

# a conversation with . . .

# lorenzo hurtado segovia

with the CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS team



Artist Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia's goal is to create art that is contemporary, yet deeply rooted in tradition. His work is imbued with color and symbolism. Read on to learn more about him and his art.

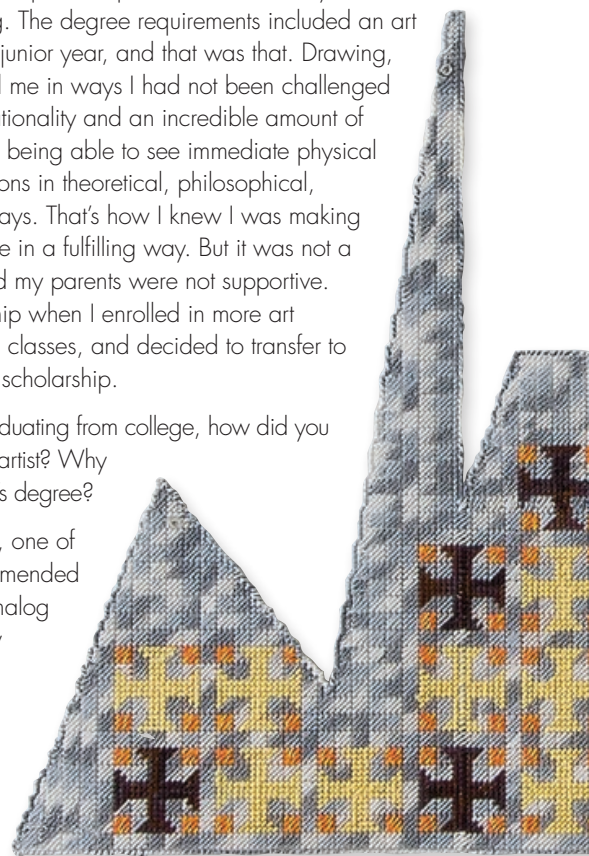
## our conversation . . .

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** You studied to be an engineer in college, then decided to major in art. What led to this decision, and how did you know you were making the right move?

**Lorenzo:** I was a math-and-science kid through middle and high school, which earned me a full scholarship and stipend to the University of Texas at El Paso to study engineering. The degree requirements included an art elective. I took drawing in my junior year, and that was that. Drawing, and art in general, challenged me in ways I had not been challenged before. There seemed to be rationality and an incredible amount of openness. I was also taken by being able to see immediate physical results that posed larger questions in theoretical, philosophical, anthropological, and social ways. That's how I knew I was making the right move. It felt right to me in a fulfilling way. But it was not a prudent financial decision, and my parents were not supportive. I lost the engineering scholarship when I enrolled in more art courses instead of engineering classes, and decided to transfer to UCLA where I received an art scholarship.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** After graduating from college, how did you start to build your career as an artist? Why did you decide to get a master's degree?

**Lorenzo:** Francesco Siqueiros, one of my professors at UCLA, recommended me for a printmaking job at Analog Press in Los Angeles during my last quarter. That was a great bridge into the L.A. art world. I worked there for two years, met a number of artists, and developed studio habits that



Installation at Vincent Price Art Museum, Monterey Park, California



are still part of my practice. Working there was great, but I felt my art was not developing. I had hit a plateau, so graduate school seemed to be the logical next move. I attended Otis College of Art and Design for its faculty and emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** How did your woven pieces emerge as a strong theme in your art? Can you take us through the process of creating a woven piece, from concept to execution?

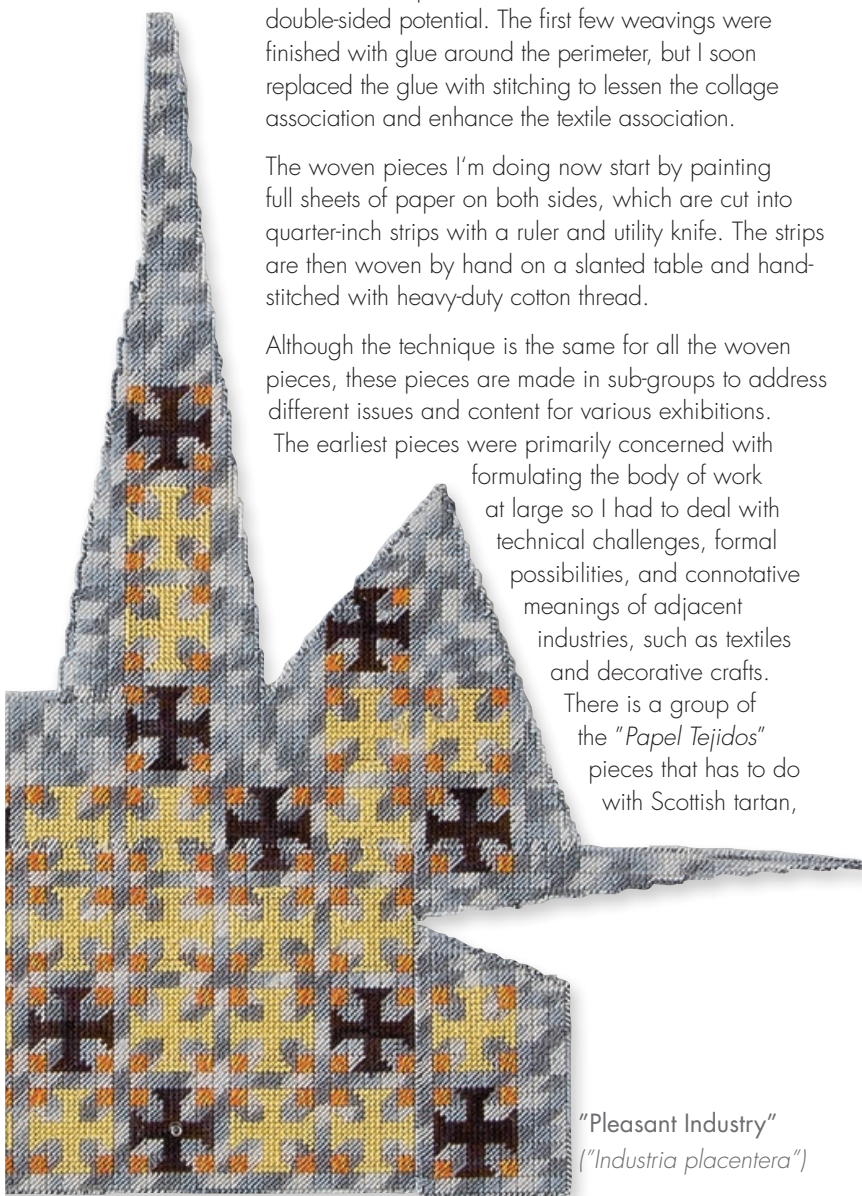
**Lorenzo:** A number of ideas and conceptual issues coalesced into woven form in quite a serendipitous way while I was cooking on a stove-top grill. I noticed that the grill turned red as it got hot and I thought it was like a modern painting, the grid was right there. I cut up two paintings on paper the following day and wove them. I noticed some paint on the back side and realized the double-sided potential. The first few weavings were finished with glue around the perimeter, but I soon replaced the glue with stitching to lessen the collage association and enhance the textile association.

The woven pieces I'm doing now start by painting full sheets of paper on both sides, which are cut into quarter-inch strips with a ruler and utility knife. The strips are then woven by hand on a slanted table and hand-stitched with heavy-duty cotton thread.

Although the technique is the same for all the woven pieces, these pieces are made in sub-groups to address different issues and content for various exhibitions.

The earliest pieces were primarily concerned with formulating the body of work at large so I had to deal with technical challenges, formal possibilities, and connotative meanings of adjacent industries, such as textiles and decorative crafts.

There is a group of the "Papel Tejidos" pieces that has to do with Scottish tartan,



"Pleasant Industry"  
("Industria placentera")



Photo by Monica Orozco

**Location:** Los Angeles, California

**Occupation:** Artist, professor

**Preferred media:** Paint. I also like to work with printmaking, carpentry, and textiles.

**Studio:** I work out of our living/dining room. My wife and I designed the space to be as flexible and open as possible. We have two young children who play there, and we entertain guests there, too. The space is organized, with tools and materials out of reach and out of sight. My work set-up varies depending on what I'm working on, but the basic arrangement includes a seven-foot slanted table I use for weaving, a small flat table for painting, and works-in-progress on the walls. I have a small walk-in closet and a floor-to-ceiling cabinet for storage. Our apartment has a patio and porch where I work on messy projects, such as carpentry and panel preparation.

**Music:** I listen to talk radio, documentaries, lectures, the Bible, and a variety of music while I work. The band I'm listening to currently is Sonido Cachimbo.

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

[CB1gallery.com](http://CB1gallery.com)

[facebook.com/lorenzo.hurtado](https://facebook.com/lorenzo.hurtado)

[instagram.com/lhurtadosegovia/](https://instagram.com/lhurtadosegovia/)

All photos by Jay Oigny, courtesy of CB1 Gallery and the artist, unless otherwise noted



others with ikat, then there are the pictorial pieces that present landscapes or icons. The weavings I'm currently making relate to geometric abstraction and paintings of the saints that are throughout Catholic imagery.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** Although your woven pieces have garnered a lot of press, what other mediums do you work in, and how do they satisfy you as an artist?

**Lorenzo:** I work in paint on canvas, panels, and paper. I also make sculpture, do printmaking, draw, and create site-related installations. Some pieces generate ideas, which spawn other works, but often in different media. It's important to explore varying ways of making and thinking, so I allow a month or so following an exhibition to try side projects without the intention of exhibiting them.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** You've talked about imbuing your work with Christian themes. Why is this important to you as a person and an artist?

**Lorenzo:** I'm a devout Christian and I see my work as a way to honor and glorify God. It was not easy to imbue my work with Christian themes from the beginning because I felt as though Christianity was not appropriate content for a contemporary artist, not in its current context. In the process of secularizing the art world, Christianity became taboo. Once I



"First Fruits V" (This is my body . . . this is my blood)  
(*"Primeras frutas V"*)



"By Deborah Calderwood II"  
Acrylic and thread on gessoed paper  
36" x 27"

This is my favorite piece, and part of my favorite body of work. It was inspired by drawings my wife made when she was 11 years old. This series honors her and is a way I expressed my love to her. One fun thing about this piece is that the fencing is all embroidered onto the paper.

realized that, I just had to address that in my work. Anthropologically speaking, Christianity is immensely rich in traditions, material, theology, lifestyles, and manners. There is a lot to explore there!

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** Why is it important to share stories of your upbringing in Mexico? How do your childhood experiences still influence your work today?

**Lorenzo:** I grew up in an informal neighborhood, a slum in Ciudad Juarez known as Colonia Azteca,

drawings as sketches, and that began a three-year process. "By Deborah Calderwood" is the first body of work I ever exhibited in a professional gallery.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** How did the tall wooden pole pieces come about? What type of fibers or threads do you use to wrap them?

**Lorenzo:** These pieces, the Cetros (scepters), are an outgrowth of crafts I made to sell as a young child. I used to make custom friendship bracelets and wrapped



"Woven Paper 49"  
(Between the summit and heaven)  
*"Papel tejido 49"*  
(Entre la cumbre y el cielo)

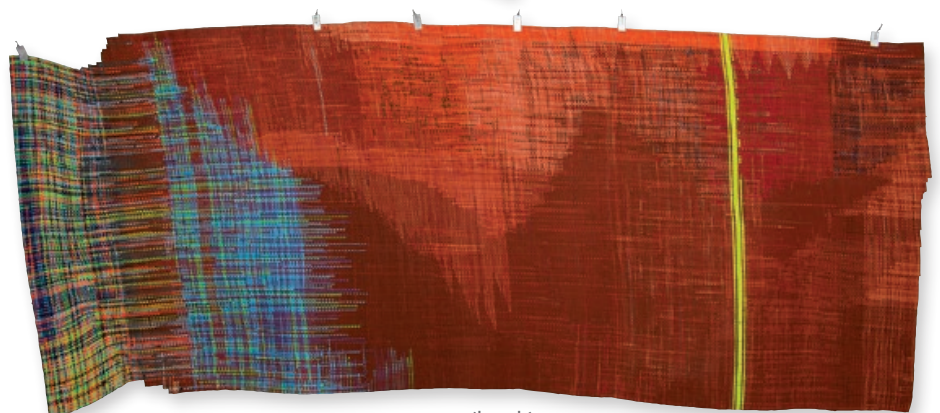
(front)

without dependable running water, electricity, sewage, or paved roads. The houses were built by their owners in an unregulated way with any materials available. There was such a creative approach to the world and to materials, it left an indelible mark in my attitude towards making. I also learned the roles of improvisation, repurposing, rogue aesthetics, socio-political context, and fearless making.

Later, one of my grandmother's friends took me to her crafting group because I showed an interest in her macramé projects. I was the only boy in a group of 12 or so elder women in historic downtown Juarez. I learned many things then, especially the social and relatable role craft has.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** The "by Deborah Calderwood" pieces are intriguing. Inspired by your wife's childhood drawings, you stayed true to their whimsical quality, which seems to be a bit of a departure for you. What drew you to these drawings and to creating art based on them?

**Lorenzo:** "By Deborah Calderwood" is my favorite body of work because it means so much to me personally. During a visit to my in-laws, I came across a box of drawings my wife made when she was 11. I kept the box in my studio. One day it was time to start a new painting and it just occurred to me to use Deborah's



(back)



"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field"  
(*"Todo mortal es como la hierba, y toda su Gloria como la flor del campo"*)





"Tree of Life" ("Árbol de la vida")



A studio glimpse

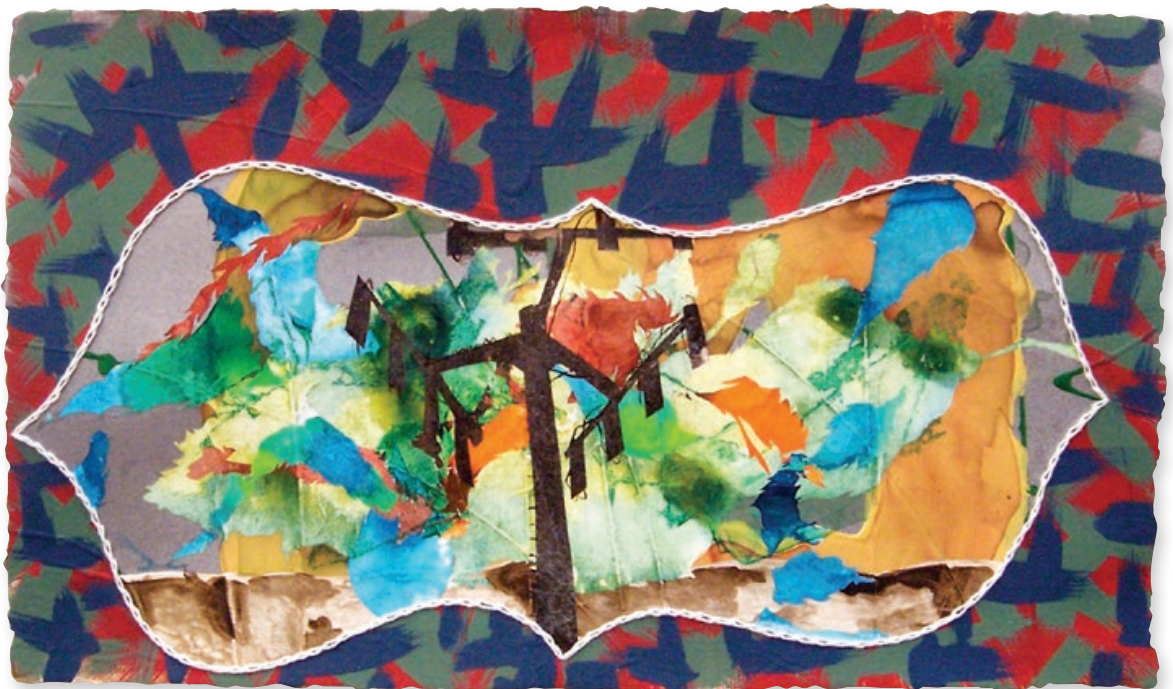
pens with people's names, using nylon threads. The Cetros sculptures are much larger (3–14 feet long) and are made with a wooden pole wrapped in 2mm and 4mm synthetic macramé cord.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** As an associate professor at Otis College, how do you guide and inspire your students? How do they inspire you?

**Lorenzo:** I think my role as an art professor is to give students permission to push their own artistic presuppositions while training them on various techniques, professional development, and critical thinking. I teach with an amazing faculty team. Students learn so much from each of their professors and graduate knowing much more than I. I'm inspired by my students' work ethic, their teachability, and their sheer creativity.

**CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS:** What are you currently working on?

**Lorenzo:** I'm working on three large woven pieces for a group exhibition curated by Howard Fox for the Craft And Folk Art Museum in L.A. on view in September 2015 through January 3, 2016, and a show of paintings for CB1 Gallery, which opens in November 2015. ●



"Landscape I" ("Paisaje I")