



Communication

PRESS RELEASE

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The Pliable Plane: textiles as a meeting ground for art, architecture and industry in the Banco de España's new exhibition

The exhibition opening at the Banco de España today explores textiles as a point of convergence between art, architecture and industry. To this end, it brings together classic and contemporary works from the Banco de España Collection and a range of public and private institutions. Its title is drawn from the essay *The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture* (1957), in which the pioneering Anni Albers defined textiles as active, pliable surfaces capable of transforming space, filtering light, absorbing sound and altering our experience of architecture.

The exhibition does not present fabric as a merely decorative element. Since their earliest use, textiles have protected, delimited, organised and made spaces habitable. Alongside these practical functions, they have also been used to tell stories, represent institutions and reveal the relationships between culture and society.

A selection of tapestries and carpets from the Banco de España Collection forms the core of the exhibition. These works were conceived as integral components of architecture and played an essential part in shaping institutional spaces, serving practical, representational and hierarchical purposes. Indeed, their ability to transform interiors, influence the experience of those moving through them and imbue architecture with meaning is one of the collection's most distinctive features.

Drawing on this historic legacy, the exhibition presents a range of contemporary practices that expand and redefine the possibilities of textiles.

The selected works show that fabric remains a particularly apt medium through which to reflect on labour, memory, the construction of value and the transmission of knowledge. From this perspective, *The Pliable Plane* proposes understanding textiles not only as a technique or artistic medium, but also as a means of thinking and of connecting different periods, disciplines and ways of inhabiting the world. If architecture is our third skin, as Albers suggested, then textiles mediate between our body and our surroundings. They help make architecture habitable and enable a fuller understanding of the social, cultural and economic relationships within it.

The exhibition brings together nearly fifty works, including tapestries, carpets, paintings, photographs, videos, documents and coins, spanning a broad historical period from the 17th to the 21st century.

The Pliable Plane has been curated by Yolanda Romero, curator at the Banco de España, and will be open to visitors at the Banco de España's exhibition gallery in Madrid from 28 September 2026 to 28 March 2027.

The exhibition is organised into four sections that offer an expanded contemporary interpretation of textile art:

1 The Needle Like a Pencil

The first section brings together works dedicated to the act of sewing. The needle is portrayed as a tool for drawing, writing and constructing spaces, through an approach that connects with the feminist practices that helped reclaim textile art: lead gives way to thread, lines to stitches and tracing to sewing. The works challenge the historical relegation of these practices to the domestic sphere. Here, sewing becomes a means of rethinking history, identity, labour and power relations.

Isabel Oliver challenges the roles assigned to women under Franco's dictatorship. Elo Vega, in turn, uses red thread to embroider on canvases printed with historic manifestos demanding equal rights for women.

Some works relate sewing to working conditions, industrial production and changes in contemporary labour. Victoria Gil's embroideries recover the memory of female workers and the knowledge tied to the textile industry. Elsewhere, Carole Frances Lung uses sewing as an instrument of activism, ironically challenging both the dominance of the machine and the production systems of global capitalism that dehumanise human beings. The inherent slowness of sewing thus becomes a form of resistance to speed, mass production and consumer culture.

Narelle Jubelin reinterprets *La Brecha de Víznar* (The Gap of Víznar) by the artist José Guerrero, radically altering its scale and technique. In this work, the needle assumes a healing function in response to the trauma of the murder of the poet García Lorca in the Víznar ravine.

Esther Ferrer shows how a gesture as simple as passing threads through assorted materials can create places and minimal architectures. Meanwhile, Elena del Rivero joins various materials with delicate stitching to address memory, absence, wound and mending.

2 Defeated Minorities

The second section takes its title from a 1965 statement by Anni Albers concerning the retreat of crafts. Nevertheless, as the works show, ancestral textile knowledge has continued to evolve and has found new methods of transmission. In contrast to the speed and standardisation of industrial manufacturing, weaving is presented as a space for learning, collective memory and cultural resistance.

Teresa Lanceta and Aurèlia Muñoz employ techniques associated with folk traditions and weaving communities to examine cultural transmission. Yto Barrada interweaves traditional Moroccan fibre manipulating and dyeing processes with a critical reflection on the contemporary textile industry and its environmental and political consequences. The Tz'utujil Maya artist Antonio Pichillá uses fibres and wool to revive Indigenous conceptions of time often obscured by Western perspectives. These proposals present manual work as a living, collective practice rather than a nostalgic vestige of a vanished world.

3 Indoor Existences: Dressing Architecture

The third section revisits Albers's phrase 'An indoor existence' to examine the role of textiles in creating interior spaces. Tapestries and carpets did not just offer protection from the cold, muffle sounds or provide comfort: they also imbued architecture with meaning. These works were often designed for specific settings, where they served to direct movement, establish spatial hierarchies and alter the sensory experience of those who used them.

The history of the Banco de España offers a notable example of this relationship between textiles and architecture. Textiles have been used at the Bank since its earliest days. The oldest items in its textile collection are carpets commissioned from the Royal Tapestry Factory from the second half of the 19th century onwards, for the headquarters on Paseo del Prado, inaugurated in 1891. A later refurbishment of the *Salón de Juntas Generales de Accionistas* (Shareholders' Assembly Hall) incorporated six Flemish tapestries by Geraert Peemans depicting the months of the year and the signs of the zodiac. Juan de Zavala integrated these works into his design to improve the hall's acoustics and make them part of its architecture.

4 Times, Narratives and Economies of Value

The final section approaches the relationship between textiles and the institution's identity through another question linked to the Banco de España's functions: how value is created. Through textiles, the works explore systems of exchange, forms of labour and the narratives that lend meaning to economic and cultural processes.

Dora García's project opens the exhibition's final section and forms part of the Banco de España's long-standing tradition of commissioning works from artists. Created for the *Salón de Cobradores* (Collections Hall), the project also continues the tradition of integrating textile art into the Bank's architecture. Her tapestries are inspired by the act of giving and receiving. The image of a hand invites reflection on the idea of exchange, connecting the creation of economic value with interpersonal relationships. Andreas Maria Fohr examines the links between industry, production, payment and debt.

To this end, he uses a cash box, a photograph, a ceramic key and several embroidered textiles reminiscent of promissory notes: promises of future payment that have value in the present.

Although they come from very different geographical and cultural backgrounds, Mercedes Azpilicueta, Patricia Esquivias and Manuel Chavajay share Fohr's interest in displaced histories and in other ways of experiencing, measuring and remembering time, distinct from the linear conception prevalent in the West. Through different forms of storytelling, these three artists use textiles to connect seemingly separate times and propose other ways of understanding history.

A catalogue raisonné of the textile collection

To coincide with the exhibition, the Banco de España has published a *catalogue raisonné* of its textile collection, which studies and documents nearly 100 tapestries, carpets, heraldic hangings and contemporary textiles preserved by the institution for more than 200 years. The catalogue has been compiled by a group of specialists led by Antonio Sama, professor at the Complutense University of Madrid, and Yolanda Romero, curator at the Banco de España.

The catalogue forms part of the Banco de España's series of *catalogues raisonnés*, designed to make its art collection more widely known and accessible. The institution has also published a three-volume catalogue of its painting, drawing, sculpture and photography collection, as well as a work devoted to its collection of timepieces. All these titles may be downloaded free of charge from the Publications section of the Banco de España Collection website.

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