Made with Love: Richie Wilde Lopezâ??s Intimate Textiles

Description

Richie Wilde Lopez

There is a familiar quality of warmth and intimacy bound into each thread of Puerto Rican artist Richie Wilde Lopezâ??s tactile textile art, which he produces in homage to his family heritage, and the women who passed traditions of weaving, embroidering, dyeing and creating down to him. He believes memories are stored deep within fabrics, both in the ways they are created, and the lives they come to inhabit, observing, â??Textiles remember. Itâ??s not something we necessarily ask of them, nor is it something we can divert them from doing. They do it regardless.â?• Drawing on this rich history, his work asks what it means to be a Puerto Rican today, and how to carry memories of the past forward into the present.

Costa (2022)

Founder of Duende Textile Studio, located in the Firehouse Arts Building in Historic Germantown, Philadelphia, where he creates his handmade woven works of art and collaborates with other makers to run a wide range of creative workshops, he says, â??Duende is a space for curiosity, craft, and connection â?? honouring culture, care, and the joy of working with our hands.â?•

Lopez was educated as a fiction writer, and largely self-taught as a weaver and embroiderer. His practice as a maker gradually evolved in adulthood out of a long-held love for the textile traditions of the Caribbean and Latin America, and a desire to revive their ancient practices and materials. A key aspect of his practice is the use of naturally derived, traditional weaving materials and techniques â?? he works in inventive and imaginative ways with threads made from raffia, nettle, jute, banana fibre, linen paper, wool and silk, and adopts natural dyeing processes such as indigo, noting, â??I am deeply attuned to the memories and stories textiles hold.â?•

Within his diverse practice, Lopez explores woven forms resembling natural forms, bodies, or hammocks, familiar imagery with qualities of warmth and comfort. In doing so, he reminds us textiles are not so dissimilar to our own bodies, with a living, breathing life of their own. â??Unlike metal or stone, the

lifespan of a textile is not dissimilar to that of our own bodies,â?• he notes, â??â?¦ newness gradually replaced by wear and tear until worn out.â?•

Lopez adopted the term â??Duendeâ?? for his creative studio from a Latin and South American term, which he describes as, â??the mysterious force that fills the artist with an urgent, almost visceral need to create. Itâ??s not just inspiration, but a profound emotional and physical response â?? an encounter with something deep and raw that transcends technique and taps into the soul of the work.â?•

Working at the loom

He argues that this spirit is woven into every piece he creates. Whether made on an 8-shaft floor loom, a replica hand-cranked chainstitch machine, embroidered in intricate detail, or woven and sewn onto canvas by hand, his works display what he calls a lasting connection to materiality and the intimate process of making, or what he calls, â??â?¦ threads crossing, repeating, holding,â?• not unlike the ways we forge and sustain connections in our lives to the people we love. He says, â??Life and memory are immediately transferable to cloth: a stain on a t-shirt can represent a delicious meal shared with another, or the scent of a loved one can be imprinted on their bedsheets.â?•

Nublada y me gusta (2023)

Ultimately, we can read his practice as a celebration of fabricâ??s connection to human life, and what it is to be alive, in all its messy, complicated ways. â??By preserving relationships and culture in a fragmented family,â?• he says, â??â?¦ my art becomes a vessel for memory, identity, and connection.â?•

CATEGORY

1. WEAVING

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