

MARIA FERNANDA CARDOSO

[1963, Colombia]

Sydney-based artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso, born in Bogotá, Colombia, blends nature, art, science, and technology to transform unconventional materials into awe-inspiring installations, sculptures, performances, and videos. Her beautiful work invites us to experience the wonders of nature.

One of her most fabled projects is *The Cardoso Flea Circus* (1994-2000), a performance piece featuring real live fleas. Over the course of a six-year period, Cardoso trained fleas to perform surprising feats such as walking on tightropes, pulling chariots, jumping through hoops, and dancing the tango.

In 2000, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City commissioned her to create a major new installation featuring 36,000 plastic lilies along a 125-foot-long wall. The permanent beauty of the plastic flowers, which imitated the architecture of old cemeteries in Colombia, expressed a mourning for lives lost during the rampant violence suffered in her country of birth. She represented Colombia at La Biennale di Venezia in 2003, exhibiting a large installation of starfish woven together into a submarine landscape called *Woven Water*. In that same year she had a major solo show, *Zoomorphia*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), Sydney.

Throughout her career, Cardoso has continued to explore nature and its links to culture and science. In 2012, she completed her PhD at the Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) at The University of Sydney. Her research on the aesthetics of reproductive morphology—likely to be one of the more unusual studies to be presented in the hallowed halls of academia—culminated in the *Museum of Copulatory Organs (MoCO)*. She has used a variety of means to explore our complex and awe-inspiring world: employing microscopes to capture the sex organs of invertebrates and plants; shearing and dyeing sheepskins to create murals; arranging preserved frogs into abstract patterns; filming the mating rituals of Australian peacock spiders; and using emu feathers to create avant-garde capes and hats. Cardoso has lived and worked in Sydney since 1997.

She is a recipient of the prestigious Creative Australia Fellowship from the Australia Council for the Arts. Her work has been shown in selected exhibitions such as *Museum of Copulatory Organs (MoCO)*, Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012); *New Media/New Materials: Highlights in Contemporary Art from The Fabric Workshop and Museum*, Contemporary Arts Center (CAC), Cincinnati, Ohio, USA (2007); *Cardoso Flea Circus*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH), Texas, USA (Installation) (2000); *Puntos de Vista. Zeitgenössische Kunst aus der Daros-Latinamerica Collection*, Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zurich, Switzerland (2007); *Cardoso Flea Circus, live performances and exhibition*, The Exploratorium, San Francisco, California, USA (1995); *Naked Flora, Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art*, JamFactory, Adelaide, Australia

(2018); *Aliento: Arte de Colombia*, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Bochum, Germany (2013); *Versiones del Sur: 5 propuestas en torno al arte en Latinoamérica*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain (2000); *Transcontinental*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), California, USA (1999); *Contingent Beauty: Contemporary Art from Latin America*, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), Texas, USA (2015); *Modern Starts: People, Places, Things*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, New York, USA (1999); and *Cardoso Flea Circus*, New Museum, New York City, New York, USA (Video installation) (1998).

Recently, the Tate / MCA Joint Acquisitions Program acquired early works *Corn Coil* and *Corn Drawings* (1989) by the artist, as well as recent works *On the Origins of Art I-II* and *Actual Size I and II* (2016). Over the last two decades, the Tate Modern also acquired the *Cardoso Flea Circus Tent and Video* (1996) and *Woven Water* (2003). Cardoso's work also is included in the following collections: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas, USA; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), Caracas, Venezuela and New York City, New York, USA; The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Bogotá (MAC), Colombia; Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (MAMBO), Colombia; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), Sydney, Australia; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), California, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), Texas, USA; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; National Gallery of Victoria (NCV), Melbourne, Australia; Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Florida, USA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), California, USA; and Tate Modern, London, England, UK.