

Artist Statement – Olga Flores

Play, popular tradition, recovery of identity, and poetry are some of the elements that characterize the work that I do at the present time. I have been influenced by some popular traditional objects of Peru. Among these, chiseled gourds, Chancay funerary dolls, and Ayacucho-style retablos stand out.

From the chiseled mates—an artisanal form that is worked on mates, or gourds—I have adopted a similar technique for elaborating the graphic and illustrative images that represent the events of daily life as they are found in the high mountains of Peru. This artisanal form is worked with tools and techniques similar to those of xilography. The images on the popular gourds represent daily work in the midst of nature, work in the countryside or on plowed land. This contact of the artisan and the farmer with the land in a natural manner provides the material that I try to represent through my xilographs. My current xilographic prints represent the bodies of immense, large women, full of life. They are the symbolic matrix of the origins of humanity.

Another popular element present in this group of elements that has influenced my work are the funerary dolls of the pre-Inka Chancay culture. I use this thematic material with the purpose of rescuing an imagery that I consider rich in its form and content. These were not toys (despite their use as rag dolls in children's games), but objects of magical-religious value. They were sometimes worked to form scenes from the life of the dead person or of those near and dear to the deceased. In this way, they accompanied the deceased into the other life.

In my work, I use the dolls to signify the release of emotion that the embrace or contact with a doll can release: the tenderness, the affection, the approach to the beloved body in the tightness of the chain that is incarnated in the vestigial object. Perhaps for me it is a way of recapturing the tenderness between human beings, given western ideas about the separation between the mother and the child and the hard work of becoming independent. I believe that in latin cultures this separation from the family, the disintegration of the family nucleus, is not experienced so strongly, and family ties continue to be experienced in an intense manner.

Another artisanal form in which I have found signs present in my work are the Ayacucho-style retablos, pieces that are derived from the boxes that were used to transport images of the saints in order to place them on the altars of homes and churches. I use the form of the retablo in its characteristic as a box—a container of life—a Nativity scene. I attach meaning to my work where I describe my contact with nature, respect, and the generation of life.

In my work, the graphical stands out as a base element, sign, and symbolism. The engraving techniques and the objects themselves are a way of recreating in the viewer—through play—a moment of playful recovery. The viewer is invited to touch the pieces, to move the objects from their places, to keep or contain things in boxes. My purpose is to re-establish a connection between art object (or artwork in a museum) and the popular element in utilitarian artisanship.