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ART201.01: Western Art I

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Visual Analysis of *Estela Tejiendo [Mom's Portrait]*

Spartanburg Art Museum currently showcases a gallery of compositions from artist Yehimi Cambón called *Now We Thrive – Venimos a Triunfar*. The painting *Estela Tejiendo [Mom's Portrait]* (figure 1) stood out within that series and offered many visual elements to analyze. The date and size of the painting are unknown; however, the canvas appears to be approximately four feet wide and six feet tall. The composition comprises latex paint, caulk, and metallic gilding wax on canvas. Cambón's work emphasizes immigrant issues while also celebrating a personal touch with the portrait of her mother. The sequence does a great job of joining activist engagement with delicacy, love, and acceptance commonly given by a motherly figure.

Cambón's mother's portrait visually highlights the strength and gentleness of her culture in different ways. At first glance, the viewer can see a woman looking to her left while knitting some fabric. The artist uses line, color, and shadow to give her composition a three-dimensional and realistic approach. Greater emphasis is placed on the woman's face and hands, highlighting lines of aging, facial expression, and movement. It is unclear what expression the woman is suggesting, but there are clear signs of emotion in the narrowing of the eyebrows and raised lip grin. The woman is wearing glasses and appears to be middle-aged; still, idealization is given in the skin's smoothness and the thick, jet-black youthful appearance in the woman's hair. A black hair tie manages her hair, and every strand seems to fit in its rightful place perfectly. There are no wild hair follicles loosely wondering about that need mending. Behind the woman's head, the viewer is immediately drawn to the stylized gold halo glowing and the dark and light contrast between the woman's hair and the violet-red foreground. In addition, the artist is portraying an

actual individual with identifying moles and darker skin color. The woman's black garment demonstrates the artist's appreciation for the human body. The viewer can sense this by how the fabric flows in relation to the body and the attention to detail in the human anatomy.

In addition to the visual elements mentioned above, Cambón also offers non-visual components within her piece. The triangle shape, made from the head and elbows, grounds the viewer's focus and offers a symmetrical balance. An invisible vertical line runs along the center of the canvas and proposes a stable configuration. The size and position suggest the importance of the woman to the artist as well. The canvas is large, and the woman's upper body fully encompasses the piece with little negative space in the foreground. Lastly, the viewer is left speculating what the woman could be looking at with interesting facial expressions following her glance.

Symbolism is found throughout Cambón's art. She appears to be honoring her mother with the gold crown. Her mother exuberates royalty, power, and strength, yet there is a contrast in the soft skin and knitted fabric. *Estela Tejiendo [Mom's Portrait]* suggests love for family and her culture. She values hard work and honors those who have sacrificed so much in hopes of a better life. The location of the piece is also very significant. It is the first thing viewers see when walking into the space and offers warmth and an inviting atmosphere.

In conclusion, Cambón offers realism, stylization, and symbolism in *Estela Tejiendo [Mom's Portrait]*. Contrasting elements guide the viewer to showcase what the artist views as noteworthy within the painting while also leaving the viewer to imagine what the person within the painting is seeing. Viewers can enjoy the visual and non-visual narrative offered by Cambón and appreciate its subject matter and complexity.



Figure 1: *Estela Tejiendo [Mom's Portrait]*, Yehimi Cambón

Spartanburg Art Museum, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Latex Paint, Caulk, Metallic Gilding Wax on Canvas