

▲ Eye.

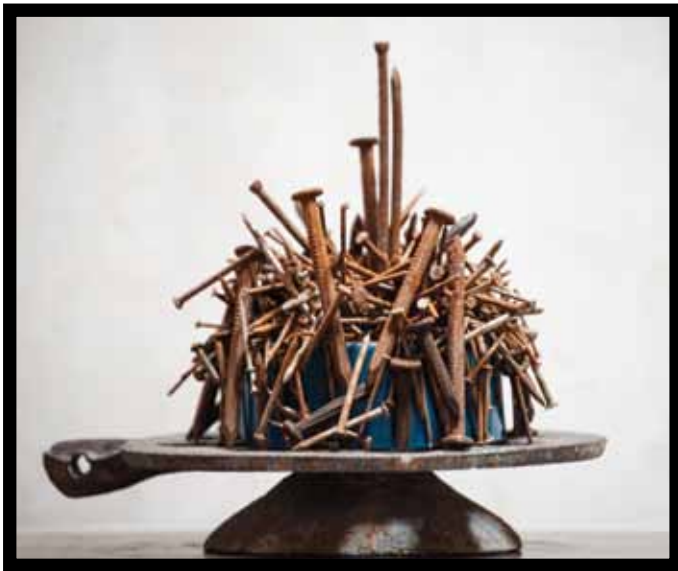
Homemade, by *María Tello*

Manuel Andrade*

*M*aría Tello's artistic career traces a journey from thought to image that, for the moment, has ended in poetry. A philosopher by training and a self-taught visual artist—first figurative and then abstract—, her most recent explorations, collected in the book she is preparing, *Hechos en casa* (Homemade), yield the fruits of maturity and contemplation, where the full exercise of her creative powers, which goes beyond definition of what she does, combine with having long lived with words that are resolved in poetry and a way of life.

Her poetry is outside conventions, and its starting or ending point is the word, but that she leaves aside when she begins by building metaphors through the discovery of the secret links between things that seem alien to each another. An exploration that actually starts off with a process of pure introspection. I mean a process that originates in the occurrence of thought, and through which, thanks

* Mexican Poet.
Photos by José Armando Canto.



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to contemplation, reflection, and enthusiasm, reveals those never obvious relationships to us, as much as her own ways of finding them, to produce a work that is open to meaning, full of hidden crannies and profundities.

Her very diverse concrete works are authentic tangles in which the thing in itself that is the artistic object, produced and productive, turns out to be just as important as everything intangible that makes it up: the mental process that conceived it, the physical movement required to anchor it, or rather, to synchronize it, the ways in which skill or chance contribute to creation, or the time into which creation has been flung and that it needs to mature or grow old—like ourselves—, and, only then, end by weaving its nexuses and speaking, from what it is, of what we are.

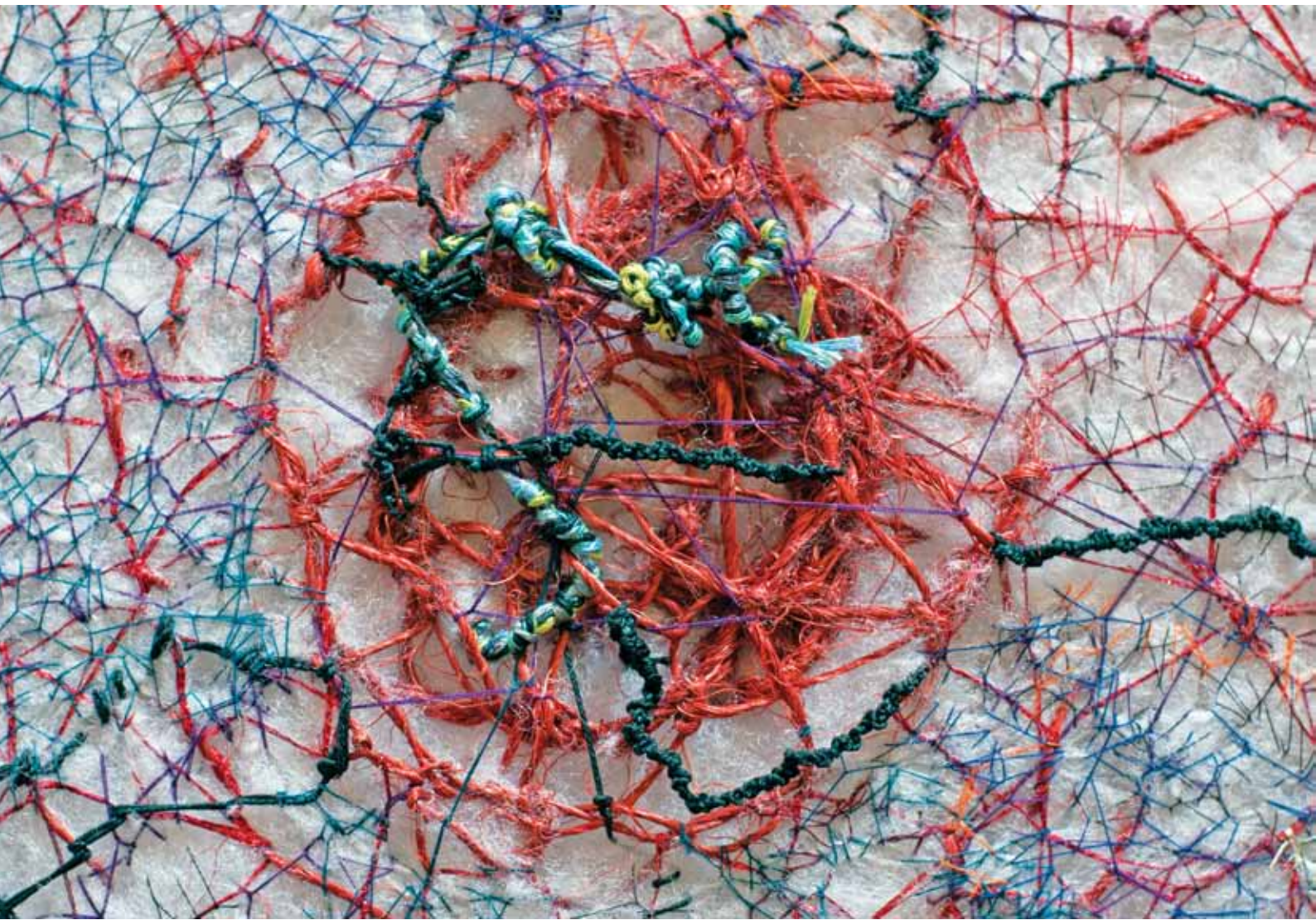
Amidst all of this, time is fundamentally involved; time, which is the true matter María Tello works with. Time and its diverse manifestations, whether in the energy that allows her to look at life that way, with a sidelong glance, to be able to sketch it; in the comprehension and organization of space and matter with which she approaches art, as though she were playing, but also as a going, little by little, unhurriedly and without an apparent destination, entering into putting into play her interior, her thoughts of the spirit. Time, shucked into routine and unforeseen discovery, collaborates with each realization and ends by being in many ways the great artifice of this poetry-making that presupposes the wait, more reflexive than contemplative; the different contacts with the elements that make it up; the patience to formulate a technique that is different every time and only effective in hitting the nail on the head; the development of a discourse through which what is new—and not only what is thematic—is



▲ *Humanity.*

constructed; and that final act that implies putting things into the world, as one who flings them into the elements so they may live their fabulous lives full (again) of time and vicissitudes.

Thus, she establishes her prodigious dialogue with the viewer, who by discovering her pieces, discovers him- or herself, while observing them in detail, leaving to one side the surprise of the first time to move on also to different degrees of proximity and wonder. Whether through the patient photography of José Armando Canto, who fixes them and gives them a new look, or exhibited in the show “Windows,” at the Mario Rangel Faz space, or situated around her study, home, and temple in the Roma neighborhood, in an environment that induces creation, where more than anywhere else, it is possible to understand, as good as gold, the quote from Emmanuel Kant with which she opens the book *Hechos en casa*:



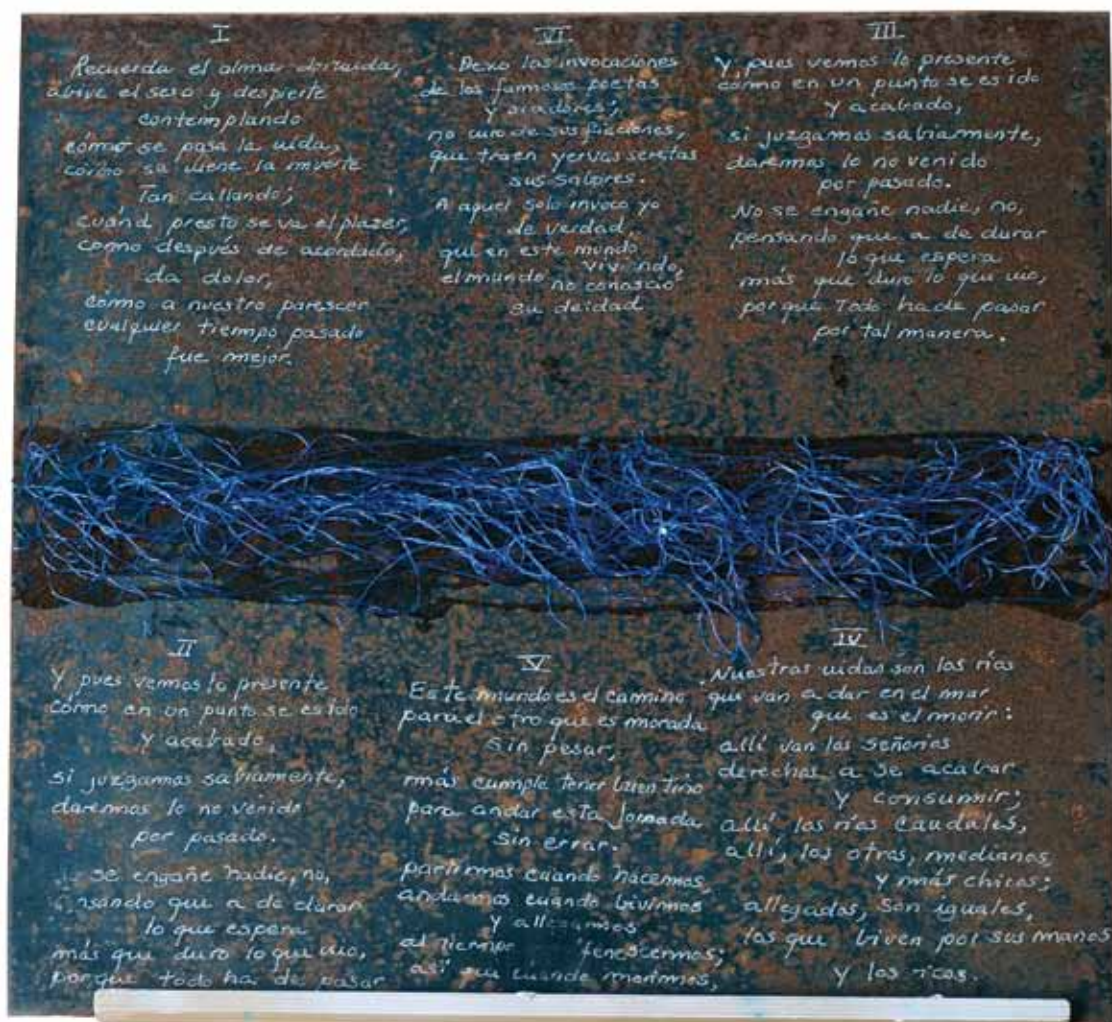
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▲ *Stomach.*

The house, the domicile, is the only bastion in the face of the horror of the nothing, the night, and the dark origins; it holds within its walls everything that humanity has patiently accumulated for centuries upon centuries; it opposes evasion, loss, absence, since it organizes its own internal order, its sociability, and its passion. Its freedom unfolds in stability, what is closed and not in what is open or undefined. Being at home is the same as recognizing the slowness of life and the pleasure of immobile meditation. (Free translation)

More than a private space, encapsulated in its internal, domestic, feminine order, in its counter-position to the public, individuality, the personal seal of thought dedicated to contemplation and reflection about the day-to-day, to a slow and often ironic proposal of alternatives to the ordinary use of objects and ways of recreating matter, in a constant approach from her own being, to the



Dreams and Poem,
 homage to Jorge
 Manrique. ▶



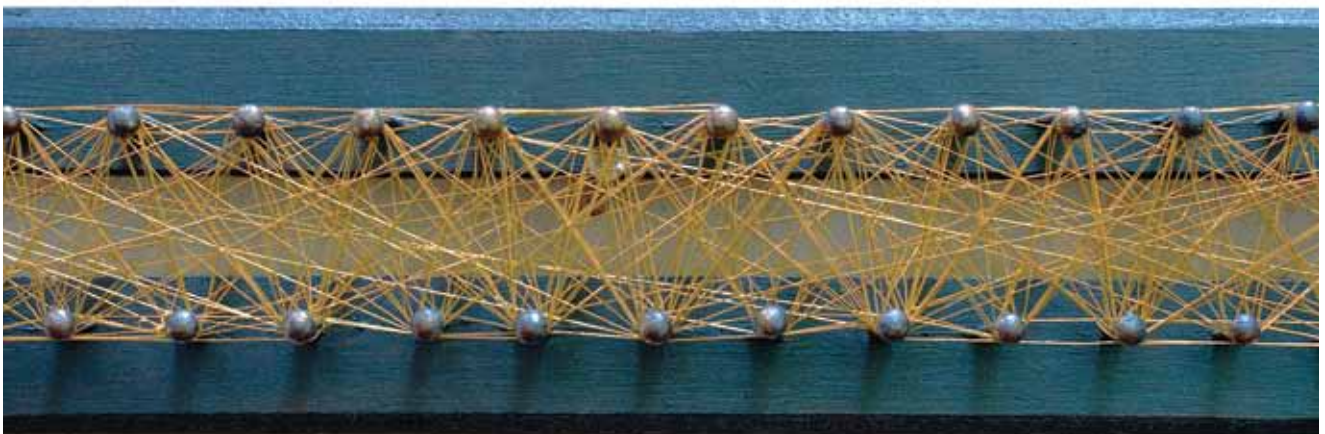
▲ *Threading Dreams.*

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dynamic of that other space and world, the world of the public and the external that, even if it stays outside, always returns through revelation, metaphor, the word: all this can be recognized in the work of María Tello.

This work, also described as a painstaking pause to experiment with the most diverse materials and the most profuse elaborations, consists not only, however, of moving through the house, but mainly of being alert to her own answers; of reading and imagining people, things, events, like emotional occurrences; of affirming, through constant intervention, ways of life; of asking and knowing, in the end, what we are and what we're like, how we react, and how these objects subjected to all kinds of variations and experiments describe parts of our being, and even achieve the miracle of supplanting us and speaking about and for us.

With that aim, with that unlimited curiosity, with that unwholesome and enjoyable taste for discovering herself, whether in the vigorous sky, in an enclosed body, in pain or in want, María Tello brings things together, dreams, clouds, words, diverse materials that life disdains; she brings together the prodigious ingredients that she finds in the scattered day-to-day as well as art's common tools, and waits for the moment in which, from her journey through the house (which is actually a way of living internally, of feeling and ordering her internal life, full of clouds, images, stories, words that are occurrences), she sets herself to discovering (also helped by the words of others, by photographs and pictures, by old and new stories, by images) the relationships among the different elements that compose her metaphors; and in revealing them, she invents the way to do it, whether a traditional or novel artistic procedure, and an action that can be knitting,





▲ Nocturnal.



▲ The Holy Family.

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embroidering, tatting, hooking, sketching, gluing, or ripping; and, along the way, she discovers the way to experience all of that, to face down the procedure that often keeps her occupied for a long time, and that offers her long periods where, curiously, she finds clues about herself, news and certainties about herself, primitive signs that unlock the code of childhood memories or renew her words, or that bring her face-to-face to other words with which she clothes her discoveries. It is as though the work, as it is made, as it-is-being-made, begins to take on a life of its own and also moves through the house even better than the gaze that discovered it, to link up with everything else that stirs there, in a process that does not stop in the seemingly finished object, since the process now demands photography and also dialogue, always renewed with the other things that populate her poetic universe in an interminable origin.

Her world, presided over by her *Family Portrait*, sinks its roots in dreams, uncovers its known face in the form of something new: just like that, it situates us face-to-face with the works of the poet and the tasks of the rain. By describing precisely what it evokes, like all poetry, Tello's work puts us on the road to connect with what is real, that is, with what we really are, with that interior full only of images and letters, that feels the mere passage of time slipping by as a natural, gradual process of change that implicates us, and where those artistic objects become productive, outside of any game, isolated, detoured, reconstructed, disassociated from their old guarantee of inert beings, and begin to seem first familiar to us and then alive, until they take our place. So, in the end, they experience us: they talk to us about what we are more frequently without our having noticed, since, just like ourselves, they have been built with time and flung into the time that defines and envelopes them, that weaves them new relationships, that rusts them, ages them, and discovers them, mere changing elements in the hands of no one. **MM**



▲ *Warrior.*