



## RAQUEL ORMELLA

*I hope you get this*

*I HOPE YOU GET THIS*, the work of artist activist Raquel Ormella, will be shown at the Lewers (Penrith Regional Gallery) from December to March 2020. Ormella says she should no longer be called an activist - partly her age she says (now 50) and beyond the anger that people have in their twenties and thirties - but Ormella's multi media works very much reflect our times and include posters, banners, videos, zines and needlework. Her work examines the intersections of art and social action. She is absorbed by the relationship between humans and the natural environment.

In conversation with *Ocula Magazine* Ormella offers a revealing insight into the challenges she has taken up, such as the research involved in creating the installation *City without crows* (2018) - carried out in a pet market in Yogyakarta. Few of us could wander through a market in Indonesia observing frightened

Above:  
*All these small intensities* (detail) 2017–18,  
 silk and cotton embroidery thread on linen  
 and Perspex, dimensions variable  
 Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery,  
 Brisbane © the artist Photo David Paterson

Below:  
*Wealth for toil #1* 2014 nylon, acrylic and  
 glitter on hessian 325 x 260 cm QUT Art  
 Collection purchased 2017 © the artist



Right:  
*All these small intensities*  
 (detail) 2017–18, silk and  
 cotton embroidery thread  
 on linen and Perspex,  
 dimensions variable  
 Courtesy the artist and  
 Milani Gallery, Brisbane  
 © the artist  
 Photo David Paterson

Below:  
*I hope you get this* 2018 silk  
 and cotton embroidery  
 thread on linen 8 x 10 cm  
 Courtesy the artist and  
 Milani Gallery, Brisbane  
 © the artist  
 Photo David Paterson



wild birds and animals, in cages and many protected, without experiencing anger and distress. Expanding urbanisation, Ormella believes, forces us to examine our attitudes towards wilderness; we are confused by our interpretations of wilderness as being not of a pure state but rather a reflection of human values. Her PhD thesis from the ANU examined human relationships with urban birds.

Then there is the needlework and the laboriousness of the reworked flags and the various banners where she incorporates, say, part of a worker's high vis jacket. Of her *Wealth for toil No. 1* banner (opposite page with the words 'Golden Promises') she says: 'I would like to make another *Wealth for toil No. 1* if I had another four months where I could just do that,

because it's so glittery. It's the bowerbird thing, just looking at the metallic is very exciting. It's mesmerising. You just can't step back from it sometimes.... But I stopped making the banner works because I didn't want to be the 'banner girl'....

Strangely self-absorbed for someone who says they don't want their art to be personal, Ormella describes *All these small intensities* (shown here): 'I basically just started stitching over a stitching I had done as a six-year-old. I didn't want to let it go, but I wanted to transform it so I could live with it. Then I just started sewing and I found I really enjoyed it, just the thoughts coming up and thinking about the colours...' She describes 'the emotional resonances, and where I was. Certain colours were about my father's working clothes, because I was thinking about my father's migrant trajectory ...'

It's pleasing to see such textile artworks (still largely the province of female artists) displayed in our big public galleries and given the kudos mostly reserved for fine art and male artists.

*I hope you get this*: Raquel Ormella is a NETS Victoria and Shepparton Art Museum touring exhibition curated by Rebecca Coates and Anna Briers  
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