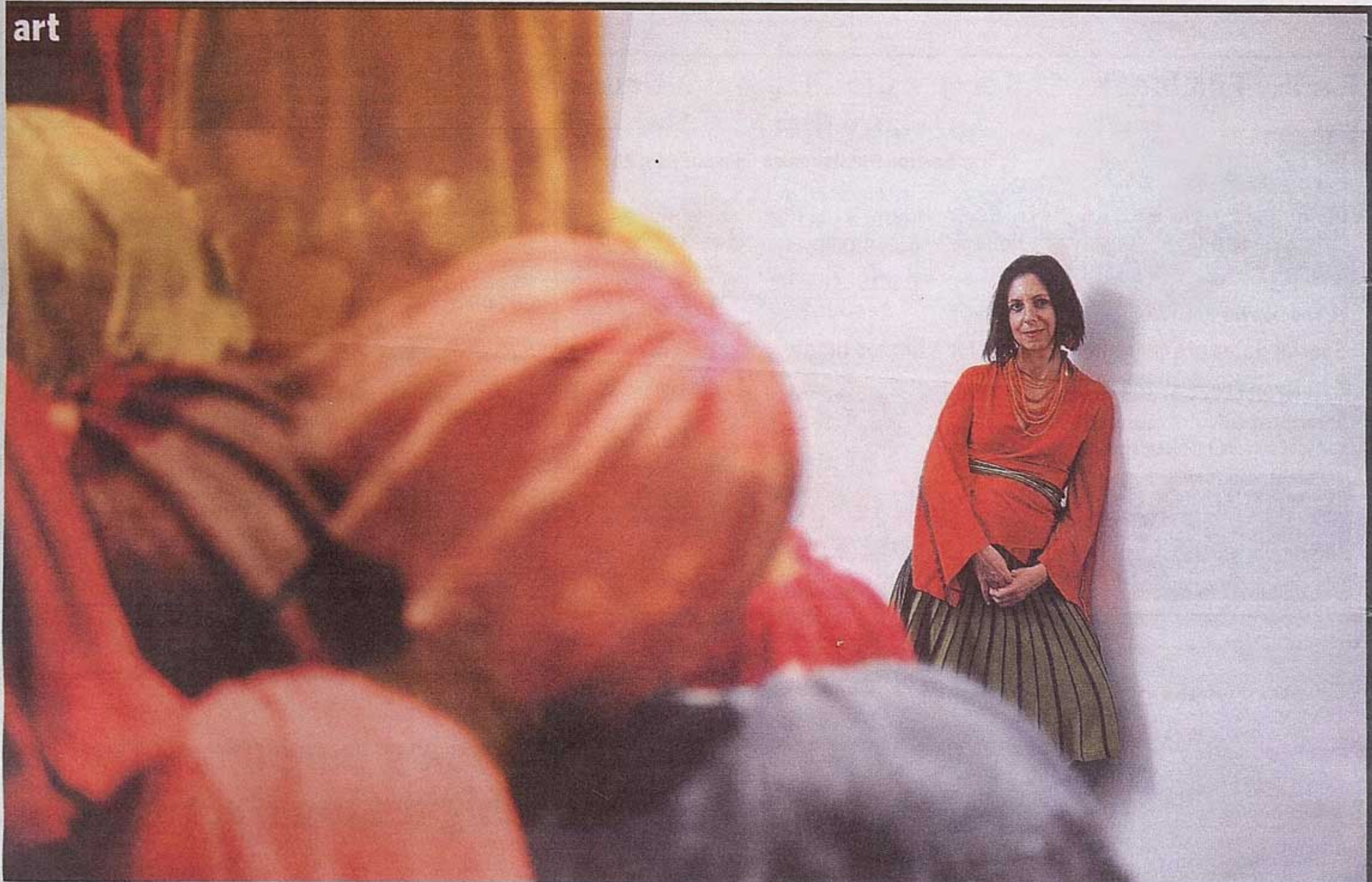


art



JOSHUA DUPLECHIAN/SPECIAL TO THE ROCKY

Artist Ana Maria Hernando's *La Montaña* installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver features a mound of Peruvian petticoats.

Petticoat work tribute to culture

By Mary Voelz Chandler
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Imagine a color field painting re-born into a three-dimensional piece of art. That's what Boulder-based artist Ana Maria Hernando envisioned when she created an installation now on view at MCA Denver into April.

Instead of paint, Hernando has heaped more than 100 crocheted petticoats into a towering work aptly named *La Montaña*.

"I arranged them like a painting," Hernando said. "I wanted them to be like moving clouds of color. I wanted the piece to have air, to be expansive, not oppressive."

Hernando works in several mediums, but textiles might be closest to her heart. As a child in Buenos Aires, where she was born in 1959, she was taken by the fact the women created elaborate embroidered tablecloths. They were used as a matter of course, painstakingly beautiful objects destined to be covered with spills.

Hernando also seeks collaborations with women in other countries, who make items she incorporates in

her work. That's how several of her abstract sculptural works have begun, including finely embroidered fabric forms crafted by Carmelite nuns in Buenos Aires that were then fused into resin plates. Hernando uses these shiny saucer-like objects as building blocks for sculpture.

In the case of *La Montaña*, Hernando turned to the women of Mollamarca, in Peru. About five hours from Cuzco, high in the Andes, the village is home to about 500, including women who weave ponchos for sale. They also make their own petticoats — brightly colored, crocheted underskirts that flare up and out during the dances that are a part of village life.

"It is another model of woman," said Hernando, who moved to the United States from Argentina in the mid-1980s. She earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the California College of Arts and Crafts and a master of arts from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

"It is an homage to them and to all women. These are such strong women. They move in this community. They all help each other. I wanted to have one from each woman ... a community of petticoats."

She purchased the petticoats for



La Montaña

■ **What:** An installation by Ana Maria Hernando

■ **Where and when:** MCA Denver, 1485 Delgany St.; through April 19

■ **Of note:** SmART Brunch Sunday program on work by

Hernando, 10 a.m. Sunday; poetry reading in Spanish and English by Hernando and Kenneth Robinson, 8:30 p.m., April 3; both events at MCA Denver

■ **Information:** 303-298-7554; mcadenver.org

about 20 soles (\$7 each) — full price, no haggling, she recalled, laughing. After all, it was only fair. "It was important for me to pay them, to make it right even from the beginning."

Hernando brought the petticoats home, dipped them in resin and, depending on their size, draped them

over different types of balls, from basketball to exercise ball. The result appears to be a mound of mushroom caps, augmented by video projected around the gallery, showing the women of Mollamarca dancing.

The installation is the most recent entry in MCA's Project Gallery, which

is earmarked for work by Colorado-based artists-in-residence.

Former MCA executive director Cydney Payton, who curated the installation, said she was interested in Hernando "because of the collaborative nature of her work. It gave another dimension to the artist-in-residence program" in which artists must interact with students and groups of people of all ages.

But the cultural aspects also were important, Payton said.

"She is a voyeur to another culture. This is a respectful and poetic take on Peruvian women and her interest in women's work. She kept a careful artistic distance, something that people should learn about."

The invisible nature of women's work reverberates with Hernando, drawn from memories of home and the practicalities of being a mother.

"You are caring for others," she said. "In many ways what you do seems transparent. The world is what it is because of millions and millions of women, and men."

"It goes beyond a paycheck, way beyond that. You do it for love."

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