

VOL 14 | ISSUE 3 | SUMMER 2025 | MERSUKA DOPAZO, OLGA

Fiber Art Now





Dopazo's techniques include painting, tearing, cutting, drawing, collage, and appliqué.



ENTHUSIASM FOR EXPERIMENTATION

"You're not an artist because you paint; you paint because you're an artist," she said. Contemporary artist Mersuka Dopazo is a born traveler, and it is her travels and the people she encounters along the way that have inspired her towering paintings. Every trip is a source of inspiration for her—the new materials, the colors and textures of each location. Visiting new places and meeting new people is a passion of hers. Dopazo loves to be surrounded by people and thrives on the busyness of life. Combining elements of painting, drawing, collage, appliqué, and more, she shares her travels. Her larger-than-life art has a carefree energy that draws the viewer in.

Dopazo is originally from Madrid, Spain, but currently lives in Bali with her family. Her large studio space is in her home. She said she can't imagine having a separate studio, away from her home and children, because you never know when inspiration may strike.

She has always made art but was a lawyer before she started creating art full time. While she was still practicing law, she had her first exhibition featuring her oil paintings. Her artwork has been an evolution.

BY BARBARA DELANEY

ABOVE:
Family Power;
2022;
fabrics,
handmade
paper,
pigments,
oil on canvas;
85 x 112 in.
(framed)
OPPOSITE:
Dopazo in
her studio.





Dopazo began working in textiles after a trip to Benares, India, the place she now considers her second home, and without a doubt, it's her biggest source of inspiration. Everything is inspirational: its fabrics, its women, its colors . . . everything!

On her first trip to India, she was inspired by the women she saw washing their saris in the river, then laying them out to dry. Transported by the amazing colors and textures, she was determined to have some of that fabric. She continues to buy sari fabrics whenever she visits India.

Dopazo is "self-taught through experience." She has "an enthusiasm for experimentation" and has done *a lot* of it. She is constantly exploring. Her collage paintings include a variety of materials: couture fabric and handmade papers that she sources from across Asia, pigments, white canvas, gesso, and gestural lines. They explore the balance of color and the relationship between positive and negative space. Ninety percent of her art is about texture and color combinations, and she loves finding and using different materials. It's difficult when certain rare materials are used up, she said, but those are the materials that make her work unique.

"I think big," she said, and she prefers making very big artwork. She can often be seen working on the floor as a result. Though her paintings are very large, they are lush in detail. She does make smaller pieces but feels that she can't express herself as well with them.

Dopazo said she has no idea what she will paint until she sets to work. She does not plan or sketch, nor does she decide on materials beforehand. Rather, she walks around her studio, choosing

ABOVE: **Stronger Together**; 2022; fabrics, handmade paper, pigments, oil on canvas; 85 x 85 in. (framed)





fabrics and papers as she works. Everything is “in the moment.” “The way I paint is undoubtedly a reflection of my unpredictable nature,” she said. “As such, my work is a natural process which does not involve choosing the fabrics or colors I am going to use in advance. Instead, one color leads to another, one stroke points me in the direction of the next and, as if by magic, the painting gradually takes form.” It’s a long process.

Inspired by people on the street, a colorful scene, children at play, or maybe a photo she has seen, her paintings portray the world around her. A painting with a group of people begins with one person. Creating that first person inspires the next, and so on. Each person gets a different treatment, with her work becoming more and more complex as it progresses. Most of her paintings are of groups of people. But it’s not about the people, per se; it’s about the scene or maybe the feeling that scene evokes. She wants viewers to use their imaginations, to contemplate what is happening in a painting.

Over the years, Dopazo has been enamored by many themes related to the people and, sometimes, things in her travels. She has painted people “on the move,” street people, characters, geishas, and even shoes and fauna. She depicts people who are often overlooked in society, maybe even avoided. It’s not necessarily about creating something pretty; it’s about showing things that touch her, things that inspire and make people think. Dopazo herself is inspired by life and everything it has to offer, and she loves to show that in her work. “I am passionate about my work, and I believe one of the greatest fortunes in life lies in the idea of loving what you do every day. I have always

OPPOSITE: **Brief Interaction**; 2025; fabrics, handmade paper, pigments, oil on canvas; 72.75 x 85.25 in.





had a deep fascination with fabrics—especially old and handmade ones—with previous lives and stories that unleash your imagination,” she said.

Though Dopazo’s paintings are rich in color and details, it’s important to her that they are not “busy.” The compositions are important, too, as is balance. It needs to be cohesive, she said. To that end, she tries everything from using papers from old books to including different thicknesses of fabric. She is trying new things every day. Her paintings incorporate both scraps of text and scraps of textiles. Her various techniques of tearing, cutting, and painting are hers alone. Every vibrant canvas is different. She said her paintings could never be replicated.

She used to work on one painting at a time but has found that working on more than one simultaneously often brings new ideas. Also, because each painting has so much detail, it helps to have a few in progress. It gives her time to rest and offers a different perspective. Inspiration flows instantly when she begins working on a new canvas, she said.

When asked about the time involved in creating her large works, Dopazo said the time can’t really be measured. It’s not about what she does on a given canvas. It’s about all that came before, all of her experiences. “A painting is a collection, the sum of your whole life,” she said. “It’s everything you have lived.”

Dopazo’s works have been exhibited extensively in the UK, the USA, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Europe. Her artwork is represented by the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, London, England.

@mersukadopazo

BARBARA DELANEY is a wordsmith, avid sewer, and quilter who calls Massachusetts home.

ABOVE: Music Life; 2022; fabrics, handmade paper, pigments; oil on canvas; 82.5 x 100.75 in. (framed)

OPPOSITE: Time To Go (detail); 2024; fabrics, handmade paper, pigments, oil on canvas; 82.5 x 70.75 in. (framed)



Fiber
Art
Now