

MARIA FERNANDA CARDOSO

IT'S NOT THE SIZE THAT MATTERS IT IS SHAPE



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Internationally renowned artist Maria Fernanda Cardoso's latest exhibition continues her obsessive investigation into the diversity and complexity of the animal kingdom. *It's not the size that matters it is shape* combines the bizarre and the quirky to produce exquisite oversized replicas of the infinitely variable intromittent organs of different creatures, forming a homage to our insatiable fascination with sex, beauty and preservation. Combining delicate forms and a minimalist aesthetic, her resin sculptures and photographs overflow with references to mortality, reproduction, vulnerability and power. For Maria, working with materials and imagery from the natural world are a device for exploring relationships between human and plant ecology.

Working with the Australian Museum and the Graphicstudeio at University of South Florida, Tampa, and using imaging technology such as microscopy, SEM microscopy and CT micro scanning to scan the genitals into three-dimensional and photographic forms, Maria has been slowly collecting and developing this body of work since 2003. Using scientific modes of analysis and illustration, Maria has transformed the male genitals of harvestman, snails, micro bats, mites and snakes into a landscape of investigative awe. Taking the form of trophies, the sculptures resemble botanical structures, drawing upon the universality of natural forms.

"It is my aim to become an expert on animal penises, and to make an animal penis museum," Maria says of her latest exhibition. Since completing her Masters at Yale University in 1990, Maria has been interested in the use of animals in her practice. After researching fleas for *Cardoso Flea Circus*, Maria discovered that fleas are magnificently endowed and their penises are described by scientists as one of the great wonders of the animal kingdom. This research lead Maria to find out whether other animals had interesting genitalia and pursue a PhD candidature on the subject matter.

Born in Columbia, Maria has lived and worked in Sydney since 1995. In 2000, the Museum of Modern Art in New York commissioned Cardoso to make a major installation for their millennium show, *Modern Starts*. In 2003 she represented Colombia at the Venice Biennale, exhibiting a large installation of starfish woven together into a submarine landscape titled *Woven Water*. Other projects include shows at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, PS1, the San Francisco Exploratorium, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Fundacion La Caixa in Barcelona, the DAROS Foundation in Zurich and the Centro Reina Sofia in Madrid. Selected collections include the Tate Gallery, London; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, National Gallery of Art, Canberra and the Miami Art Museum.

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