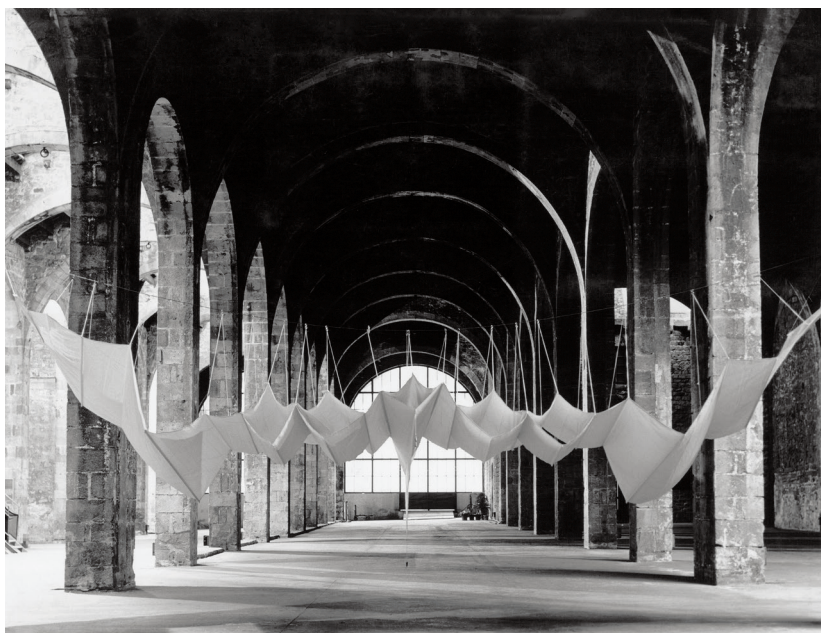


Exhibition April 29 – September 7, 2026

Nouvel Building, Floor 0

Aurèlia Muñoz

Beings



Ocell-estel B2 (Bird-Kite B2), 1982. Colección MACBA. Depósito de la Generalitat de Catalunya. Colección Nacional de Arte de Postguerra y Segundas Vanguardias. Photo: Josep Gri Espinagosa

**MUSEO NACIONAL
CENTRO DE ARTE
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This exhibition offers a comprehensive tour through five decades of work by the artist Aurèlia Muñoz (Barcelona, 1926–2011) on the centenary of her birth. Titled *Beings*, alluding to one of the foundational concepts in her practice, it proposes a detailed analysis of the series, periods, and techniques that defined Muñoz’s career from the mid-1960s through the first decade of the new millennium. In doing so, it brings together for the first time her earliest collages and assemblages alongside large-scale embroidered tapestries, her emblematic knotted-fiber macramé sculptures, bird-kites that soar over the gallery space, sculptures created from paper pulp and with found materials such as seashells and conches, in addition to an abundance of sketches and models that reveal Muñoz’s tireless investigation of materials and concepts. Drawn from national and international collections, as well as the Archivo Aurèlia Muñoz, all of these pieces together allow us to appreciate the full range of work of one of the most singular creators in our recent history.

While she was initially associated with the *Nouvelle Tapisserie* (New Tapestry) movement, which introduced novel changes to textile practices in Europe beginning in the mid-1960s, Muñoz’s work far transcends the fields of Fiber Art and contemporary crafts. Her artistic project was incredibly expansive, though we can trace a coherent line through it in her constant changes in scale and technical mediums and through references to the experimental architecture of her time, to ancient art, and to the ancestral traditions of various cultures. By combining vernacular techniques and contemporary methods, and establishing dialogues with engineering, ecology, and ethnology, Muñoz was able to sustain her personal artistic universe while simultaneously responding to the emerging crises of the postindustrialized world—all in a context marked by the dictatorship, censorship, and gender inequality. Her contributions were nevertheless visionary in terms of structural experimentation, in the search for new artistic materials, and in her attention to the impact of those materials on terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial



Aurèlia Muñoz installing *Xarxes vegetals* (Plant Nets), 1973. Museu d'Art de Girona. Depósito Generalitat de Catalunya. Colección Nacional de Arte. Photo: Arxiu Fotogràfic Pau Barceló

ecosystems—themes that clearly emerge throughout various periods of her artistic production.

Working with a powerful and revealing sense of intuition, Muñoz was sensitively attuned to future concerns as wide-ranging as interspecies imaginaries, philosophical posthumanism, and what in ethnology is known as perspectivism—turns that will, respectively, shift the hierarchy between subjects and objects of knowledge and the one between communities of “knowers” and “the known”—as well as new materialisms and the marked return to handcrafting in the twenty-first century. Perhaps because these transformations seem more prominent today than ever before, Muñoz’s practice resonates with particular singularity in the artistic debates of our time. Thus, *Beings* sets out to explore the artist’s universe through its unending profusion of entities that

appear in and through her works as diverse figures or genderless beings, animated textile bodies and self-supporting garments, plant architectures and bird-kites, anemones and aerial books. Faithful to this multiplicity and to the numerous narrative perspectives it offers, this project has brought together a diverse chorus of agents, experts, and interlocutors—it is impossible to imagine this exhibition without their collaboration.

Embroidery, Montage, Stamps

Aurèlia Muñoz's training as an artist was intuitive and autonomous, driven by the urgency of a relatively late start, as she made the crucial decision to dedicate herself to a creative practice in the late 1950s, when she was in her thirties. From her earliest work



Construcció abstracta (Abstract Construction), 1965. Art Collection Meierijstad, The Netherlands. Photo: Johannes Schwartz

in which her talent for painting became evident, Muñoz drew on a range of traditional techniques and absorbed both historical and modern influences. Among her main sources of inspiration, several stand out: the major works of the Catalan Romanesque period created using the historical technique of “painting with needles” or *acu pictae* (seen in the twelfth-century *Tapís de la Creació* [Tapestry of Creation] in the Girona Cathedral); Spanish and European traditions of popular embroidery; pre-Columbian American textile techniques; as well as the avant-garde movements that defined her own time, especially modernism and Surrealism, through the work of artists such as Antoni Gaudí, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, René Magritte, and Joaquín Torres García. A whole melting pot of influences becomes apparent both in Muñoz’s collages and assemblages and in her stamped fabrics.

Knotted Sculpture

Aurèlia Muñoz’s work became internationally renowned through her macramé sculptures—some of which are imposingly large. This exhibition presents a selection that includes her most important series and groups of macramé work. Created between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, these largely monochrome works with austere lines position Muñoz as one of the most unique creators of her time, in direct dialogue with her European, Latin American, and US contemporaries (such as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Sheila Hicks, Olga de Amaral, Jagoda Buić, and Lenore Tawney). At a time when she was gaining increasing recognition for her embroidered works, the knot emerged in Muñoz’s practice as an essential gesture, one that undergirded all of the artistic languages she had contended with until that moment. From her very first macramé work, she made the definitive decision to use a single color associated with a material—jute or sisal, sometimes dyed, or raw cotton—for each piece. Muñoz’s knotted structures are at once surface and volume, the body and what clothes it. Their statuesque monumentality is a constant. Almost defiant as they are suspended in



Personatge dins el bosc (Figure in the Forest), 1974. The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. Photo: Arxiu Fotogràfic Pau Barceló

air, they call to mind sacred, royal, or papal cloths of the past. But Muñoz turns them into bodies, beings, self-supporting or flying volumes. Through the art of the knot, she explores plural compositions and serial variations: *Capas* (Layers), *Personatges* (Figures), *Macras*, and, central to her work, *Ens* (Beings).

Aerostats: Between Bird and Kite

For Aurèlia Muñoz, the textile medium is a tool to reveal and modify space. Her sculpture produces a flexible, mobile, light, and open presence, but also a technical object that does not conceal the methods of its creation, the gestures that have brought it into the world. Alongside characteristic features of handicrafts such as stitches, graphic lines, and knots, Muñoz skillfully explored technical elements and industrial materials, architectural relationships, and the interplay of forces in constructed space. In 1979, she began to develop a series of flying sculptures, similar



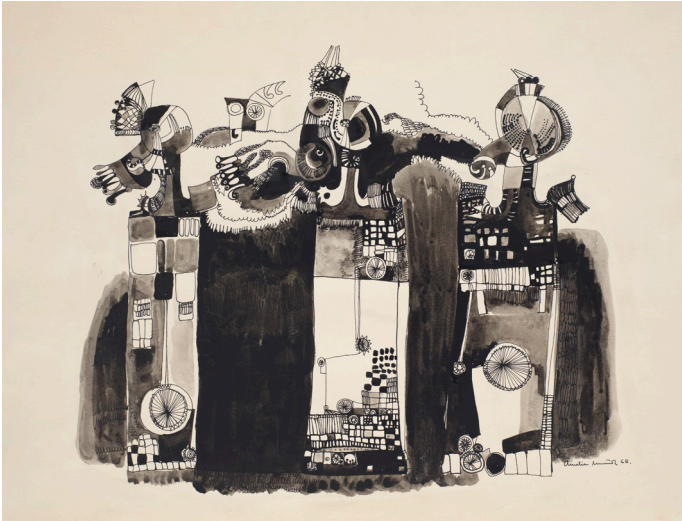
Ocell-estel B3 (Bird-Kite B3), 1982. Colección Juan Varez.

Photo: © Ferran Freixa, VEGAP, Barcelona

to paragliders or primitive airplanes, made out of large canvases structured with rods. Their contours vibrate with reminiscences of Muñoz's earlier sculptural experiences at school, where she created animals out of folded paper. At the same time, the sculptures that she will call "aerostats" and "bird-kites"—and that she will title with letters and numbers as though they were models or factory prototypes—are based on her fascination with the air, with sails, and with the winds, and her fascination with movement and traveling beyond all limits. Unlike the experimental designs created by Leonardo da Vinci, one of her major influences, these works cannot be seen as mere machines or transportation devices. They are beings; they have something living and animal about them, as though they had escaped from the utilitarian world and stretched their wings in a transcendent space.

Drawing as a Parallel Practice

Drawing is a medium that accompanied Muñoz throughout her career. This exhibition presents for the first time a wide-ranging retrospective selection of her drawings, and reveals how they can be understood as a rigorous and distinctive dimension of her



Untitled, 1965. Archivo Aurèlia Muñoz. Photo: Fotogasull

creative practice. Created with india ink, pen, or watercolor on white cardstock or notebook pages, they are an important testament, bearing witness to the artist's mental and cultural universe. Muñoz was most prolific in her production of drawings during the 1960s, and though she signed them, she rarely exhibited them. Her compositions tend to be highly complex, with a free, dreamlike, and often paradoxical perspective. They are full of animals, robots, figures, and humanoid beings. While drawing on her fascination with medieval bestiaries and Romanesque porticos, Muñoz remained equally open to influences from Surrealism and pop culture images of her time. The 1970s and 1980s saw a new period of graphic effervescence in her work, taking the form of abstract games, akin to origami, or the manipulation of folds and ribbons. These experimental forays in her constant movement beyond representation often underscore the autonomy of the drawing itself.



Llibre aeri blanc I (White Aerial Book I), 1985. Archivo Aurèlia Muñoz.
Courtesy of Galeria José de la Mano. Photo: La Fotogràfica

From the Book Object to the *Aerial Book*

Throughout the 1980s, Aurèlia Muñoz continued to develop her interest in handmade paper, and the book became a sort of leitmotif with almost mythical status: both an object and container of information, and eminently aerial. Initially presenting them as sketches and drawings, she transformed the books into flying sculptures. Their sheets of white paper situate them in the wake of the bird-kites, and they also enter into conversation with the marine shapes that obsessed Muñoz during this same period. Moreover, the artist's trips to numerous sites in Latin

America—in Mexico and Brazil—as part of various projects solidified her admiration for Amazonian cultures and ancestral, pre-Columbian techniques and objects. Among those, the quipu (the system of knots and cords used to record and transmit information in Inca culture and in the administration of the Inca Empire) had a special power for Muñoz.

Seascape

Faithful to her methodology in which the interdependence of materials took precedence over forms, Muñoz approached her work with paper as a water-based practice in the broadest sense: an exploration of the liquid world of baths, dyes, and washes; processes of liquifying and drying, which allowed the paper to take on any shape and any color. If the paper fibers take shape in the water, it could be said that the aquatic shapes naturally manifest as shapes in the paper. The sea, as a constant presence in the Mediterranean landscape and imaginary, had always exerted a mental and physical pull on the artist (she was a great lover of diving). We can even think about Muñoz's approach to paper-based techniques in the last third of her career as a way of engaging intimately with the marine ecosystem. Her exploration of paper as a sculptural medium and her attraction to aquatic forms—reeds, anemones, algae, scales, shells—came together in the late 1970s and continued to intermingle until the end of her life.

The Archivo Aurèlia Muñoz: Processes and Contexts

The Archive captures Muñoz's rigor and commitment to her work. Her efforts to confer value on and professionalize her practice ran up against the context of the dictatorship and a setting that was both *machista* and hostile toward artistic work—particularly toward the work of women artists. This exhibition brings together an original and wide-ranging set of documents and materials, personal collections, models, sketches, and photographs that manifests Aurèlia Muñoz's diverse influences, cosmopolitan



Algues blaves amb cargols (Blue Seaweed with Conch Shells), 1986.
Archivo Aurèlia Muñoz. Photo: Roberto Ruiz



Aurèlia Muñoz and her collaborators installing *Ondulacions* (Undulations) in the artist's studio, 1974. Photo: Josep Ventosa

inspiration, and organizational tenacity. Popular art forms, such as basketmaking, ceramics, garment making, and weaving, figure among her major points of reference, particularly in the preparatory research she did for her embroidered and macramé works. Her use of documentary sources can be seen not only in the works she presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions but also in how she documented her processes in the studio. It is also evident in many of her manuscripts, often written for conferences and classes, which are conserved in her archive alongside other materials that reflect her interest in teaching.

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from 10 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Closed on Tuesdays

The exhibition galleries must
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