

Rupert Garcia: *La Xochitl IV*

Rupert Garcia is a master of graphic economy, and his compositions have a deceptive simplicity: there is a wealth of information at play in the interaction between his expertly placed marks. His tapestry's title, *La Xochitl*, means "flower" in the Aztec language Nahuatl; the 13-day period associated with the day Xochitl in the Aztec calendar is thought to be profoundly influenced by creativity and playfulness. In this spirit of creative play, Garcia embellished each tapestry in the edition by painting on its surface; the pigments were absorbed and embedded into the fibers of the tapestry, lending it the same hand-worked quality as his paintings and pastels.

The central flower is an *Ipomoea tricolor* or Mexican morning glory, a motif which Garcia has revisited in several paintings: the roman numerals in the work's title indicate that this is the flower's fourth transformation. Garcia's work is informed by a personal philosophy that reconciles dualistic notions such as life and death or conscious and unconscious. As a result, he frequently uses motifs which embody unity by evoking multiple ideas which might otherwise be seen as contradictory. The morning glory is a prime example: its lively blossoms are often laid on graves during the Mexican Day of the Dead. Garcia notes that it is a nearly universal phenomenon to bring flowers to a funeral and to have some kind of social gathering after the service; hence sadness and celebration are not opposites, but are layered and interwoven in the fabric of human emotions. Likewise, the vibrant hues of *La Xochitl's* morning glory are overlaid with dripping, hole-like shapes: echoes of a lament in the colors of joy, simultaneously evoking both growth and decay, the violent and the sublime.

What I like about the tapestry medium is the idea of warming up a room. This happens physically in terms of temperature and at the same time, in the impact of its design: when the image is powerful enough, it can ignite the room. Tapestry is part of a tradition that is truly universal: a human practice that gives space a statement and gives it meaning, whether spiritual or otherwise.

- Rupert Garcia



Rupert Garcia, *La Xochitl IV*, 2003 - Jacquard Tapestry and fabric paint, 82 x 82 in. Ed: 6



Detail from *La Xochitl IV*

About the Magnolia Tapestry Project

The Magnolia Tapestry Project emerged from artist John Nava's commission to decorate the vast interior walls of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, which required a consideration of the acoustical demands of the space: the decorative element was to function practically by reducing unwanted reverberation, prompting an inquiry into the use of textiles. Nava and Magnolia Editions co-director Donald Farnsworth subsequently collaborated on a series of woven experiments which grew into an unorthodox approach to Jacquard weaving, whereby work by contemporary artists is translated into a digital "weave file" using custom calibrated color palettes developed at Magnolia Editions. The completed weave file is woven in Belgium on a double-headed Jacquard loom using 17,800 available warp threads.

In the same way that Tamarind and Gemini put the commercial lithographic technology of the 19th century into the hands of fine artists in the fifties and sixties, the Magnolia Tapestry Project is putting the electronic Jacquard loom to work in unexpected ways for contemporary artists. The Project includes tapestries representative of several generations and numerous art movements: the Pop princesses of Mel Ramos; the monumental, Expressionistic figures of Leon Golub; the hyper-realism of Alan Magee and Guy Diehl; the playful poetics of Squeak Carnwath and William Wiley and the post-Surrealist visions of Bruce Conner are all re-envisioned in striking new editions. The Magnolia Tapestry Project has also produced tapestries by Ed Moses, Doug Hall, Lia Cook, Lewis deSoto, D.J. Hall, Donald and Era Farnsworth, George Miyasaki, Diane Andrews Hall, Gus Heinze, Robert Kushner, John Nava, Nancy Spero, Katherine Westerhout and others. ■