

**The Jewish Museum**

***Marta Minujín: Arte! Arte! Arte!***

**English Verbal Descriptions**

**STOP LIST**

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Translations provided by Acoustiguide. Translations Editing by Sara García.

**600. Marta Minujín, *Conceptos entrelazados (Intertwined Concepts)*, 2019–22**

**NARRATOR:** This piece is titled *Conceptos Entrelazados (Intertwined Concepts)* and it was made in the years 2019 through 2022. The materials are acrylic, tempera, and lacquer on mattress fabric stuffed with foam rubber. This large-scale sculptural work is 98  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide by 102  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches in height and 51  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches in depth. The work resides on a low rectangular, white, pedestal. This platform is positioned in front of the entrance to the exhibition, and visitors are invited to walk around the work and view it from multiple angles.

When viewing this artwork from the front, we see a large rectangular swarm of colorful striped material. This sculpture almost resembles an upright bed or sea of pillows gathered together haphazardly. It's plush, like you could dive into it and be engulfed by the soft forms. The piece presents an immediate contrast; the erect rectangular structure and the pillow-like parts contribute to a sense of both whimsy and stability.

The organic-shaped soft sculptural forms that make up this work are each covered with a different striped pattern. The stripes are bold bright colors, a rainbow of summery hues like what you might find on beach towels and umbrellas, including bands of cotton candy pink, lime, teal, orange, watermelon red, aquamarine, and violet. Each of these shapes is unique – some are limb-like, or phallic, while others resemble rectangular pillows with the center cut out, like an open mouth. Some have scalloped edges and others almost resemble letters. The wavy jumble of soft interwoven forms is like a nest of color, overlapping, weaving through each other, and hanging off the upright sides. Looking closely, you can see the artist's hand in the work; the colorful stripes show brushstrokes, and the seams of these soft forms are formed with hand-stitching. The back of the sculpture also has these intertwined soft forms, with long snake-like, square, and rectangular pieces. There is a spirited poetry to this cartoonish and curious work. It is playful and grand on its pedestal, and almost like a monument or large-scale attraction at a circus.

Marta Minujín started creating art out of mattresses and mattress fabric in the 1960s. She picked up this practice again in 2007. About these pieces she says,

**MARTA MINUJÍN:** I was trying to convey a world that was colorful, carefree, fun. And this part of the bed –these fluorescent mattresses– also created a kind of restorative reverie, in that everything looked pretty, in shades of turquoise, in this and that.... As if you'd fall asleep and dream about beautiful things, and that'd be a boost of energy for the day. That would be the theme.

**601. Marta Minujín, *Sin título (Untitled)*, 1961-62**

**NARRATOR:** This artwork was made in the years 1961 to 1962 and is *Untitled*. It is an abstract sculptural painting, a two-sided object made out of cardboard, paint, and pyroxylin lacquer. The dimensions of this work are 26 ¼ inches high by 39 ¾ inches wide and 1 ½ inches in depth, about the size of a bath towel. The work is displayed on a white pedestal placed perpendicular to the wall so you can walk around it to see the front and back. It has a dark wooden frame with glass on both sides, giving the impression that this piece is encased in a box.

The front of this work is a rectangular monochromatic field of black, earthen, and sooty in appearance, with a somewhat matte and uneven surface quality. This hue and condition make the object appear rustic rather than sleek and modern. Recessed and protruding from the surface are several arrangements of cardboard pieces painted the same black. These invite the viewer to peer inside as if peeking inside a dark cupboard. Rectangular strips of painted cardboard jut and divide the composition at different angles. Several rows of smaller horizontal bands descend downwards at points, cutting across the space like pieces of weave in a basket, or rungs on a ladder. Some cantilever out toward the viewer like stacks of dominos in a line. There is order and disorder both, as cardboard pieces are arranged in evenly spaced stacks, edge to edge, as well as in jumbled oversized areas, interrupting other pieces. This arrangement almost resembles the mechanical insides underneath a car hood or inside a watch.

The back of this artwork has a different appearance. The painted surface is abstract and geometric. The background color is a light and neutral warm sand hue. Thin black lines connect in clusters on the composition like a cityscape. There are empty pockets of space amid the linear organization, almost resembling breaks in a train track. Sections of watercolor brushstrokes appear in a translucent gray and yellow amid the linearity. Small circular and oval shapes are sprinkled amid the abstract arrangement. The entire painting looks like an aerial view of a map with sections of land carved out like a patchwork quilt. A dark wood frame contains the dynamic composition.

**602. Marta Minujín with Andy Warhol, *El pago de la deuda externa argentina con maíz, "el oro latinoamericano"* (Paying Off the Argentine Foreign Debt with Corn, "the Latin American Gold"), 1985/2011**

**NARRATOR:** This artwork is titled *El pago de la deuda externa argentina con maíz, "el oro latinoamericano"* (Paying Off the Argentine Foreign Debt with Corn, "the Latin American Gold"). It was originally made in 1985 and printed in 2011. The medium is a C-Print and consists of six color photographic images. Each photograph is the same size - 36  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches high by 39  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. They each have a matching thin black frame. The photographs are hung in two evenly spaced rows, three on top and three on bottom. They fill a large portion of the white wall they are displayed on. Flashing neon lights from a piece hung on the wall to the left reflect across the photographs.

Each photograph shows the same two figures sitting on simple red folding chairs, arranged back-to-back, atop a mound of corn. When facing the photographs, the individual on the left is the artist Marta Minujín, a middle-aged white woman with platinum blonde shoulder-length straight hair, bangs, and broad black sunglasses. She wears a long-sleeved sleek black coat with the collar popped, black trousers, one bright yellow sock and one bright orange sock. Her shoes are black and closed-toed, with black wings on the side and a small dragon face, as well as a thin strap around the ankle. The person on the right is the American artist, Andy Warhol; he is a white man, about 15 years older than Minujín. He wears a long-sleeved black turtleneck, black jeans, and light sneakers. His straight silver-gray hair is shaped in an edgy mop cut. With their bright hair and black ensembles, the two artists strongly complement and coordinate with each other.

The background of the photographs is a simple white backdrop which suggests these were taken inside a photo studio with artificial lighting. The floor of the studio is covered in corn; the pile stretches from one side of the photograph to the other. The corn was painted so the colors really pop, creating a sea of yellow and orange ears with light green husks still attached.

In each of the six photographs, the two individuals are situated slightly different in their physical positions. Their body language and gestures vary from formal to playful. In the first photograph, on the top-row on the left, the two artists are seated, facing away from each other, arms crossed or at their sides on the two red folding chairs with a foot or so between them. In the second photograph, Minujín twists her body towards Warhol while he remains in profile. In the third photograph, he now turns his body forward to face the viewer while she looks more directly at him, her hand on her waist. In the fourth photograph, the left on the bottom row, the two face the viewer, their arms touching as they hold several ears of corn together over the backs of the red chairs. In the next image, both Minujín and Warhol look at each other directly while he holds two ears of corn, and she smiles. The final image

shows them in continued conversation and gaze while Warhol maintains hold of both ears of corn. Each image looks as if it was taken mere seconds apart and the compositional arrangement is reminiscent of a comic strip or storyboard with gutter space dividing each image from the next.

Here's artist Marta Minujín sharing her thoughts about this piece.

**MARTA MINUJÍN:** Simply put, Argentina's always owed money to the International Monetary Fund. Always. Then I thought, "This country's fed the entire world by now," because during World War II, Argentine ships would sail out laden with seeds and corn for people to make bread and everything. So many ships sailed out, in fact, that their lives were extended by what they received from Argentina. So, for me, the dollar debt had already been settled.

I wanted to be done with the subject and figured I'd pay Andy Warhol. He was a friend of mine, and our intentions, way of living, everything was aligned. So, I paid off Argentina's foreign debt to him in Latin American gold—corn. That was the idea behind this piece. Now, many issues still remain around the dollar, but it's as though I've paid off this debt. For me, it's settled. Even for Argentina, it's settled—it has been for many years now.

**603. Marta Minujín, *Congelación a lo largo (Autorretrato de espaldas) (Long-Term Freeze [Self-Portrait with Back Turned])*, 1975, from the series *Frozen Sex*, 1973–75**

**NARRATOR:** This painting is titled *Congelación a lo largo (Autorretrato de espaldas)* or *Long-Term Freeze (Self-Portrait with Back Turned)*. It was created in 1975. This work is from a larger series called *Frozen Sex* which the artist made between the years 1973 to 1975. It is acrylic on canvas and the dimensions are 47 ¼ inches high by 94 ¼ inches wide. It is oriented horizontally like a landscape, with a vast width, displayed in a room painted soft pink.

Running through the center of the painting from the left edge to the right, is the reclining body of a woman with her head on the left. She is painted from the back with her arms positioned in front, so we are only able to see the back of her head, neck, and shoulders, back, waist, hips, butt, thighs, calves, and soles of her feet.

The style is abstracted, with flat areas of color describing the figure and background. It is reminiscent of a heat map, or psychedelic poster from the 1960s, with regions painted in a range of simple, analogous warm colors. These colors range from a deep magenta that shows the shadows beneath her legs and spine, to bright peach to describe her legs and parts of her torso, to several shades of pink from rose to mauve to describe the folds of the neck and head. A soft yellow at the back of her head gives the shape of hair, either short or wrapped to the front of her neck. More peach and orange are folded into the body, each lyrically curving in an organic way to describe paths and patches of this form in repose. When looking closer you can see brushstrokes and cracking paint, showing slight variations in the flat fields of color.

Supporting her body from below is a field of deep beet red, featuring a gentle sloping set of curves like a mountain range, or bedsheets piled up below a body. The top third of the painting that hovers above this body landscape is a solid sherbet pink color. The overall mood is calm and cool and yet it is painted in a bright and bold color palette that pops.

**604. Marta Minujín, *Pandemia (Pandemic)*, 2020–21**

**NARRATOR:** This artwork is titled *Pandemia (Pandemic)*. Marta Minujín worked on it every day for a year between 2020 and 2021. It is a mixed-media painting, using acrylic and tempera on hand-cut mattress fabric strips, glued with vinyl adhesive onto canvas. The dimensions of the painting are 106 ¼ inches high by 78 ¾ inches wide.

This abstract artwork is rectangular, with a vertical orientation and a monochromatic color scheme that resembles a tall city building. It is hung in space away from the wall, suspended by a wire from each upper corner. The scale and display of the work feels imposing, as we have to look up to take in the entire piece.

The surface consists of 27,900 thin glued strips of mattress fabric, colored in small squares of alternating black, white, and gray. Each strip is between 1/16 and 1/8 of an inch wide and varies in length. The orientation of the strips is not uniform; they are largely vertical, some veering slightly diagonally and overlapping to give a three-dimensional texture to the work. At points, across the canvas, these strips run horizontally, cutting in long spindly stripes across the body of the painted surface. From far away the small squares merge to form an undulating sea of gray; an effect resembling the static of an old television or a fluffy shag carpet. The busyness of the canvas offers no rest, making your eye dart all over, or blur out of focus to be able to take in the whole piece.

While we cannot see the back of the work, on it Minujín has scrawled headlines she heard on the radio about the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

This work evokes strong memories of that first year of the pandemic, a mixture of startling headlines and day-to-day repetition, the abnormal becoming the normal, the lives we lost, and the routines we created to cope. Here's artist Marta Minujín.

**MARTA MINUJÍN:** I would spend five or six hours a day, like I do now, gluing one strip in place, then another, and then another. I enjoy it, I find it relaxing.