

# ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

DECEMBER 8, 2021 BY ETTY YANIV

## Deborah Kruger – Plumas at PRPG in Mexico City

### Featured Artist



Deborah Kruger in front of *Accidentals*, 2020, screen-printing on recycled plastic bags, sewing, wrapping, waxed linen thread, 92 x 167 x 6"

*Plumas*, featuring Deborah Kruger's recent work, is PRPG.mx's premiere show in their newly expanded exhibition and residency space in Mexico City. In this sculptural installation, curated by Micheal Swank, Kruger focuses on the extinction of Mexican bird species, the death of Mexican indigenous languages, and the impacts of climate change on migration.

### What is the genesis of this exhibition?

By using recycled materials and materiality-based pieces, I hope to induce viewers to consider some of the solemn issues addressed in this new body of work. *Plumas* is both a celebration of the beauty that birds bring to our lives as well as a warning about what we may lose in our lifetimes if we do not take action.

Using my textile design background, I screen-print images of endangered birds and endangered languages onto pages created from fused recycled plastic bags. These images emerge from detailed drawings done while researching endangered birds. The printed pages are sewn and cut into feathers which are used to build sculptures and wall-reliefs. The complex process is itself a reflection of the complexity of impacts on regional ecologies that contribute to the demise or extinction of species, in this case, birds and languages.

As I researched the plight of endangered birds, I became aware of the concurrent loss of indigenous languages. In many cases, the factors impacting the loss are the same. For example, clear-cutting rainforests not only disrupts bird habitat, but it also interferes with cultures that are thousands of years old. The ensuing desertification and release of greenhouse gases eventually impacts all of us.

I grew up in a second generation immigrant family and watched firsthand the impact of losing an indigenous language, in my case, Yiddish. In the course of one generation, the literature, media, theatre and humor leached away. Of the 7,000 languages currently spoken world wide, there will only be 3,000 remaining by the 22nd century. By integrating text of endangered languages into my work, I hope to honor and elevate endangered cultures.

My intensive, many-layered process requires the help of many assistants, most of whom are local Mexican women. A team-based approach is required for work of this scale, just as a community-wide response is required to shift consumption and policies that may still save some species. These women take great pride in their studio work and I am noticing subtle shift in the power dynamic of their domestic relationships as well as a growing sense of personal empowerment.

Artists have a unique opportunity to translate the issues of our time into a visual language that transcends borders and national identities. My hope is that *Plumas* becomes part of that international dialogue.



Deborah Kruger, *Accidentals*, Wall mural completed in 2020, 92" x 167" x 6", screen-printing on recycled plastic bags, sewing, wrapping, waxed linen thread, photo courtesy of Carlos Diaz Corona

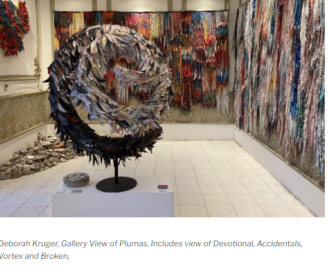


Deborah Kruger, *Vortex*, Sculpture completed in 2018, 59" x 22" x 29", screen-printing on recycled plastic bags, sewing, wrapping, photo courtesy of Carlos Diaz Corona

### Please guide us through the show.

This current exhibition grew out of an earlier show titled *Turbulence: Birds, Beauty, Language and Loss*. That show debuted my work with plastic bags. *Plumas* expands on that body of work by including museum-scale murals, sculpture and installations.

The wall murals, *Accidentals* and *Devotional*, are overwhelming in their layers and details. There is no easy way of approaching the losses due to habitat fragmentation and climate change. Viewers need to navigate between visual and content overload. It is my personal challenge to find a balance between beauty and loss, between sorrow and inspiration.



Deborah Kruger, Gallery View of *Plumas*, Includes view of *Devotional*, *Accidentals*, *Vortex* and *Broken*.

### All photo courtesy of the artist unless otherwise indicated

Patterning has influenced Deborah Kruger's work since her training in textile design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. She has taught, lectured and exhibited her artwork in museums and galleries throughout the US and Mexico since the 1980s. Recent career highlights include a 2021 solo exhibition titled *Plumas* at PRPG.mx gallery in Mexico City. This exhibition will travel to the Visions Art Museum, San Diego, CA in 2023. In 2021 Kruger's work appeared in two international Biennales: *Abandon* is in the Rufino Tamayo Bienal that is traveling throughout Mexico. *Kimono* was included in the Art Textile Biennial in Australia. Kruger has attended residencies at the Millay Colony for the Arts, Austerlitz, NY, La Porte Peinte Centre, Noyers-sur-Serein, France and a recent residency at Hypatia-in-the-Woods, Shelton, WA. The artist maintains studios in the lakeside village of Chapala, Mexico, and in the vibrant art community of Durham, NC.

PRPG is an artist and curatorial residency, in-person and online, focussed on building community with an emphasis on ethical relationships between artists and curators from all over the world. Our mission is to amplify, collaborate, and create a sustainable community online, in CDMX, on Artsy.net, and with our partner galleries in Los Angeles, Ventura, California, and Austin, Texas.

**Plumas is on view through December 11th at the gallery and through February 15th on Artsy.**



📍 FEATURED ARTIST, UNCATEGORIZED

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