

Genius Strikes

A Stitch in Time

WITH CLASSICAL SCULPTURE AS HIS INSPIRATION, BARCELONA ARTIST SERGIO ROGER SHAPES ANTIQUE LINEN INTO PLAYFUL AND ELEGANT WORKS OF ART THAT ARE AT ONCE SOPHISTICATED AND SMILE-INDUCING, CHARMING OBJECTS OF BEAUTY.

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This page: Sergio Roger seeks out antique linen to create sculptures like *Aphrodite*, 2022. "I am in love with its patina and texture," he says of the material. "It resembles old marble." Previous page: Ionic columns surround *Antinoos*, 2021, in his Barcelona studio.



The average piece takes Roger four months to complete. "It's a labor-intensive process," he says.

Guests at the Christie's preview in London were confused. When the auction house exhibited antiquities about to go on the block in a landmark sale last fall, visitors found, tucked among ancient pieces of carved stone, the soft, tactile sculptures of Barcelona-based artist Sergio Roger, who shapes antique linen into trompe-l'oeil versions of Greco-Roman art—the most regal, surreal plushies imaginable.

"My work plays with expectations," says Roger. "I want to surprise the viewer so they have to come close to the piece in order to understand it." His pieces hold a mirror up to our notions of the classical ideal, capturing the *idea* rather than the aspirational perfection normally associated with the genre. "The linen itself has limitations—I'll never be able to faithfully recreate all the details," like the whorl of curls on a marble bust or the sharp fluting on an Ionic column, Roger adds. In pieces like *Cyrene*, which renders a torso dripping with starched-linen pleats, or *Jupiter*, which reinterprets the god's profuse curls and beard with intricate—but inexact—stitching, Roger creates surprising, idiosyncratic art that edifies the fallible and winks at the inexorable passage of time. "I'm interested in absence and deterioration and the remains of history," he explains. "When we think about traditional sculpture, we think of strong materials that last a long time, but fabric has the opposite connotations: It's something feminine, intimate and impermanent."



Mythological figures are a fitting subject for Roger's work, like *Jupiter*, 2022. "Textiles and weaving are a recurrent theme in Greek and Roman mythology and linen has a strong connection to the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean," he says.