional art spaces opened up, such as *112 Workshop* or *PS 77*, and we were to witness the most radical and political breach in art since Dada in terms of both artistic conventions and the establishment.

Women's groups, such as WAR (Women Artists in Revolution) were on guard against any institutional art exhibition, ready to throw light on

the fact that women artists were still being sidelined and systematically excluded from official circuits. And they did so by means of demonstrations and direct political action¹². Because back then everything was regarded as political. The personal was political¹³.

Women artists worked on an individual basis – this was when Judy Chicago, Linda Nochlin and Miriam Schapiro all started out – but they did not object, and in fact the opposite was true, to working in groups and collectively signing their works, thereby erasing personal identities. That idea of collective work was the same that had encouraged some European creators to act within groups as a different form of positioning with respect to the art institution. It was in itself a dissident stance given its anti-individualistic orientation. Perhaps it is worth underscoring just how fundamental for the market and for the system in general is the concept of the individual, the essential basis for the idea of the genius as a different being, above and beyond the rest.

To a certain extent, the struggle to conquer their own space led these artists to reject painting, considering it too contaminated by the androcentric discourse, both in terms of iconographic tradition and especially so in light of the recent formal movements led by Abstract Expressionism. For this reason they began to make use of other languages such as photography, performance, or installation, in an attempt to build new discourses from scratch. The artists who continued working as painters did so with a heightened critical and political sensibility which questioned the patriarchal contents implicit in that specific medium whether by recontextualising it and parodying recurring grand themes and works from the history of art, or by rejecting the purity of painting and its halo of superiority defended by modernism while at once repositing it as a hybrid vocabulary: painting mixed with other artistic practices.

However, another symptom of the alternativeness of these American and even French women artists from the 1970s, perhaps the best-known and best studied cases, is that their dissidence very often did not reach beyond the confines of their immediate context, and much less so their national borders, finding an echo only in the specialised art press which, generally speaking, hardly reached Spain. Ángela García was a contemporary of WAR, Chicago and Schapiro,

however, they never knew each other's work. And although it is true to say that the context of our country, in the grip of an isolation not only political, but also economic and cultural¹⁴, made the free flow of information almost impossible, it is no less true that in García's milieu the works by Warhol, Lichtenstein, Mel Ramos, Oldenburg, Allen Jones or Wesselman were known¹⁵. But these artists entered within the limits of the established, developing their work within the traditional structure of museums and galleries, while their contemporary women artists, with their belligerent and combative stances, remained in a situation of invisibility outside the platforms they created themselves and, it goes without saying, on international circuits¹⁶.

In this sense, Ángela García Codoner experienced a double isolation: the isolation she shared with her fellow citizens in a dictatorship that dominated Spain, and the isolation that, due to her condition as a woman and as a feminist artist – particularly the latter – make her a *rara avis* within the Spanish art scene. While the members of WAR had created a chain of collective guerrilla art, and American female students were at least able to avail of oases such as Fresno and CalArts¹⁷, García Codoner was practically forced to adopt the, at that time, "double militancy" subsuming women's issues in anti-Franco dissidence, but lacking precedents in which to reflect herself, or colleagues with whom to share her concerns. In this sense, the fact that she worked on her own in a place like Valencia is quite revealing when, at the time, working in a team was so widespread¹⁸, something which even further underlines her precarious communicative situation with regard to the subject matters cutting across her work in those years¹⁹.

If we try to look at Ángela García's work under a present day perspective and context, we will probably come away with the impression that it is a painting impregnated with erstwhile references and recipes. What is incredible is that it dates from the early 1970s, already thirty years ago. And furthermore, it was made in Spain, even though with practically no repercussion²⁰. This space-time continuum is crucial to any understanding of the importance of rediscovering her work. To analyse García's forgotten work today with the hindsight of the evolution undergone by contemporary art in recent decades is a fascinating task, and to a certain

extent we could view it as the lost mother of these above-mentioned references and recipes. In fact, she is one of the artists who opened up the discourse of gender in Spanish painting. While this statement might seem daring, it nonetheless remains true to date, notwithstanding other similar cases in the country still waiting to come to light²¹.

If we take a summary glance over the artistic context in Valencia with regard to the participation of women painters and particularly of García herself, we will notice that her presence was reasonably discreet, and that it became even more so as they left behind the faculty of fine arts and their phase as amateurs to begin their professional careers as such: "there were very few of us, Aurora Valero, who was older than me but didn't have many shows either; Jacinta Gil, who belonged to a much earlier generation; and besides, a group of figurative painters: Rosa Torres arrived in the generation after mine. The truth is that there were quite a few women in my class at college. However, ultimately, only two of us continued painting. Our problem was that women got married, had children, and gradually seemed to quit. And in this sense I truly consider myself one of the first in breaking with the norm. It was very hard for me, but I kept going"²². When speaking about her contemporaries, she categorically claims "in those days there was nobody in Valencia making feminist painting. Nor am I aware of any case in the rest of Spain". And what we know today about Spanish women artists from the avant-gardes to the late 1960s does not change this perception²³.

As a result, to understand her work it is essential to recall the dizzying transformation our country was undergoing, a transition which had already started in the previous decade. Around the mid 1970s, and in parallel to the indefatigable activity of political feminist groups, Spain went through a boom in gender issues favoured by the new political openness, by the much needed changes in legislation, and by the desire to speak publicly and openly about issues which had previously been confined to private when not clandestine circles²⁴. This general tendency was to affect, in the following two decades, the work of a new generation of women artists who began to apply gender discourse to the practice of visual arts and to their own professional consideration – an attitude that implied a huge step forward with

regard to the construct of women artists as the muses of their colleagues, inherited from a large part of the historical avant-gardes.

There were more and more women artists understanding art as a professional career choice and not as an accomplishment for young ladies from the bourgeois classes as had been the norm in the 19th century. And their very presence helped to normalise a new situation not only in the schools of fine arts, but also in exhibition venues and in the art market. On the other hand, the unprecedented emergence of women in art resulted in contributions differentiated by their individual political involvement. Indeed, there were those who incorporated their specific vindications and claims vis-à-vis women's reality in oeuvres which may be clearly regarded as feminist; others addressed those questions from the realm of intuition; other less politicised artists dealt with subject matters and concerns that had to do with the mere fact of being women yet lacking a critical corpus; and, finally, all those artists who, although they did not engage in the subject matter of gender, contributed to normalise the participation of women in territories until very recently closed to them by their mere presence in public and professional spheres.

1974 - 1975 Misses

These were the years when García began her professional career, the crucial turning point in Spain from the late-Franco period to the early years of the transition towards democracy. An acutely politically sensitive country which was changing incredibly fast after nearly half a century of cultural and political anorexia. As we have already said, this painter had been influenced by Equipo Crónica and Equipo Realidad²⁰. With the former she collaborated in the painting of their multiples, and with both groups she shared a friendship, projects and journeys abroad. Besides her links with Spanish painters, she was well versed in international Pop artists, thanks to her broad reading interests and her trips to Europe and America²¹. However, she maintained substantial differences with her colleagues regarding concerns and subject matter, and even in her personal way of using language and graphic elements. We believe that those differences are the result of the previously-mentioned "double militancy" and the fact that her gaze was conditioned by her gender.

Let us take a look, both as an example and as a starting point, at the invariable use by Spanish Pop painters of irony and parody as mechanisms to question reality through recontextualisation, deformation, repetition, a free association of images, etc; something interpreted by Valeriano Bozal as a distancing strategy. Yet very few traces of humour can be found in the work of Ángela García Codoner, a painter who, with hindsight, claims not to understand how her paintings were "so restrained given the rage I had bottled up at the time"²². And I believe that that anger must have been responsible for the neutralisation of any sort of social caricature in her painting, even if it is possible to recognize some hints of it in early works like *Desfile* or *Recortable*, both from 1974, which on the other hand were those more obviously indebted to the weight and influence of her colleagues.

On another note, while her contemporaries used the history of Spanish painting and its representations of power as references, shrewdly and ironically mirroring them as criticism of the political present - standard practice at the time by the Spanish left and opponents to the regime - García worked almost invisibly: untouched, camouflaged, covered, concealed. Those rejecting Franco's dictatorship and denouncing the lack of freedom, rarely extended these vindications to the collective which suffered most under the political circumstances: women²³. On this particular issue, Ángela García Codoner tells us how "in those days there were no feminist men. They were too busy fighting the dictatorship, and I was very busy trying to find a small space for myself. It was the same war, but fought on different fronts. But they showed no solidarity. And although left-wing parties, with which I had occasional contact, were concerned with projecting an image of supporting women's rights because that was what was expected from them, that support never materialized in anything concrete. And it is not that they didn't understand, because many of my male colleagues were highly intelligent, but it simply had nothing to do with them. Nobody was prepared to give up their privileges".

Before the 1970s, Spanish women were a social collective deprived of basic individual rights. Nowadays, the image of a woman in a burka is particularly anathema, a woman lacking all power over her immediate physical visibility, but also

deprived of her rights to health, education, and freedom of movement. We are obviously talking about different degrees of lack of freedom but in the 1970s Spanish women did not have the right to have a passport without the authorisation of her guardian, either her father or husband. Neither was she free to go to university, work, earn a salary or open a bank account without their consent no matter what age she was. Until 1970, the tutelage of children was exclusively a father's concern, and he had the right to give them up in adoption without the mother's consent. In this way the separation of the sexes that had been entrenched in the social fabric since the late 18th century was kept alive: women were in charge of the private space while men dominated the public arena. And any incursion by women into the latter was controlled and restricted²⁴.

In these paintings from the mid 1970s, García Codoner touched on the issue of the mechanisms of the image of the exceptional albeit authorised appearance of women in the public sphere and its dissemination in the mass media and popular culture. We are referring here to beauty contests, a kind of competition which had already been a benchmark issue in the so-called "second wave of feminism"²⁵. In contrast, she undertook the subject of the supposed realm that the home was for women, the most direct representation of the private space. In their capacity as supporters of the family and prisoners in their own houses, women were allowed a concession which let them step into the public arena. With these competitions they became 'queens for a day' and the embodiment of eroticism and sexuality²⁶. Once on the catwalk, the essential and practically only value that women could contribute was her meticulously groomed looks, looks which of course had to adapt to culturally accepted canons. Clad in their bikinis, the girls looked and acted like robots, everyone of them repeating the same movements and following pre-established behavioural patterns, their individual will seemingly usurped.

This was the channel Ángela García chose to talk about Francoism, and much more. She put in practice the feminist motto of the time: the personal is political. Yet she took these issues beyond a merely autobiographical dimension. Where Equipo Crónica questioned the given identity of who we were as Spaniards, suggesting that we are our visual heritage

our culture, our kings, our history and, why not, even our comic-book characters like the Guerrero del Antifaz. García posed the question "OK, but who are we as Spanish women?" In answer, we are fairytales, popular magazines, TV soap operas, embroideries obstinately taught at school, private life. No kings nor queens here unless they are beauty queens, no history in upper case, no burials of Count Orgaz, no images of assassinations of heads of state taken from television. In her paintings, the cardinal and contextualising elements are Disney's Snow White and Cinderella, Azucena²⁷, or the images epitomising the ultimate female archetype: the beauty queen. Referents of popular culture, it's true, but of a popular culture of women that García Codoner knows and persistently repeats. Given the lack of critical feminist writing in Spain at the time, another of her sources was the magazine *luz* (1946 - 1982), a must-read publication in those years which also provided Equipo Realidad with their most significant iconographic references²⁸. However, it is important to emphasise her own life experience as the most influential element in the formation of her political self.

García uses ink-jet to paint the blurred face of a Miss, framing it within blond lace (*Composición*, acrylic on canvas, 1974). Her identity is, nevertheless, denied by means of crusing the Miss' gaze with a horizontal strip of shapely legs, a technique similar to that used by the press in cases where the person must remain anonymous, like policemen, alleged criminals, or the children of celebrities. But perhaps she does so because nobody really cares who she actually is. The identity of the owner of the endlessly reproduced legs does not matter. There are only sinuous and well-shaped bodies, turned into market flesh and crowned with straws, mere objects to buy and sell. Women are depicted as clones with no freewill, beings built from a model which allows for no variations. We just have to recall the warning in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* when the beautiful cyborg steps outside the rules, brings the system down and sets the Apocalypse in motion. Beautiful is alright, but inactive and without a will.

If the references used and the topics dealt with by García Codoner make her painting different from that of her contemporaries, the actual methods she used to build her images were similar although put at the service of her own specific discourse. For example, in paintings such as *El desfile* or *Recortable*

belonging to this series, she uses an expressive strategy also frequent since 1972 in the paintings by Equipo Realidad: the *floa*. In this way, her *Misses* were rendered unfocused, imprecise, and blurred. The *floa* was widely used by some Pop painters –not forgetting the equally masterly blurring of detail by Gerhard Richter– as a strategy to unsettle a direct reading of the image in question. In García we would also have to add the fact that a blurred figure brings with it the idea of reverie and desire, of the mysterious and unreachable from the legacy of romantic painting and also, as we have mentioned before, of certain works depicting women painted by Impressionists such as Renoir or Degas¹⁸.

However, contrary to the consideration of painting as a pure medium¹⁹, García takes it as a hybrid form, following the British Pop of Hamilton and his collages, the proto-pop of Robert Rauschenberg or the more political expression in the collages by John Heartfield²⁰ and the Iberian versions made by Renau and Ballester. For instance, *Composición* (1974) is an acrylic with collage in which she used photographs of *Misses* taken from magazines which she cut into small fragments and then silk-screened once and again in the different series of works she painted in those years and which undoubtedly provided an iconographic continuity to all her work from the 1970s.

The repetition of an image, later used in collages, provides her series from those years with an iconographic unity. On one hand, she used serigraphy while also relying heavily on the new technologies of the time as in the case of the photocopier she had in her studio. And that obsession for the grid, underlined in those little cut-outs of glued photocopies, would lead us to the Neo-Cubist body of work from the late 1980s and 1990s, a work indebted to Picasso and Braque, almost nostalgic yet somewhat cold and analytical.

The construction of space, another of the significant features of the work of this artist, is directly related to collage. When her colleagues used quotes from Baroque art, elements from the mass media and everyday life, they integrated them in a non-contrived fashion, mimetically copying and recontextualising them in a single space. Besides, they painted with acrylic in an attempt to erase any hint of gesture, of the brushstroke. They built a metaphoric space in which a *menina* rubbed

shoulders with a 1960s lamp from a typical middle-class house of the time. But, instead of depicting the elements in a continuum, like an assemblage integrating the objects within space, García violently placed them as if they were broken fragments of reality to be put back together haphazardly. She cut and separates in interspersed parallel bands, never showing complete images, as if only fragmentation and discontinuity were possible (*Las hadas y el bordado*, acrylic and collage on canvas, 1975).

She fractionates the bodies of the *Misses*, the fairytales, alternating them with needlework and fragments of lace, instilling an overall sense into the formal arrangement. The bodies are nothing but sections which are valued as such, like shapely legs finished off with stilettos, waip waists, big hairdos, smiles framed by heavily made-up eyes. Sections lacking in subject identity. If an artist such as Wesselman uses these same methods to fetishise, the place from which García looks, a gender-influenced gaze, acts as a form of denunciation, locating these bodies within their real context and showing the other side of the coin²¹.

The jigsaw is as scattered as an unresolved Rubik cube: if we attempt to mentally reconstruct it, to make the pieces fit, undoubtedly many loose pieces will be left over. It is in the process of non-pictorial production where Ángela García proclaims her gaze as other than the gaze offered by centuries of depiction of female bodies, for she combines the objectivity of the mirrored image –the face of Azucena, the legs of a *Miss*– with a gesturality highlighted by the radical, albeit neatly geometric, cuttings of what has been painted. This procedure directly leads us towards the hand, towards the artist. With this formula the montage prevails over the reading of the original image, while it deactivates its power to narrate and its representational meaning, conflating expression and meaning.

For what is being built is our memory of making oil-based soaps, cross-stitching, of the gaps between lace-curtains Carmen Martín Gaité talked about, of futile stories of the “beauty among beauties”, of romantic dreams of perfect love, of one true love. And the pictorial space is a fragmentary one, because the history of women is also fragmentary, dislocated, full of empty voids. A history poor in visible culture and recognised as such, the master of a small field in a sphere of the public nearly always

hijacked. A history nevertheless extraordinarily fertile in the domestic field and that, far from being categorically rejected, is vindicated as a sphere for creation. Ángela García blends the material reality of the home and the family with the built image usurping its space, whether fairytales, queers for a day, or the future of a sublimated love²². They are, however, things which cannot stand up in real life. Like in a funfair mirror house, giving us glimpses of reflections but never showing us reality as it is.

1975 - 1977 Needlework²³

With *Needlework*, a series begun in 1975 and exhibited at the Val 30 Gallery three years later, Ángela García Codoñer took another step forward. She made a radical move away from the iconicity which had characterised her early paintings and which placed them within the sphere of Pop art, shifting to in-depth work with a subject matter only summarily touched on the previous year: the issue of work traditionally assigned to the female gender²⁴ and which the history of art had classified as a minor category of handicrafts²⁵. On some occasions, she used collage –taking the photocopies of the *Misses* and overlaying them on the painting– although in most cases she opted for the painting of patterns and outlines for embroidery traced on tissue paper. At the end of that process, she extended the tiny checks of a tablecloth until eventually losing the quality of miniaturist work, of a kind of virtuoso, mechanical and therefore theoretically automatic occupation, the chores of our grandmothers on long winter evenings. As a matter of fact, she analyses the stitch in its less decorative essence –as a field of colour, as a geometric weave, taking her close to the aesthetic agenda of Mondrian or Van Donsburg.

A formal analogy may be deduced from this analysis between the female chores of embroidery, patchwork or clothes-making and the results of some of the avant-garde tendencies. And the Valencian painter arrived at this conclusion in an intuitive way, removed from the political meaning underlying the works of artists such as Miriam Schapiro or Faith Ringgold and the school of followers that defined the pattern of Western art in the coming decades. García places these chores and symbols of women's work at the same level as painting –a medium considered as hierarchically superior and traditionally masculine – while at the same time she rebels against the

anonymity of the hand, of repetition, of the back part of the neat needlework always made following the same path, against the impossibility of breaking away from the pattern, carefully traced from magazines, and doing something different. Underlying all this work is the desire to do away with the *lujos* and bring the yo into being.

On the other hand, García's works are not precisely functional –they cannot be used when setting the table for tea, but are framed, protected behind a glass and hung on the wall; lacking in continuity, their borders are cut at a certain point, like the samples my mother used to have and which were used as a sort of catalogue of things to be done. They are simply forms which, by doing away with their functionality, become a political discourse subverting accepted givens and rebelling, making tissue patterns not an end but a means. For the specific position of the subject is important: if I am Picasso, the meaning of that act is formal; if I am Ángela García Codoñer, it is political²⁶.

For, if fairytales represent a desire for the future, a woman's imaginary focused on sublimated love, what is real are the works made at home which involved the time of women made eternal by daily repetition. The character of Penelope letting the days pass by, weaving and unweaving her shroud, is updated and personified in the works of all those women ambiguously devoted to the profession of housewives; in the memory of my grandmother, Isabel, knitting booties all day long with the same routine, measuring her time stitch by stitch; and of my mother scrupulously repeating the same pace my grandmother had in turn inherited from other women before her. Because genealogies may be found here, in works lacking not only artistic consideration but even a professional one. Faceless, anonymous handicraft, Ghettoes around a table with a heater underneath. Ghettoes in convent schools with the girls stitching text on the blank page of the cloth with coloured threads.

Her dissidence confronts that measured line of our mothers and grandmothers, offering an alternative, a change. Yet here we do not find a denial, a betrayal of the particular culture of looking at, of building, the women's world. Similarly to the premises from which Miriam Schapiro starts off in the same period²⁷, she uses the tradition inherited from her mother.

At that time cut-outs began to appear in her paintings, speaking to us about the paper dolls we used to buy at the newsagents around the corner, together with picture cards, and which we kept in a shoe box: "Dolls with a complete wardrobe of coats, handbags, shoes or hats... winter clothes or chaste bathing suits for the beach or the swimming pool. Childlike dolls with little or no femininity like the androgynous Nancy that my mother never bought me - whose little dresses were attached to their bodies with the help of folding tabs. Cut-out dolls - always female, or at most baby boys - who taught us to dress fashionably, to take care of our appearance, or to dress like señoritas who know how to match their handbag and shoes. Cheap dolls for girls from humble families, appearing in the paintings of García Codoñer in a disorderly fashion in a space without coordinates. Dolls hidden (*Composición*, serigraphy, pencil and acrylic on board, 1975) behind the firm legs of the anonymous Misses silk-screened by this Valencian painter in rows, like in a grid. For she made it evident to us that, after the supposedly innocent learning of childhood, the end for which everything has been set out for years eventually arrives. They are the girls' chores - cutting dresses for dolls before doing it for oneself - acting for her as a link with the series on beauty contests.

In 1977 she mixed the embroideries from the *Needlework* series with patterns of clothes traced and cut in tissue paper, patterns which cannot be used, merely acting as a cultural reference and most likely, as an autobiographical reference. The grid gradually loses strength until finally disappearing, exclusively leaving colour to dominate the surface as form. It was as if it were the hand inventing the designs for others to copy.

The fragments of Misses' bodies re-emerge, but on this occasion they are diminutive, almost unrecognisable from the distance, like grids within the overall fabric - textile as text, as Roland Barthes would have it. The beautiful girls play their role within the discourse of the tabloids, of women's work, as if they were stitches - the smile stitch, leg stitch, bust stitch; small photocopies attached to the support in a deliberately precarious manner with visible fragments of tape; the stitch is time, is profession; housewife/duty, beautiful and always ready; chores/duty, hardworking. Beauty equals laboriousness. Beauty framed by the home, shut up within the hurrie.

In 1978 the political vindications disappear with their place taken by painting for painting's sake - at an early stage, as a reminder of the cross-stitch referentially appearing in the *Needlework* series. However, the brushstroke little by little occupies the place of the stitch, which disappears as a sign: it is colour and gesture, but a studied, non-violent gesture. The discourse of her work is now clearly in tune with what was happening in Spanish painting during the 1980s, a painting dissociating, distancing itself from political overtones and from the social references which had been kept in place during the final years of Franco's dictatorship. That was the moment for painting-painting, as claimed by many, or "if painting is death, we are necrophagous".

But that's already another story.

1. The *lujos* is a small cloth with which young girls were taught to embroider at school in manual class - I don't know whether this is still the case nowadays. It was also the object with which we started our trousseau. I remember having embroidered my *lujos* at the age of eleven, back in the 70s. I was embroidering for myself, but basically it was for somebody who would eventually come along, the still absent partner who, somehow, was persuaded to try in this sublimated fashion. *Lujos* is a conflation of "lu y yo", literally meaning "you and I".

2. Cf. CHADWICK, Whitney, *Mujer, arte y sociedad*, Barcelona, Destino, Thames and Hudson, 1992. [Original title: *Women, Art and Society*].

3. When asking the question "why are there no great women artists?", Nochlin challenged the concept of the great artist or genius, claiming that this concept is nothing but a construct, a myth. After that, she explained that the conditions for artistic creation among women throughout history were not at all favourable, concluding that invisibility is not synonymous with non-existence. NOCHLIN, Linda, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?", in *Artforum*, 69, no. 9, January 1971, pp. 22-39.

4. We ought to bear in mind that in the 19th century, when the academies of fine arts first opened up for women, they were only allowed to take up certain subjects, and, for example, the study of anatomy or copying from the nude were off limits to them. See DE DIEGO, Estrella, *La mujer y la pintura del XIX español (retrospectivas olvidadas y algunas más)*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1981.

5. See PÉREZ CARREÑO, Francisca, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, Madrid, Información e Historia S.L., 1993, p. 38.

6. Painted in 1630 during a visit to England, the painting was not attributed to her until 1967. See MULLOCK, Griselda, "Histoire et politique: l'histoire de l'art peut-elle survivre au féminisme?", in Various Authors, *Féminisme, art et histoire de l'art*, Paris, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1990, p. 69.

7. Suzanne Valadon was completely self-taught. The daughter of a washerwoman, her entrée into the Parisian art

scene was as a model after giving up a previous job in the circus. See CHADWICK, Whitney, op. cit., p. 269.

8. In the case of Artemisia, being the daughter of the Baroque painter Ottavio Gentileschi made training in the family workshop easier. However, her work was also submitted to a process of invisibility behind her father's name. Many of her paintings were attributed to Ottavio or were considered as anonymous works for centuries.

9. In this essay we will focus on two series made by García in the 1970s, *Misses* and *Labajos* (*Needlework*). Prior to these, she made works in which she painted deformed bodies with a metaphorical purpose. As she herself claimed in an interview in Valencia on 7 June 2003 - an interview widely quoted in this text - that body of work was a reflection of the discovery of her own body. We must bear in mind that serialised production was one of the starting points of the work of the artistic group at the time, such as the Equipo Crónica: "For us, 'Crónica de la Realidad' [Chronicle of Reality] meant an objectivisation and realism of the data thus used as a categorisation and serialisation (sic) of the envelopes. For us, the series is a perfect means to unite the particular with the dynamic and dialectic development of the general", in "Equipo Crónica": Sulpicio Toledo Valdés [Manifiesto programático], 1964, cit. by BOYAL, Valeriano "Cuatro notas para el análisis de las imágenes del Equipo Crónica" in *Del Equipo Crónica a Manuel Valdés*, Valencia, Consorcio de Museos, 1998.

10. Juan Genovés was already living in Madrid by then. Also in Valencia, painters like Joan Antoni Toledo, Artur Herrer, Rafael Amengol and Manolo Boix were following a Pop line, for Ana Pérez - who had taken part in 1964 in the early gatherings leading to the creation of artistic groups in Valencia taking that tendency as their starting point - gave up painting in the mid 1960s and did not start her career until the 1990s.

11. See WAGNER, Anne M., "Hicdonos. Presencia de Krasner, ausencia de Pollock" in CHADWICK, Whitney and DE COURIVRON, Isabelle (eds.), *Los otros importantes. Creatividad y relaciones íntimas*, Madrid, Cátedra, Universidad de Valencia, Instituto de la Mujer, 1994, pp. 277-304. Krasner even claimed on one occasion that in the *Center for Women* were treated like cattle. [Original title: Anne M. Wagner, "Fictions: Krasner's Presence, Pollock's Absence," in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courivron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995)].

12. *117 Workshop*, later called *White Columns*, was in 117 Greene Street and was founded in 1970 by Gordon Matta Clark and Jeffrey Jew. *117* is currently affiliated with the MoMA. It was first called *Institute for Art and Urban Resources* and was set up by Alanna Heiss in 1971. See *3000 Artists Return to Artists Space, 25 Years*, Claudia Gould and Valerie Smith (eds.), New York, Artists Space, 1998, p. 27.

13. The first demonstrations of American feminist artists took place against the Whitney Museum, after this institution organised an exhibition in 1969 with negligible female participation; the protests led to the creation of *Women Artists in Revolution (WAR)*. Sixteen years later the group *Guerrilla Girls* was created.

14. See "Women's Liberation: Notes From the Second Year", in *Journal of the Radical Feminist*, New York, 1970, which deals with the question of the links between the personal and the political in the feminism of the time.

15. Our isolation was the paradoxical grounds on which the then Spanish Minister for Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga, launched the advertising campaign with the slogan "Spain is different".

16. Due to cultural reasons and also geographic proximity, Spanish artists had links with Latin countries in Europe. Araya lived in exile in Paris, or, for instance, Equipo Realidad spent several seasons working in Milan. García Codoñer recalls how Valencian artists used to travel throughout Europe to see painting and admits not having had any contact with Anglo-Saxon feminist platforms: "When we were students, we went to the Venice Biennale, to Madrid in an exhibition of Zubizarán...", however, she had a chance to see American painting on her honeymoon in the United States in 1968, and she says she was impressed by the work of Wesselman, because of his graphic techniques rather than his subject matters or iconographies, and Rosenquist which she claims to have liked for its impactos.

17. The scant repercussion of these groups in the media was obviously not exclusive to women artists, but affected most artists moving in New York's alternative spaces.

18. In 1970, Judy Chicago began an educational experiment in Fresno, California, through which she responded to Greenberg's formalist modernism by introducing in her program gender and feminist contents, a non-hierarchical use of both materials and techniques, and questioned the traditional Euro-American and masculine historical practices. Cf. WILDING, Faith, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-75", in BROUDE, Norma and GARRARD, Mary D. (eds.), *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1994, p. 31.

19. In a letter sent to Mensa in 1964, just before the formation of Equipo Crónica, Tomás Llorens explained to the Catalan painter: "We have come up with the idea of creating a group. Not to help in the question that the individual launching of an artist demands today, but with the goal of defining a tendency and a common artistic intention through a work which in some extent approaches team work... we are trying to create a painting reflecting the myths of the society surrounding us... Given that, at the end of the day, it is about raising social (and not individual) awareness, we want the artistic elaboration to be controlled by the most rational and objective possible debate on three issues" (cf. LLORENS, Tomás, "Juan-Antoni Toledo y la creación del Equipo Crónica", in Toledo, Valencia, IAM, 1998, p. 12; García Codoñer, a child of that set of ideas, created and signed her work individually in the 1970s, although she explains that in those days she made many collective projects with the above-mentioned Valencian artists. One example is the group exhibition *Los otros 25 años de pintura valenciana*, organised in Valencia with the support of the Puntis, Temps and Val 130 galleries as a reaction against an institutional exhibition offering a biased vision of local painting).

20. To the question of whether she was aware of the Valencian feminist groups which met in the Dones Bookshop, she answers: "I used to go to class, have rows with my husband, take care of my children, and study. I couldn't waste time on gatherings. And as I didn't belong to any groups because I never had time for meetings, I was never connected with that group. However, whenever I needed a feminist book, that was the place to go".

21. The series *Mises*, which has been shown incompletely in the two retrospectives lately dedicated to García Codoñer (in Las Alarzonas with the title *Ángela García. 1972 - 2002*, and at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia), was exhibited for the first time at the Official College of Architects of Valencia and Murcia in 1974. Notwithstanding its innovative and critical dimension, it had no repercussion in Valencia. The artist does not remember any feedback from the people surrounding her, among which were her fellow artists Valdes, Solbes, Calafich, Ballester and Torres. In the 1980s, her work shifted towards a type of painting which had much more to do with the mainstream of the time, a painting with which we believe she obtained less meaningful results.

22. In this sense, we should cite here the exhibition of Ana Peters — a painter who took part in the project *Estampa Popular Valenciana* in the mid 1960s, in the Edurne Gallery in Madrid, with the title *Imágenes de la mujer en la sociedad de consumo* (April, 1966). Mariuz Ródenos also took part at the 2nd Salón de Independientes of Valencia (1973) with a painting in an expressionistic style called *Liberación de la mujer* which was presented together with *Proyección del hombre*. In the Catalan conceptual movement we should mention Tina Miralles (Sabadell, 1950), whose two individual exhibitions coincide in time with García Codoñer.

23. In her essay on the Basque sculptor Luña Roldán, Mariuz Ballester, partner of Josep Renau, describes the situation of the women students of fine arts in Valencia in the 1920s: "for some obscure reason, I was enrolled at the School of Fine Arts of Valencia. In those times, towards the end of the monarchy in Spain, female students were regarded hardly in general, but it was particularly so for female students in fine arts, as these schools were forbidden territory for women. I can remember the vulgar mucking by the janitors, the piercing insults used by the teachers themselves to discourage us, and in the best of cases, the indifference of our male classmates. The arrival of the Republic brought many changes, but the old situation was truly shameful: in that time there were very few of us and I remember that I arrived at home completely distraught and I would give free rein to my tears of frustration and rage secretly in my room." See PRAIS RIVELLES, Rafael, "Tuveon por delante", in *Mujeres que fueron por delante*, Valencia, Consorcio de Museos, 1998.

24. The generation of women artists immediately prior to García Codoñer included, among others, Juana Francés (1926 - 1990), Jacinta Gil (1925), Amalia Aza (1930), Ana Peters (1932), Carmen Laffon (1934), Isabel Quintanilla, Isabel Villar (1934), and Esther Ferrer (1937), and further back Mariuz Malku (1907 - 1995), Remedios Varo (1908 - 1963) and Marga Gil Roscovet (1918 - 1932). From her own generation are Aurora Valero (1940), Soledad Sevilla (1944), Susana Solano

(1946) and Rosa Torres (1948). It is worth highlighting the fact that García Codoñer lacks references in the history of art, for the above-mentioned artists, in spite of the fact that, in some cases, they undertook questions related with femininity or the reflection of women's life in their work, did not have any critical or political perspective. The main referent for García is the reality she lives in, condemns and rebels against.

25. There was an unprecedented boom of groups of progressive women vindicating women's rights. They also coincided with the Spanish transition to democracy and the cover of the UN, which had declared 1975 as *International Women's Year*. See FOLGUERA, Pilar, "De la transición política en la democracia. La evolución del feminismo en España durante el periodo 1975 - 1988", in *El feminismo en España: dos siglos de historia* (Pilar Folguera, comp.), Madrid, Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 1988, pp. 111 - 131.

26. García Codoñer admits the influence of Equipo Crónica, with whom she not only shared common interests, but also a friendship which led her to travel on several occasions with them. Ballester and Cardells, members of Equipo Realidad, were her colleagues from college. "They were people who contributed with their concerns in college far more than other classmates. I had an excellent relationship with them... I was part of their gang. The truth is that Equipo Crónica broke with everything and offered new alternatives, and the rest of us were lagging behind, a bit like travel companions." In fact, the series *Oficio y Oficiantes*, made by Equipo Crónica in 1974 (an allegory about art and the artists) was based on a group photograph taken by Rafael Solbes, with Alherola, a photographer who documented the work of the group; the painter Rosa Torres and Ángela García Codoñer who painted part of their multiples; the engraver F. Uppis; the painter Jordi Teixidor, Juan Vicente Monzón and Mandó Valdés. Analysing the whole series, the critique of the concept of authorship is all too evident, for if "the portrait includes all the individuals who had intervened in one way or another in the works of the Equipo Crónica... why not prevent all the people who had collaborated in the painting of the works signed by the Equipo? Who were those works by? Who should their works be attributed to? To those who made the original photograph? To those preparing the materials? To those engraving the surfaces? To those deciding what the result should be?" See MARÍN MADRÍ, Ricardo, *Equipo Crónica: pintura, cultura, sociedad*, Valencia, Fundación Alfonso el Magnánimo, 2002, pp. 105 - 110.

27. It is possible to make — and in fact, this has been done — a detailed analysis of the pictorial resources, of the juxtaposition and association of elements, of the renewed vindication of the femininity for painting, relating Ángela García's work with the above mentioned groups. Notwithstanding the basal and inalienable nature of these aspects in an analysis of this painter, it is important to underscore that the true interest of her work lies less in her formal exploration of Pop, as in the innovative use she makes of language and image as tools at the service of a gender discourse. That is what it makes it so different and deserving to be rescued from obscurity. Cf. DE LA CALLE, Román, "Un nuevo 'Less is more'", and PERÓ, Juan Bautista, "Del grán al signo. De la cita al collage (And back

again)", in *Ángela García. 1972 - 2002* (catalogue), Valencia, Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2002.

28. It is interesting to think that it was Valencia where the first group of Neo-Pop women painters, *Equipo Unites*, appeared in the 1980s and that their work, made mostly with female references, applies the irony and parody which was common currency in 1960s and 1970s pop in Spain, and which they use as an instrument for distancing, although lacking in the acidity and sharpness of García Codoñer.

29. In fact, from the 1980s, some feminists began to question the ability of the parties of the left to offer alternatives to the vindications of women, something which resulted in many of their affiliates quitting party politics. For example, in the late 1970s, "the national committee of the Spanish Communist Party decided that notwithstanding the important role played by the *Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* [set up inside the party in 1964] during the dictatorship, with the arrival of democracy it had lost its raison d'être". Rosa Paró, "El feminismo en España. Breve resumen, 1953 - 1985", in FOLGUERA, Op. Cit., p. 137.

30. In the Civil Law in force during Franco times, the articles concerning Family Law barred women from taking decisions without the written authorisation of their husbands or fathers. Similarly to mutes or the mentally disabled, they even lacked legal entity or rights. This situation continued until 1975.

31. The first televised report of a feminist demonstration in the USA was titled "No more Miss America" (September 1968, Atlantic City). The serigraphy *Mises en traje de baño*, a group portrait in the form of a frieze made in 1970 by Equipo Realidad, must be read as a referent from popular culture. However, when the poster *Miss Chicago and the Calligram Girl* (1971) was produced by the Fresno State College, as part of Judy Chicago's feminist program, the students appeared in disguise parodying the female stereotypes of beauty and seduction by confronting crowns, beauty queen sashes and bikinis, with combat boots, unshaven armpits, love-handlers, doll-like make up or lascivious looks. The students from Fresno attempted to reverse, with the aid of humour, the oppressive images of women projected in the mass media. See WILDING, op. cit., p. 38. Particularly interesting is to compare the work of García, with that of the artist Pauline Boty in her series *It's a Man's World* from the early 1960s; in it, Boty questioned the patriarchal gaze reifying the female body. See RECCI, Helena and PHILAN, Peggy, *Art and Feminism*, New York, Phaidon, 2001, p. 54.

32. In fact, García Codoñer works by questioning the archetypes resulting "from the differentiation in spheres — the public and the private — and the reinforcement of the woman nature/male culture division, and other binary oppositions such as intuition/analysis or emotion/reason; women are themselves consigned to the condition of a body and to the inferior role entailed in Western culture. That is how the idea that one is born a woman yet one becomes a man, was promoted. The prevailing gaze would devalue the female body in a Machiavellian way: on one hand, it will support the load of the ideal of nature and beauty — linked to its being an object of voyeuristic desire — with its classical

reference to goodness in the case of the loving mother, the chaste virgin or the loyal lover; on the other hand, it will always bring with it the latent danger expressed through the creation of a female teratology of emulating vaginas, Lemnian women, hysterical women, the femme fatale, etc", in LEJEDA, Isabel, "El tono dorado. El tacto, de seda. La piel, sana", in *Femenino plural: reflexiones desde la diversidad*, Valencia, Consorcio de Museos, 1996.

33. "Roys used to insist *Hazañas bélicas*, while we read *Anarcho*. We were taught to be good, to be forbearing, to be humble, unpretentious. You had to be perfect if you wanted to get married later", Ángela García explains.

34. In the late 1960s, the magazine *trunfo* introduced issues such as sexual liberation, marriage, family or the role of new women which would lead to the appearance of the "new man". See FLATA, Gabriel, *La razón romántica. La cultura política del progreso español a través de Trunfo (1962 - 1975)*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 1999. On Equipo Realidad and *Trunfo*, see GANDIA CASIMIRO, J., "Hay tiempo una dual: quién no eran ellos quienes pintaban, sino que lo hacían sus imágenes", in *Equipo Realidad*, Valencia, IVAM, 1993, p. 8. García Codoñer admits that the book by Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystic* (1963) published in Spain in the late 1960s, was essential in her political formation.

35. They were also common in kitsch postcards, erotic photography and the cinema of those years.

36. Most of her closest contemporary colleagues pointed out by one of the elements appearing on the canvas, including the spots taken from the media. In the case of Equipo Crónica, they often combined serigraphy and acrylic, in some cases using collage.

37. The work of Heartfield or Rotau already played at contrasting fragments of images used as signs and taken from a diversity of artistic fields, to build a political signification not exempt from humour in the case of the German artist.

38. The fragmentation of the works from 1974 and 1975 may bear a formal relationship with the work made in the early 1960s by James Rosenquist — we just have to think of *Vertical Appendix* from the Museum of Contemporary Art of Los Angeles. By accentuating that tendency to deconstruct the images, García opened up a solitary path which bears some relation with the work of Miriam Schapiro and the *Pattern and Decoration* movement of which the American artist was a member yet which was unknown to García Codoñer. However, while Schapiro, from a previous generation and associated with Abstract Expressionism, bases her discourse on the choice of materials, in the artistic vindication of women's chores, the work of the Valencian painter combines that reading with the use of the iconography for political purposes.

39. In the interview, carried out in June 2003, García Codoñer revealed how important reading the book *Libre antes del amor* had been for her, a work "poking fun at law, since the age of emancipation, people began to marry far late and the sentimental concepts associated with that idea began to become fashionable. Before that time, people married for interest, taking into consideration fortunes, property or family background. I was also quite interested in this".

40. As a matter of fact, it could be said that there is a continuity between the two series studied in this essay, for the discourses on the mification of the female body, or about women's work are reflected in both.

41. "At school we used to make those little doilies with cross stitching, which I was always so bad at. They also tormented us with layettes. To me, needlework were very useful as a reference, because they provided an explanation to the drift of our culture, women's culture, and from a visual viewpoint they were a gold-mine".

42. If Waitul vindicates design, comics and the so-called contemporary popular arts, coming from the mass media, it seems all too logical to vindicate other traditional popular works within a Pop context.

43. Pkuvon, in fact, used pages of newspapers in his Cuban period, while García uses patterns from *Avance* magazine or of embroideries, displacing her daily reality to the field of Fine Arts. Given her condition as a woman, she paints her experiences and her imaginary as a woman.

44. Before Rosemarie Trocket in the 1980s, or Marina Núñez in the 1990s, artists who strategically disclose that the author of a piece is a woman by using *bicuit* or an embroidered tablecloth as a support. Ángela García integrates both formally and conceptually the decorative elements of lace rdding and needlework in the final image. It is the *huusa* as surface, food, everyday, tablecloths with which Judy Chicago will invite all of us to eat off with our past unveiled, and that, many years later, Chelo Malesanz will use in a rather blunt way in *El gnliso*, 2000.

45. Those paintings have a forerunner in a work from 1974 belonging to the series *Misres (Recuerdos)*, acrylic on canvas.

Girls no longer embroider at school,
Girls don't read fairytales and the prince is on
vacation,

Girls enrol in engineering and are clever,
Girls work in their profession, breed, suffer gender
violence and professional discrimination.

Has society changed in the thirty years since these
paintings were made?

In what concerns us here, very little.

These paintings attempt, precisely, to express, from
a language that has been superseded today, the
topicality of the non-superseded subject, to rein
force, with the aid of images from the past, the
contradiction of a "developed and comfortable"
society which permits the existence of this discrimi-
nation which sometimes leads to death.

It's not a new paragraph, just a period.