



María José ÁVILA GARCÍA

Visual Artist

majoa242@gmail.com

<https://majoa242.wixsite.com/website/>

‘As a lifelong artist, María José Ávila García is always looking for the next opportunity to reflect her everyday experiences in artistic expressions. Since 2018, she has participated in the Cota-Cundinamarca (Colombia) art scene and in various other spaces. Her approach and results are constantly evolving as she hones her personal style. However, she refuses to be typecast and works hard to avoid repetition. María José approaches each project with total enthusiasm and dedication, no matter which one it is.’

Anca POP

Editor and Researcher

anca.m.pop7@gmail.com

Anca is an editor and researcher based in London. She holds an MA in Social Sciences (University College London) and an MA in Philosophy (University of Warwick). Her main topics of interest are metaphysics, political philosophy, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, geopolitics and international law, Performing and Visual Arts, Central and East European cinema



***Otra Oportunidad* - an Installation by María José Ávila García**



See the installation [here](#).



OTRA OPORTUNIDAD
(By María José Ávila García)

1. El Deseo

He decidido volver a nacer
Rendida ante lo verdaderamente hermoso
Volveré a nacer

Seré todo lo que un día soñé
Ver el cielo por primera vez

Haré todo lo que un día soñé
Ver el cielo por primera vez

Tendré todo lo que un día soné
Ver el cielo por primera vez

2. La Creación

Carne viva
Palpita, palpita, palpita
Toma mis manos
Toma mi aliento
Soy incapaz de moverme

Carne viva
Palpita, palpita, palpita
Toma mis brazos
Toma mi rostro
Soy incapaz de moverme

El cielo es testigo
Las nubes llorarán

3. El Nacimiento

Hijo de los que ya no están
Del polvo y los recuerdos

Hijo de los que vendrán
De la lluvia y el anhelo

Espero un sol cálido
Que me haga cerrar los ojos

Soy tu carne
Soy tu sangre
Seamos juntos hijos
Seamos juntos padres

ONE MORE CHANCE
(Translated from the Spanish by Anca Pop)

1. Desire

I have decided to be born again
Surrendered to the truly beautiful
I shall be born again

I shall be everything I dreamt one day to be
See the sky for the first time

I shall do everything I dreamt one day to do
See the sky for the first time

I shall have everything I dreamt one day to have
See the sky for the first time

2. Creation

Living flesh
Throb, throb, throb
Take my hands
Take my breath
I am unable to move

Living flesh
Throb, throb, throb
Take my arms
Take my face
I am unable to move

The sky is witness
The clouds shall cry

3. Birth

Child of those who are no more
Of dust and memories

Child of those to come
Of rain and longing

I await a warm sun
To make my eyes close

I am your flesh
I am your blood
Together let us be children
Together let us be parents



Growing up in the high-altitude vicinity of the Majuy sacred mountain, in Colombia's montane Bogotá savanna, María José would often find herself looking at the sky, gripped by the many skies the Majuy and the savanna were conjuring. Those were her skies – loyal witnesses to her and her family's life. But those were also the skies of her ancestors, the Muisca – legendary indigenous highlanders of the Colombian Andes, still inhabiting parts of today's central Colombia.

With a wind's blow, and a cloud's coming in and out of shape, they were maybe trying to tell her something. Ephemeral – yet, for a sky-eyed María José, ever more revealing – air sculptures. Perhaps that's why she felt compelled to immortalise them, by diligently putting together an ever-expanding photo archive of clouds.

Her more worldly surroundings were those of Cota (department of Cundinamarca) - a locality whose status she describes as perched between a town and a village; all the more so given to 'a rhythm of doing and of being' of its own. The unconventional and the uncategorisable were also present in her family. Raised by her grandparents (and many uncles) she was able to draw on their reservoir of patience and wisdom. Their lesson of love was not to rush her out of childhood and onto life's all too trodden paths; they taught her to tune her ear to the sound of her inner rhythm, forge her own rites of passage and her own place in the world. With the confident eye of seasoned sign-readers, they read the artistic cues in María José's personality and made sure to guide her towards her vocation when that bridge needed to be crossed. It was Uncle Felipe who, on a random walk, told a would-be Psychology student María José: 'That is not the right decision. You must study Art. I see you as an Art student'.

Nurturing and supportive as grandparents and relatives, her family are at the same time direct descendants of the ancient Muisca; even closer to the Muisca's old ways of life for being generationally distant from hyper-modern realities. Artisanal textile-making traditions, holistic medicinal practices, intuitive knowledge of how to forge a respectful relation with nature, an active and watchful interest in communal ties – formed an important part of María José's upbringing and afforded her a unique lesson of resilient world-building.



For the keen sensitive observer that she is, it was unavoidable that such learnings should also make their way into her artistic practice. In doing so, new meanings and possibilities are arising, new worlds being disclosed. The weaving and sewing passed on by her grandmother from a very young age, the hand-made fabrics María José collected as a child (their colours, textures, the memories knitted into their making), the myriad flowers, trees and plants sharing the household with her family (with their many roles, some medicinal, others spiritual), the friends and relatives who made up the local community – all have become something more than objects, practices and faces from the world of her childhood. As art materials and devices, they are witnesses and guides to María José’s coming into being as an artist – part and parcel of an assiduous process of self-invention.

And how profound and visceral this process proved to be! At its heart lies a formidable paradox: as a facilitator of the artist’s birth, the world of María José’s childhood will pay with its very worldliness, as it finds itself slowly left behind. The birth of the artist is a birth out of childhood and the world thereof, and into a period of self-world-building and creative auto-sufficiency. This is a critical moment for the nascent artist; the decision to part with the old world and embrace the new one has been taken, but the painful birth is yet to take place. She gathers her strength and some pieces of the old world around her – tokens of the price she must pay on her journey of self-discovery – and prepares to spring forth.

Nestled in these musings, one feels hopefully enticed to tune into the atmosphere of a newly unlocked world – María José’s latest work, ‘Otra Oportunidad’. Exhibited in 2021 in the Bacatá Cultural Centre (Funza, Colombia), ‘Otra Oportunidad’ is a multi-layered installation, composed of an audio poem, a visual piece (a hand-crafted textile sculpture, plus adjoining items), and a pre-installation performance (the making of the sculpture, using various knitting and sewing techniques).

The project started with and was led by the poem ‘Otra Oportunidad’ (written by María José herself). The visual ensemble came to life gradually, as María José, during a period of pandemic-occasioned reflection, decided to return to the fabrics and crafts of her childhood, put to the side



for most of her time at university. Out of jute – a very rough natural fibre, typically used to make rope and sacks – she slowly crocheted a ‘womb’. This painstaking process,

forcing her body into prolonged uncomfortable positions, scraping her skin and making her wear a facemask, to prevent the inhalation of fibres, took two months to finish. Onto and attached to the womb she then embroidered pieces of red fabric, meticulously collected from relatives and friends. The three-hand arm jutting out from the womb was knitted by María José directly around her own arm and hand.

The visual work finally includes a white veil rippling around the hand-crafted ensemble, as well as scattered flowers and twigs, specifically brought over from María José’s family home by herself and her grandfather. As a culminating piece in the installation, during the exhibition, the three Dramatis Personae of ‘Otra Oportunidad’ can be heard reciting the verses from inside the womb (via a speaker placed therein).

A confident and mature work in the trajectory of a promising young artist, ‘Otra Oportunidad’ speaks about how to draw on the world around us only to discover at its core our very own singular power.