

PILAR MATA DUPONT  
LA MARUJA



MOORE CONTEMPORARY  
Cathedral Square\_Hay Street Perth



*La Maruja La Mano*, 2021  
Cover: *La Maruja La Liliانا*, 2021

PILAR MATA DUPONT

# LA MARUJA

25th September - 23rd October 2021

**MOORE CONTEMPORARY**

Cathedral Square 1/565 Hay Street Perth  
info@moorecontemporary.com  
moorecontemporary.com  
+61 417 737 744



*La Maruja La Muerte, 2021*

---

Who is *La Maruja*, the figure recurring in Pilar Mata Dupont's new body of work?

According to the disparaging feminine noun in Spanish, she is a gossip, an obsessive consumer of telenovelas, a housewife whose life is defined by domesticity and pettiness, cooking and cleaning.

She is little María, the diminutive, the affectionately addressed.

She is Pilar's great-great-grandmother María Cristina, who had few choices in life, married into the Mata family in Argentina, and died under mysterious circumstances in the early 1910s at around age 30 in the years following the removal of her son, Fito.

She renames her family ranch Destierro – exile. Portrayed as a haunted farmhouse in the Gothic tradition, Destierro sits uneasily on the land of the indigenous Querendí people, in the grasslands of Buenos Aires province.

She is a mute, anonymised figure in the stylised Edwardian dress worn by women of that class at that time in Argentina – modest coverage, peachy tones, delicate lace, a dash of latex to reference the medical. Played by Pilar herself, she is like a character from an Alejandro Jodorowsky film: exaggerated,

impossible and theatrical. She is like a woman in a Lucrecia Martel film, trapped in a state of suspension while history is being processed.

She is the version of Pilar almost named María Pilar by her parents. She is all the Marías in Pilar's family – her mother, her dad's cousin... She is like a figure in a multi-generational story by Gabriel García Márquez in which names recur in family trees decade after decade.

She is an archetype of mothers, of women, of the overlooked and reviled and mistrusted, the stifled and the choked. She is the illness suffered by María Cristina. Was it mastitis – a feminine infection, fatal if left untreated – that killed her? Or some more mundane, less symbolic ailment?

She is all the misinformed theories about women's bodies, starting with the ancient Greek assessment that the female body is structurally hysterical and more subject to disease than the perfect, divine male form. According to Hippocratic theory, she has an animal physiology of weepy softness, seeping bodily fluids and strange fumes. For Aristotle, she is a violated, inverted, monstrous kind of male. Such theories have a long afterlife. She has a body defined in hierarchical relation to the male. She is all the projections of misogynist desire and control.

She has veins that run with specifically female blood, and she feels specifically female pain, that of maternal separation



*La Maruja La Enfermedad, 2021*





*La Maruja La Metáfora, 2021*

from Fito. While the hallmark of human biology is variation and irregularity, each of her cells carries genetic information inscribed with XX chromosomes. She will die of a curable disease, whose symptoms she can already feel.

She is a vessel for women's testimony, passed down and down, through stricken eras and troubled family trees.

Beyond any individual, she stands as a compromised, mythic matriarch trapped in a personal history, a familial investigation and a saga of psychology and place. A horror aesthetic creeps through, without any of the genre's usual catharsis, violence or conclusiveness.

Sixty years after her death, and more than four hundred and fifty years after the establishment of Spanish settlements in the region, Argentina would be consumed by a military dictatorship, another wound in the country's traumatic history. In decades long after, Pilar collected interviews from family members about María Cristina, gathered footage at Destierro ranch and resurrected these collective memories in a newborn story of her great-great-grandmother's life and death. The figure of María Cristina is remembered, reinterpreted and imagined once more.

Lauren Carroll Harris

## Exhibition List

---

### *La Maruja La Mano, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja La Muerte, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja La Isolina, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja La Enfermedad, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja La Liliانا, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja La Metáfora, 2021*

Photo print, acrylic face, mounted on  
aluminium  
120 x 90 cm  
Edition of 5 + Artist's Proof

### *La Maruja, 2021*

Single channel HD video  
11:48 minute loop  
Edition of 5



*La Maruja La Isolina, 2021*



Still from *La Maruja*, 2021

**MOORE CONTEMPORARY**

Cathedral Square

1/565 Hay Street

Perth WA 6000

+61 (0)417 737744

[info@moorecontemporary.com](mailto:info@moorecontemporary.com)

[moorecontemporary.com](http://moorecontemporary.com)