



Frieze Masters 2024

Feliza Bursztyn

9 – 13 October Stand E13

On the occasion of Frieze Masters, London, The Mayor Gallery is excited to present Feliza Bursztyn (b. 1933 Bogotá, Colombia - d. 1982 Paris, France) who was a pioneering Colombian artist whose work, alongside that of her Brazilian contemporaries Gego and Mira Schendel, revolutionised the Latin American art scene.

Throughout her career, the artist combined and interrogated ideas about art, machines, craft, modernity, and labour through the lens of hysteria- a term which since the nineteenth century has been used to describe female instability, abnormality, and emotional excess. Bursztyn created her kinetic sculptures using discarded fragments of machines, tires, cables and other metal bits adding, with time, hand-dyed fabrics, motors, light, and sound to produce increasingly complex installations and environmental proportions. By deploying the notion and tropes of madness, Bursztyn thus explored the irrationalities, fragilities, and ambiguities of modern life.

Born to Polish Jewish immigrants, her father owned a small textile factory, which allowed Bursztyn to pursue studies first in Bogotá, then at the Art Students League in New York, and lastly at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. In 1960 she converted a section of her father's factory into an art studio. Her early decision to work with scrap metal and other pieces of discarded material was due to a combination of accessibility and of having met the Nouveau Réalisme sculptor César (1921-1998). When Bursztyn presented her first of eleven Chatarras (sculptures made from scrap) in 1961, she received a harsh review from Walter Engel, one of Colombia's leading art critics. By 1964 and on the occasion of her second solo show, however, W. Engel and others had reconsidered the possibilities of junk as an art medium. In 1965 Bursztyn won first prize in sculpture at the 17th Salón Nacional, and in 1967 she unveiled a new body of work, made of stainless steel and with a kinetic component, which she titled *Las Históricas* (The hysterical ones). These motorized sculptures were occasionally presented in immersive environments that included not only a loud mechanical sound but also a short film titled *Hoy Feliza* (Today Feliza) by the experimental filmmaker Luis Ernesto Arocha.

Despite her critical success, some saw her works as political commentaries against the state and the church and in 1981, after two trips to Cuba, she was detained and questioned for two days by the military. Shortly after her release she sought political asylum in Mexico and then settled in Paris, where in 1982 she died of a heart attack at the age of forty-nine.

Her work has been collected privately and by public institutions, such as the Museo de Arte Moderno, Museo Nacional de Colombia, and Banco de la República, all in Bogotá, and Tate Modern, London. *Welding Madness*, a large retrospective of her work was held at Muzeum Susch, Switzerland, in 2022.

Image: Feliza Bursztyn welding in her studio, Courtesy of Archive of Pablo Leyva, Photo: Pablo Leyva
Welded stainless steel on a black marble base, 39 x 17 x 22 cm

High-res images available on request

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