

## ANNA TORMA

As the descendent of skilled sewists and embroiderers, Anna Torma has been finetuning her needlecraft since her childhood in Tarnaörs, Hungary. Her work is strongly rooted in both Hungarian textile traditions and contemporary practice connected to feminist reclamations of fibre-based work as fine art practices. She has been an exhibiting artist since the late 1970s, primarily producing large-scale, hand-embroidered wall hangings. These textile structures incorporate numerous techniques, including Hungarian cross-stitch, freehand quilting, appliqué, felting, photo transfer, and collage.



**Figure 1.** Anna Torma, *Party with Dionysos*, 2011. Hand embroidery on linen, cotton threads with silk collage border, 185 x 150cm, collection of Patrick Cady/Musée d'Art Contemporain Singulier. [View Source](#)

Since immigrating to Canada in 1988, Torma has found inspiration for her pieces in the flora and fauna surrounding her home in Baie Verte,

New Brunswick, as seen in the floral motifs of *Party with Dionysos* (2011) (fig. 1). She describes the lush imagery featured in her work by writing, “I work with the idea of Dionysian feelings, portraying male and female figures interlaced by real and imagined vegetation, suggesting connectedness in an earthly microcosm. I also want to show the enjoyment and appreciation of myths and legends of different cultures, sexualities, flowers, fruits, colours, and living and imagined creatures, seeing the environment and human identity as a whole but fragile, and always changing, subject.”



**Figure 2.** Anna Torma, *Pedagogical Charts I*, 2016. Hand embroidered collage on linen fabric, silk thread, 143 x 166 cm. Collection of Michel L'Heureux. [View Source](#)

When drafting her hangings, Torma draws from a diverse range of sources, including anatomical drawings, as seen in *Pedagogical Charts I* (2016) (fig. 2).



**Figure 3.** Anna Torma, *Permanent Danger*, 2017. Hand embroidery and reverse applique on three layers of linen fabric, silk thread, 206 x 125 cm. [View Source](#)

Darker themes, including human strife and our threatened natural environment also appear in her hand-embroidered hangings, such as *Permanent Danger* (2017) (fig. 3). This double-sided embroidery depicts Torma's personal, pictorial language, comprised of a figurative lexicon of fire-breathing monsters, human figures, symbolic vegetation, and representations of her husband, artist Istvan Zsako's, sculptures. To create *Permanent Danger*, Torma stitched through three layers of fabric, embroidering both sides simultaneously, to create images on each side that mirror the other. This work—alongside fourteen other large-scale embroideries made by the artist since 2011—were displayed in the 2021 solo exhibition, *Anna Torma: Permanent Danger* (curated by Sarah Quinton for the Textile Museum of Canada and the Art Gallery of Guelph, Ontario). (SS)

