

Museum Alejandro Otero Interview

Anastasia Carpio: "'I've learned that life isn't always fair, and not everything we go through is just. But through art, I have found a way to ease that feeling and understand it."

Anastasia Carpio was born in Caracas, Venezuela. She holds a **Bachelor of Arts** in Graphic Design and Fashion, graduating *Cum Laude* from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She taught at the Caracas Design Institute for twelve years, and in 2016, she completed workshops in **lithography, soft sculpture, tapestry weaving, and engraving** at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in the former Academy of San Carlos. This interview with journalist Javier Méndez was conducted in October 2020 to mark the publication of the catalog for her first solo exhibition, **"Progeny, Yesterday and Today."** Held in May 2019, the exhibition showcased the work from her participation in the fourth edition of the MAO Artistic Residency program.

What is the main source of inspiration for your works?

My primary sources of inspiration are my life experiences and my childhood. I had a wonderful upbringing, rich with adventures and travel around the world.

How do you define Anastasia Carpio as a contemporary visual artist?

I am a visual artist. Art has been a huge part of my life since childhood, thanks to my father, a professional architect. My background as a graphic designer and teacher has significantly influenced my creative process and my dedication as an artist.

What first led you to dedicate yourself to the visual arts?

At a young age, I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and study architecture, but that wasn't possible because of the political situation at the Central University of Venezuela at the time. So, I took his advice to study in New York and continued with fashion design, a path I had already begun in Caracas. My constant displacement throughout my life has created a **"lack of belonging"** that is now crucial to my work. It has become an element I feel the need to represent in my installations, bringing my travel experiences in every piece.

Looking back at this journey, how would you define the experience so far?

Would you change anything about this professional odyssey?

The experience has been extraordinary. My work has been very well-received, both in Venezuela and internationally. In 2019, I won the artist residency at the Alejandro Otero Museum in Caracas, and after three months there, I held my first solo exhibition, "Progeny, Yesterday and Today." At the end of the year, I decided to take my career even further. I applied to sixteen artistic residencies in Europe and was accepted into seven programs in five countries, which I'm incredibly proud of. One of these was in Barcelona, Spain, where I was awarded a 50% scholarship. I also had the honor of being selected for three programs in Lisbon, Portugal.

What first inspired Anastasia Carpio to unleash her creative process and bring "Progeny, Yesterday and Today" to life?

"Progeny" is a large-format installation born from three years of research and a personal need to challenge myself as a visual artist.

For years, I've felt a profound sense of displacement. When I returned from Mexico in 2016, after studying tapestry weaving, lithography, engraving, and soft sculpture, I felt like a stranger in my own country. This feeling of being a 'fish out of water' led me to explore my past... This inward journey helped me understand my sense of not belonging, allowing me to reconnect with my family, my memories, and my origins. Through my art, I began to weave new forms and counter-forms—a dynamic web of connections that are constantly being built and unbuilt. This is my way of reflecting on life experiences, places, affections, and absences.

The materials themselves became central to this process. Using organic and recycled resources—like natural fibers, plant-based inks, sprouted grains, and discarded objects—I focus my research on what can be transformed and reborn.

Where did the idea for the title "Progeny, Yesterday and Today" come from?

This piece came from a need to connect with my roots and give a sense of belonging to the absence I felt. It was like seeing my lineage projected on the wall, as I created a journey of colors and smells that connected me to my life experiences. As I painted the gauze, I could smell the colors and relive each event in my mind, a slow-motion film of my past unfolding before me.

Justice holds great weight for me. With maturity, I've come to understand that not all of life is fair, but art helps me process and understand that feeling. I have learned to express the concept of violence through my work, not in a literal way, but through the tension between two installations: "Germination" and "Final Judgment." It's like seeing two sides of a coin, where good and evil confront each other, and a positive outcome is born from that struggle—the calm after the storm.

What is the communicative language of this particular exhibition, and what do you want to express?

My design background provides the foundation for solving my formal and artistic challenges, allowing me to transform my vision into a new aesthetic language. Conceptually, my work is rooted in the relationship between nature, the ephemeral, and permanence, which serves as a lens to explore deeper aesthetic concerns about memory and family. My art is sensitive and metaphorically constructs the vulnerability of the family nest.

What is your opinion on the social events that occurred in our country in April 2017, and why did you decide to incorporate them into your artistic practice?

While I don't consider myself a political artist or my work a protest piece, the events of 2017 were deeply significant for me. What happened in my country echoes historical shifts that have shaped societies worldwide, for better or worse. These events gave me a profound sense of belonging and rootedness, connecting me to a history that is both local and universal.

I felt a strong need to be a part of this history—my country's and my own—to find my place within a narrative of change. My art explores this theme, offering an ephemeral interpretation where everything comes and goes, yet its impact always endures. By being an

active participant, I was able to process that experience, and my work became a way of sharing my journey.

What did it mean for you to exhibit at the Alejandro Otero Museum (MAO) after your participation as an artist-in-residence, and what satisfaction did this installation bring you?

That experience remains the most important beginning of my career as a visual artist. The Alejandro Otero Museum gave me a crucial platform: the chance to express myself, to create a work of significance, and to find my voice. It pushed me to connect with my art on a deeper level and, with courage, to communicate my vision on a grand scale. This trust in myself and my expression also placed me on a vital international stage. Thanks to this opportunity, my first exhibition was given context and weight, something I will always be grateful for. The show went on to earn me seven artist residencies across five European countries.

For an emerging artist, many doors remain closed. The art world can feel contradictory, with galleries and museums asking, "Where have you exhibited?"—yet offering no way to get our work seen.

For this reason, I extend my thanks to the entire team, especially Director Leoner González and Richard Aranguren. I am forever grateful to the museum and to myself for this incredibly gratifying opportunity.