

By Carlos Jover 09.04.2022



MATERIA PRIMA / RAW MATERIAL: Laurie Pearsall displays her vital memory at the MA gallery in Palma. Fragile and beautiful installations, painting, photography, and sculpture make up this magnificent exhibition by the North American artist.



Works of North American artist Laurie Pearsall

The raw material of memory is life itself. If you work with it and do so with cruel sincerity, what is distilled is Truth, just like that, with capital letters. And in a world full of fakes, self-deception, dissimulation, and false appearances, that memory and truth can regain ground is great news, something truly unusual.

Deep down, the principle of art resides in the personal filter that the artist avails in the face of their experiences, so that these experiences, combined with inherited cultural baggage, make up the scenario in which creation can take place, united with talent. Yet, always, no matter how hidden it may be, the artist's personal experience must always be positioned as the foundation, as raw material. The case of this exhibition is paradigmatic in this sense, for in it we witness an amazing display, in diverse allegorical formats of experiences, many of an extremely intimate nature, of the protagonist and artist, Laurie Pearsall. We could almost say that **the artist has turned the entire gallery space into a huge confessional**, where rather than asking for forgiveness for her own sins (which she does also, when the case arises), what she has done is to ask that those who have committed sins against her may be forgiven after going through the ordeal of a scrupulous and harsh penance.

Laurie Pearsall (Massachusetts, USA, 1970), studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 1992, and subsequently completed a dual masters degree in Painting and Art Education at the Massachusetts College of Art, **she later moved to the island of Mallorca, where she currently resides and works.** As I said, starting from painting, Pearsall **has evolved towards other types of manifestations similar to scenography, performance, and site-specific installations** in which she develops and distills all her feelings and memories of experiences, many of them traumatic, that she has had to go through.

It is, therefore, a body of work that unequivocally refers to the *self* as the main raw material, similar in style, for example, to that which was developed in recent literature by the Norwegian **Karl Ove Knausgard**, in his saga *My Struggle*, or in our own realm, the Catalan writer **Neus Canyellas**, whose work also has the feminine characteristic that roots it even more so, if it were possible, with that of Pearsall (Canyellas' latest publication, *Authorized Autobiography*, is highly recommended reading).



Exhibition of norte american artist Laurie Pearsall

The mechanism that activates *Materia Prima* originates from the writing, precisely, of some overwhelming — in their extensiveness — diaries by the artist, **diaries that comprise small-format index cards, loose sheets, notebooks...** The writing is automatic and in a cathartic sense, overflowing, as I said, in terms of its production. The curious thing about these diaries, with which **she has composed a large part of the works exhibited in this exhibition**, is that what really matters in them is the process of writing them, which is carried out as if it were a self-exorcism. Then, once the inner demons are expelled, the sheets where the writing has been captured cease to have a sacred value personally, so that they can serve, materially, as tools for the making of the final work of art.

An example is the piece in which the pages have been washed in the waters of a river, later collected and arranged in an ad hoc installation, as well as in various photographs. Furthermore, part of the scenographic style pieces have been brought together to be shown in the gallery through **photographs**, which have been taken — since the protagonist in them is Laurie Pearsall

herself — **by another collaborating artist and friend, Natasha Lebedeva**. The photographs are also exquisite, true jewels of art loaded with symbolism.

In addition to this autobiographical discourse, *Materia prima* also contains theoretical approaches that reflect on the role of women in their various life stages, adolescence, maturity, widowhood, etc. All this, always starting from eminently feminine and feminist connotations, which in the present case make up a solid block of absolute justification.

Once again, **an exhibition that speaks of Truth and memory and experience**, and that contains pieces of extreme beauty, pieces that condense the emotion and suffering with which the pages of all life are written.

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