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Geometry Yields Art For MoLAA

Eye on Art

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GAZETTE ARTS WRITER

Acrylic geometric panels explode into shapes and formations that are fun and whimsical in the new "Integral Geometries" display at the Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA) now through July 7.

Solo artist Marta Chilindrõn, who now lives in New York but was born in Argentina, has been experimenting with these modular forms since the end of the 1970s. The result is clever, mechanical sculptures — with a neon color palette — that both adults and children will enjoy.

It's a bit like playing with paper dolls — fold it, cut it and have fun seeing how each slash and crease creates a new image. Only instead of paper and folds, Chilindrõn works with large acrylic sheets that have been hinged together and can be "folded" and set up to achieve different visual effects. They collapse and emerge and reveal "sculptures" of things like furniture forms and pyramids and fanciful mazes.

As you enter the exhibit, you are met with a huge structure called "Cube 48" (2006). It consists of 62 48-inch square hinged panels. The twin-wall polycarbonate panels can be unfolded and laid out in a variety of maze-like configurations.

No two installations are the same. Visitors can walk through it and experience the piece from every viewpoint — including seeing through it. As the exhibit progresses, "Cube 48" will change shape.

"My focus has always been on questioning the accuracy of our perception, our interpretation of realty," says the artist. "Participation of the viewer is important because it brings the person into the work; the public is the performer and the viewer."

Thankfully, Chilindrõn has included a series of scale models that can be manipulated by visitors in order to understand the unfolding systems of the sculptures. The small maquettes provide the hands-on experience that the larger works invite.

However, watching the careful, gloved, handling by Chilindrõn and her assistant as they unfolded the large artwork pieces (before a good-sized audience), they seemed fragile.

One of the first of her works in this genre is a piece called "Table and Chair" (2000). It's a hinged, flat, square-ish, two-dimensional shape that pops out from the wall into a multi-dimensional form of a, well, table and chair.

It's a witty surprise. You can imagine sitting on the chair, pulled up to the table, and writing a note or studying (if they were not so fragile — a thicker material would have to be used). It would be easy to envision a whole classroom of desks and chairs that could "unfold" — like bleachers in a gym.

There is an all-white hanging sculpture ("Cloud" 2009) that is the only piece that is cut with rounded edges. The abstract, free-form image of clouds is inventive. Two smaller wall pieces ("9 Trapezoids" 2013 and "Ring" 2013), effectively morph into tabletop sculptures.

There are only eight pieces in this exhibit, but fortunately the museum offers much more. Make sure you pick up the "cut and fold" paper sheets for the kids to try at home.

MoLAA is the only museum in the United States exclusively dedicated to modern and contemporary Latin American art. It has several large spaces that are well-curated with a variety of styles and artistic offerings. MoLAA is a strong voice in distinguishing between the many cultures, aesthetics and artistic visions of the Latin world.

"Integral Geometries" runs through July 7, at the Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamitos Ave. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday. General admission is $9, and students and seniors get in for $6.