



"Maria In Red", 1997: Photograph (c) by Raimund Dix.

Maria Mazas

HATS AS DREAM AND THOUGHT PROTECTION

By Marco Fioramanti

Translated from Italian by David Thompson

El Barri Gotic, Barcelona, autumn 1987. She had a tiny inverted planet Earth hanging from her left ear on a chain. This detail has remained wedged in my memory.

I guess poets are those who, turning the world on its head, shake out unforgettable images that fit us like clothes, or crackle up our spines, more delicious than fear. These are all things of which Maria is capable. Born in Galicia, trained in dance, brought up with brushes and paint, she has carved out a career in a very distinctive art form: headwear design. A bit like the man who installs your TV antenna, she is nearer the angels than us and, probably somehow, also in communication with them. Maybe they come quietly at night and leave a feather or two on her pillow, ready for the next piece. It's ten years since her first workshop in Freiburg, Germany (COLLECTION SUN AND SHADE, Atelier Adelhauserstraße), where she confronted theatre and fashion, and where she realized quickly that it wasn't her bag. She had a vision of the hat as a single piece, an organic form made to measure in a workmanlike process beginning with raw material. Then the return to Barcelona, the years of research, the official catwalks of the Salon Gaudi (GAUDI FASHION SHOW WINTER COLLECTION 1993, G.F.S. SPRING AND SUMMER COLLECTION 1994 in collaboration with designer Daniel Carrasco, G.F.S. WINTER COLLECTION 1995); Galeria Aspectos (RED AND BLACK, 1993); Metro Art (SPRING 1994); Ramon Ollé (GREC. ROMEO Y JULIETA, 1995); Boqueria 28 (COLLECTION FALL/WINTER 96/97); Seat - Feira del automòvil (FIVE HATS FOR A DANCE-PERFORMANCE, 1997), Galeria Forum (THE GARDEN OF EDEN, 1997; A STROLL DOWN THE RAMBLAS, 1998: 20 leotard-clad models presenting to passerby her designer's head-coverings); Teatro Nacional (COLLECTION SHOW FOR ALBERTO CERDAN, 1999); and the exhibitions in Madrid (CIBELES FASHION SHOW WINTER COLLECTION 1993, CIBELES FASHION SHOW SPRING AND SUMMER COLLECTION 1996, collaborating in the collection Esteve for Women); Granada (BELLMODA FASHION SHOW, 1992, in collaboration with designers Paco Cañizares, Daniel Carrasco); Santiago de Compostela (ENTRE NOS E O CEO, 1999, Galeria Noroeste); Freiburg (THE HAT AS SCULPTURE, 1992, Atelier Adelhauserstraße) and Italy (TENDENZE, 1997, Galerie P.D 362, in Venice, Civitanova Marche, Padua).

July 2000. Passing through Barcelona I call Maria. She invites me to visit her present showroom, on the first floor of a huge 19th century palazzo, in the center of town. The darkness of the entrance is broken up by points of light emanating from inside a large metallic sculpture and flashing in sequence. From the dark to the light, and the surprise of having passed over the threshold of a magic and fabulous world. Light and music (Purcell) orchestrated by the hat-maker's hand. The dual space is divided between workshop and showroom, each piece on its own stand, ready to fall in love with, slip into like Alice through the mirror, journey with into the unknown. That's what fascinates Maria: the intimate relationship that is born each time between the client and the hat, and the inevitable self-analysis of which she is the incidental author. This game of masking and unmasking, and eventual self-recognition, recalls the Dippold The Optician's story in Edgar Lee Masters' SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY: he asked his clients how they saw the world through each new pair of glasses; some saw globes of red, yellow, purple, some saw knights at arms, beautiful women, kind faces.

Maria's clients have the opportunity to see themselves in a fresh light as they look out from under each new hat, and an unexpectedly deep involvement is provoked between artist and public. As she riffs on their emotions, her hats, always recognizable for their airy lightness, begin to move, in a rhapsody of straw, leather, felt, blue or mauve flowers, and woven metal. Maria describes her work as Dream And Thought Protection: her hats armor the soul against fear and self-doubt, and allow their wearers to lose (or rise above) themselves in the crowd; to breathe the new life into buried passions or to believe in the reality of miracles.

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