

LISSON

OLGA DE AMARAL



BIOGRAPHY

Olga de Amaral spins base matter into fields of colour and weaves tectonic lines through space, unselfconsciously testing the borders between crafted object and the work of art. From the flat surfaces of tapestry through to resolutely three-dimensional sculptural forms made from fibre, the Colombian artist's work spans more than 60 years, in turn reaching even further back to the spiritual qualities and ancient craquelure of medieval icon paintings or else the rigour and simplicity of the modernist grid, as if run through a loom. Developing her own tools and techniques, while relying on the hand for her strip-woven expanses of wool, linen and cotton, Amaral has also knotted reams of horsehair together and bolstered her fabric works through a painterly application of gesso or stucco, often highlighting the reverse, or foregrounding the edges. Working not only on the floor or the wall, Amaral carves up interiors with her hanging tapestries, and creates floating formations from yarn or plastic. Amaral's travels are reflected in her wide range of international influences. After an encounter with the Japanese technique of 'kintsugi' at the ceramics studio of British potter Lucie Rie in 1970, for example, Amaral began employing gold leaf, layered and intertwined within the fabric of her hand-woven textiles. Amaral's work also references religious and ceremonial dimensions prescribed to gold through the pre-Columbian worship of the substance. In 2003, she said: "As I build these surfaces, I create spaces of meditation, contemplation and reflection... Tapestry, fibres, strands, units, cords, all are transparent layers with their own meanings, revealing and hiding each other to make one presence, one tone that speaks about the texture of time."

Olga de Amaral was born Olga Ceballos Vélez in Bogotá, Colombia in

1932, where she continues to live and work. She studied Architectural Drafting at the Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca in Bogotá, leaving for the USA in 1952 to study textiles at the Cranbrook Academy of Art outside of Detroit, Michigan. By the 1960s she was a teacher at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine and was included in a group exhibition at MoMA, New York entitled *Wall Hangings*, before staging a solo show, entitled *Woven Walls*, at New York's Museum of Arts and Design in 1970. In the early 1970s, she returned to Colombia, representing her country at the Venice Biennale in 1986 and receiving her first major survey show at the city's Museo de Arte Moderno in 1993. Her work is in many major collections worldwide, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH, USA; Cranbrook Art Museum, Detroit, MI, USA; De Young Museum, San Francisco; CA, USA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA; Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France; Museo Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia; American Craft Museum, New York, NY, USA; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, USA; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX, USA; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH, USA; and Tate Collection, London, UK.