

What Lies Beneath: An Installation by Sandra C. Fernandez

August 1 – October 17, 2004

Opening Reception Friday, August 13, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.



sandrafernandez

Innocentia



Innocentia (detail outside skirt), 2004, children's transfer drawings and writings, fabric, Japanese hand-made paper, Cyanotype non-silver photographic process, machine sewing, stitching

Dubitatio



Dubitatio (detail), 2004, fabric, hand-made paper, photographic transfer, machine stitching, embroidery, found objects, milagros (charms)

The Sculpture of Sandra C. Fernandez: Transforming a Feminine Garment into a Universal Archetype.

By Manya Fabiniak

Issues of abandonment, isolation, sexism, political freedom, war, and dislocation have for millennia haunted the human psyche. Each of these has been part of the personal experience of Sandra C. Fernandez. We all have choices as to how we will process and overcome the traumatic experiences that befall us. Psychologically, one must embrace the past, however painful, to become liberated from our memory's emotional constrictions.

In confronting personal issues, artists understand that the creative process provides an opportunity to distill memory until only the primary essences remain, ready to be concretized into form. When successfully executed, the resulting artworks point to a universality that allows us an expansion in consciousness, moving towards a new depth of understanding of the human condition. Through the exploration of different media, Fernandez has sought to confront her personal history, seek awareness, and relay such universal concepts.

For this installation, the artist expands from the intricately rendered and intimate

boxes and collages of her earlier work into large, over-sized skirts that not only engage, but enfold the viewer. Previously, the viewer opened and inspected Fernandez's soft sculptures – now one physically enters into their domain, enveloped by their presence.

Fernandez is asking for a relationship that, like any new encounter, begins with an intrigue regarding surfaces but gradually expands to engage with depth the heart, the core of the artist's intent: her historically-shaped self and its power for transformation and healing. Yet, as in all relationships, what we discover from the depths of others is so often invariably a mirror into our own sense of being – our stories, despairs, visions, and transcendence.

Three separate themes support the intent of each work for Fernandez: innocence, abandonment, and the emotional needs of a child form the theme of "Innocentia." The fragile state of adolescence and the

modal state of youth serve the theme of "Dubitatio," while maturity, compassion, peace, and wisdom form that of "Experientia." Each skirt is meant by the artist to "invoke a sense of shelter, where the power and protection of love can be embraced whether one is male or female." Each skirt is in a sense a "womb," from which life comes, yet also where one takes full responsibility for giving birth.

Drawings by children provide captivating gestures of innocence and the early struggles for expression. The artist has used their unabashed directness to completely enfold "Innocentia." Fernandez undertakes this task with full artistic bravura, handling the most delicate of intimate renderings

with a nurturing grace until they paradoxically form the monumental. Humorous and quirky, even unhappy, angry moon-shaped faces give off their charm. Yet the artist demands that we acknowledge the authentic human experiences that all children encounter. Huge cyanotypes faces of children from different nationalities line the interior, each looking directly at the viewer with a powerfully set, steady,



Innocentia (detail inside skirt), 2004, children's transfer drawings and writings, fabric, Japanese hand-made paper, Cyanotype non-silver photographic process, machine sewing, stitching



Dubitatio (detail), 2004, fabric, hand-made paper, photographic transfer, machine stitching, embroidery, found objects, milagros (charms)

Experientia



Experientia (full view), 2004, fabric, various hand-made and commercial papers, Vandykes photographic process, ink jet prints, paper quilting, machine stitching, embroidery



Innocentia (detail view through back opening of skirt), 2004, children's transfer drawings and writings, fabric, Japanese hand-made paper, Cyanotype non-silver photographic process, machine sewing, stitching



Experientia (detail outside skirt), 2004, fabric, various hand-made and commercial papers, silk thread, Vandykes photographic process, ink jet prints, paper quilting, machine stitching, embroidery

commanding gaze. One stands in this enclosure enveloped, confronted. Even as several faces are hauntingly beautiful, the questioning, searching eyes demand responses on a much deeper level. The painful question of why such innocence should endure great suffering and thus lose its very essence is Fernandez's challenge to the viewer.

The transformative state of consciousness that fills the life of an adolescent is hauntingly rendered in "Dubitatio." Uncertainty and doubt, as well as a young mind's malleability is suggested by portraits that are seen through the delicate haze of an ethereal, striped sheer fabric. Printed on transparent paper and now cut to form, the portraits are in natural color or digitally altered black and white with splashes of red, blue, or orange. For Fernandez, "An important element in the meaning of this work is that here the young adult is not aware as yet that an avenue for change exists, and that one holds the potential for the remaking of oneself."

Resolution comes only through maturity, compassion, and the transcendent power of human beings to continuously create a life of depth and richness of meaning. Although the images on the interior walls of "Experientia"

echo that of the "Innocentia," the haunting faces are now that of adults, again wondering, questioning. But this time they are enfolded by an exterior surface of white and toned papers, delicately stitched and quilted. A biblical text composed of thoughts on how to achieve peace within and without provides a border – not merely for enhancing the skirt, but for life as well.



Experientia (detail inside skirt), 2004, fabric, various hand-made and commercial papers, silk thread, Vandykes photographic process, ink jet prints, paper quilting, machine stitching, embroidery

In creating, the past is recreated. Out of the formlessness of memory and tragic experiences comes the salvation that is inherent in art's enduring process. As the artist goes within herself, she expands far outside that very self, creating an opportunity for others to share in the expansion of understanding through beauty, order, harmony, and peace. "It is my hope," says Fernandez, "that through viewing all the details to be found in this exhibit, one can see that the opportunity for creation continually exists, and that one need not ever remain a victim."

Manya Fabiniak is an artist, writer, and expressive arts therapist living in Buffalo, NY. She has created murals for churches, businesses, and private residences throughout Western New York. She is presently working on her forthcoming book, *Art and Creation: Expanding One's Personal Life Through the Experience of Art*.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I have always seen skirts as places to hide rather than objects to wear. To me, they evoke motherhood and a place to play hide and seek and peek-a-boo. Skirts are dwellings for the living, tepees for our imagination to inhabit. Human nature steps in them stripped naked, laying bare our contradictions, our loneliness, our miseries and crimes – particularly those committed by our indifference to the pain of others. My skirts have faces peering outwards, with youthful hope, but also inwards, introspectively, particularly as they age. The outside of some of my skirts, on the other hand, reveals the sunny side of ourselves, the colorful, hopeful side of our natures. Others, however, reflect off the personal and social tragedies from which the skirts are meant to shelter us. I dwell on the texture of skirts because life itself is made up of stitches and patches, sewn up with fragments of memory and imagination. This is a show about three attitudes toward the world that we associate with aging: innocence (childhood), questioning (adolescence), and experience (adulthood). This is not a story with happy resolutions. Each age is rent by pairs of opposites: outside and inside; tragedy and hope; empowerment and powerlessness; community and loneliness.



Photo: Manya Fabiniak

Sandra Fernandez

Born in Queens, New York, 1964, Sandra Fernandez spent her formidable years in Quito, Ecuador. She has resided in the United States since 1987.

EDUCATION

2003 New York State Art Education Certification, Buffalo, NY

1995 Master of Fine Arts, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1993 Taller de Grabado "Tres en Raya" (Intaglio workshop), Madrid, Spain

1992 Master of Arts, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1991 Bachelor of Science in Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1990 Associate Degree in Applied Arts, Visual Communications. Madison Area Technical College

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

2002-present Adjunct Faculty, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY

2001-02 Teacher, Abby Kelly Charter Foster School, Worcester, MA

1999-01 Adjunct Faculty, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY

1998-99 Visiting Professor, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL

Gallery Director, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL

1995-98 Lecturer, Illinois State University, Normal, IL

1995 Arts Administrator Assistant, University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension, Madison, WI

1994 Instructor, The Wisconsin Union Mini Courses, Madison, WI

Publications Specialist, Chicano Studies Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

2001 *Pan-Am Public Art Project: Art without Borders, Women's Pavilion*. Buffalo, NY

1996 *Women's Caucus for Art Women of Color Slide Portfolio: Hispanic National Juried Project*.

1994 *Honorable Mention*. 8th Annual Artful Women Exhibit. Madison, WI

1991 *Juror's Merit Award*. 63rd Annual Undergraduate Student Art Show. Madison, WI

1990 *Gold Award*. AMI Fest Accompli. Chicago, IL

Bronze Award. Munich Multimedia. Munich, Germany

Bronze Award. AMI International Festival. Orlando, FL

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (national and international)

2004 *Undergarments, an installation by Sandra C. Fernandez*. Open Studio Gallery. Toronto, Canada

The Paper Dolls/Cucas series. Hiestand Galleries, Miami University. Oxford, FL

Fragments of Memory/Retazos de Memoria. EL Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera. Buffalo, NY

2001 *Pan-American celebration, works by Sandra Fernández*. Buffalo Arts Studio. Buffalo, NY

2000 *Cucas/Paper Doll Series*. Wakeley Gallery, Illinois Wesleyan University. Bloomington, IL

1998 *Works by Sandra Fernández*. Truman State University, Kirksville, MO

Behind what is seen. University of Wisconsin Hospitals, Madison, WI

1996-97 *Retazos de la Memoria*. Sala de Exposiciones de la Fundación Octaedro Quito, Ecuador

1995 *Retazos de Memoria/ Fragments of memory an Artist's Book Exhibit*. Merwin and Wakeley Galleries, Illinois Wesleyan University. Bloomington, IL

Containers: An Artist's Book Exhibit by Sandra Fernández. A Master of Fine Arts thesis exhibit. Class of 1925 Gallery, Memorial Union. Madison, WI

1994 *Self/Containers, an Artist's Book Exhibit by Sandra Fernández*. La Mujer Latina 2nd Annual Conference. Grainger Hall Atrium, UW School of Business. Madison, WI

1993 *Creando Identidad fuera de casa/Building Identity away from home*. Theater Gallery-Memorial Union. Madison, WI

1992 *Works by Sandra Fernández, A Master of Arts thesis exhibit*. Red Oak Gallery/Madison, WI

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2003 *Annual Invitational: On Wheels*. El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera. Buffalo, NY

2002 *11th Annual Member's Exhibition*. Big Orbit Gallery. Buffalo, NY

2001 *Expose yourself*. CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, NY

2000 *Eyes Wide Open, Artist's Perception of Conflict*. Art Department Gallery, University at Buffalo, SUNY. Buffalo, NY

1999 *Fiber Focus '99*. Art St. Louis. St. Louis, MI

49th Annual Quad-State Juried Exhibition. Quincy Art Center. Quincy, IL

1998 *Collage*. McLean County Arts Center. Bloomington, IL

Muse of the Millennium: Emerging trends in fiber art. Nordic Heritage Museum and Seattle Weaver's Guild. Seattle, WA

1997 *Luminous Code: Photo-Based Artworks*. Texas Association, College of the Mainland. Austin, TX

Reflections on Culture. Truman Art Gallery in conjunction with the Fifth National Woman in Photography Conference. Boston, MA

1996 *Shape-shifting: Transformations in the Art of the Book*. National Touring Exhibit 1996-1999. Margaret Sunday, Curator. University of Northern Colorado. Greeley, CO: 1996 Mariani Gallery and Mari Michener Gallery; University of Northern Colorado; 1997 Vernon R. Alden Library, University of Ohio; Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI; 1998 Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts, Chicago, IL; Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center, University of Pennsylvania; Downtown Art Gallery, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, MI; Preuss Library, Luther College, Decorah, IA; 1999 University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY

1995 *Faculty Biennial*. Illinois State University Galleries. Normal, IL

Latin American Book Arts. Center for Book Arts Gallery. New York Traveling exhibition: Wessel Lieberman Booksellers Seattle, WA; Papertrail/Ottawa Canada; Minnesota Center for Book Arts/Minneapolis, MN; 1996 Mexic-Arte Museum/Austin, TX

1994 *Above the Surface, a Relief Print Portfolio*. Traveling Exhibition organized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI in cooperation with Hartford Art School; North Texas State University; Ohio State University. Oklahoma State University

Wisconsin Women Book Artists/ International artist book exhibit Exchange. Balinese women's artist books joining for an Exhibit. Wisconsin Center Gallery. Madison, WI

Bali/Wisconsin Women's Artist Book Exhibit. Suriwati Sanggar Gallery. Bali, Indonesia.

Out of Bounds, Books as Art/Art as Books. Creative Arts Workshop Gallery. New Haven, CT

Artful Women/8th Annual Exhibition. Madison, WI

CAIE'94: America's Cultural Diversity. The Center of Contemporary Arts at Saint Louis, MI

1992 *Her Art Works*. South Bend Art Center. South Bend, IN.

Artful Women. Sixth Annual Exhibition of work by WI Women Artists. Madison, WI

1991 *Art Against War*. An open exhibition of works that oppose War and support Peace. University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

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Artful Women. Sixth Annual Exhibition of work by WI Women Artists. Madison, WI

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2001 *S.O.S. (Special Opportunity Stipend)*. The New York Foundation for the Arts and The Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, NY

1994-95 *Advanced Opportunity Fellowship*. University of Wisconsin

1993-94 *Advanced Opportunity Fellowship*. University of Wisconsin

1994 *Grant, Graduate School Research Support*. University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1990 *Scholarship. Madison Area Technical College Foundation*. Madison, WI.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2004 *Manya Fabiniak, Exhibition Catalogue Undergarments*. Open Studio. Toronto, Canada

2002 *New York State Governor's Arts Awards, 2002*. Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, Unveiling of Public artwork at the Art Across Borders project in downtown Buffalo. *Photograph of the sculpture and the artist*. Pg. 7.

2001 *Holly Auer: "Sculpture sharpens historical edge."* *The Buffalo News*. Tues., Jul. 3, 2001. Section B.

Info/At Spree: "Art Across Borders." *Buffalo Spree*, Sept./Oct. 2001. Pages 18-19.

Jennifer Lewandoski: "Pan-Am venue for public art display." *The Reporter*, Sept. 6, 2001. Vol 33, Page 2

Natalie Green Tessier: "Women's Work." *The Buffalo News*. Jun. 29 - Jul. 5

Elizabeth Licata: "El Museo Celebrates Diversity." *Blue Dog Press*. Jun. 28 - Jul. 4, 2001. Page 26

Elizabeth Licata: "Strings Attached." *Blue Dog Press*. Jun. 14 - Jun. 20, 2001. Page 28

Matt Chambers: "Artists and Memory." *Blue Dog Press*, May 17-23, 2001. Page 28

2000 *Exhibition Catalog: Eyes wide open, Artist's Perception of Conflict*. Art Department, University at Buffalo, SUNY. Buffalo, NY

1999 *Karen Kunc, Artist's Books and the Burning Question*. Grapheion, 10th issue, 2/99. Pages 13-19. Color plate illustration

Exhibition Catalog: 49th Annual Quad-State Juried Exhibition. Quincy Art Center. Quincy, IL

Exhibition Catalog: Fiber Focus '99. Art St. Louis. St. Louis, MI

1998 *Lloyd Herman, Catalog for the exhibition The Muse of the Millennium*. Nordic Heritage Museum and Seattle Weaver's Guild. Seattle, WA

1997 *Jennifer Blessing, Catalog for The Exhibition: Luminous Code: Photo Based Artworks*. Texas Fine Arts Association. Austin, TX

2004 *S.O.S. (Special Opportunity Stipend)*. The New York Foundation for the Arts and The Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, NY

1994-95 *Advanced Opportunity Fellowship*. University of Wisconsin

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Elizabeth Licata: "El Museo Celebrates Diversity." *Blue Dog Press*. Jun. 28 - Jul. 4, 2001. Page 26

Joanne Silver, *Photos put the focus on "Culture"*. Boston Herald. Friday, May 9th, 1997, pg. S 13.

Fernando Arenas, *Historias en su propia caja*. El Comercio Sección Cultural. Quito, Ecuador. Wed., Dec.8, 1996. Page C6

Marjorie Crawford, Amanda Schurr, Sandy Voigt, *Women of color in Art*, slide resource series Unit III: Latina American, Women Caucus for Art/Universal Color Slide Company, Sarasota, FL

1996 *Margaret Sunday, Exhibition Catalog Shape-shifting: Transformations in the Art of the Book*. University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO

1995 *Kevin Lynch, "University of Wisconsin Graduate M.F.A. show."* *The Capital Times*, Thurs., May 18, 1995. Page 6F

Dory Lightfoot, "M.F.A. Exhibit by Sandra Fernández," *Alambraso*, The Chicano Studies Program Newsletter from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Volume 10 #1, Spring 1995

John Petrick, "Judging by the Cover..." *Tempo, The Jersey Journal's Weekly Entertainment Guide*, Feb. 3 - 10, 1995

Brian Hannon, *Latin American Book Arts Catalog*. Center for the Book Arts, New York, NY 1995

COLLECTIONS

Public

Buffalo Place (downtown theater district), Buffalo, NY

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France

Kohler Art Library, Madison, WI

University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics, Madison, WI

United States, Canada, Ecuador, Spain, Colombia, Argentina, France



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Michael J. Beam
Curator of Exhibitions and Collections
Castellani Art Museum



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OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

Niagara University
NY 14109-1938
716.286.8200
fax: 716.286.8289

www.niagara.edu/cam

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