

Mother, Consumed

SUSANA GUERRERO, 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel New York

March 18 – May 20, 2021

In *Mother, Consumed*, her second solo exhibition at 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel, Susana Guerrero presents a collection of objects that explore the symbiosis between mother and child during gestation, that precarious period when two lives are inextricably intertwined and a woman shares of her own organs, sustenance, and spirit so that a new, fully autonomous being might spring into the world. Partially inspired by the Spanish-Mediterranean myth “La Mare dels Peixos,” in which a woman surrenders her own flesh to engender several other lives but is then parthenogenetically reborn, these works bear witness to that mysterious passage from unity to duality through which we all go at the inception of our lives, and which neither mother nor child ever fully leaves behind.

Guerrero’s works merge the traditionally feminine process of weaving with materials more commonly found in the historically male realm of mechanized mass fabrication. In *Arrancarse los Dientes (Tear off Teeth, 2018)*, a handful of ceramic human teeth rest inside a delicate womblike cage fashioned from thin strips of metal and the sharp thorns of the medicinal Agave plant. Gnashing, tearing, healing, and feeding are forced into an uneasy symbolic accord. A similar thorny cage is seen in *La Madre (The Mother, 2020)* as the bottom of a corset woven from red insulated electrical wire that flows down the wall and onto the floor and then transforms into a wavelike blue flood, hinting at the deep interconnection between the natural cycles of menstruation and the ocean’s tides. In contrast, some works in the show use a more blatantly industrial sheen to parody the softness of flesh, as in *Bomba de Leche (Milk Bomb, 2009)*, a hard ceramic sphere covered with gilded baby-bottle nipples, setting up an unsettling tension between warm maternal instinct and cold self-protection, and perhaps the idea that there’s strength to be gained through such self-surrender.

The exhibition’s grandest statements are found in two visually and thematically related works. The first, a series of pieces from 2018 and 2019 titled *El mal en tí (The evil in You)* and *El mal en mí (The evil in me)*, is presented as a wall-wide display of five forms in black electrical wire with enameled ceramic, brass, and leather elements woven in. In addition to another corset with shiny red toothlike pendants dangling from tentacle-like straps, there are more amorphous scarf-like and sock-like shapes that are by turns uterine, serpentine, and intestinal. The second piece, *La Desollada (The Skinned, 2018)*, features a red wire form with thin, leaflike brass blades that suggests a strange otherworldly flower, from which flows undulating red tubes that resolve themselves

into the shapes of lungs, kidneys, heart, stomach, and liver. In addition to the previously mentioned theme of two lives unified during gestation, the titles and forms of these works reflect a deep ambivalence about motherhood, gender, and biological destiny that runs throughout the show. Guerrero's works don't want to give us easy answers about the complex, lifelong web of tensions that exist between mother and child; instead, they pose whispering but insistent questions that are meant to get under our skin and linger for days or years to come.

Susana Guerrero is a Fine Arts PHD, Miguel Hernandez University, Elche, Spain (2012). She graduated in Fine Arts in the specialties of Sculpture and Print, Polytechnic University in Valencia, Spain (1996-1997). She is a professor at Miguel Hernandez University, Fine Arts Campus, Altea, Spain, since 2003. She is also the recipient of numerous fellowships and residencies in Italy, Germany, Mexico, and Greece, and has work in a dozen institutional collections throughout Europe and Mexico.

For further information or to schedule an interview with the artist, please e-mail us at info@532gallery.com

Mother, Consumed. The devoured Mother

Mother

*To have another body inside your own
and be cut across by it.*

The devoured mother

*Feeding with your body another body
devouring you from within.*

The nurturing mother

*Turned into nourishment, may you have
the power to give and take life.*

The exhibition *Mother, Consumed* revolves around the fertile mother bearer of life. Focusing on the time the female carries inside another body, another set of organs beside her own. She is double-hearted and has multiple organs that share her flesh's interior privacy while pushing her organs out of place.

The mother is cut across, transformed into an open path, with entry and exit, deep within.

The mother is devoured from inside out, strengthened by offering her flesh to feed another life.

The works shown are a sort of emotional archaeology that reinterprets the legend feeding it from its own experience—using the hardness of the compulsive process of weaving as a summoning ritual, retrieving the traditionally feminine work within contemporary artistic practice. Impregnating each piece's materials built of that poetic and symbolic load and its genealogy, turning them into domestic relics.

"The devoured Mother" is based on the story of "La Mare dels Peixos" of the Valencian popular oral tradition. It is a legend of the coastal area of the Mediterranean Sea.

Legend has it that a fisherman from Denia went out to fish and captured a strange creature, a three-headed, two-tailed snake that spoke with a human voice and asked him to behead it.

She asked him to cut her three heads and two tails, commanding him to give his wife one of the

head to eat and the remaining two to feed his dog and his mare.

Afterward, he must bury her two tails in the soil of his garden with the tips up.

In the beginning, the fisherman refused, but the Mare dels Peixos convinced him and instructed him that, afterward, he had to throw the remaining of her body into the sea and she would regenerate.

So did the fisherman. His woman, dog, and mare got pregnant with twins, and the sea-creature body regenerated.

The legend speaks of the Mare dels Peixos as a goddess of fertility who does not need males to reproduce herself. A female who, when eaten, fertilizes with her flesh.

La Mare dels Peixos is a beheaded woman who asks to be beheaded and who survives her decapitation, and in a Phoenix sort of transmutation reborn from her death, voluntarily offering her flesh to engender new life.

It is a heroic narrative that reminds us of classical culture mythological characters that survive in popular literature and contemporary art.

Susana Guerrero, 2021