

THIS PAGE JACQUE
3.5 METRE D'APPEN
COMMITTEE ELE
DAN MARTI'S LIVIN
OPPOSITE PAGE DI
AND BARE ARCH IS
AFTER A

DREAM WEAVER

ROPE, CORD, CABLE, WOVEN, KNOTTED, TIED - **DANI MARTI**
TAKES MACRAME TO A NEW, CONTEMPORARY LEVEL.

TEXT BY LISA REKINS, STYLING BY JEAN WINGATE, PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW SMART.





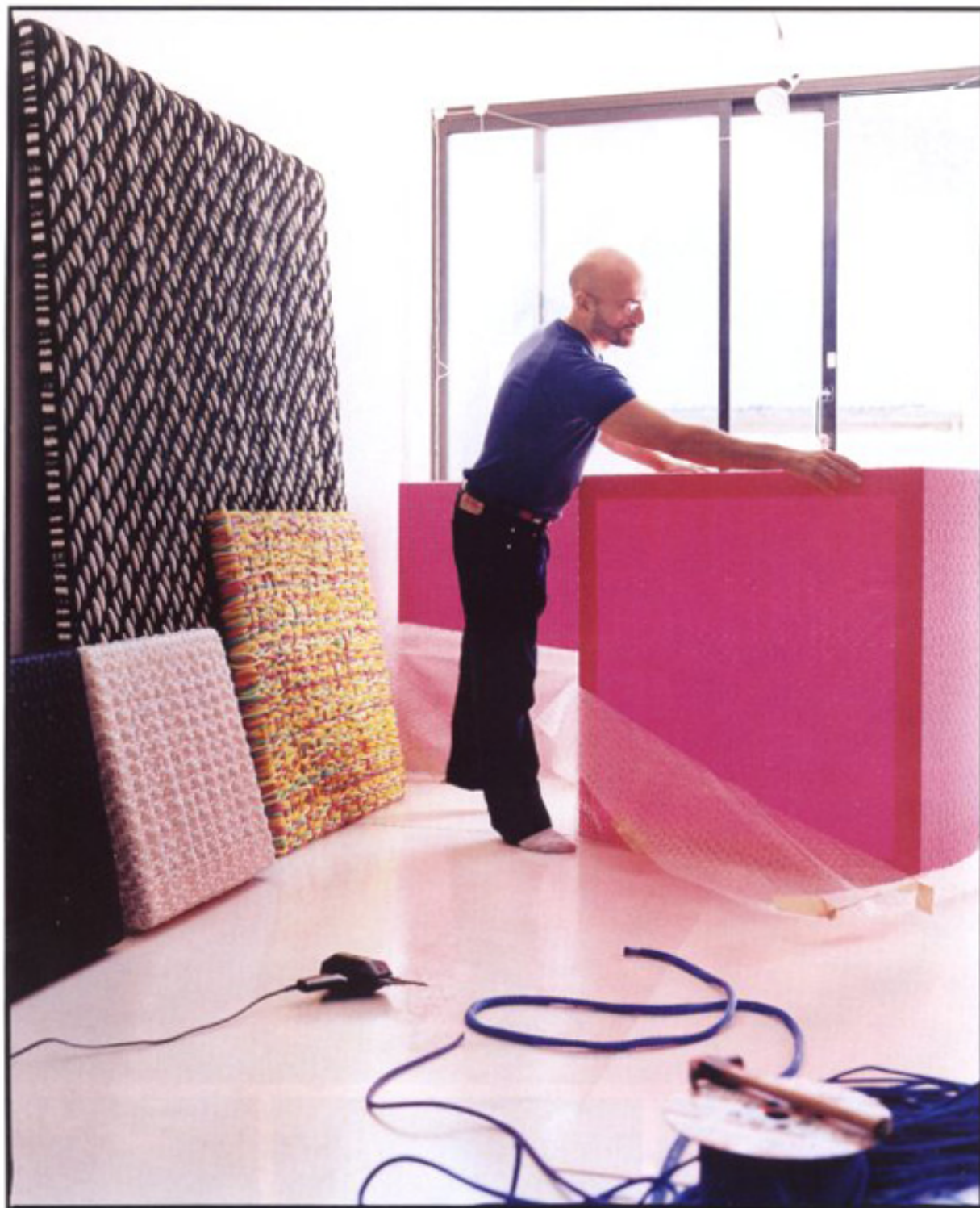
THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE DANI MARTI'S ENTIRE APARTMENT IS DOMINATED BY ROPE; HOW TO DRESS A SAINT NO.5 LEANS AGAINST PORTARIT OF THE DOOR; DANI MARTI WITH 1 X 1, MADE FROM TAPE MEASURES.

At the age of 12, all Dani Marti's classmates were playing soccer. But the boy from Barcelona got out of sport and spent his time at home doing macramé, which he'd learnt in a couple of lessons at school, or visiting the rope shop on the Ramblas, filling up his backpack with his purchases. His mother wasn't thrilled that all his pocket money went on rope. "I wanted to make macramé dresses, everything," he says.

Fast forward 20 years and Marti, based in Sydney since 1988, is yet again spending all his money on rope – his most recent order from his Spanish suppliers weighed 1.2 tonnes. "I want to buy everything they have." His entire apartment is overflowing with rope – every cupboard is packed with the stuff, the walk-in wardrobe barely has room for clothes, the staircase is lined with reels of it, the second bathroom has been sacrificed; the tangle of rope spilling out of the shower looks like an extra from the movie *Tentacles*. Rope that's as thick as a wrist, or cord as fine as a pencil; discontinued lines; rope for boating, shipping, electrical work, plumbing or heavy industry; customised rope; rope that shimmers with the reflective tape woven through it; rope in various shades of white, or Australian-made waterskiing cable in eye-straining fluorescents; plastic-covered washing line, mesh used in mussel farming, or for fruit bags, scourers, or women's underwear.

Since 1999, Marti, who has studied painting, sculpture and installation and also acts as director of the Catalan Trade Promotion Centre, hasn't been making macramé dresses but, rather, square or rectangular pieces, each using a number of different types of rope of varying thicknesses, varying tones, woven over a frame by hand in complex weaves. Some of these "woven constructions" are enormous, measuring up to 6.2 by 2.2 metres or more: "Big doesn't phase me."

The square or rectangular shape has come about because Marti sees each of his pieces as "a little universe of bigger >



THIS PAGE ABOVE DANI MARTI WITH *HOOK AND LOOP*, *HOW TO DRESS A SAINT NO. 4* AND *UNDER THE SUN LEAN AGAINST CONCERTO NO. 2*, WHICH HAS SINCE BEEN DESTROYED BECAUSE MARTI WAS NOT HAPPY WITH IT.

possibilities, like a DNA code, a secret code. I like people to get inside them. It's a parcel of a reality that could be indefinite in size."

His work has been commissioned by designers and architects, including Burley Katon Halliday, George Freedman and Dale Jones-Evans, and has featured in such galleries at Sydney's Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Auckland City Art Gallery and Galeria Alejandro Sales in Barcelona.

Before he starts on a new piece, Marti almost always has a title in mind. "I need an idea, a portrait, a circumstance to take me through," he says. "It's the same thing as a grandmother knitting, thinking of her grandchild." And the titles can be highly specific: There's *Portrait of a Young Man Returning a Ladybird to the Grass*, a green, yellow, red and black creation inspired by a scene witnessed while he was meditating in the Blue Mountains. And the all-white, quite chaotic *Mad Babe* ("That's about a woman I know who is mad and her name is Babe"). Or the enormous, not-quite-finished *Portrait of St Peter Knocking at the Door* from his series *How to Dress a Saint*. "I love that title – I stole it from a show in Barcelona. The show was awful, but it was a good title."

Marti's newest works are verging more than ever towards the monochromatic. "I'm pushing the minimalist, formalist aesthetic; there can be too much going on if you have too many colours." He's planning a series, *Variations of a Serious Black Dress*. "The minimalist, black thing has been done with painting 1000 times, but I want to do it in three dimensions. And I'm calling it that to show it's just about a dress, it's nothing spiritual." □