

Melissa Cody

BY IGNACIO SZMULEWICZ JANUARY 2, 2024

Many of humanity's earliest technological innovations originate from the art of storytelling: stone totems, mineral-based pigments, textiles. Melissa Cody's first exhibition in Latin America, "Webbed Skies"—curated by Isabella Rjeille and Ruba Katrib—emphasizes the vitality of ancient values that differ from those inherent to the contemporary Western world. Through handmade traditional textiles, Cody proposes ways of looking at geometry, function, or abstraction from the point of view of Indigenous practices that too often fall outside of modern discourses.

One of the twenty-six pieces in the show, *Caminho da cobra* (Path of the Snake), 2013, is a tapestry divided in four parts in which a poisonous viper is moving through a landscape. The composition is visually disrupted by the constant shifts in direction of the so-called snake, but this is no ordinary picture. The reptile is both an animal from the natural world and a mythological symbol associated with speed or lightning by the native Diné/Navajo, to which Cody belongs. The show advocates a return to manual labor in dialogue with knowledge from older generations. At the same time, the artist recognizes the influence of technology in mass culture and incorporates elements such as glitches and digital colors in her works—though she remains far from technophilic. Cody's textiles bring the power of native cosmo-visions to life in a world that is dominated by mass production and the bombardment of AI images. What path will prevail? Only time will tell.



Melissa Cody, *Caminho da cobra* (Path of the Snake), 2013, three-ply aniline dyed wool, 35 × 23 5/8 inches