

Water Things

Foreword to the 1999 exhibition
catalogue by Cecilia Vargas



“Maizaro I”
Dyes on Silk mounted on board
12” x 8”. 1999.
Collection of the artist (UK)

Water Things **by Cecilia Vargas 1999**

I must have first seen silk as a child, and would have been touched no doubt by the respect and fascination demanded by such material. Its association with luxury and sensuality must have put it in an unreachable position for me which had nothing to do with experimentation. Silk was intimidating, a closed material, a finished entity which was exclusively available to either Italian experts or displayed by expensive French furniture, luxurious walls or glamorous beauties. Access to the possession of this dream was limited to small, square and cheap versions imported from India.

Each material has its own soul, its backbone. Artists must follow what its skin dictates so that we know what to do to them. For many years, canvas, paper, wood, glass and even plastic allowed me to establish diverse, specific and surprising relationships.

Something similar has happened with silk. Although I could perhaps say that it has been more difficult to face a square metre of white silk than its equivalent of canvas. At the beginning everything was intimidating. Its integrity, its whiteness, its beauty. Even its utilitarian association.

With time and with my new interests, with my ongoing fascination for the microscopic world, I found myself linking water and silk so that water and its things began to emerge from the fabric's surfaces. The touch and the response of silk led me to recall the still water of lakes, the intricate shapes of molluscs, the depths of submarine shadows. It was easy to imagine the Orinoco's or Patía's shallow banks shimmering on silk, easy to detect the Corals of the Red Sea or drowning algae intertwined with stones.

This exhibition of paintings on silk is the result of an exploration of this seductive material which has allowed me to further develop old interests and where demanding and evasive techniques have been strict but generous with surprises.

Cecilia Vargas, 1999

Artist