

Ana Mendieta



a r e t r o s p e c t i v e

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Petra Barreras del Rio

John Perreault

Guest Curators

THE NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, NEW YORK



Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective

November 20, 1987–January 24, 1988

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Amategram series

Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper

16 × 11 5/8 inches

Collection of the Estate of Ana Mendieta

Frontispiece: Photographs of Ana Mendieta

Credits: Lisa Kahane, Nereyda Garcia Ferraz, Orlando Cardona

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In 1983, Ana Mendieta participated in a series of dialogues sponsored by The New Museum entitled "Art and Politics." That evening, Mendieta and Linda Goode Bryant addressed the topic of "Integrity and Aesthetics." Mendieta eloquently spoke of the difficulties of being an artist today. Born in Cuba, Mendieta was an exiled artist who was further marginalized by virtue of her gender. That this exhibition takes place only now, when she is no longer here to enjoy it and see the difference that her work and attitudes have made to her peers, is a reflection of a reality that she emphasized often: the art world, like culture at large in America, supports the mainstream, and the mainstream is white, male, and privileged. (Even the women's movement, Mendieta felt, was basically white and middle class.)

Mendieta's was also a clear voice in a period muddled by careerism and opportunism. She said, that evening, "Art is a question of vocation. I don't have a choice; I can only make what I make." Many of her outdoor works were often ephemeral and connected to the earth, subjected to its natural changes. I am not sure that they were intended at all for a museum's neutral, interior walls, but that is the only way now to view them. The work's scope and intensity are a surprise to those who are not familiar with her art. To those of us who are, the full impact of these pieces, brought together for the first time, will doubtless also come as a surprise; Mendieta left behind an enormous and important body of work that is more impressive than we ever imagined.

Mendieta was outspoken and aggressive about her political views, but at the same time she felt that art's importance lay in the spiritual sphere. As she put it the evening she spoke at The New Museum, "Art is a material part of culture but its greatest value is its spiritual role, and that influences society, because it's the greatest contribution to the intellectual and moral development of humanity that can be made." Her own contribution is an eloquent testimony to these ideas.

This exhibition would not have occurred without the aid, support, and commitment of a large number of dedicated and concerned individuals. We are very grateful to

Petra Barreras del Rio, Director of El Museo del Barrio, New York, and John Perreault, art critic and Director of Visual Arts at Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island, who acted as guest curators for the exhibition. Part of the Ana Mendieta Retrospective Committee, they worked closely with fellow members Louis Gilbert, Cristina Delgado Olsen, Ruby Rich, and Nancy Spero to bring her work to the attention of the public. Of great assistance to them were Carlos Guitterez-Solana, who consulted with the committee on funding sources; Hans Breder and Ignacio C. Mendieta, who transferred Mendieta's films onto video; and the firm of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby and MacRae, who offered *pro bono* legal advice on Committee matters.

We are especially grateful to Raquel Mendieta Harrington, Ana's sister and also a member of the Committee. As administratrix of the Estate, she tirelessly oversaw the multitude of details concerning Ana's work and life. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Raquel O. Mendieta, Ana's mother, who agreed to lend the majority of works included in the exhibition from the Estate. We would like to acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Florencio R. Bethencourt, Juan Gonzalez, Lucy Lippard, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Robert and Ardash Rodale, who also generously lent works to the exhibition. We also appreciate the loan of the videotape, "Fuego de tierra," a documentary about Ana Mendieta, produced by Nereyda Garcia Ferraz and Kate Horsfield with support from the Cuban-American Network, Chicago, and distributed by the Video Data Bank, Chicago.

We were most concerned that the catalogue convey the scope and intensity of Ana's work. We would like to thank Art Print of Taylor, Pennsylvania, who assisted us substantially in the realization of the catalogue. Julie Ewington, Lecturer at the Canberra School of Art, ably researched and compiled the extensive bibliography, exhibition history, and chronology while on a grant from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. Myrna Nieves-Colón translated the catalogue essays into Spanish with skill and sensitivity; we also appreciate the cooperation and assistance of Joanna Ekman who helped

edit the manuscript. Our thanks to Petra Barreras extends to the staff at the Museo del Barrio, particularly Pedro Villarini, for their help in the preparation of the Spanish manuscript. For the additional support toward the catalogue provided by Art Matters, Inc., and the Estate—we are most grateful.

At The New Museum, Curators Lynn Gumpert and William Olander provided counsel and support during the organization of the exhibition. Karen Fiss, Curatorial Coordinator, supervised the entire project, organizing the myriad details of the exhibition as well as producing the catalogue. Portland McCormick, Teresa Bramlette, and Jeanne Breitbart helped enormously in the preparation of the catalogue manuscript. Jill Newmark, Registrar, arranged the loans, shipping, and conservation of the pieces with skill and acuity. Our crew, working with Preparator Cindy Smith, ably facilitated a complex installation. Gayle Brandel, Russell Ferguson, Jim Minden, Virginia Strull, Terrie Sultan, and the staff members in each department all contributed extra efforts towards the successful realization of this exhibition.

The New York State Council has once again provided major financial assistance with this important project. We are also grateful for a generous grant from the National Endowment of the Arts, a federal agency. The New Museum is proud to present this retrospective of the work of Ana Mendieta and we sincerely thank all the individuals who helped make it possible.

MARCIA TUCKER
Director

PREFACIO Y RECONOCIMIENTOS

Ana Mendieta participó en 1983 en una serie de diálogos titulados Arte y Política que auspició The New Museum. En esa noche, Mendieta y Linda Goode Bryant discutieron el tópico “La integridad y la estética.” Mendieta habló elocuentemente sobre lo difícil que es ser una artista hoy en día. Mendieta, nacida en Cuba, era una artista exilada que fue aún más marginada a causa de su sexo. El hecho de que esta exhibición tenga lugar ahora, cuando ella no está ya aquí para disfrutarla y ver el impacto que su obra y sus ideas han tenido en sus contemporáneos en el arte, es un reflejo de esa realidad que ella enfatizaba a menudo; el mundo del arte, como la cultura en general en Estados Unidos, apoya las tendencias dominantes en el arte y esas

tendencias son de carácter blanco, masculino y privilegiado. (Hasta el movimiento feminista era básicamente blanco y de clase media, según su sentir). Mendieta era, además, una voz que se levantaba con claridad en un período turbio con el afán de carreras profesionales y el oportunismo. Ella dijo, esa noche, “El arte es cuestión de vocación. No tengo alternativa; tan sólo puedo hacer lo que hago.” Muchos de los trabajos que realizaba al aire libre eran a menudo efímeros y se conectaban a la tierra; estaban sujetos a sus cambios naturales. No estoy segura de si estaban hechos con la intención de exhibirlos en las paredes interiores neutrales del Museo, pero es la única forma en que podemos verlos ahora. El alcance y la intensidad de su obra son una sorpresa para aquellos que no están familiarizados con su arte. Para aquellos de nosotros que lo estamos, el impacto total de estas obras, que han sido reunidas por primeras vez, será también una sorpresa; Mendieta dejó tras sí una cantidad enorme e importante de trabajo, que es más impresionante de lo que hubiésemos podido imaginar jamás.

Mendieta era franca y agresiva en cuanto a sus posiciones políticas, pero, a la misma vez, creía que la importancia del arte residía en la esfera espiritual. Así lo expresó la noche que habló en The New Museum: “El arte es una parte material de la cultura, pero su valor mayor reside en su rol espiritual y su influencia en la sociedad, ya que es la contribución más grande que podemos hacer al desarrollo intelectual y moral de la humanidad.” Su propia contribución es elocuente testimonio de estas ideas.

Esta exhibición no hubiese sido posible sin la ayuda, el apoyo y el compromiso de una gran cantidad de personas dedicadas e interesadas en el proyecto. Les estamos muy agradecidos a Petra Barreras del Río, Directora de El Museo del Barrio, Nueva York, y a John Perreault, crítico de arte y Director de Artes Visuales del Snug Harbor Cultural Center de Staten Island, que fueron los curadores invitados de esta exhibición. Ambos forman parte del Comité para la Retrospectiva de Ana Mendieta y trabajaron de cerca con los otros miembros del comité, Louis Gilbert, Cristina Delgado Olsen, Ruby Rich, y Nancy Spero, para traer la obra a la atención del público. Les fueron de gran ayuda Carlos Guitierrez-Solana, que sirvió de consultor para la localización de fondos, Hans Breder e Ignacio C. Mendieta, que transfirió las películas de Mendieta a videos y la firma de LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby y MacRae, que ofreció consejos legales ad honorem a los

asuntos del comité.

Le estamos especialmente agradecidos a Raquel Mendieta Harrington, hermana de Ana y, además, miembro del comité. Como albacea de la herencia, supervisó incansablemente la multitud de detalles relacionadas con la vida y obra de Ana. Queremos también extender nuestras más sinceras gracias a Raquel O. Mendieta, madre de Ana, que accedió a prestarnos de los bienes heredados la mayoría de las obras que se incluyen en esta exhibición. Queremos expresar nuestro reconocimiento al Sr. y la Sra. Florencia R. Bethencourt, a Juan González, Lucy Lip-pard, The Metropolitan Museum of Art y a Robert y Ardath Rodale, quienes generosamente prestaron también obras para esta exhibición. Queremos además apreciar el préstamo de la cinta de video, "Fuego de tierra," un documental sobre Ana Mendieta, dirigido por Nereyda García Ferraz y Kate Horsefield, con la colaboración del Cuban-American Network de Chicago, y distribuido por Video Data Bank, Chicago.

Nuestro mayor interés ha sido que el catálogo comunique el alcance y la intensidad de la obra de Ana. Queremos dar las gracias al Art Print of Taylor de Pennsylvania, que ha contribuido considerablemente a la realización de este catálogo. Julie Ewington, conferenciante de la Escuela de Artes de Canberra, investigó y compiló hábilmente la extensa bibliografía, la historia de la exhibición y la cronología a través de una beca de la Junta de Artes Visuales del Concilio de Australia. Myrna Nieves-Colón tradujo los ensayos del catálogo al español con destreza y sensibilidad; también apreciamos la cooperación de Joanna Ekman, quien ayudó a editar el manuscrito. Queremos dar las gracias a Petra Barreras y extenderlas al personal de Museo del Barrio, especialmente a Pedro Villarini, por su ayuda en la preparación del manuscrito en español. Estamos muy agradecidos al Art Matters, Inc. y al patrimonio de Mendieta por el apoyo adicional que nos brindaron con el catálogo.

En The New Museum, los Curadores, Lynn Gumpert y William Olander, ofrecieron sus consejos y apoyo a la organización de esta exhibición. Karen Fiss, Coordinadora de los Curadores, supervisó el proyecto completo, organizando los millares de detalles de esta exhibición y produciendo también el catálogo. Portland McCormick, Teresa Bramlette, y Jeanne Breitbart ayudaron grandemente a la preparación del manuscrito de este catálogo. Jill Newmark, Registradora, hizo arreglos con destreza y agudeza para los préstamos, la transportación y la con-

servación de las obras. Nuestro equipo de trabajo, junto a la encargada del montaje de la exhibición, Cindy Smith, lograron realizar hábilmente una instalación compleja. Gayle Brandel, Russell Ferguson, Jim Minden, Virginia Strull, Terrie Sultan, y todos los miembros del personal de cada departamento hicieron un esfuerzo especial para que esta exhibición fuese un éxito.

El New York State Council proveyó una vez más ayuda financiera para este importante proyecto. Estamos también agradecidos al National Endowment for the Arts, una agencia federal, por su generosa donación. The New Museum se enorgullece en presentar esta retrospectiva de la obra de Ana Mendieta y queremos darle las gracias a todas las personas que la hicieron posible.

MARCIA TUCKER
Directora



UNTITLED, 1977

**Serie árbol de la vida
(Tree of Life series)**

**Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches**

**Collection of Ignacio C. Mendieta
*Earth-body work with tree
and mud executed at
Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa***

Earth and Fire

Mendieta's Body of Work

BY JOHN PERREAULT

I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth. . . . I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body. This obsessive act of reasserting my ties with the earth is really the reactivation of primeval beliefs . . . [in] an omnipresent female force, the after-image of being encompassed within the womb, is a manifestation of my thirst for being.

Ana Mendieta, 1981
Unpublished statement

Ana Mendieta's oeuvre is not difficult to situate within the categories of advanced North American art of the past two decades. We can only guess how her work might have developed, but with her tragic death in 1985 at the age of thirty-six, her body of work became an oeuvre, a closed set. This set falls within the overlapping categories of earth art, body art, photo art, and perhaps performance art, with the work of more recent years retaining characteristics from her earlier developments within these genres but taking the form of portable, relatively durable objects.

Although Mendieta was not strictly a pioneer in any of the forms she began to synthesize quite brilliantly in the early seventies, she was able to reinvent herself as an artist, leaving her efforts at painting far behind. In the process she created poetically and politically charged artworks influenced by the antigallery, antiobject genres that were spreading rapidly through the art world. News of Robert Smithson's earthworks, Vito Acconci's body

art, and performance art by many artists (and writers) came in shock waves that signaled a release from formalism—though many of these works were quite formal—and from traditional ways of art making. The then-emerging feminist movement in art must have played a part too, for Mendieta's art works embody feminist themes; she did at least one tableau/performance on the subject of rape.¹ The female body and the goddess—symbolizing creation and nature—were to become consistent themes.

All of these connections and sources are obvious, but they do not tell the whole story. We know that in the seventies she was working for her M.F.A. at the University of Iowa, under Hans Breder, and that this situation gave her access to the latest art developments and the freedom to experiment. None of this background accounts for the unusual power of her art. A discussion of her work that is limited to a cataloguing of influences and sources leaves us with a view of her art as fragmented,



UNTITLED, 1977

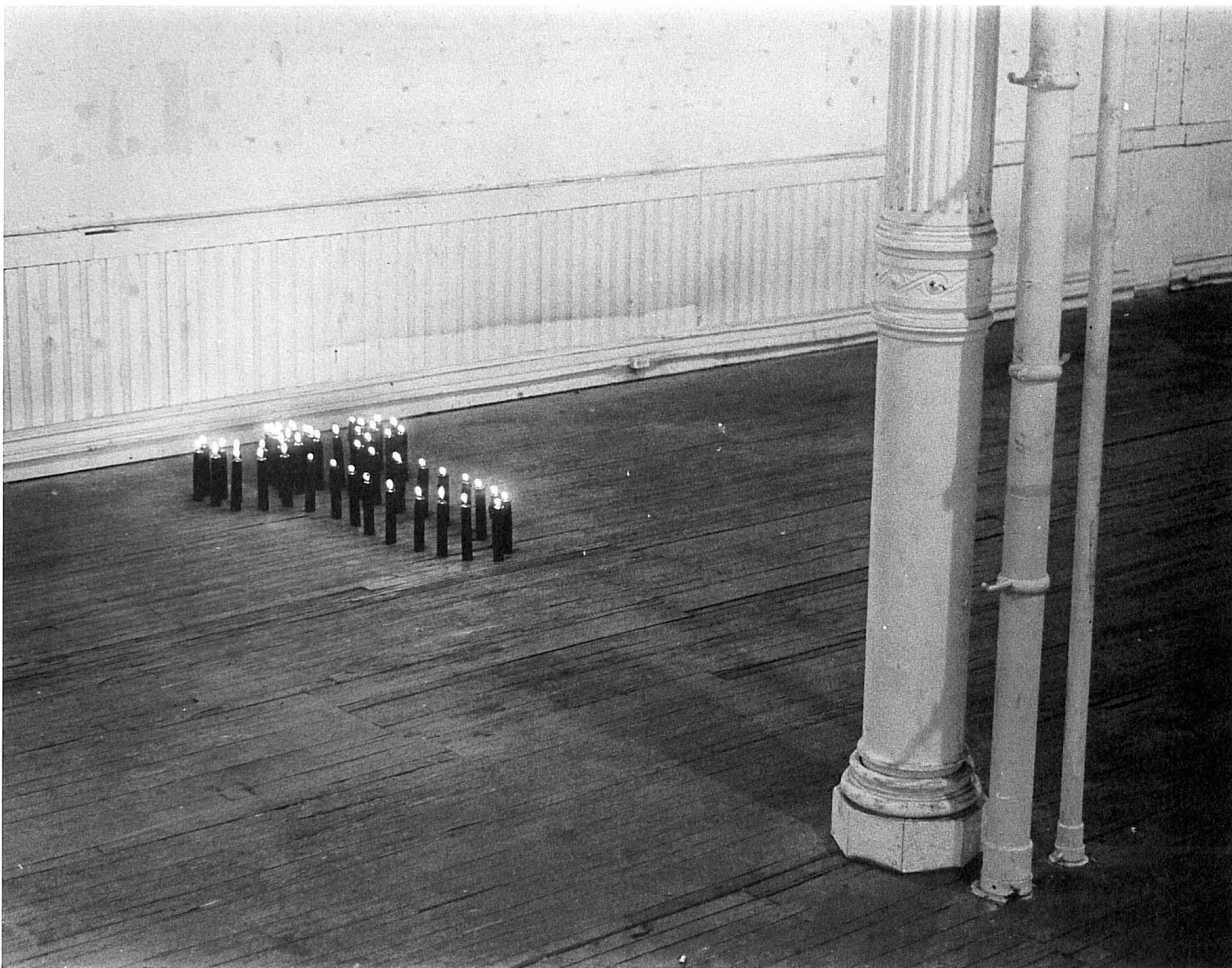
—
Serie árbol de la vida
(Tree of Life series)

Color photograph

13 1/4 × 20 inches

Collection of Ignacio C.
Mendieta

*Gunpowder silueta executed at
Old Man's Creek, Iowa City,
Iowa*



NAÑIGO BURIAL, 1976

Installation at 112 Greene Street
Gallery, New York,
February 23–March 5.

and no different from many other art works done under those same influences. Yet when one looks at Mendieta's Super-8 films and the color slides or the prints made from the slides or the black-and-white blow-ups—all mere souvenirs of her solo earth moldings, earth carvings, blood and fire drawings—and when one sees the late vine pieces, floor sculptures, and gunpowder-blasted planks and tree trunks, it is obvious now what an extraordinary artist she was. What accounts for this?

Consistency is certainly a factor. No matter what the medium or format, there is an intensity of vision that is astounding. Mendieta did not dabble. Many artists have learned to imitate themselves in order to satisfy requirements of the art market. Mendieta was consistent because she had no choice; she made the art she had to make, which was the only art she could make and the only art she needed to make. Her single-mindedness was dictated by inner necessity. The act of tracing the outline of her own body—her silhouette, her shadow—upon the earth in the long-lived "Silueta" series was important to her as art, as magic, as political act. This was equally true of the rock carvings and inscriptions of female symbols. These helped her heal herself, if only temporarily. If one could claim even a small portion of the earth as one's own territory, exile was assuaged.

As an adolescent, Mendieta was sent by her parents from Castro's Cuba to the United States, where she lived in orphanages and then in foster homes. Paradoxically, her exile from Cuba eventually brought her closer to nature and to Cuba. As an adult, she was decidedly not anti-Castro, and in 1980 she returned for a visit, executing the following year a series of hillside stone carvings. However, after her fellowship at the American Academy in Rome expired in 1984, she elected to stay in Italy. Perhaps she had become addicted to exile? On the other hand, she felt closer to her Latin roots in Rome than in New York. Also, there was European interest in her work. As much as she loved Cuba, it was not possible—and is still not possible—to connect with the world art system from a Cuban base.

Mendieta was ambitious for her art, and with good reason. She was well on her way to proving that a woman artist, an artist with Third World roots, and a so-called minority artist could establish herself as an innovator. Her artwork is a significant addition to twentieth-century art: it is expressive without being maudlin; it taps primitive imagery and sources of energy without be-

ing exploitive. Mendieta did not appropriate; she found her own images of power and meaning.

Mendieta's earth/body pieces, which are known mostly through photographs or films, are not unrelated to minimalism and antiformal art. We may, in all good conscience, collapse the artificial separation between these two styles, for though the former is primarily geometric and the latter—seen by some as postminimalism—is organic, both subvert composition by utilizing single-image presentations or repetitions ordered by schematic placements rather than by taste. Earth art is minimalism writ large upon the landscape; body art is the earth art of the flesh. In both cases, unlike the minimalism that initiated the sequence of styles, questions of ephemerality and distribution became paramount. Minimalist objects are sculpture, for all the chat about gestalt theory, objectness-as-opposed-to-sculptureness, and the verbal protest against the consumerist art system. Minimalist objects are sculpture of a traditional sort because they are self-contained, can usually be moved about with no great loss in meaning or form, and because they are meant to endure. Earth art and body art, the latter shading off into one-person performance art (with or without an audience), do not really have much existence as art without media transcription and distribution. The works are made inaccessible by geography or time. Although the program of the time was to escape the gallery system, this escape created another regime of dependencies: photography, film, written publicity, and then video. Photography in particular became the art object and the language of communication. Photography became the proof of art.

Mendieta was caught in this net of paradoxes as much as anyone else. She was early enough in the chain of deceptions, however, to use photography quite naturally to prove and communicate her ephemeral alterations of the environment; she did not burn her image into the earth merely to have a salable photograph. Photography was a means, not an end. Nor was ephemerality the guiding principle, for she began to seek more permanent manifestations, as illustrated by her remarkable rock carvings in Cuba.

Forms, formats, genres, materials, are not at the center of Mendieta's art. Her creative principles were elsewhere, deeper and more personal. Her version of body art aspired to the universal; she used the measurements of her five-foot form to measure the world. She became

her own method of composition, imposing her outline with ignited gunpowder, stones, flowers, fireworks, and even a branding-iron cast of her hand upon selected out-of-the-way fragments of the natural environment; she had herself bound in strips of cloth, buried in mud and rocks; she traced her shadow in blood. She became a priestess, an earth goddess. In terms of performance art, she eschewed audience and thereby undercut what was to become the dissipation of the genre into nightclub entertainment and various forms of bad acting.

Like many emerging artists, Mendieta worked within already existing formats—in her case, the most avant-garde formats available—but unlike most, she used them for her own ends, made them her own. It was a nearly perfect match. She needed these forms; these forms inspired her. Could her vision of the energies of nature have been communicated through paintings and standard forms of sculpture? I think not.

Mendieta's work of the eighties presents slightly different sets of stylistic vectors, different formal problems. The Cuban rock carvings are another aspect of the female creative principle she saw at work in nature: the earth as womb. The floor pieces and tree-trunk carvings that were to follow take this same primitivistic imagery—influenced by pictographs and prehistoric art—into the realm of the portable icon. She was manifesting the general drift back to object making. One does not know how conscious she was of what might be considered a general capitulation to market values. She was not alone. She could not survive on lectures and on a few sales of color prints made from slides of her work or on her beautiful drawings on leaves and bark paper. She moved from earth to wood, from the horizontal to the vertical, yet maintained her vision.

What was that vision? She pointed to it in various statements, but it is the work itself that expresses it most profoundly. She was a magician. Although we know for a fact that she was interested in Santería—a New World, Catholicized version of the African Yoruba religion—her interest went deeper than a fascination with spells, spirit possessions, potions, and “saints.” Santería's cosmic view is predicated upon a belief in powerful spirits at work on earth. Mendieta saw the earth as a living body, and she wanted to be one with that body. Nevertheless, the tragic sense of exile that informs her artwork suggests the separateness from nature and spirit that is almost the definition of modern life. Mendieta's art tries to

overcome this separation, and it is this, not some formal strategy, that accounts for the power of her body of work, for we are all in exile. Gnosticism and pantheism are at war and neither can win.

Mendieta grew up a stranger in a strange land. A trip to Mexico when she was at the University of Iowa helped her gain some understanding of her Latin American heritage, as did later meetings with other Latin American artists. Feminism gave her additional support, but her feminism was tempered by her understanding that most feminists in the United States were white and middle class and had little understanding of Third World women.²

Mendieta did not dwell morbidly upon her disrupted youth; it was just part of her story. She had spunk. She was fully aware of Latin American art and the work of Latin American artists in the United States; she was supportive and sympathetic. On the other hand, she was determined to overcome ethnic clichés: art by Latin American artists, in their native countries or in the United States, need not be retardataire, and Mendieta's work proves this. When we have finished the task of sorting the art that emerged from seventies pluralism—a task we are only now beginning—Mendieta's art will be seen as far more important than it is now possible to imagine. Her work foreshadows what can only be called a turn to the spiritual.

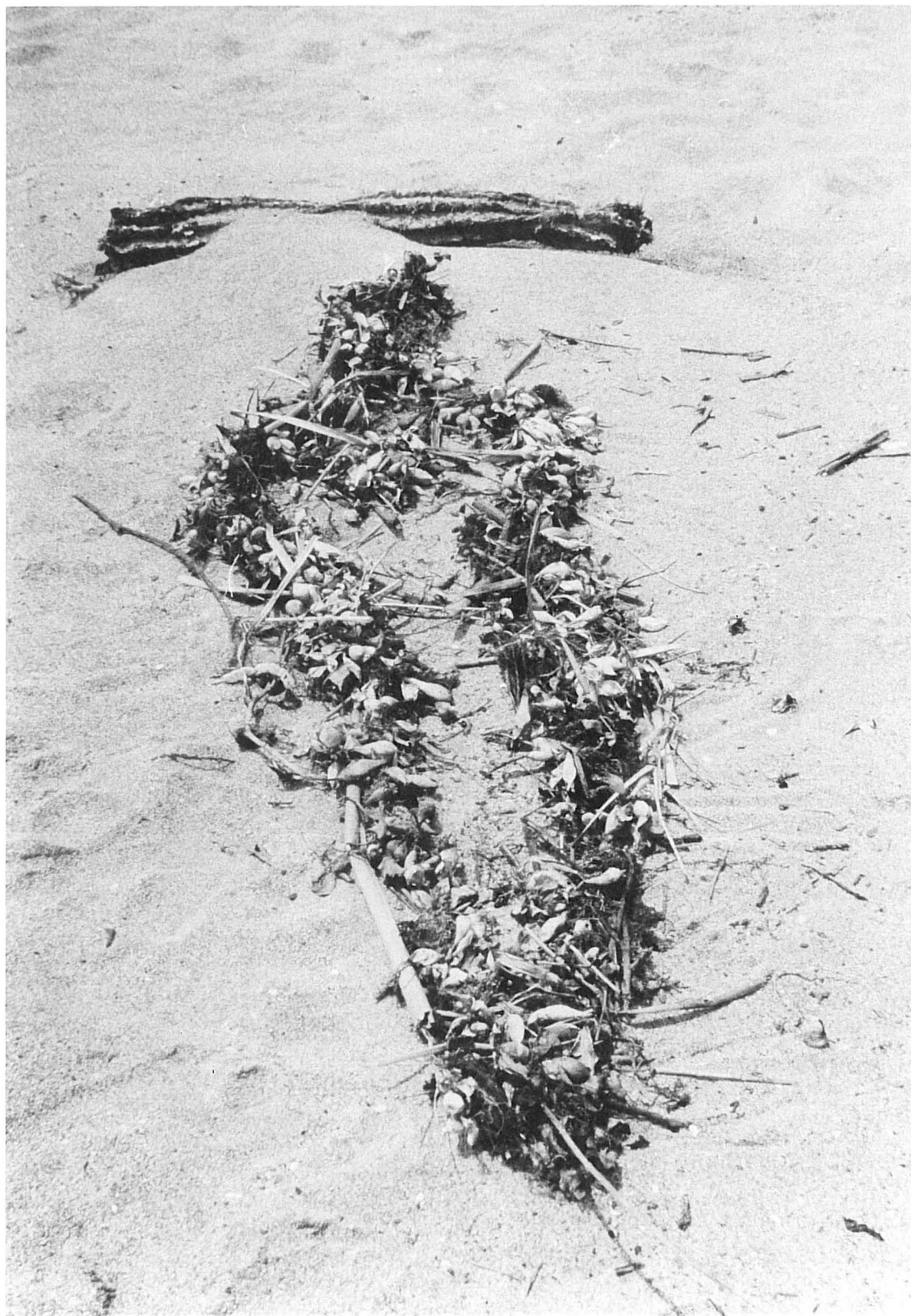
What critical tools can we use to approach Mendieta's art? The whole range of it is not without a certain formal beauty, which we can place in time. But to really understand it, we must use poetic ploys, for the strength of the work is its poetry. This sets it off from artwork that is formally similar. Thousands have used their own bodies as an art material; thousands have appropriated primitive symbols of fertility. Yet very few of these art propositions are much more than exercises in style. Ultimately the strength of Mendieta's work is that it requires more than contextual and formal analysis. Poetic works require poetic exegesis. Poetic artworks can only be defined as artworks that inspire poetic responses, and these responses have more to do with the spiritual than anything else.

Art is a belief system, and Mendieta believed in the power of art to change lives. Art changed her life and allowed her moments of equilibrium, caught between the pain of exile and the transcendence of ritual. This is dangerous territory, but all else is banal. Mendieta can either



NAÑIGO BURIAL, 1976

Installation at 112 Greene
Street Gallery, New York,
February 23–March 5.



UNTITLED, 1977

—
Silueta series (Silhouette series)

Color photograph

20 × 13 1/4 inches

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta

*Earth-body work with dried leaves,
sticks and pods on sand, executed
in Iowa*

be seen as a romantic or as someone absolutely clear-headed about how to heal the breach between humanity and the nonhuman world. Mendieta's works are about the numinous. At their finest, they are numinous themselves.

What do we see when we look at what remains of her art works? A few photographs depicting silhouettes on the ground or rock carvings in Cuba. Later we see female figures made of fernwood or constructed of vines. We see earthly symbols on the floor. We see wood inscribed with fire, as if this were the only way to let the soul become visible. If we do not see beyond what we see, then we are not seeing the art: we are stuck in the fallen world of art products. Eschewing the sentimental and, for the most part, the sensational, Mendieta was courting the gods.

NOTES

1. Referred to in Lucy Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art," *Art in America* 64, no. 3 (May-June 1976): 80.

2. In her 1980 catalogue introduction to *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, an invitational exhibition she co-organized at the A.I.R. Gallery in New York, Mendieta wrote: "During the mid to late sixties as women in the United States politicized themselves and came together in the Feminist Movement with the purpose to end the domination and exploitation by the white male culture, they failed to remember us. American Feminism as it stands is basically a white middle class movement."

Tierra y Fuego

L a O b r a d e M e n d i e t a

POR JOHN PERREAULT

Traducido por Myrna Nieves-Colón

He estado conduciendo un diálogo entre el paisaje y el cuerpo femenino (basado en mi propia silueta). Creo que ésto ha sido resultado directo de haber sido arrancada de mi tierra natal (Cuba) durante mi adolescencia. Estoy abrumada por el sentimiento de haber sido arrojada del vientre (la naturaleza). Mi arte es la forma en que reestablezco los lazos que me unen al universo. Es un regreso a la fuente materna. A través de mis esculturas de tierra/cuerpo me hago una sola con la tierra. Me convierto en una extensión de la naturaleza y la naturaleza se convierte en una extensión de mi cuerpo. Este acto obsesivo de afirmar mis lazos con la tierra es en realidad una reactivación de creencias primigenias . . . [en] una fuerza fe-

menina omnipresente, la imagen posterior de estar encerrada en el útero; es una manifestación de mi sed de ser.

Ana Mendieta, 1981

Declaración sin publicar

La obra de Ana Mendieta no es difícil de situar en las categorías del arte norteamericano de avanzada de las dos últimas décadas. Tan sólo podemos adivinar cómo pudo haberse desarrollado su obra, pues con su trágica muerte ocurrida en 1985 a la edad de treinta y seis años, la totalidad de su trabajo se convirtió en obra terminada, un conjunto cerrado. Este conjunto cae dentro de las categorías sobrepuestas de arte de tierra, arte del cuerpo, foto-arte y quizás arte de "performance," reteniendo la obra de años recientes características de sus desarrollos más tempranos en estos géneros, pero tomando la forma de objetos portátiles y relativamente durables.

Aunque Ana Mendieta no fue exactamente una pionera en ninguna de las formas que empezó a sintetizar tan brillantemente a principios de los setenta, pudo reinventarse a sí misma como artista, dejando muy atrás sus esfuerzos en la pintura. En el proceso, creó trabajos de gran carga poética y política, influenciados por los géneros de la antigalería y el antiobjeto que se difundían rápidamente por el mundo del arte. Las noticias sobre los trabajos de tierra de Robert Smithson, el arte del cuerpo de Vito Acconci y el arte de "performance" de muchos artistas (y escritores) que llegaban en sacudidas periódicas, eran señal de un abandono del formalismo—aunque muchos de estos trabajos eran bastante formales—y de las formas tradicionales de hacer arte. El movimiento feminista en las artes que emergía entonces debió haber jugado también su papel, ya que los trabajos artísticos de Mendieta encarnaban temas feministas; ella hizo por lo menos un cuadro vivo sobre el tema del ultraje.¹ El cuerpo femenino y la diosa—simbolizando la creación y la naturaleza—se convertirían en temas constantes.

Todas estas conexiones y fuentes son obvias, pero no nos cuentan toda la historia. Sabemos que en los setenta se encontraba estudiando su maestría en bellas artes en la Universidad de Iowa bajo la dirección de Hans Breder y que esta situación le dio acceso a los últimos desarrollos en el arte y a la libertad de experimentar. Nada en este trasfondo justifica el insólito poder de su arte. Una discusión de su trabajo que se limite a catalogar las influ-



UNTITLED, 1978

Siluetta Series (Silhouette series)

13 1/4 x 20 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of

Ana Mendieta

***Earth-body work with hair and
tree stump, executed in Amana,
Iowa***



UNTITLED, 1979

Silueta Series (Silhouette series)

20 × 13 1/4 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta

*Mud silueta executed at Sharon
Center, Iowa*

encias y fuentes nos dejaría con una visión de su arte fragmentada y no muy diferente a la de muchos otros trabajos artísticos que se han hecho bajo las mismas influencias. Sin embargo, cuando uno mira las películas super-8 de Mendieta y sus diapositivas a color o las fotografías hechas de sus diapositivas o las fotos en blanco y negro reveladas en grande—todos meros souvenirs de sus molduras de tierra, grabados de tierra, dibujos de sangre y fuego—y cuando uno ve las piezas de enredaderas, las esculturas para colocar a nivel del piso y las tablas y troncos de árboles explotados con dinamita que hizo últimamente, es obvio que era una artista extraordinaria. ¿Cómo se justifica esto?

La consistencia es un factor, definitivamente. No importa el medio o el formato, hay una intensidad de visión que es asombrosa. Mendieta no hacía cosas a medias. Muchos artistas han aprendido a imitarse a sí mismos para satisfacer requisitos del mercado del arte. Mendieta era consistente porque no tenía alternativa; hizo el arte que tenía que hacer, que era el único arte que podía hacer y el único arte que necesitaba hacer. Este enfoque tan directo de su visión estaba dictado en una necesidad interna. El acto de trazar el contorno de su propio cuerpo—su silueta, su sombra—sobre la tierra en su perdurable serie “Silueta” era importante para ella como arte, como magia y como acto político. Esto era igualmente cierto en cuanto a los grabados en las rocas y las inscripciones de símbolos femeninos. Ellos la ayudaron a curarse a sí misma, aunque sólo temporalmente. Si uno pudiera por lo menos reclamar una porción pequeña de la tierra como su propio territorio, entonces el exilio se mitigaría.

Ya adolescente, a Mendieta la enviaron sus padres desde la Cuba de Castro a los Estados Unidos, donde vivió en orfanatos y casas de padres adoptivos. Paradójicamente, su exilio de Cuba la trajo más cerca de la naturaleza y de Cuba. Ya adulta, no era anti-castrista, decididamente, y en 1980 regresó de visita y al año siguiente realizó la serie de grabados en las rocas de las laderas. Sin embargo, después que la beca de la Academia Americana en Roma expiró en 1984, decidió quedarse en Italia. ¿Se había vuelto, quizás, adicta al exilio? Por otra parte, se sentía más cerca de las raíces latinas en Roma que de las de Nueva York. Además, en Europa había interés en su trabajo. Por más que amara a Cuba, no era posible—y aún no es posible—conectar con el sistema mundial del arte desde Cuba. Mendieta

tenía ambiciones para su arte y con muy buenas razones. Estaba en vías de probar que una mujer artista, una artista con raíces en el Tercer Mundo y una artista de la llamada minoría, puede establecerse a sí misma como innovadora. Su trabajo artístico es una adición importante al arte del siglo veinte: es expresivo sin ser ridículo; utiliza la imaginería y las fuentes de energía primitivas sin explotarlas. Mendieta no se apropió de las cosas; ella encontró sus propias imágenes de poder y significado.

Las piezas de tierra/cuerpo de Mendieta, que se conocen mayormente a través de fotografías o películas, no están desvinculadas del minimalismo y del arte anti-forma. Podemos con toda confianza eliminar la separación artificial que hay entre los dos estilos, porque aunque el primero es principalmente geométrico y el último—visto por algunos como post-minimalista—es orgánico, ambos subvierten la composición al utilizar presentaciones de una sola imagen o repeticiones ordenadas en base a disposiciones esquemáticas en vez del gusto. El arte de tierra es el minimalismo escrito en grande sobre el paisaje; el arte del cuerpo es el arte de tierra de la carne. En ambos casos, a diferencia del minimalismo que inició las secuencias de estilos, las cuestiones de lo efímero y la distribución se hicieron de primera importancia. Los objetos minimalistas son esculturas a pesar de toda la habladuría sobre la teoría gestalt y la calidad de ser objeto—en oposición a la calidad de ser escultura y la protesta verbal contra el sistema de arte consumerista. Los objetos minimalistas son esculturas de un tipo tradicional porque son independientes y completas y están hechas para durar. El arte de tierra y el arte del cuerpo, este último convirtiéndose en arte “performance” de una sola persona (con o sin audiencia), no tienen realmente mucha existencia como arte sin las transcripciones de los medios de comunicación y la distribución. Los trabajos se hacen inaccesibles por la geografía y el tiempo. Aunque la consigna de la época era escapar del sistema de galerías, este escape creaba otro régimen de dependencias: fotografía, película, publicidad escrita y después video. La fotografía, en particular, se convirtió en el objeto de arte y su lengua de comunicación. La fotografía vino a ser la prueba del arte.

Mendieta se encontró tan envuelta en esta red de paradojas como todos los demás. Sin embargo, su arte ocurrió lo suficientemente temprano en esta cadena de decepciones y por lo tanto, supo utilizar la fotografía en forma muy natural para probar y comunicar sus altera-

ciones efímeras al ambiente; ella no quemó su imagen en la tierra simplemente para tener una fotografía vendible. La fotografía era un medio, no un fin. Tampoco lo efímero era el principio que le servía de guía, ya que había empezado a buscar manifestaciones más permanentes, como lo ilustran sus admirables tallas o grabados en las rocas de Cuba. Las formas, los formatos, los géneros, los materiales, no son el centro del arte de Mendieta. Sus principios creativos están en otra parte, más profunda y personal. Su versión del arte del cuerpo aspiraba a lo universal; usaba las medidas de su forma de cinco pies para medir el mundo. Ella se convirtió en su propio método de composición, imponiendo su silueta con pólvora encendida, piedras, flores, fuegos artificiales, y hasta con el hierro de marcar con la forma de su mano, sobre fragmentos seleccionados al azar del ambiente natural; hizo que la amarraran con tiras de tela, la enterraran en barro y rocas; trazó su sombra con sangre. Se hizo una sacerdotiza, una diosa de la tierra. En cuanto a su arte “performance,” evitó la audiencia, socavando así lo que se iba a convertir en la disipación del género: un entretenimiento de clubes nocturnos y varias formas de mala actuación.

Como muchos de los artistas que emergían, Mendieta trabajó en formatos que ya existían—en su caso los formatos más vanguardistas disponibles—pero, a diferencia de muchos, los usaba para sus propios fines, los hacía suyos. Era una alianza casi perfecta. Ella necesitaba estas formas; estas formas la inspiraron. ¿Podrían haberse comunicado sus visiones de las energías de la naturaleza a través de la pintura y las formas tradiciones de la escultura? No lo creo.

El trabajo de Mendieta en los ochenta presenta conjuntos de vectores artísticos un poco diferentes, diferentes problemas formales. Los grabados en las rocas de Cuba son otro aspecto del principio creativo femenino que vio ponerse en función en la naturaleza: la tierra como útero. Las piezas para colocar a nivel del piso y los grabados en los troncos de los árboles que les seguirían llevan esta misma imaginaria primitivista—influenciados por los pictogramas y el arte prehistórico—al reino del ícono portátil. Ella manifestaba la tendencia general de la vuelta al hacer objetos. Uno no puede saber cuán conciente estaba de lo que se podría considerar una capitulación general al mercado de valores. No estaba sola. No podía vivir de conferencias y la venta de unas pocas fotografías a color hechas de las diapositivas de sus trabajos o de los

bellos dibujos en hojas y papel de corteza de árboles. Ella se movió de la tierra a la madera, de lo horizontal a lo vertical y, sin embargo, mantuvo su visión.

¿Cuál era esa visión? Mendieta apuntó a ella en varias declaraciones, pero es el trabajo mismo el que la expresa de una manera más profunda. Ella era una maga. Aunque sabemos de seguro que estaba interesada en la santería—una versión católica de la religión africana yoruba en el Nuevo Mundo—su interés iba más allá que una fascinación con encantamientos, posesiones de espíritus, pociones y “Santos.” La visión cósmica de la santería se basa en la creencia en espíritus poderosos activos en la tierra. Mendieta vio la tierra como un cuerpo viviente y ella quería ser una con ese cuerpo. No obstante el trágico sentido del exilio que moldea su obra, ésta sugiere esa separación entre la naturaleza y el espíritu que es casi la definición de la vida moderna. El arte de Mendieta trata de superar esa separación y es esto, y no alguna estrategia formal, lo que justifica el poder de su arte del cuerpo, porque todos estamos en exilio. El gnosticismo y el panteísmo están en guerra y ninguno de los dos puede ganar.

Mendieta creció una extraña en una tierra extraña. Un viaje que hizo a México cuando estaba en la Universidad de Iowa la ayudó a obtener algunos conocimientos de su herencia latinoamericana, así como los encuentros que tuvo más tarde con otros artistas latinoamericanos. El feminismo se temperó con su comprensión de que la mayor parte de las feministas en los Estados Unidos eran blancas y de clase media y tenían muy poco conocimiento sobre las mujeres del Tercer Mundo.²

Mendieta no se recreó morbosamente en su juventud perturbada; era sólo parte de su historia. Ella tenía valor. Estaba totalmente consciente del arte latinoamericano y del trabajo de artistas latinoamericanos en Estados Unidos; simpatizaba con ellos y los apoyaba. Por otra parte, estaba dispuesta a superar los clichés étnicos: el arte de los artistas latinoamericanos, en su país natal o en los Estados Unidos, no necesita estar rezagado y la obra de Mendieta lo prueba. Cuando terminemos la tarea de sortear el arte que emergió del pluralismo de los setenta—una tarea que tan sólo estamos comenzando—el arte de Mendieta se verá en forma mucho más importante de lo que nos podemos imaginar ahora. Su trabajo anticipa lo que tan sólo se puede titular como una vuelta a lo espiritual.

¿Qué instrumentos críticos podemos utilizar para acer-



UNTITLED, 1979

—
Serie volcán no.2
(Volcano series no.2)

Color photograph
13 1/4 x 20 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta

*Earth-work with gunpowder
executed at Sharon Center, Iowa*

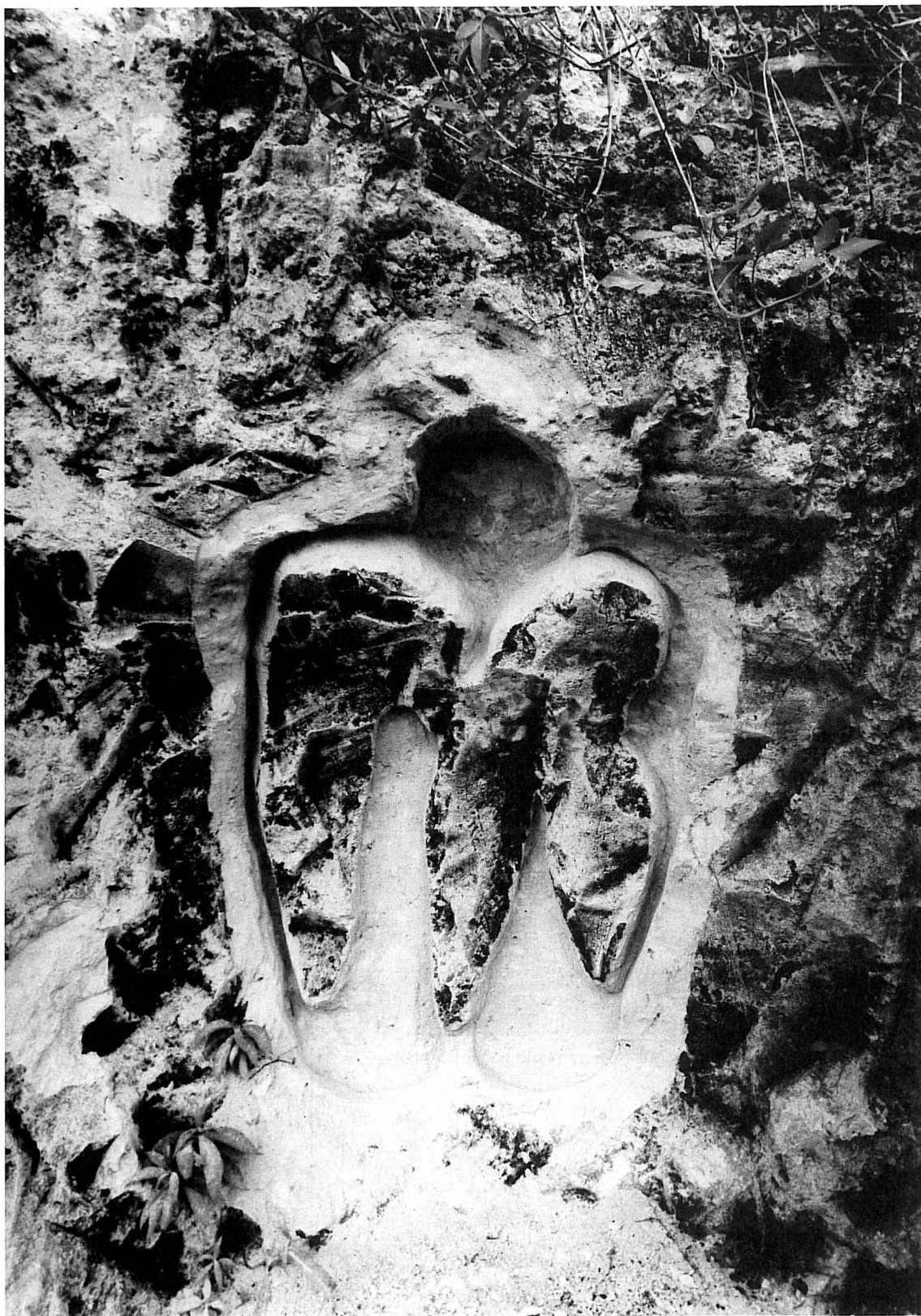
carne al arte de Mendieta? La gama completa de su arte no está desprovista de cierta belleza formal, que podemos colocar en el contexto de una época. Pero para realmente comprenderlo, tenemos que usar estrategias poéticas, porque la fuerza de su arte es su poesía. Esto lo separa de trabajos artísticos que son formalmente similares. Miles han usado sus cuerpos como material artístico; miles se han apropiado de símbolos primitivos de fertilidad. Pero muy pocas de estas proposiciones artísticas son mucho más que un ejercicio en estilo. En última instancia, la fuerza del arte de Mendieta es que requiere más que el análisis contextual y formal. El trabajo poético requiere una exégesis poética. Los trabajos poéticos solamente se pueden definir como trabajos artísticos que inspiran respuestas poéticas y estas respuestas tienen que ver más con lo espiritual que con cualquier otra cosa.

El arte es un sistema de creencias y Mendieta creía en el poder del arte para cambiar vidas. El arte le cambió la vida y le permitió momentos de equilibrio, suspendida entre el dolor del exilio y la trascendencia del ritual. Este es un territorio peligroso, pero todo lo demás es banal. A Mendieta se le puede ver como a una romántica o como a alguien con absoluta claridad mental sobre cómo sanar la brecha entre la humanidad y el mundo no humano. Los trabajos de Mendieta son sobre lo misterioso. Los mejores, son misteriosos ellos mismos.

¿Qué observamos cuando vemos lo que queda de su obra? Unas cuantas fotografías representando siluetas en el suelo o grabados en las rocas en Cuba. Después vemos figuras femeninas hechas de helechos o construídas con enredaderas. Vemos símbolos de la tierra en el piso. Vemos madera inscrita con fuego, como si fuera la única forma de hacer que el alma se hiciera visible. Si no vemos más allá de lo que vemos, entonces no vemos el arte: nos quedamos estancados en el mundo fallido de los productos de arte. Evitando lo sentimental y en su mayor parte, lo sensacional, Mendieta le hacía la corte a los dioses.

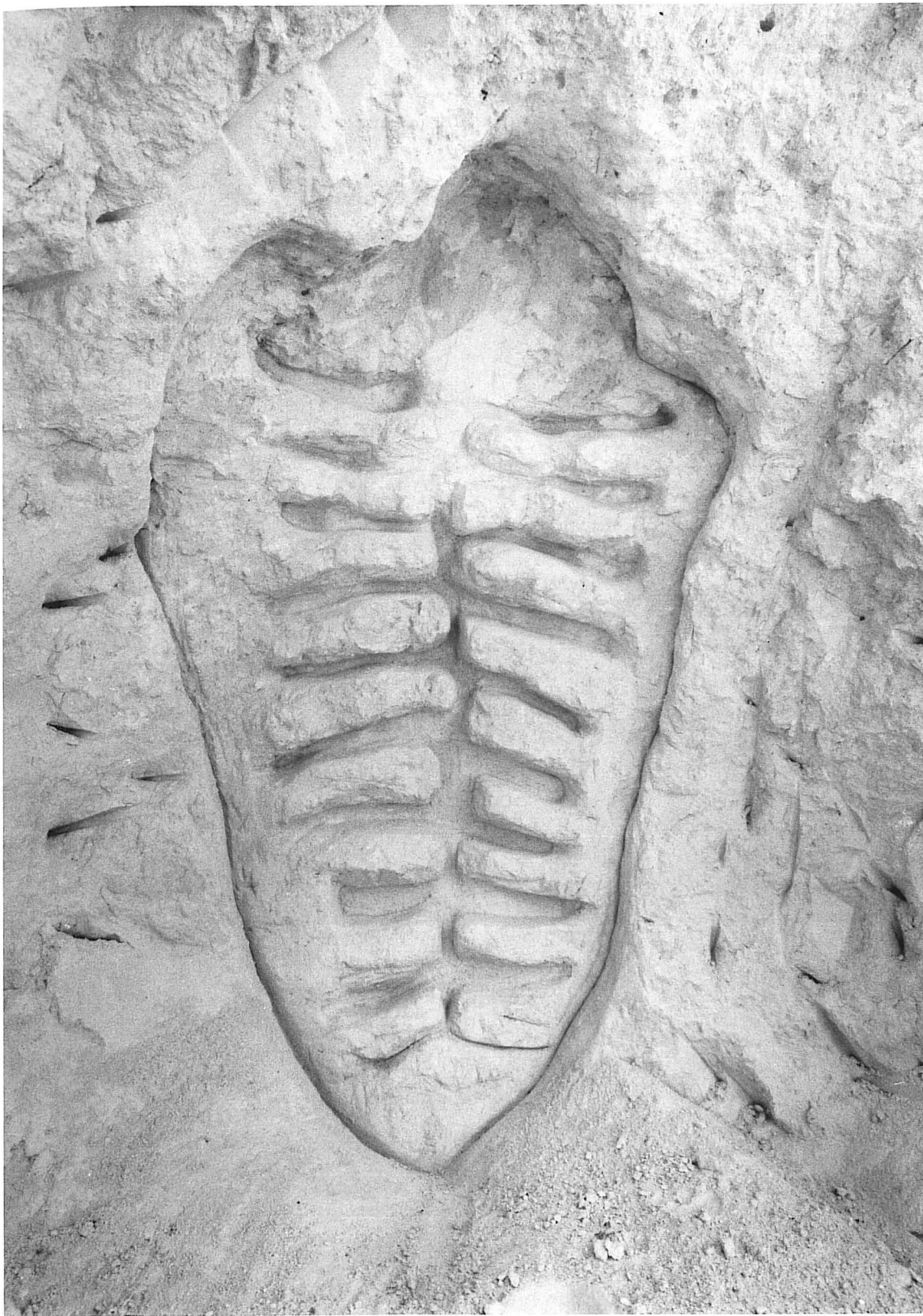
NOTAS

1. Referido en Lucy Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasure of Rebirth: Womens Body Art," *Art in America* (May-June 1979): 80.
2. Mendieta escribió en su introducción al catálogo de 1980 de *The Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, una exhibición por invitación que co-organizó en la Galería A.I.R. de Nueva York, lo siguiente: "A mediados y fines del setenta, a medida que las mujeres de Estados Unidos se politizaban y se unían al Movimiento Feminista con el propósito de terminar con el dominio y la explotación de la cultura masculina blanca, se olvidaron de nosotras. El Feminismo Norteamericano, como se presenta, es básicamente un movimiento de la clase media blanca."



**GUACAR (OUR
MENSTRUATION/NUUESTRA
MENSTRUACIÓN), 1981**

**Esculturas Rupestres
(Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 x 40 3/4 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta
*Carved cave wall executed at the
Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de
Jaruco, Havana, Cuba***



**ITIBA CAHUBABA
(OLD MOTHER BLOOD/
ENSANGRENTADA MADRE
VIEJA), 1981**

**Esculturas Rupestres
(Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 x 40 3/4 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta
*Carved cave wall executed at the
Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de
Jaruco, Havana, Cuba***



**BACAYÚ (LIGHT OF DAY/
LUCERO DEL DÍA), 1981**

Esculturas Rupestres

(Rupestrian sculptures)

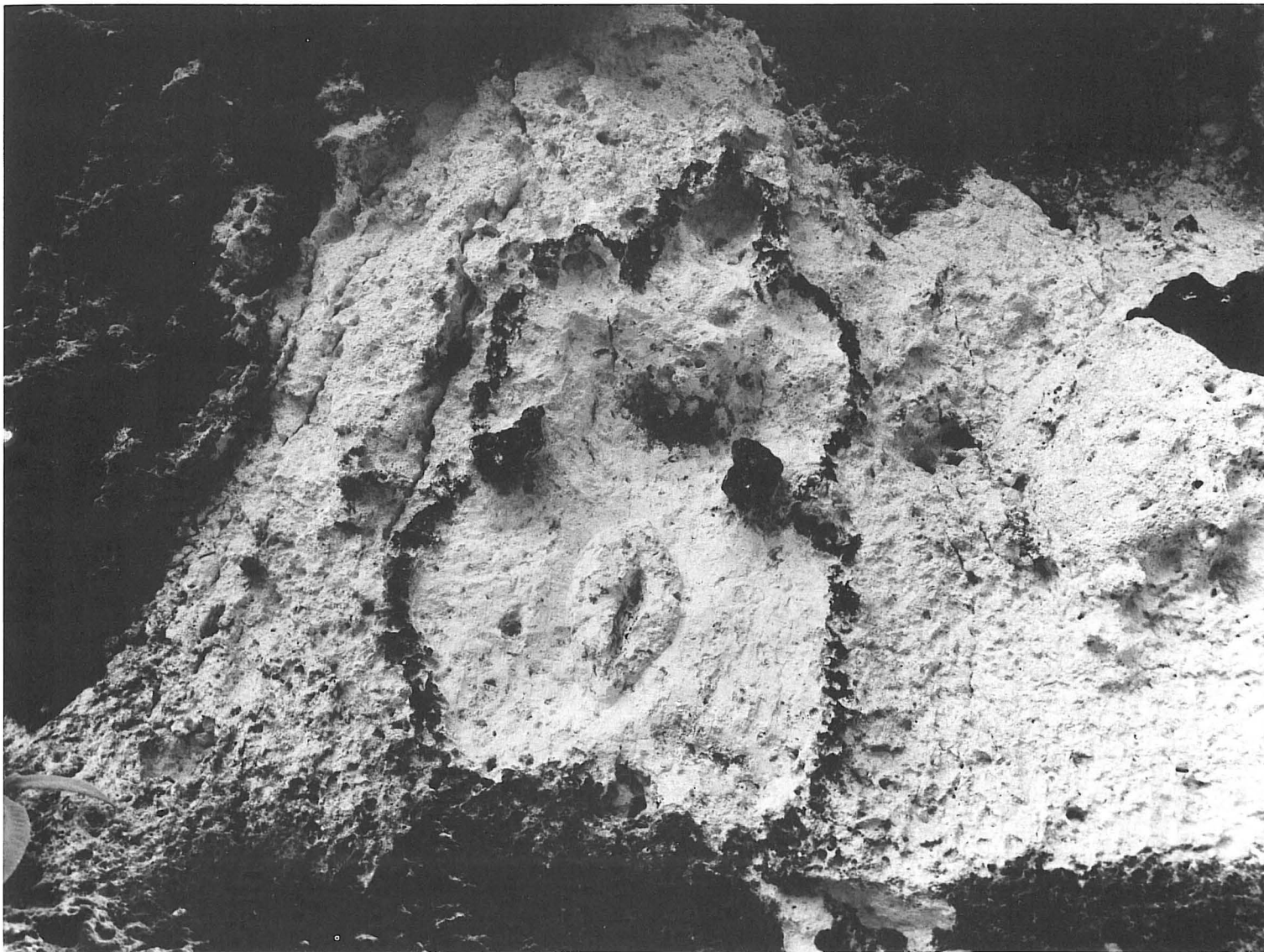
Black and white photograph

40 3/4 × 53 1/4 inches

Carved and painted stone executed

at the Escaleras de Jaruco,

Havana, Cuba



**MAROYA (MOON/LUNA),
1981**

**Esculturas Rupestres
(Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 x 53 1/4 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta
*Carved and painted rock wall
executed at the Escaleras de
Jaruco, Havana, Cuba***

Ana Mendieta

A Historical Overview

BY PETRA BARRERAS DEL RIO

Naturaleza = criadero de Dioses
Ana Mendieta
"Apuntes", 1979-81 (unpublished)

Otro modo de ser humano y libre.
Otro modo de ser.
Rosario Castellanos
"Meditación en el umbral"¹

By all accounts, 1972 was a turning point in Ana Mendieta's art: it was then she realized that "my paintings were not real enough for what I wanted the images to convey, and by real I mean I wanted my images to have power, to be magic."² That search for powerful, magical images guided Mendieta's efforts throughout her career. Having just received her M.A. degree in painting from the University of Iowa, she re-enrolled that same year to pursue an M.F.A. degree in the university's brand-new Multimedia and Video Art program. Established in 1970 under the leadership of Hans Breder, this program, which encompassed the Center for the New Performing Arts, became a highly regarded experimental outpost visited by the artistic avant-garde of the early seventies.

In a 1987 unpublished statement, Hans Breder, describes Mendieta's graduate student years as a period when her work "exploded off the canvas" and she began to create her first body works. The highly experimental environment allowed the young artist to

develop a personal vocabulary in which her own body became the medium for ephemeral performances, documented in a variety of visual media including film, video, and photography.

The murder of a fellow student on the Iowa campus in March of 1973 provoked one of Mendieta's body-art events, her first rape piece in which an unsuspecting audience of artist friends entered her apartment to discover her bloody, half-naked body. With this dramatic work, conceived in "reaction against the idea of violence against women,"³ she joined other artists who were likewise concerned with a feminist approach to making art. As early as 1975, critic and art historian Lucy Lippard included the "shocking, bloody 'rape tableaux' performed by Ana Mendieta with herself as a victim . . . [among] a growing number of artworks by women with the self as subject matter."⁴

From then on, Mendieta did not hesitate to use provocative images and subject matter in her art. Throughout 1973 and 1974, she repeatedly used blood combined

with tempera in ritualistic performances that have been preserved in black-and-white films. She later discussed the importance of blood in her earlier work: "I started immediately using blood, I guess because I think it's a very powerful magical thing. I don't see it as a negative force."⁵ In *Blood Writing* (1973) and *Blood Sign No. 2* (1974), for example, Mendieta faces a white wall with her back to the camera, writing in blood with her hands or leaving marks of her blood-covered arms and hands as she leans on the wall and slides from a standing to a crouching position. (In these performances we find the prototype for the "Body Tracks" series on white paper done in 1982 at Franklin Furnace, New York.) In another indoor piece, Mendieta stands naked facing the camera in front of a white wall as she holds a beheaded white chicken that flaps its wings in a frenzy of agony, splattering blood over her body. And during an outdoor performance in 1973 at Old Man's Creek in Iowa City, Mendieta rubbed blood over herself and rolled in a bed of white feathers, which then covered her naked body as she stood up. This act suggested her transformation into the white cock whose sacrifice is a preparatory rite for the Nañigos, a male secret society of Santería, the syncretic, Afro-Caribbean religion that embraces the spiritual traditions of the Yoruba in Africa and elements of Catholicism.

Mendieta's attraction to Santería developed not while she was living in Cuba with her family, but after she had begun work as an artist. She later noted that she became interested in Santería because her art contained "a lot of healing imagery."⁶ Time and time again throughout her career, Mendieta would draw inspiration from various African and Precolumbian traditions of nature worship. She was an avid reader of history, anthropology, and literature, particularly works relating to Spain and Latin America, and her library contains the now-classic texts by the Cuban writer Lydia Cabrera, who documented and studied Santería in twentieth-century Cuba. Mendieta's first Santería-related works were executed in 1972, and she was still exploring the theme through 1981, when she created a piece on a tree deemed sacred by Santería believers in Miami. During an interview she recalled how her work blended in and became integrated with the traditional offerings of food and animal sacrifices:

I also did an interesting piece that crossed the line between

art and life. The Santeros use a tree that in Spanish is called a *ceiba* and in English is called a cotton silkwood tree. It has very long roots that stick out. In Miami there is a tree like that which the Santeros have claimed and the people do things to that tree when a healer tells them that they have to make a sacrifice. When I was there I decided to do a piece on the tree. I was in the Cuban section and collected human hair from the different beauty shops so I knew it was Cuban hair. Then I made an image of a figure on the tree. A root was sticking out so the figure appeared to be either a male or a female being screwed. There were also three knots on it that happened to look like female genitals so I surrounded them with hair that I glued on. The last time I saw the tree, people had added coconuts, chicken wings, all kinds of offerings. For a while they put a figure of Santa Barbara underneath it, cut an opening in what would be the face and stuck a shell in the mouth. They have really activated the image and claimed it as their own.⁷

Although it was not until 1982 that Mendieta began making freestanding sculptures from tree trunks, she often incorporated trees in her early work. Perhaps one of the most striking pieces is from the "Tree of Life" series (1977), in which Mendieta stands in a hieratic pose—her back against the huge trunk of a living tree, her arms raised with palms facing out, her eyes closed, and her naked body completely covered with mud, dry grass, and leaves. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, writing about the work of the photographer Francesca Woodman, raised several points that can also be applied to Mendieta's early works, particularly the "Tree of Life" series. In using their own bodies in their work, both artists alternated "between active, creative subject—a producer of meaning—and passive object—the receiver of meaning." Employing their bodies as surfaces, they were "both a sight (a spectacle), and a site (of meaning, desire, projection)."⁸

During the late seventies, Mendieta developed an extraordinary ability to work in an outside setting, improvising with whatever natural materials were at hand. In 1977, while continuing to create body art, Mendieta also began tracing the silhouette of her five-foot-tall body on earth, sand, tree trunks, and fields, in the environs of Iowa City and near Oaxaca, Mexico. Natural rock formations, vegetation, earthy materials and debris, fire, water, and gunpowder became her media as she shifted her focus to producing outdoor pieces. In this series of work, the artist removed herself from the finished products, which she described as "earth-body sculptures."⁹ This was an extremely prolific period: about two hundred in-



**GUANBANCEX (left) and
GUANAROCA (right), 1981**

**Esculturas Rupestres
(Rupestrian sculpture)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 x 53 1/4 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

dividual pieces from the "Silueta" series are documented in films and photographs.

At the same time, she also began to experiment with the media of film and photography to document the pieces, which intentionally were abandoned to change or perish in nature. Of the works filmed in which fire and gunpowder were used, critic and curator Gylbert Coker observes that "one can see that the fire makes the works alive, mysterious, aggressive." She also describes a 1976 *Silueta de cohetes* done in Oaxaca:

One of her earlier pieces, a female figure built with arms outstretched, as though embracing the world, is both beautiful and frightening as the flames sway in the air. The viewer is encouraged to become emotionally consumed in the exhilaration of the flames. Works like this generate an emotional energy similar to that found in a religious ceremony or ritual.¹⁰

The film documentation also added the dimension of real time to these "events," in which the artist set the stage and then became a spectator in the final moments, which were beyond her control. Mendieta was careful to clarify, nonetheless, that "making earth-body sculptures is not the final stage of a ritual for me."¹¹ In fact, her work increasingly took the form of sculptural objects, pulling away from the realm of body art.

Mendieta's visits to Mexico in the mid-seventies made a strong impact on her work. She has stated, "Plugging into Mexico was like going back to the source, being able to get some magic just by being there."¹² Both Judith Wilson and Lippard have drawn parallels between Mendieta's imagery and the work of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1910-1954). Quoting Hayden Herrera, Kahlo's biographer, Lippard describes the painter as "immersed in that Mexican sense of solitude that Octavio Paz has called "a form of orphanhood." Lippard continues, "Kahlo's works are painful, powerful, and direct—embarrassingly emotional and visceral (to an Anglo-Saxon culture), exuding a longing connection with an anthropomorphized Earth Mother or perhaps for death and release."¹³ Some of Mendieta's concerns can be recognized in this description, but her work differs from Kahlo's in that her literal early images were eventually transformed into poetic visual metaphors, and her somber themes suggest not only death but also life-giving forces such as earth, blood, water, and fire.

Nevertheless, it could be said that Mendieta experi-

enced her own form of orphanhood. She often talked about a sense of displacement triggered by the painful separation from her parents and her native country, Cuba, at the age of thirteen. She wrote in the early eighties: "I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe." She described an "African custom which I think . . . is analogous to my work. . . . The men from Kimberly go outside their village to seek their brides. When a man brings his new wife home, the woman brings with her a sack of earth from her homeland and every night she eats a little bit of that earth. The earth will help her make the transition between her homeland and her new home."¹⁴ Wilson observes that "like Kahlo, whose canvases contain frequent allusions to her cultural heritage, Mendieta is trying to locate herself spiritually."¹⁵

Undoubtedly, the rich artistic heritage of Mexico—in particular, the Mexican muralists—stimulated Mendieta to further develop her personal vocabulary. Wilson notes that "the fusion of politics and indigenous heritage that marks the work of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros would be a lasting influence on her, although the ideological content of her own work focuses more on sexual politics."¹⁶ Nonetheless, when Mendieta uses flowers, skeletons, or fireworks, she is not borrowing from the fine-arts tradition, but from the abundant and rich tradition of Mexican popular arts.

In 1977 Mendieta received her M.F.A. degree from the University of Iowa and moved to New York City, where she immediately gained recognition in the "alternative" visual-arts scene. She received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1978, 1980) and the New York City-based Creative Artists Program Service (1979), as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship (1980). During this period she joined the A.I.R. Gallery, the first and most prestigious cooperative gallery of feminist artists.

Located in Soho, the enclave of the visual-arts avant-garde in the seventies, A.I.R. provided a receptive environment for Mendieta's feminist interests and proved to be a stimulating impetus for her artistic development. In November of 1979, she had a solo show at A.I.R. that consisted of photographic documentation of the outdoor "Silueta" pieces produced in Iowa, Colorado, and New York. Earlier that year, the "punch" of these images was described as "bracing" by art critic William Zimmer, reviewing a group show at the Henry Street Settlement



UNTITLED, August 1980

Gunpowder-Silueta series

(Serie silueta de pólvora)

Black and white photograph

40 × 50 inches

***Executed at La Ventosa, Oaxaca,
Mexico***

Gallery. He wrote: "Mendieta offers photographs of alterations she has made on landscape sites. These marks are dubbed 'silhouettes' but are really vaginas on the hillside or on the grass. The Abstract Expressionists wished to identify their bodies with the earth, but as men couldn't come this close."¹⁷

Between 1979 and 1982 Mendieta participated in several other group shows. Three of them were composed of temporary, outdoor installations: *Art Across the Park* in New York (1980), *Streetworks* in Washington, D.C. (1981), and *Projects in Nature* (1982) at Wave Hill, New York. Mendieta's contribution in the *Streetworks* exhibition was described by Martha McWilliams Wright in the *Unicorn Times*: "Ana Mendieta, a feminist artist of Cuban ancestry, will carve a female figure on a hillside and then set the sod over the earthwork afire. An alternative proposal includes scorching the sod with a branding iron made in the shape of an artist's hand."¹⁸ In other outdoor pieces executed during this period, Mendieta continued to work with natural materials found at the chosen site. An element of performance, whether she set gunpowder on fire or scorched the sod, always remained, and although the artist was removed from the finished piece, a reference to her body was invariably present.

In most of the group shows in which Mendieta was included, she exhibited her photographs. However, in 1979 at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, she created an outdoor installation as part of *Ancient Roots/New Visions*, a show of contemporary Hispanic art in the United States that traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago. For her floor piece at the Everson, Mendieta first made a mound of earth within an area of twelve by sixteen feet. Then, a silhouette of gunpowder was traced on the center of the mound and set on fire for the opening night. This work is one of a few that Mendieta was able to realize in a gallery or a museum before 1983, and it anticipates her later floor pieces done between 1983 and 1985.

In 1980 Mendieta, along with two other artists, organized *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists in the United States* at A.I.R. This project offered Mendieta the opportunity to explore her interests in politics, sexual and otherwise. Her introduction to the exhibition catalogue expresses how she found resonance in the aims of the movement of the Unaligned Nations "to end colonialism, racism and exploitation."¹⁹ In 1979, she returned for the first time since adolescence to Cuba,

a leader of the Unaligned Nations. She spoke later of the strong connection she had felt with her native land: "I was afraid before I went there because I felt I've been living my life with this obsessive thing in my mind—what if I find out it has nothing to do with me? But the minute I got there, it was this whole thing of belonging again."²⁰

Even before her first visit, Mendieta had expressed a desire to work in Cuba, writing, "it would only be logical to bring the 'Silueta' series to its source."²¹ Returning there in August of 1981, Mendieta began working in the woods of Jaruco. The soft limestone of the hilly terrain provided an optimal medium for her carvings, whether on existing rock formations or chiseled into caves and solid rock walls. Once again, Mendieta's art exploded with power and exuberance. In this series, called the "Rupestrian" sculptures (from *rupes*, the Latin for rock), the artist attained great facility in handling relief sculpture, a skill she would later use in her tree-trunk sculptures and in her floor pieces. Mendieta carved with fluidity a large number of images inspired by prehistoric representations of fertility and by Precolumbian symbols. In fact, all the titles of these pieces included words from the language of the now-extinct Taino Indians of Cuba.

At Jaruco, Mendieta incorporated paint in her work for the first time. Using it very selectively to bring out the outlines of a carving or a rock formation, she established a connection with the region's native inhabitants, whose cave paintings are some of the scant remaining evidence of their existence. Her work assumed an eerily timeless quality.

Mendieta documented these carvings meticulously in black-and-white photographs and films. The black-and-white photographic enlargements of the Cuban carvings were shown at A.I.R. in November 1981—soon after completion—along with a selection of Mendieta's recent films. Zimmer commented on the relation between the prehistoric and the contemporary in Mendieta's work: "A hurried examination might lead you to think you were regarding genuine neolithic art, but Mendieta's most ambitious work entails the camera. It is twentieth-century stuff!"²²

Constantly experimenting, Mendieta explored new media in and around New York in 1982. The Hartford Art School and the Real Art Ways (RAW) Gallery in Hartford jointly commissioned the artist to create a work in conjunction with a show of life-size photographs docu-



**BODY TRACKS (RASTROS
CORPORALES), 1982**

**Photograph taken during a
performance at Franklin
Furnace, New York City**



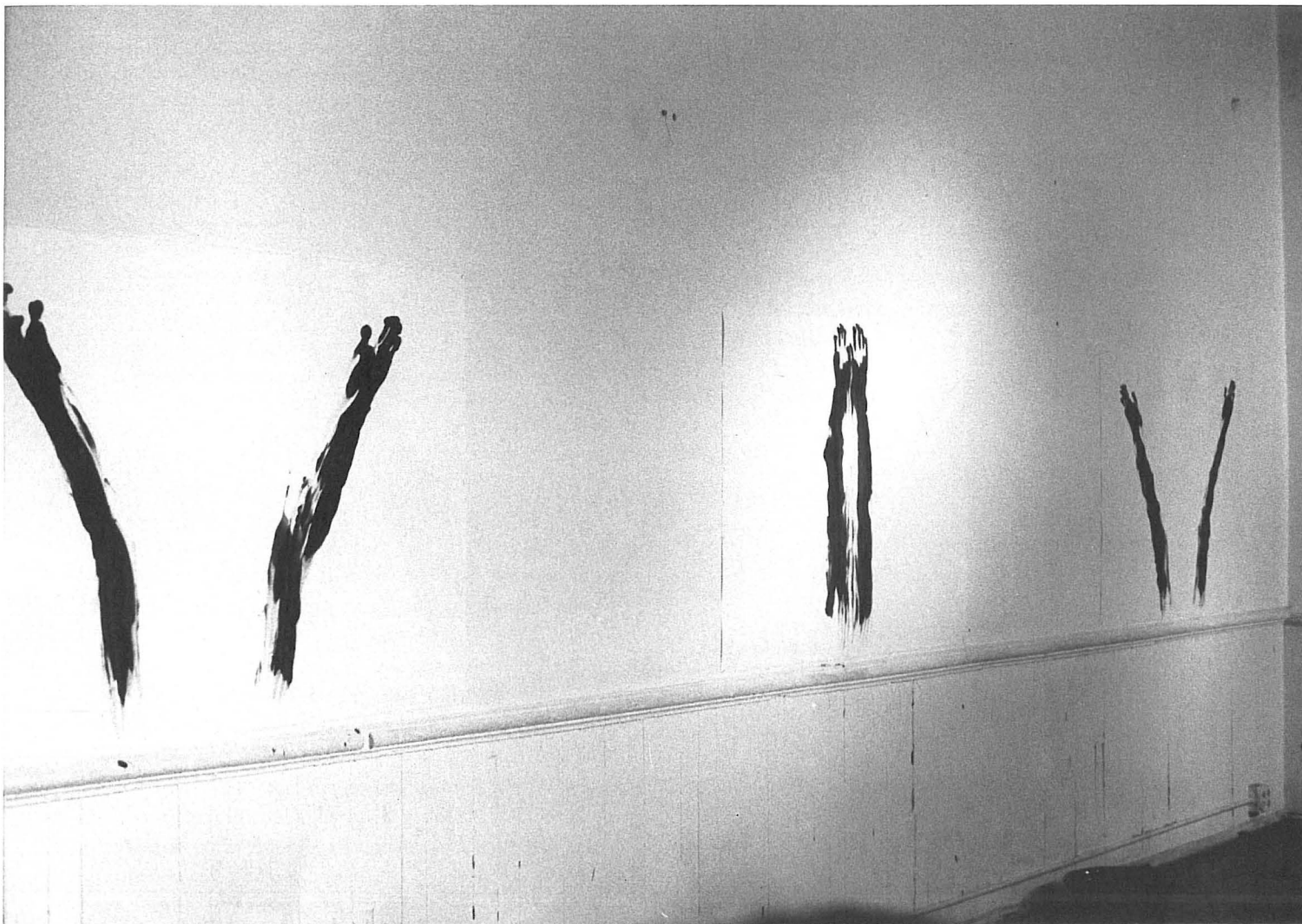
**BODY TRACKS (RASTROS
CORPORALES), 1982**

**Photograph taken during a
performance at Franklin
Furnace, New York City**



**BODY TRACKS (RASTROS
CORPORALES), 1982**

**Photograph taken during a
performance at Franklin
Furnace, New York City**



CORPORALES), 1982

**Blood and tempera paint on
paper**

**Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

*Drawings produced during a
performance at Franklin Furnace,
New York City*



**BODY TRACKS (RASTROS
CORPORALES), 1982**

**Blood and tempera paint on
paper**

38 × 50 inches

**Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

*Drawing produced during a
performance at Franklin Furnace,
New York City*

menting the "Rupestrian" sculptures. According to Doris Whitbeck, who reviewed the public-art work, Mendieta arrived at the campus looking for inspiration. The artist selected a log, seven feet long and three feet in diameter. Whitbeck describes Mendieta's process as follows:

After carving the outlines of a human shape around the knots on the log's surface, Mendieta filled the deep grooves with a mixture of saltpeter, sulphur and charcoal, blackening her hands and face in the process.

When it was time to ignite the gunpowder, a gusty wind snuffed out the matches Mendieta had lit, so she borrowed a lighted cigarette from one of the art students clustered around her and urged them to step back. "Once it goes off, it should have its own arena," she said.²³

Mendieta called this piece *Arbitra* (Latin for "female witness"), a linguistic allusion to the tradition connecting woman and tree (*arbor*, in Latin).²⁴ A reviewer for *Art New England* pointed out that *Arbitra* was "unusual in Mendieta's work by being relatively permanent and relatively public."²⁵ This piece foreshadowed the four vertical sculptures made out of tree trunks that Mendieta produced in Rome between 1984 and 1985.

Between 1982 and 1984 Mendieta also began to experiment with drawings, employing a black acrylic paint on amate (bark) paper, and dry leaves. These pieces were the first nonphotographic, portable work she produced. The images continued to be identifiable as female figures, however abstracted and emblematic. With these smaller works, the reference to the artist's own body was blurred.

In 1983, while at the American Academy in Rome on a fellowship, Mendieta had a studio for the first time, and she started to explore the possibilities of floor works for indoor exhibition. The works from this period are executed from different types of earth and sand in a range of natural colors, with surfaces elegantly molded into grooves. In some cases the cracks produced when the earth dried out are the only—yet highly effective—decorations.

Mendieta explained the transition she effected from outdoors to indoors:

I have been given a beautiful studio in Rome. I have never had a studio before because I have never needed one. Now I have been working indoors. I've always had problems with that idea because I don't feel that I can emulate nature. In-

stallation is a fake art. So I've given this problem to myself.. to work indoors. I found a way and am involved right now, working with sand, with earth, mixing it with a binder, and making sculptures. I am very pleased because I am able to get the same kind of textures I get outside. I was working and working and not sure if anything was there, and then one day I came into the studio and saw that the sculptures had a real presence. All of them have a "charge" in them.²⁶

Curator and critic Peter Frank, writing in early 1985 about Mendieta's most recent work agreed with the artist that the work continued to have a resonance beyond the actual objects:

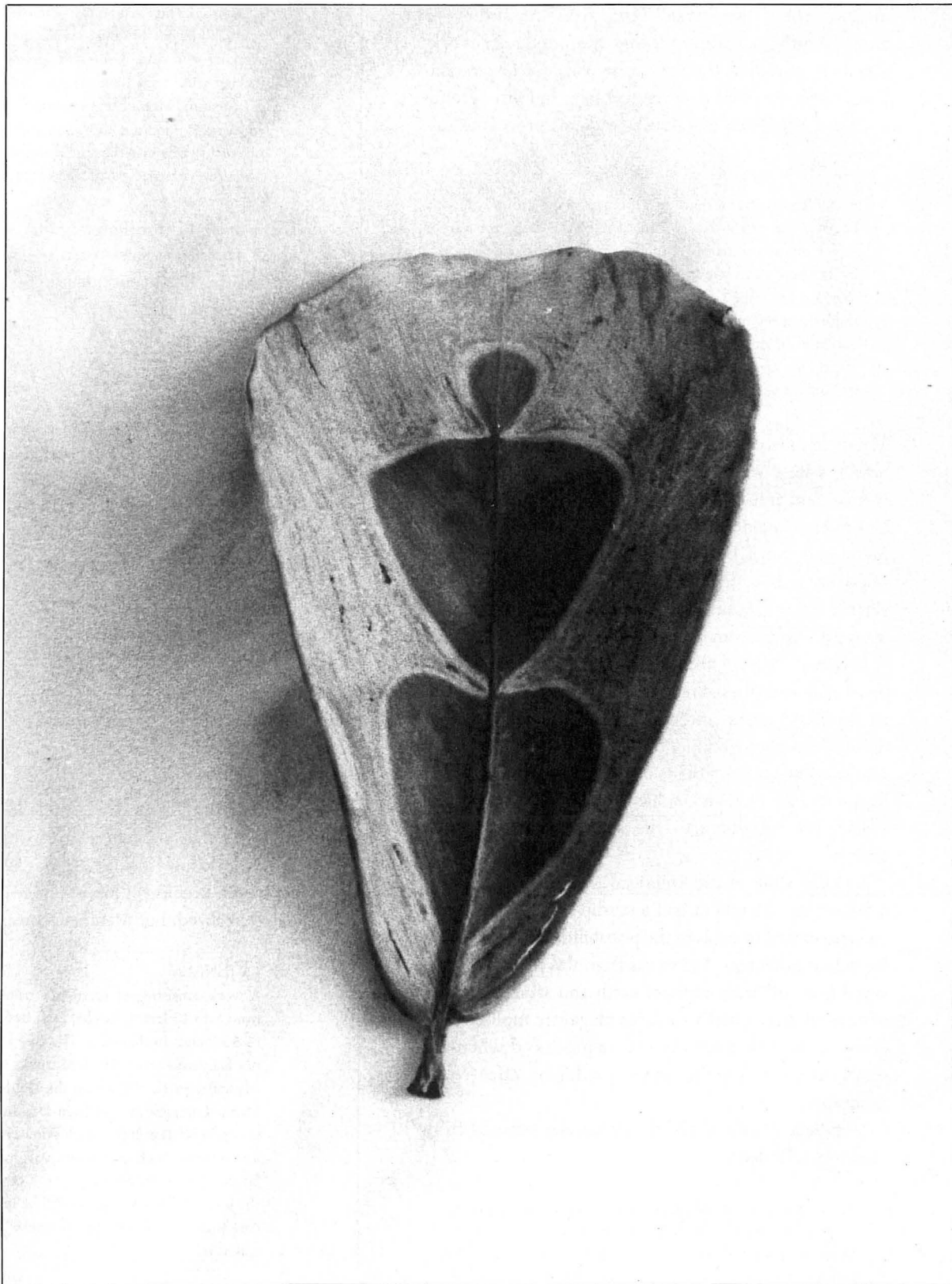
The process of execution, although no longer an overt factor in the work, is still strongly felt; the fragility evinced by Mendieta's often cracked, crumbling, granular material, while actually overcome by fixative substances, still implies the constant intervention of natural and human forces. Irrespective of the actual durability of Mendieta's recent work, they still evoke the ephemerality, simplicity, and basic humanity of drawings etched in sand on the beach—and as well, by the Biblical story of Creation. This time, however, instead of God fashioning man out of clay, Mendieta fashions woman.²⁷

In these floor pieces made in Rome, Mendieta continued the exchange between the landscape and the mythic female figure.

At the same time that Mendieta was producing her first indoor pieces, she was also planning her most ambitious public-art commission. In 1985, Al Nodal, Director of the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, commissioned Mendieta to create a work to be installed in downtown Los Angeles for MacArthur Park's public art program. Because of her untimely death, the project was never realized, but Mendieta's proposal remains:

LA JUNGLA

A work consisting of seven tree trunks (redwood) varying from 8 to 10 feet in height, each tree trunk being from 25 to 50 inches in diameter. The tree trunks are to be kiln-dry for permanency. The tree trunks will be installed in the triangular patch of grass on the Wilshire Boulevard part of MacArthur Park (across from Otis Institute). They will be set up in relationship to each other charging the space with a tenseness. Each tree trunk will have an image carved/burned into it representing the 7 powers of life (that rule the jungle). The tree trunks will be installed with a cement base (that will not be visible) making the installation stable and safe.²⁸



UNTITLED, 1982-84

—
Drawing on leaf

6 inches

**Courtesy of the Estate
of Ana Mendieta**

Ana Mendieta's work in this retrospective, which spans the years from 1975 to 1985, maintains an extraordinary cohesiveness. Inspired by the mythological metaphors of Gaea, or Mother Earth, and Hades, the dwelling of departed spirits, she relentlessly searched for images that would capture the power of nature. Mendieta handled natural materials with ease, shaping them into images at times shocking, at times dramatic, and usually arrestingly beautiful. Like the bride in the African tale, Mendieta carried her sack of earth wherever she went, but she also grounded herself in each new site—Iowa, Mexico, New York, Cuba, Rome—producing artistic offerings to nature.

For Mendieta there was no choice but to be an artist. She was prolific, restless, intelligent. Her work touched on many of the relevant issues explored by visual artists in the seventies and early eighties, but her talent for handling the most elemental materials and her grasp of the poetic transcend the moment.

NOTES

1. Nature = breeding ground of the gods—Ana Mendieta. Another way of being human and free. Another way of being.—Rosario Castellanos. Translated by Sandra Barreras del Rio, whose comments added insights to this essay.
2. Ana Mendieta, bilingual wall text for exhibition, c. 1981, documents, Estate of the artist.
3. Cherry Kittredge, "Mendieta Incorporates Herself, Earth and Art," *The Daily Iowan*, Iowa City, December 6, 1977, p. 7.
4. Lucy Lippard, "Transformation Art," *Ms.* 4, no. 4 (October 1975): 33.
5. Judith Wilson, "Ana Mendieta Plants," *The Village Voice* (August 19, 1980): 90.
6. Ana Mendieta and Linda Montano, unpublished interview, 1983-84, documents, Estate of the artist.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work*, exh. cat., Wellesley College Museum, Wellesley, Mass., and Hunter College Art Gallery, New York, 1986, pp. 19, 31.
9. Mendieta, bilingual statement.
10. Gylbert Coker, "Ana Mendieta at A.I.R.," *Art in America* 68, no. 4 (April 1980): 133-34.
11. Ana Mendieta, unpublished papers, Estate of the artist.
12. Wilson, p. 90.
13. Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, New York, 1983, p. 47.
14. Ana Mendieta, unpublished document, Estate of the artist.
15. Wilson, p. 90.
16. *Ibid.*
17. William Zimmer, "Artists Only," *Soho Weekly News*, 1979.
18. Martha McWilliams Wright, "City Braces for New 'Guerilla Art,'" *Unicorn Times* (Washington, D.C.), March 1981, p. 44.
19. Ana Mendieta, Introduction, *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, exh. cat., A.I.R. Gallery, New York, 1980.
20. Gerardo Mosquera, "Ana Mendieta: Esculturas Rupestres,"

Areito 7, no. 28 (1981): 55.

21. Ana Mendieta, unpublished papers, Estate of the artist.
22. William Zimmer, "Mendieta at Yvonne Seguy," *Art Now/New York: Gallery Guide* (November 1982).
23. Doris Whitbeck, "Of Nature, Myth, and Womanhood," *The Hartford Courant*, April 30, 1982, p. D8.
24. Lalia Kahn, "Ana Mendieta," *Art New England* (June 1982): 7.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Mendieta and Montano, 1983-84.
27. Peter Frank, "The Human Figure: Present and/or Accounted for," in *Awards in the Visual Arts 4*, exh. cat., Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, N.C., 1985.
28. Ana Mendieta, unpublished papers, Estate of the artist.

Ana Mendieta

Sinópsis Histórica

POR PETRA BARRERAS DEL RIO

Traducido por Myrna Nieves-Colón

"Naturaleza = Criadero de dioses"

Ana Mendieta

"Apuntes", 1979-81 (sin publicar)

"Otro modo de ser humano y libre.

Otro modo de ser."

Rosario Castellanos, "Meditación en el umbral"

Todos los testimonios indican que el año de 1972 fue crucial para el arte de Ana Mendieta; fue entonces, ella afirmó, "cuando me percaté de que mis pinturas no eran lo suficientemente reales para lo que deseaba que las imágenes transmitieran, y cuando digo real quiero decir que deseaba que mis imágenes tuvieran poder, que fueran mágicas."² Esa búsqueda de imágenes poderosas, mágicas, guió los esfuerzos de Ana Mendieta a través de su carrera. Inmediatamente después de recibir el grado M.A. en pintura de la Universidad de Iowa en 1972, Mendieta se matriculó en el programa que se acababa de fundar en esa universidad de Arte de Medios Múltiples y Video. Establecido en 1970 bajo el liderazgo de Hans Breder, este programa, que incluía el Centro para las nuevas artes representativas, se convirtió en un lugar de avanzada tenido en mucha estima y visitado por la vanguardia artística de principios de los setenta.

En una declaración, Breder describe la "atmósfera

fértil” de los años de estudiante de maestría de Mendieta, cuando su “trabajo explotó fuera del lienzo.” Breder también recuerda lo que, tal vez, fuera la primera pieza de arte del cuerpo de Mendieta, hecha en el temprano otoño de 1972. La tendencia hacia el uso de los medios de comunicación múltiples en sus estudios le permitió a la joven artista desarrollar un vocabulario artístico extremadamente personal. Su propio cuerpo se convirtió en el medio donde plasmó representaciones efímeras que documentó en una variedad de medios visuales, incluyendo películas, videos y fotografías.

El asesinato de una compañera de estudios en el campus de Iowa en marzo de 1973 provocó una de las obras de arte del cuerpo de Ana Mendieta. Mendieta creó su primera obra de violación, donde una audiencia de artistas amigos que no sospechaban nada, entraron a su apartamento y descubrieron el cuerpo medio desnudo y ensangrentado de la artista. Con esta obra de carácter dramático, concebida como “reacción a la idea de la violencia en contra de la mujer,”³ ella se unió a otras artistas que se encontraban igualmente interesadas en un enfoque feminista del quehacer artístico. Tan temprano como en 1975, la crítica e historiadora de arte Lucy Lippard incluyó los “chocantes, ensangrentados, cuadros vivos de violación puestos en escena por Ana Mendieta consigo misma como víctima” entre “un número creciente de obras de arte hechas por mujeres con el yo como tema.”⁴

Desde ese momento en adelante, Mendieta no titubeó en utilizar imágenes y temas procativos en su arte. Durante el 1973 y el 1974, usaba sangre combinada con ténpera repetidamente en “performances” rituales que se han conservado en películas en blanco y negro. Más tarde discutió la importancia de la sangre en sus primeras obras: “Comencé inmediatamente a usar sangre, creo que fue porque pienso que es algo muy poderoso y mágico. No la veo como una fuerza negativa.”⁵ Obras como *Escritura en sangre* (1973) y *Signo de sangre No. 2* (1974) enseñan a Mendieta de cara a una pared blanca y de espaldas a la cámara, escribiendo en sangre con las manos o dejando marcas de los brazos y las manos cubiertos de sangre en la pared mientras se recuesta sobre ella y se desliza de una posición erecta hasta agacharse. (En estas representaciones encontramos el prototipo del modelo para la serie Huellas corporales en papel blanco hechas en 1982 en Franklin Furnace, N.Y). En una de las primeras piezas interiores, Mendieta está

de pie, desnuda de cara a la cámara, frente a una pared blanca mientras aguanta un pollo blanco decapitado que bate sus alas en un delirio agónico, derramando sangre sobre su cuerpo. En 1973, durante un “performance” al aire libre en Old Man’s Creek en Iowa City, Mendieta se entregó sangre y rodó por una cama de plumas blancas, que le cubrieron el cuerpo cuando se levantó. Este acto sugería su transformación en el gallo blanco cuyo sacrificio es uno de los ritos preparatorios de los ñañigos, sociedad secreta masculina de la santería, religión sincretista afro-cubana, que abarca tradiciones espirituales de los yorubas en Africa y elementos del catolicismo.

El interés de Mendieta en la santería no se desarrolló mientras vivía en Cuba con su familia, si no mucho más tarde, cuando comenzó a trabajar como artista. Ella ha dicho que se interesó en la santería porque su arte contenía “muchas imágenes curativas.”⁶ Una y otra vez a través de su carrera, Mendieta buscó su inspiración en las tradiciones africanas y pre-colombinas del culto a la naturaleza. Era una ávida lectora de historia, antropología y literatura, particularmente de obras relacionadas con España y Latinoamérica. En su biblioteca se encontraban los clásicos textos de la escritora cubana Lydia Cabrera, quien documentó y estudió la santería cubana del siglo XX. Mendieta hizo los primeros trabajos sobre santería en 1972 y continuó explorando el tema hasta 1981, cuando creó una pieza en un árbol que los creyentes de la santería de Miami consideraban sagrado. En una entrevista, ella recordaba cómo su trabajo se mezcló y se integró con las ofrendas tradicionales de comida y sacrificios de animales:

Yo también hice una pieza interesante que cruzó la línea entre el arte y la vida. Los santeros usan un árbol que en español se llama ceiba y en inglés se llama “cotton silkwood tree.” Tiene unas raíces muy largas que salen hacia afuera. En Miami hay un árbol como éstos que los santeros han reclamado y la gente le hace cosas al árbol cuando los curanderos les dicen que tienen que hacen un sacrificio. Cuando estaba allá decidí hacer una pieza en el árbol. Yo estaba en la sección cubana y reuní pelo humano de los diferentes salones de belleza; así que sabía que era pelo cubano. Entonces hice la imagen de una figura en el árbol. Una raíz sobresalía de tal manera que la figura parecía una mujer o un hombre a quien le hacían el amor. También habían tres nudos que parecían los genitales femeninos, así que los rodeé con pelo pegado con goma. La última vez que vi el árbol, la gente le había añadido coco, alas de pollo, toda clase de ofrendas. Por un tiempo ellos pusieron una figura de Santa Bárbara de ajo, le abrieron una entrada en lo que



**EL LABERINTO DE LA VIDA
(THE LABYRINTH OF LIFE),
1982**

**Serie de laberinto de Venus
(Labyrinth of Venus series)
Black and white photograph
41 × 61 inches**

**Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta
*Clay and earth sculpture executed
in Iowa***

hubiera sido la cara y le metieron una concha en la boca. Ellos realmente activaron la imagen y la reclamaron como propia.⁷

A pasar de que Mendieta no introdujo un tronco de árbol en posición vertical como una escultura en sí misma hasta después de 1982, usaba árboles a menudo en sus primeras obras. Tal vez una de las obras más impresionantes es el *Arbol de la vida* (1977), en la cual Mendieta está parada en una pose hierática, con la espalda contra el inmenso tronco de un árbol vivo, las brazos subidos, las palmas hacia afuera, los ojos cerrados y el cuerpo desnudo completamente cubierto de barro, hierba seca y hojas. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, al escribir sobre las obras de la fotógrafa Francesca Woodman, planteó varios asuntos que son pertinentes para los primeros trabajos de Mendieta, particularmente para el *Arbol de la vida*. Al usar su propio cuerpo en su trabajo, ambas alternaban, “el ser un sujeto activo, creativo- productor de significados- y el ser un objeto pasivo- receptor del sentido.” Al usar el cuerpo como superficie, ella era tanto algo para verse (espectáculo) como un sitio (de significado, deseo, proyección).⁸

A fines de 1970, Mendieta desarrolló una extraordinaria habilidad para trabajar en lugares al aire libre, improvisando con cualquier material natural a mano. En 1977, mientras continuaba creando arte del cuerpo, Mendieta también comenzó a trazar la silueta de su figura de cinco pies de altura en tierra, arena, troncos de árboles y cuevas en los alrededores de Iowa City y cerca de Oaxaca, México. Las formaciones naturales de las rocas, el agua y la pólvora se convirtieron en el medio artístico a medida que fue poniendo todo su interés en producir obras al aire libre. En estas obras, la artista no incluyó su cuerpo en el producto final, que describió como “esculturas de tierra-cuerpo.”⁹ Este fue un período muy prolífico; aproximadamente unas doscientas obras de la serie “Silueta” están documentadas en películas y fotografías.

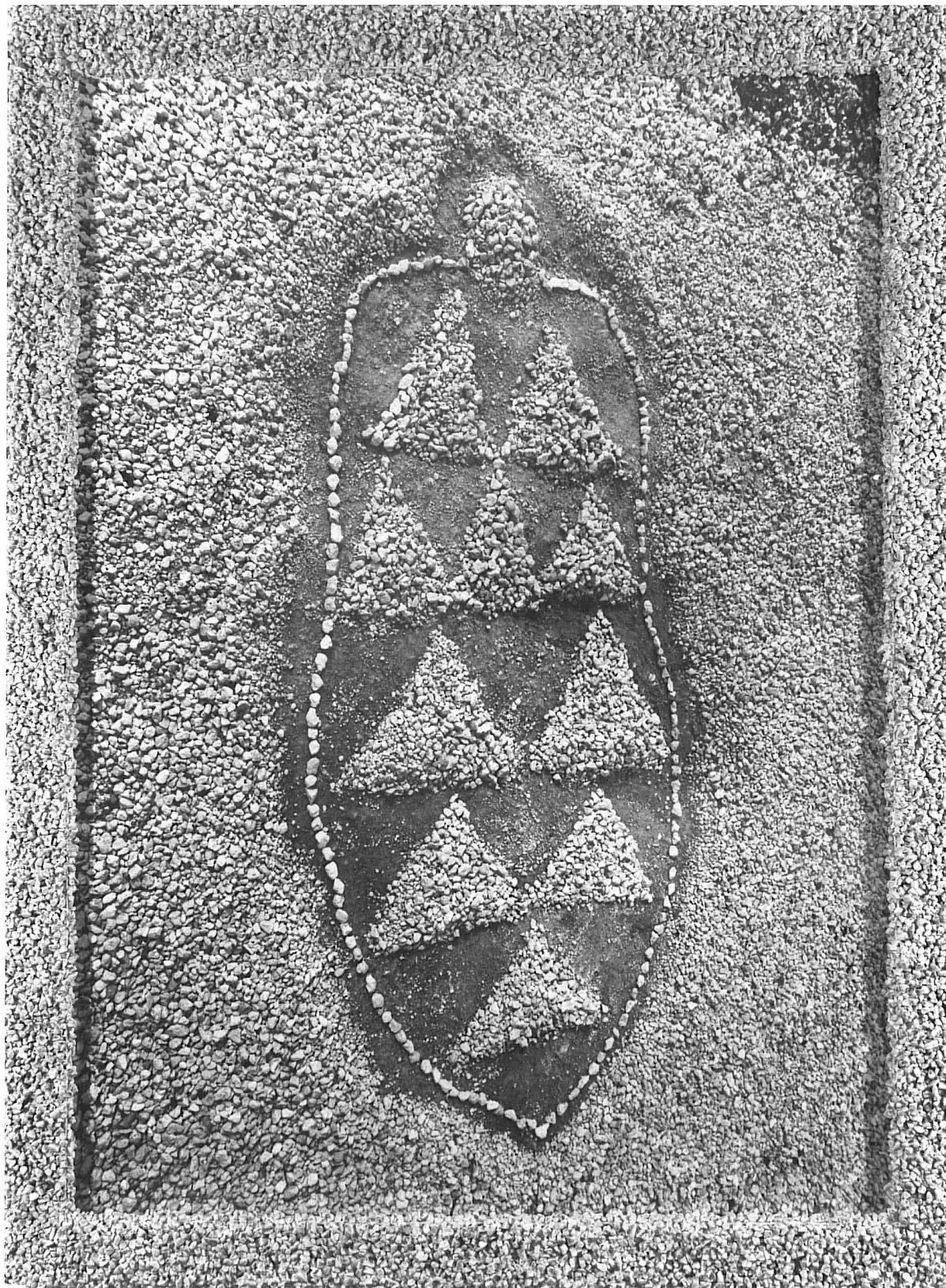
A la misma vez, comenzó a experimentar con los medios de película y fotografía que se usaban para documentar las obras, las cuales se abandonaban intencionalmente a cambiar o perecer en la naturaleza. La crítica y curadora Gylbert Coker observa que en las obras que se filmaron en que usó el fuego y la pólvora: “una puede ver que el fuego hace que las obras sean vivas, misteriosas, agresivas.” También describe una “Silueta de cohetes” que hizo en Oaxaca en 1976:

Una de sus piezas tempranas, una figura femenina construida con los brazos extendidas, como si abrazara el mundo, es a la vez hermosa y aterradoramente cuando las flamas se mecen en el aire. Exhorta a la persona que la ve a consumirse emocionalmente en la estimulación de las llamas. Obras como éstas generan una energía emocional similar a la que se encuentra en una ceremonia religiosa o en un ritual.¹⁰

La documentación fílmica añadía también una dimensión temporal real a los “eventos,” en los cuales la artista preparaba el escenario y se convertía en un espectador en los momentos finales que, para entonces, estaban fuera de su control. No obstante, Mendieta tuvo el cuidado de aclarar que “hacer esculturas de tierra-cuerpo es para mí la etapa final de un ritual.”¹¹ De hecho, sus obras tomaron cada vez más la forma de objetos escultóricos, saliéndose de la esfera del arte del cuerpo.

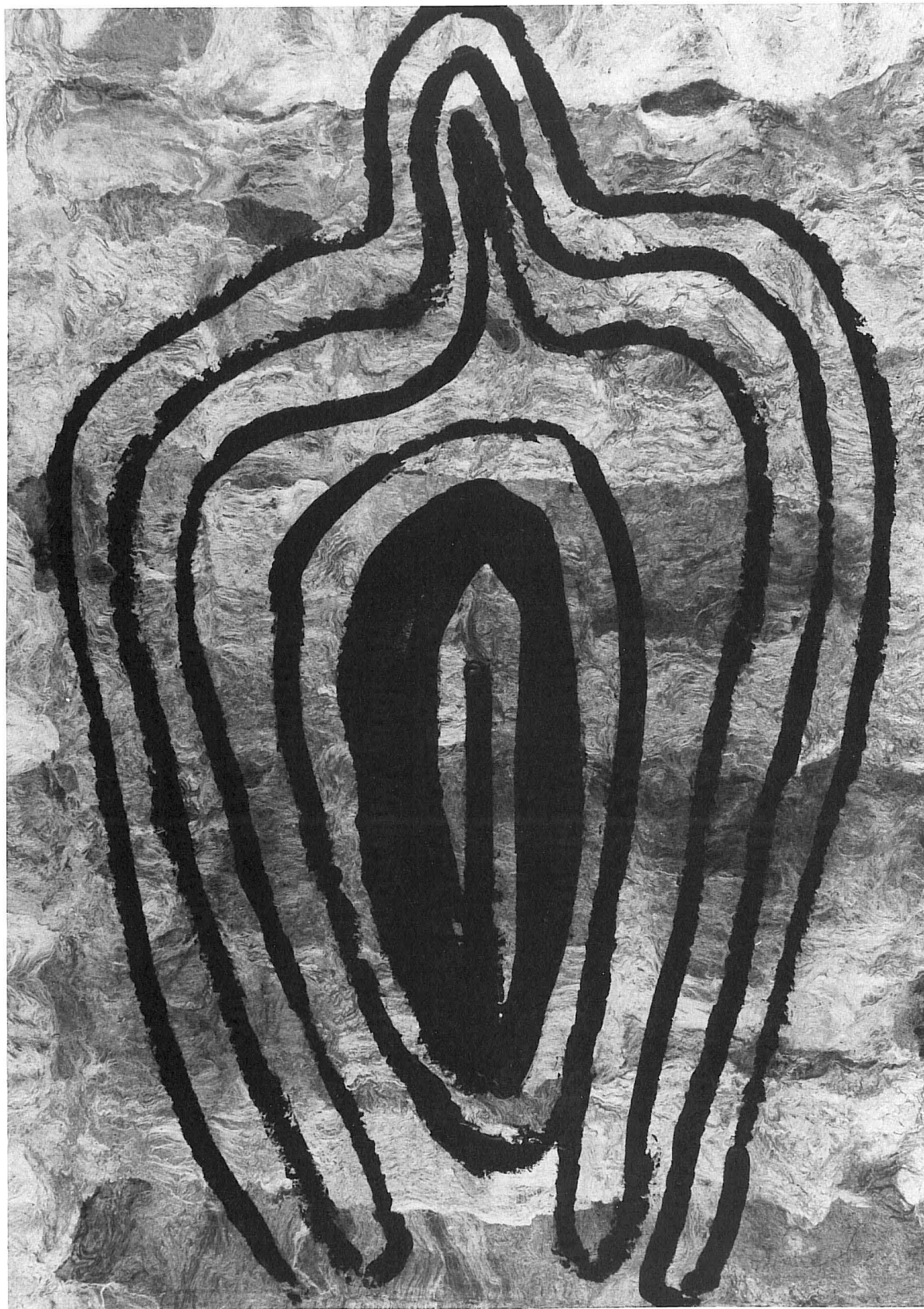
Las visitas de Mendieta a México a mediados de los setenta tuvieron un impacto en su trabajo. Afirmó: “Sumergirme en México fue como regresar al origen, y poder conseguir magia con sólo estar allí.”¹² Tanto Lucy Lippard como Judith Wilson han establecido paralelos entre la imaginería de Mendieta y el trabajo de la pintora mexicana Frida Kahlo (1910 - 1954). Citando a Hayden Herrera, la biógrafa de Kahlo, Lippard describe a la pintora “inmersa en el sentido de soledad mexicana que Octavio Paz ha llamado “una forma de orfandad.” Lippard continúa: “Las obras de Kahlo son dolorosas, poderosas y directas—embarazosamente emocionales y viscerales (para una cultura anglo-sajona), exudando una anhelada conexión con la antropomórfica Madre Tierra o, tal vez, con la muerte y la liberación.”¹³ Aunque estas palabras incluyen algunas de las preocupaciones que Mendieta también tenía, su trabajo difiere del de Kahlo porque sus primeras imágenes, que eran literales, se transformaron eventualmente en metáforas poéticas y visuales y sus sombríos temas sugieren no sólo la muerte, sino también las fuerzas dadoras de vida, como lo son la tierra, la sangre, el agua y el fuego.

Sin embargo, lo que sí puede decirse es que Mendieta experimentaba su propia forma de orfandad. A menudo hablaba de un sentido de desplazamiento causado por su dolorosa separación de los padres y de su país de origen, Cuba, a la edad de trece años. A principios de los ochenta escribió: “Estoy abrumada por el sentimiento de haber sido arrojada del seno materno (la naturaleza). Mi arte es la forma en que vuelvo a establecer los lazos que



UNTITLED, 1983

Stonewoman series
(Serie mujer de piedra)
Black and white photograph,
marble chips attached
to frame
60 x 46 inches
Collection of
Raquel Mendieta Harrington
*Sculpture of marble chips
executed in Miami, Florida*



**LA CONCHA DE VENUS
(CONCH OF VENUS),
1981-82**

**Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on
amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches
*Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta***

me unen al universo.” Describió una “costumbre africana que me parece... análoga a mi trabajo.” En el mismo texto dice: “Los hombres de Kimberly van fuera de su villa a buscar novias. Cuando un hombre trae a casa a su nueva esposa, la mujer viene con un saco de tierra de su lugar natal y cada noche come un poco de ella. La tierra la ayuda a hacer la transición entre la lugar de origen y su nueva casa.”¹⁴ Wilson observa que “como Kahlo, cuyos lienzos contienen alusiones frecuentes a su bagaje cultural, Mendieta trata de situarse espiritualmente.”¹⁵

Sin lugar a dudar, la rica herencia cultural mexicana—especialmente el trabajo de los muralistas mexicanos—estimuló a Mendieta a desarrollar aún más su vocabulario personal. Wilson apunta que “la fusión de política y herencia indígena que caracteriza el trabajo de Rivera, Orozco y Siquieros, se convertirá en una influencia permanentemente en ella, aunque el contenido ideológico de su trabajo recalca más la política sexual.”¹⁶ Sin embargo, cuando Mendieta usa flores, esqueletos o fuegos artificiales, no las toma prestados de la tradición de las bellas artes, sino de la rica y abundante tradición de artes populares de México.

En 1977 Mendieta recibió su maestría en bellas artes de la Universidad de Iowa y se mudó a la ciudad de Nueva York, donde inmediatamente se ganó el reconocimiento de los círculos de artes visuales “alternativos.” Recibió dinero de las fundaciones National Endowment for the Arts (1978, 1980), del programa local niuyorkino Creative Artists Program Service (1979) y de la beca Guggenheim (1980). Durante este tiempo se unió a la galería A.I.R., la primera y muy prestigiosa galería cooperativa de artistas feministas.

Localizada en Soho, el enclave de la vanguardia de artistas visuales de la década de los 70, la galería le dio ímpetu al desarrollo artístico de Mendieta y proveyó un ambiente receptivo para sus intereses feministas. En noviembre de 1979, tuvo una exposición individual que consistió en la documentación fotográfica de las *Siluetas* que produjo al aire libre en Iowa, Colorado y Nueva York. Anteriormente ese año, el crítico de arte William Zimmer, al reseñar una exposición colectiva en la galería del Henry Street Settlement, describió el impacto de las imágenes de *Siluetas* como “estimulante”. Escribió: “Mendieta ofrece fotografías de alteraciones que ella hizo en ciertos paisajes. A estas marcas se les llama “siluetas,” pero son realmente vaginas plasmadas en las lomas o en la hierba. Los expresionistas abstractos deseaban identificar sus cuerpos con la tierra, pero hombres al fin y al

cabos, no pudieron acercarse tanto.”¹⁷

Entre los años de 1979 y 1982, Mendieta participó de otras exposiciones colectivas. Tres de éstas consistían de instalaciones temporeras al aire libre: *Arte en el parque de Nueva York* (1980), *Arte de la calle* en Washington, D.C. (1981) y *Proyectos en la naturaleza* (1982) en Wave Hill, Nueva York. Martha McWilliams Wright describió en el Unicorn Times la participación de Mendieta en la exhibición de *Arte de la calle* de la siguiente manera: “Ana Mendieta, una artista feminista de ascendencia cubana, talla una figura femenina en una loma y entonces le prende fuego a la hierba sobre la figura de tierra. Una alternativa a estas tallas es chamuscar la grama con un carimbo que reproduce la mano de la artista.”¹⁸ En otras obras al aire libre que realizó en ese período, Mendieta continuó trabajando con materiales naturales que encontraba en el lugar escogido y siempre hubo en elemento de “performance,” ya fuera dinamitando o chamuscando la hierba. A pesar de que la artista ya no aparecía en la obra terminada, invariablemente había en ellas una referencia a su cuerpo.

En la mayoría de las exhibiciones colectivas en que Mendieta participó, expuso sus fotografías. Sin embargo, en 1979, en el Everson Museum de Siracusa, creó una instalación al aire libre como parte del programa *Raíces antiguas/Nuevas visiones*, una exhibición de arte hispánico contemporáneo de los Estados Unidos que viajó hasta el Instituto de Arte de Chicago. En la obra para colocar al nivel del piso que realizó en Everson, Mendieta construyó un montículo de tierra en un área de doce por dieciséis pies. Trazó entonces una silueta de dinamina en el centro de montículo la noche de apertura de la exhibición y la encendió. Esta es una de las pocas obras que Mendieta hizo en galerías y museos antes de 1983 y anticipa las obras para colocar a nivel del piso que hizo posteriormente, entre 1983 y 1985.

En 1980 Mendieta, junto con otras dos artistas, organizó la exhibición *Dialéctica del aislamiento: una exhibición de las artistas tercermundistas de Estados Unidos* en A.I.R. Este proyecto le brindó la oportunidad a Mendieta de explorar su interés en la política, sexual y de otra índole. Su introducción al catálogo de la exhibición expresa cómo encontró eco en los objetivos del movimiento de naciones no-alineadas “para terminar con el colonialismo, el racismo y la explotación.”¹⁹ En 1980, regresó a Cuba, líder de las naciones no-alineadas, por primera vez desde su adolescencia. Habló más tarde de la fuerte conexión que sintió con su tierra nativa: “Tenía miedo antes de ir

porque pensé que había vivido toda mi vida con esta obsesión en mi mente: ¿que pasaría si descubro que no tiene que ver nada conmigo? Pero desde el minuto en que llegué me sentí que pertenecía de nuevo a algún lugar.”²⁰

Con anterioridad a la visita, Mendieta había expresado interés en crear obras en Cuba. Había escrito: “Sería lógico llevar la serie “Siluetas” a su fuente de origen.”²¹ Al regresar a Cuba en agosto de 1981, Mendieta se puso a trabajar en los bosques de Jaruco. La suave piedra caliza de las lomas prometía ser un medio óptimo para sus tallas, ya fueran hechas en formaciones rocosas naturales o cinceladas en las cuevas y en las paredes sólidas de las rocas. Nuevamente el arte de Mendieta “explotó” con poder y exuberancia. En esta serie, titulada “Esculturas rupestres” (de *rupes* que significa roca en latín), la artista alcanzó una gran facilidad en el manejo de la escultura en relieve, destreza que más tarde usaría en sus troncos de árboles tallados y en sus obras para colocar a nivel del piso. Mendieta talló con fluidez un gran número de imágenes inspiradas en representaciones prehistóricas de la fertilidad y en símbolos pre-colombinos. De hecho, todos los títulos de estas obras fueron tomados del lenguaje de los desaparecidos indios taínos de Cuba.

En Jaruco, por primera vez, Mendieta incorporó pintura a sus obras. Usó la pintura muy selectivamente, delineando los contornos de una talla o de una formación rocosa. Establecía así una conexión con los habitantes indígenas de las región, cuyas pinturas rupestres forman parte de la escasa evidencia de su existencia. Su trabajo adquirió una espectral cualidad eterna.

Mendieta documentó meticulosamente estas tallas en fotografías y películas en blanco y negro. Las ampliaciones de las fotografías en blanco y negro de las tallas cubanas (junto con una selección de las más recientes películas de Mendieta) se presentaron en el A.I.R. en noviembre de 1981, poco después de haberlas completado. Zimmer comentó sobre la relación entre lo prehistórico y lo contemporáneo en el arte de Mendieta: “Un examen apresurado puede llevarnos a pensar que vemos una muestra genuina de arte neolítico, pero el trabajo más ambicioso de Mendieta supone la cámara. Es cosa del siglo veinte.”²²

En 1982, Mendieta exploró nuevos medios en y alrededor de Nueva York. Conjuntamente, la escuela de arte de Hartford y la galería Real Art Ways (R.A.W.) de Hartford le encargaron a la artista que creara una nueva obra

para presentarse con una exhibición de fotografías de tamaño natural que documentar a las “Esculturas rupestres.” De acuerdo con Doris Whitbeck, quien reseñó la obra de arte público, Mendieta llegó al campus buscando inspiración. La artista seleccionó un leño de siete pies de altura por tres pies de diámetro. Whitbeck describe el proceso de trabajo de Mendieta de la siguiente manera:

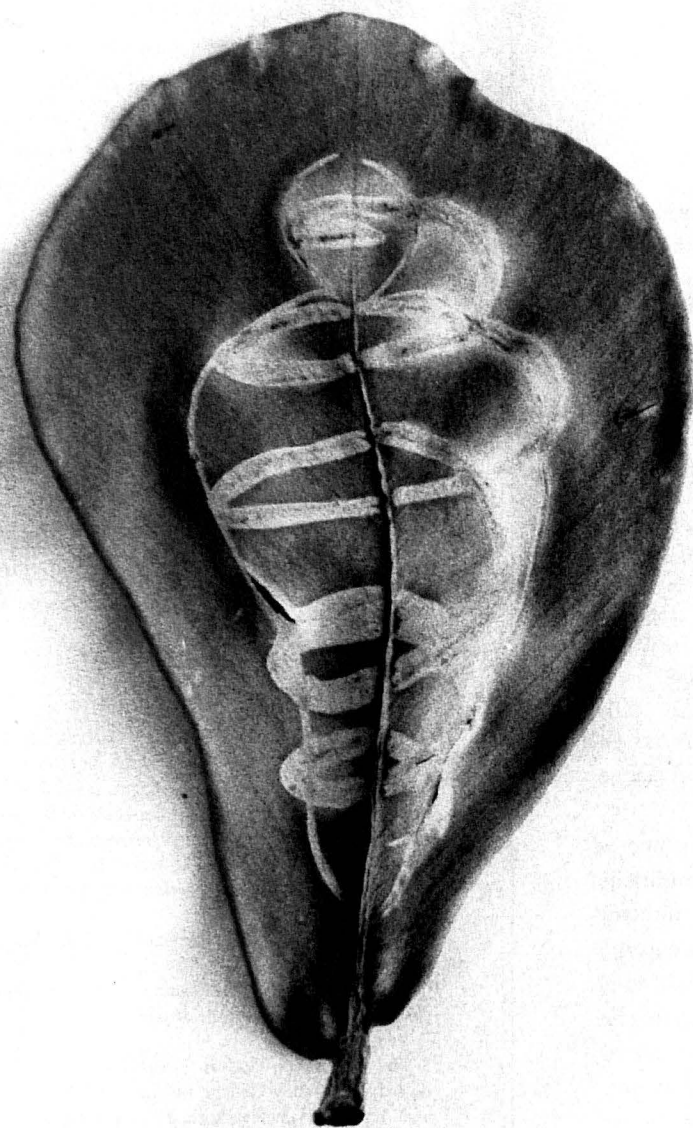
Después de tallar el contorno de una figura humana alrededor de los nudos en la superficie del leño, Mendieta llenó las estrías profundas con una mezcla de salitre, azufre y carbón, ennegreciéndose las manos y la cara en el proceso. Cuando llegó el momento de prender la pólvora, un viento borrascoso apagó los fósforos que Mendieta había encendido; entonces tomó prestado un cigarillo prendido de uno de los estudiantes de arte que se agrupaban a su alrededor y les pidió que se echaran hacia atrás. “Una vez se enciende, debe tener su propia arena,” dijo.²³

Mendieta llamó a esta obra *Arbitra* (que en latín significa “testigo femenina”), una alusión lingüística a la tradición que conecta a la mujer con el árbol (*arbor* en latín).²⁴ Una reseña del Art New England apuntó que *Arbitra* era poco usual en la producción de Mendieta, ya que era relativamente permanente y relativamente pública.²⁵ Esta pieza prefigura las seis esculturas verticales hechas de troncos de árboles que Mendieta produjo en Roma entre 1984 y 1985.

Entre 1982 y 1984, Mendieta empezó también a experimentar con dibujos. Trabajó en tinta china sobre papel amate (corteza) y hojas secas. Estas obras se convirtieron en el primer trabajo no fotográfico y portable producido por Mendieta. Las imágenes se podían identificar como figuras femeninas, aunque eran abstractas y emblemáticas. La referencia al cuerpo de la artista en estas obras pequeñas era borrosa.

En 1983, mientras estaba becada en la Academia Americana en Roma, Mendieta tuvo un estudio por primera vez y comenzó a explorar las posibilidades de hacer piezas para colocar a nivel del piso para las exhibiciones en el interior. Las piezas de este período están hechas de diferentes tipos de tierra y arena en una gama de colores naturales con superficies elegantemente moldeadas en surcos. En algunos casos, las grietas que se producían cuando la tierra se secaba son las únicas, pero muy efectivas, decoraciones.

Mendieta explicó la transición que llevó a cabo de exteriores a interiores:



UNTITLED, 1982-84

—
Drawing on leaf
6 inches

Courtesy of the Estate
of Ana Mendieta

Me dieron un hermoso estudio en Roma. Yo nunca tuve un estudio porque nunca necesité uno. Ahora he estado trabajando en interiores. Siempre tuve problemas con esa idea ya que no siento que puedo imitar la naturaleza. Una instalación es un arte falso. Así es que me he dado un problema a mí misma... trabajar adentro. Encontré una manera de hacerlo y en eso estoy envuelta ahora, trabajando con arena, con tierra, mezclándolas con una pega y haciendo esculturas.

Estoy muy satisfecha porque consigo el mismo tipo de textura que consigo afuera. Estaba trabajando y trabajando insegura de si había algo ahí y, entonces, un día llegué al estudio y vi que las esculturas tenían una presencia real. Todas tenían una "carga" en ellas.²⁶

El curador y crítico Peter Frank, escribiendo a principios de 1985 sobre el más reciente trabajo de Mendieta, estaba de acuerdo con la artista en que las obras mantenían una resonancia que iba más allá de los objetos reales:

El proceso de ejecución, aunque ya no es un factor explícito en las obras, todavía se siente con gran fuerza: la fragilidad hecha patente por los materiales agrietados, desmoronados y granulares que Mendieta usa, aunque conquistada con substancias figativas, todavía implica la intervención constante de fuerzas naturales y humanas. Independientemente de la durabilidad real de las obras recientes de Mendieta, todavía evocan la efímero, la simpleza y la humanidad básica de dibujos grabados en la arena de la playa—y también, de la historia de la creación bíblica. Esta vez, sin embargo, en vez de Dios moldeando al hombre, Mendieta moldea a la mujer.²⁷

En las piezas para colocar a nivel del piso hechas en Roma, Mendieta continuó el intercambio entre el paisaje y la figura mítica de la mujer:

Al mismo tiempo que Mendieta producía sus primeras piezas para interiores, estaba planificando su comisión de arte público más ambiciosa. En 1985, Al Nodal, director del Otis Art Institute de Parsons, Los Angeles, le encargó a Mendieta que creara una obra para ser instalada en el área central de Los Angeles como parte del programa de arte público del parque MacArthur. Debido a su intempestiva muerte, el proyecto no se realizó, pero la propuesta de Mendieta permanece:

LA JUNGLA

Una obra que consiste de siete troncos de árbol (pinos gigantes de California) variando de ocho a diez pies de altura, cada tronco de veinticinco a cincuenta pulgadas de diámetro. Los troncos van a ser secados al horno para darles permanencia. Los troncos de árboles se instalarán en un pedazo de hierba rectangular en el Whilshire Boulevard en

el parque MacArthur (frente al Instituto Otis). Se instalarían en relación de unos a otros y cargarán el espacio de tensión. Cada tronco tendrá una imagen tallada/quemada que represente las siete potencias de la vida (que tenían en la jungla). Los troncos se instalarán con una base de cemento (que no será visible) para que la instalación sea estable y segura.²⁸

La obra de Ana Mendieta en esta retrospectiva, que abarca los años de 1972 a 1985, tiene una extraordinaria cohesión. Inspirada en las metáforas de Gea o la Madre Tierra y de Hades, la casa de los espíritus que han muerto, ella, inexorablemente, buscaba imágenes que pudieran captar el poder de la naturaleza. Mendieta manipulaba los materiales naturales con facilidad, dándoles formas que a veces eran chocantes, a veces dramáticas y que siempre llamaban la atención por su belleza. Como la novia del relato africano, Mendieta cargaba su saco de tierra dondequiera que iba, pero también se cimentaba en cada nuevo lugar— Iowa, México, Nueva York, Cuba, Roma—produciendo ofrendas artísticas a la naturaleza.

Mendieta no podía dejar de ser una artista. Era prolífica, inquieta, inteligente. Su trabajo tocó muchos de los temas relevantes que exploraron los artistas visuales de la década del setenta y de principios de los ochentas, pero su talento para manejar los materiales más elementales y su entendimiento de lo pético, trascienden lo temporal.

NOTAS

1. Traducidos al inglés por Sandra Barreras del Río, cuyos comentarios han contribuido a la formación de este ensayo.
2. Ana Mendieta, declaración bilingüe, texto para la pared de una exhibición, c. 1981, documentos, herencia de la artista.
3. Cherry Kittredge, "Mendieta Incorporates Herself, Earth and Art," *The Daily Iowan*, Iowa City, December 6, 1977, p.7.
4. Lucy Lippard, "Transformation Art," *Ms.*, 4, no. 4 (October 1975): 33.
5. Judith Wilson, "Ana Mendieta Plants," *The Village Voice*, August 19, 1980, p. 90.
6. Ana Mendieta y Linda Montano, entrevista sin publicar, 1983-84, documentos, herencia de la artista.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Francesca Woodman: Photographic Work*, cat. de exh., Wellesley College Museum, Wellesley, Mass, y Hunter College Art Gallery, Nueva York, 1986, pp. 19, 31.
9. Mendieta, declaración bilingüe.
10. Gylbert Coker, "Ana Mendieta at A.I.R.," *Art in America*, 68, no. 4, (April 1980): 133-34.
11. Ana Mendieta, papeles sin publicar, herencia de la artista.
12. Wilson, p.90.
13. Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, Nueva York, 1983, p.47.
14. Ana Mendieta, documento sin publicar, herencia de la artista.
15. Wilson, p.90.
16. *Ibid.*

17. William Zimmer, "Artists Only," *Soho Weekly News*, 1979.
18. Martha McWilliams Wright, "City Braces for New 'Guerilla Art,'" *Unicorn Times*, Washington, D.C., March 1981, p. 44.
19. Ana Mendieta, Introduction, *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, catálogo de exhibición, Galería A.I.R., Nueva York, 1980.
20. Gerardo Mosquera, "Esculturas Ruperstres de Ana Mendieta," *Arquito*, 7, no. 28 (1981): 55.
21. Ana Mendieta, papeles sin publicar, herencia de la artista.
22. William Zimmer, "Mendieta at Ivonne Seguy," *Art Now/New York: Gallery Guide*, (November 1982).
23. Doris Whitbeck, "Of Nature, Myth, and Womanhood," *The Hartford Courant*, April 30, 1982, p. D8.
24. Lalia Kahn, "Ana Mendieta," *Art New England*, (June 1982): 7.
25. Ibid.
26. Mendieta y Montano, *ibid.*
27. Peter Frank, "The Human Figure: Present and or Accounted for," en *Awards in the Visual Arts 4*, catálogo de exhibición, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, Nueva York, 1985.
28. Ana Mendieta, papeles sin publicar, herencia de la artista.



ANIMA (ALMA/SOUL), 1976

Serie silueta de cohetes

(Fireworks Silhouette series)

Color photograph

13 1/4 x 20 inches

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta

*Documentation of earth-body work
performance with fireworks and
bamboo armature, executed in
Oaxaca, Mexico*



UNTITLED, 1977

—
Serie árbol de la vida (Tree of
Life Series)

Color photograph

13 1/4 × 20 inches

Collection of Raquel Mendieta
Harrington

*Earth-body work with cloth,
executed in Oaxaca, Mexico*



UNTITLED, 1977

Fetish series (Serie de fetiches)

Color photograph

20 × 13 1/4 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta

*Earth-body work of sand and blood
executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa
City, Iowa*



UNTITLED, 1977

Fetish series (Serie de fetiches)
Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta
*Earth-body work of sand, sticks
and water, executed at Old Man's
Creek, Iowa City, Iowa*



UNTITLED, 1977

Silueta series (Silhouette series)
Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches
Collection of Ignacio C. Mendieta
Earth-body work of mud and water
executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa
City, Iowa



UNTITLED, 1976

**Serie árbol de la vida
(Tree of Life series)**

Color photograph

20 × 13 1/3 inches

Collection of Raquel O.

Mendieta Harrington

*Earth-body work with flowers,
dead tree trunk on sand, executed
in Oaxaca, Mexico*



**ESCULTURAS RUPESTRES
(RUPESTRIAN SCULPTURES),
1981**

**Carved cave wall executed in the
Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de
Jaruco, Havana, Cuba**



MUD FIGURE (FIGURA DE FANGO), 1983-84

—
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces $28 \times 18 \times 2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches;
two pieces $32 \frac{1}{2} \times 18 \times 2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches;
one piece $11 \times 8 \frac{1}{4} \times 2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta



**THE VIVIFICATION OF THE
FLESH (LA VIVIFICACIÓN DE
LA CARNE), 1981-82**

Amategram series

Gouache and acrylic on amate
(bark) paper

24 3/4 x 17 inches

Collection of The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs.
Fernand Leval and Robert Miller
Gallery, Inc. Gift, 1983
(1983.502.1)



UNTITLED, 1985

Wood slab carved and burnt with
gunpowder
54 1/2 x 20 1/4 x 2 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta



UNTITLED, 1983

—
Sand and binder on wood
63 × 39 × 2 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta



UNTITLED, 1985

—
**Semi-circular tree trunk carved
and burnt with gunpowder
79 1/4 × 25 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

Works in the Exhibition

Ana Mendieta titled her works in Spanish, English or Taíno, an Indian language. The titles first noted are those originally determined by the artist. A translation of the title follows in parentheses. Because a large number of the works in the exhibition are actually photo-documentation of the artist's outdoor pieces, many of the checklist entries contain a brief annotation describing the materials and location of the original earthwork or performance. All the photographs exhibited here were taken and developed by the artist. All works are courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta unless otherwise noted.

* An asterisk indicates that this piece belongs to an extensive body of work entitled the "Silueta" series.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS

1 *Corazón (Heart)*, 1975

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Sand-and-blood sculpture executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

2-6 *Anima (Alma/Soul)*, 1976*

Serie silueta de cohetes (Fireworks Silhouette series)

Color photographs
13 1/4 × 20 inches each

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta
Documentation of earth-body work performance with fireworks and bamboo armature, executed in Oaxaca, Mexico

7 *Untitled*, 1976*

Serie árbol de la vida (Tree of Life series)

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/3 inches

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta
Earth-body work with flowers, dead tree trunk on sand, executed in Oaxaca, Mexico

8 *Untitled*, 1976*

Serie árbol de la vida (Tree of Life series)

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Collection of Raquel Mendieta Harrington
Earth-body work executed in Oaxaca, Mexico

9 *Untitled*, 1977*

Serie árbol de la vida (Tree of Life series)

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Collection of Ignacio C. Mendieta

Earth-body work with tree and mud executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

10 *Untitled*, 1976*

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Earth-body work with sand executed in Oaxaca, Mexico

11 *Untitled*, 1976

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Collection of Raquel Mendieta Harrington
Earth-body work with cloth at a ruin wall, executed in Mexico

12 *The Black Ixchell (El Ixchell negro)*, March 1977

Ixchell series

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Earth-body work with cloth and paint executed in Iowa City, Iowa

13 *Untitled*, 1977*

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta
Earth-body work with dried leaves, sticks and pods on sand, executed in Iowa

14 *Untitled*, 1977*

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta
Earth-body work with powdered tempera paint and sand executed in Iowa

15 *Untitled*, 1977*

Fetish series (Serie de fetiches)

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Earth-body work of sand, black powder and water, executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

16 *Untitled*, 1977*

Fetish series (Serie de fetiches)

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Earth-body work of sand, sticks and water, executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

17 *Untitled*, 1977*

Fetish series (Serie de fetiches)

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Earth-body work of sand and blood executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

18-19 *Untitled*, 1977*

Color photographs
13 1/4 × 20 inches each

Nos. 1 and 2 in a series of three photographs; documentation of a performance work in which a three-ring silhouette was burnt into the landscape, executed in Iowa.

20 *Untitled*, 1977*

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches

Collection of Ignacio C. Mendieta
Earth-body work of mud and water executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

21 *Untitled*, 1978*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Earth-body work with grass and dried earth executed in Amana, Iowa

22 *Untitled*, 1978*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Burnt silhouette on grass executed in Iowa

23 *Untitled*, 1978*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Grass burnt with cast-iron hand executed in Iowa

24 *Untitled*, 1978*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Earth-body work with gunpowder executed in Iowa

25 *Untitled*, 1978*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Earth-body work with hair and tree stump executed in Amana, Iowa

26 *Untitled*, 1979*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Collection of Raquel Mendieta Harrington
Carved bedrock executed in Amana, Iowa

27 *Untitled*, 1979*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches

Carved bedrock and gunpowder executed in Amana, Iowa

28 Untitled, 1979*

Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches
Earthwork with stones and water executed in Amana, Iowa

29 Untitled, 1979*

Color photograph
20 × 13 1/4 inches
Mud silueta executed at Sharon Center, Iowa

30 Untitled, 1979*

Serie volcán no. 2 (Volcano series no. 2)
Color photograph
13 1/4 × 20 inches
Earthwork with gunpowder executed at Sharon Center, Iowa

OBJECTS FROM PERFORMANCE WORKS

31 Anima (Alma/Soul), 1976*

Serie silueta de cohetes (Fireworks Silhouette series)
Bamboo, string
71 × 35 × 1 inches
Collection of Raquel O. Mendieta
Armature used in performance work in Oaxaca, Mexico; see checklist nos. 2-6

32 Untitled, 1977

Cast iron
4 × 7 × 5 inches
Cast of artist's hand used in performance works, see checklist no. 23, 33-36

33 Rites and Rituals of Initiation (Ritos y rituales de iniciación), 1978

Book burnt with handprint
8 × 5 1/4 inches

34 Untitled, c. 1978

Blank book burnt with handprint
11 3/4 × 11 1/4 inches

35 Untitled, c. 1978

Wood burnt with handprints
11 13/16 × 11 13/16 inches

36 Untitled, c. 1978

Grass burnt with handprint
10 × 8 inches
Collection of Lucy R. Lippard

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

37 Untitled, August 1980*

Gunpowder-Silueta series (Serie silueta de pólvora)
Black and white photograph
40 × 59 3/4 inches
Executed at La Ventosa, Oaxaca, Mexico

38 Untitled, August 1980*

Gunpowder-Silueta series (Serie silueta de pólvora)
Black and white photograph
40 × 50 inches
Executed at La Ventosa, Oaxaca, Mexico

39-42 Untitled, August 1980*

Black and white photographs
Two 39 1/2 × 53 inches; two 53 × 39 1/2 inches
Carvings in clay executed at the Montaña de San Felipe, Oaxaca, Mexico

43 Untitled, 1980*

Black and white photograph
40 × 53 inches
Collection of Robert and Ardath Rodale, Allentown, Pennsylvania
Carving in clay with root executed in Oaxaca, Mexico

44-46 Untitled, 1981

Black and white photograph
10 × 13 1/4 inches
Site photographs of the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

47-50 Untitled, 1981

Black and white photograph
10 1/8 × 13 3/8 inches
Carvings executed at the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

51 Atabey (Mother of the Waters/Madre de las aguas), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 × 40 3/4 inches
Carved cave wall executed in the Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

52 Bacayú (Light of Day/Lucero del día), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 × 53 1/4 inches
Carved and painted stone executed at the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

53 Caucubú (Prettiest Indian/India más linda), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 × 53 1/4 inches
Carved and painted rock wall executed at the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

54 Guacar (Our Menstruation/Nuestra menstruación), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 × 53 1/4 inches
Carved cave wall executed at the Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

55 Guanaroca (First Woman/Primera mujer), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 × 40 3/4 inches
Carved rock wall executed at the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

56 Guanbancex (Goddess of the Wind/Diosa del viento), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 × 40 3/4 inches
Carved cave wall executed at the Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

57 Itiba Cahubaba (Old Mother Blood/Ensangrentada madre vieja), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
53 1/4 × 40 3/4 inches
Carved cave wall executed at the Cueva del Aguila, Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

58 Maroya (Moon/Luna), 1981

Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian sculptures)
Black and white photograph
40 3/4 × 53 1/4 inches
Carved and painted rock wall executed at the Escaleras de Jaruco, Havana, Cuba

59 Birth (Nacimiento), 1982

Gunpowder-Silueta series (Serie silueta de pólvora)
Black and white photograph
30 × 40 inches
Earthwork with gunpowder

60 El laberinto de la vida (The Labyrinth of Life), 1982

Serie laberinto de Venus (Labyrinth of Venus series)
Black and white photograph
61 × 41 inches
Clay and earth sculpture executed in Iowa

61 La concha de Venus (Conch of Venus), 1982

Serie laberinto de Venus (Labyrinth of Venus series)
Black and white photograph
61 × 41 inches
Clay and earth sculpture executed in Iowa

62 La vivificación de la carne (The Vivification of the Flesh), 1982

Serie laberinto de Venus (Labyrinth of Venus series)
55 × 40 inches
Clay and earth sculpture executed in Iowa

63 Untitled, 1983

Stonewoman series (Serie mujer de piedra)
Black and white photograph, marble chips



**TALLUS MATER (MADRE
TALLO/STEM MOTHER),
1982**

**Outdoor installation with
ficus tree root sculpture
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

attached to frame
60 × 46 inches
Collection of Raquel Mendieta Harrington
Sculpture of marble chips executed in Miami, Florida

64 Untitled, 1983
Sandwoman series (Serie mujer de arena)
Black and white photograph, marble chips attached to frame
60 × 46 inches
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Florencio R. Bethencourt, Coral Gables, Florida
Sand sculpture executed in Miami, Florida

DRAWINGS

65 Itiba Cahubaba (Old Mother Blood/Ensangrentada madre vieja), 1981
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
16 × 11 5/8 inches each

66 La concha de Venus (Conch of Venus), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

67 Mujer de arena (Sandwoman), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

68 Silueta (Silhouette), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

69-70 Madre selva (Mother Jungle), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

71 El laberinto de Venus (Labyrinth of Venus), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

72 Untitled, 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 × 16 inches

73 The Vivification of the Flesh (La vivificación de la carne), 1981-82
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 3/4 × 17 inches
Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Fernand Leval and Robert Miller Gallery, Inc. Gift, 1983 (1983.502.1)

74 Madre selva (Mother Jungle), 1981
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
24 1/8 × 16 1/4 inches
Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Fernand Leval and Robert Miller Gallery, Inc. Gift, 1983 (1983.502.2)

75 El laberinto de Venus (Labyrinth of Venus), 1981
Amategram series
Gouache and acrylic on amate (bark) paper
16 × 11 5/8 inches
Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Fernand Leval and Robert Miller Gallery, Inc. Gift, 1983 (1983.502.3)

76 Madre selva (Mother Jungle), 1982
Earth on gesso and wood
78 × 36 inches

77 Body Tracks (Rastros corporales), 1982
Blood and tempera paint on paper
38 × 50 inches
Drawings produced during a performance at Franklin Furnace, New York City

78-132 Untitled, 1982-84
Drawings on leaves
Vary in size, 5 - 7 inches

133 Oraculo, 1984
Wash on vegetable paper
24 × 18 inches

134 Untitled, 1984
Labyrinth of Venus series (Serie laberinto de Venus)
Crayon on paper
11 3/4 × 56 3/4 inches

SCULPTURE

135 Tallus Mater (Madre tallo/Stem Mother), 1982
Ficus tree roots
61 × 19 × 3 1/2 inches

136 Untitled, 1982
Ficus tree roots
57 × 17 × 5 inches
Collection of Juan Gonzalez, New York

137 Anima (Alma/Soul), 1982
Black rock crystals, cement, nitrate, potassium manganate, and sulphur
Dimensions variable
Originally created for an outdoor site at The Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida

138 Untitled, 1983
Sand and binder on wood
63 × 39 × 2 inches

139 Untitled, 1983
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces: 32 × 24 × 1 inches; 36 × 34 × 1 inches

140 Untitled, 1984
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces: 42 1/4 × 28 × 1 1/2 inches; 36 × 24 × 1 1/2 inches

141 Sandwoman (Mujer de arena), 1983-84
Sand and binder on wood
48 × 30 1/2 × 2 1/2 inches

142 Untitled, 1983-84
Sandwoman series (Serie mujer de arena)
Sand and binder on wood
55 × 26 × 3 inches

143 Mud Figure (Figura de fango), 1983-84
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces, 28 × 18 × 2 1/4 inches; two pieces, 32 1/2 × 18 × 2 1/4 inches; one piece, 11 × 8 1/4 × 2 1/4 inches

144 Figure with Gnanga (Figura con Gnanga), 1984
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces: 35 × 31 × 2 1/2 inches; 37 × 32 × 2 1/2 inches

145 Onile, 1984
Earth and binder on wood
Three pieces: 38 × 24 × 2 1/2 inches; 32 × 24 × 2 1/2 inches; 13 × 9 × 2 1/2 inches

146 Nile-Born (Nacida del Nilo), 1984
Sand and binder on wood
61 1/2 × 19 1/2 × 2 1/2 inches

147 Untitled, 1984
Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces: 39 × 34 × 1 1/2 inches; 36 × 34 × 1 1/2 inches

148 Untitled, 1984
Earth and binder on wood
61 1/2 × 19 1/2 × 1 inches

149 Fernwoman (Mujer de helecho), 1985
Osmunda fern root
56 1/2 × 8 × 14 inches

150 Untitled, 1985
Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
54 1/2 × 20 1/4 × 2 inches

151 Untitled, 1985
Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
85 1/2 × 8 × 1 1/4 inches

152 Untitled, 1985
Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
61 × 7 1/2 × 1 1/4 inches

153 Untitled, 1985

Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
65 5/8 × 13 × 1 inches

154 Untitled, 1985

Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
80 1/2 × 11 1/4 × 1 1/2 inches

155 Untitled, 1985

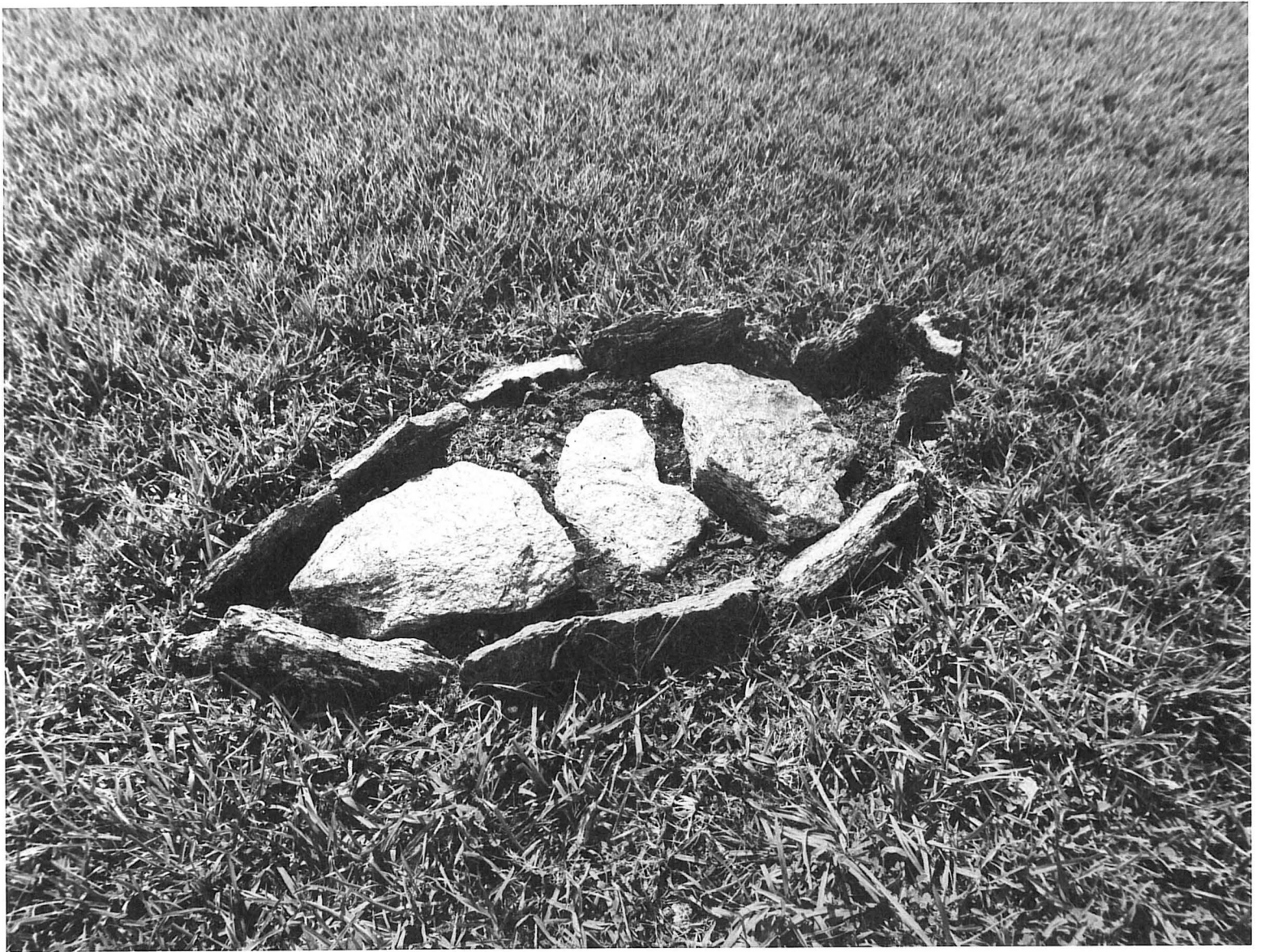
Wood slab carved and burnt with gunpowder
79 1/4 × 11 1/2 × 3 inches

156-59 Untitled, 1985

Four semi-circular tree trunks carved and burnt
with gunpowder

73 × 15 1/8; 79 1/4 × 25; 78 × 39 1/2;
80 × 47 inches

*The proposed project for the MacArthur Park Public Art
Program in Los Angeles which was not completed before
Mendieta's death, was based on these tree sculptures cre-
ated in Rome, Italy.*



ANIMA (ALMA/SOUL), 1982

**Black rock crystals, cement,
nitrate, potassium manganate
and sulphur**

**Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

***Outdoor installation at The Lowe
Museum of Art, Coral Gables,
Florida***

Chronology

- 1948** Born Havana, Cuba, November 18
- 1961** Moved to Iowa, United States, September 11, with her sister Raquel
- 1969** Bachelor of Arts, University of Iowa
- 1970** Became a citizen of the United States
- First performance-photo works using her own body
- 1971** Archaeological fieldwork in San Juan Teotihuacán, Mexico
- First one-person exhibition, Iowa Memorial Union, University of Iowa, Iowa City
- 1971-73** Special Support Scholarship, University of Iowa
- 1972** Master of Arts in Painting, University of Iowa
- 1972-77** Taught in Iowa City high schools
- 1973 & 1974** Coordinator, University of Iowa Summer School Multimedia Program, Oaxaca, Mexico
- 1976** Traveled in Europe during spring months
- Coordinator, University of Iowa Summer School Multimedia and Video Art Program, Oaxaca, Mexico
- 1977** Grant, Iowa Arts Council
- 1978** Moved to New York City
- Coordinator, University of Iowa Summer School Multimedia and Video Art Program, Oaxaca, Mexico
- Visual Artist Grant, National Endowment for the Arts
- 1979** Sculpture Grant, Creative Artists Program Services
- 1979-80** Instructor, State University of New York, College of Old Westbury
- 1980** First visit to Cuba as an adult
- Visual Artist Grant, National Endowment for the Arts
- Guggenheim Fellowship in Sculpture
- 1981** Visiting Artist, Art Institute of Chicago, February-April
- Second visit to Cuba; one-month stay at the Escaleras de Jaruco, with Cuban Ministry of Culture support
- Member of Selection Committee, Sculpture, CAPS Grant, New York
- Member of Selection Committee, Franklin Furnace Archives, New York City
- 1982** Visual Artist Grant, National Endowment for the Arts
- Individual Artist Grant, New York State Council for the Arts
- Sculpture Consultant, CAPS Grant, New York
- 1983** American Academy Fellowship, Rome, Italy
- Principal residence in Rome until her death
- 1984** Award in the Visual Arts, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art
- 1985** Married Carl Andre, January 17.
- Died September 8, New York City
- 1986** Establishment of the Ana Mendieta Memorial Scholarship, School of Art and Art History, University of Iowa



EARTH ARCHETYPES, 1984

Installation at Primo Piano, in
Rome, Italy, March 21–April 30.

Exhibition History

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1971 Iowa Memorial Union, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

1976 112 Greene Street, New York, N.Y., *Nañigo Burial and Filmworks*, February 23-March 5.

1977 Corroboree: Gallery of New Concepts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, *Siluetas Series 1977*, December 5-23.

1979 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Siluetas Series*, November 6-24.

1980 Museu de Arte Contemporânea, São Paulo, Brazil.

Kean College, Union, N.J., *Two Projects in Earth*, April 22-24.

Colburn Gallery, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt., *Earth/Body Sculptures*, September 24-October 8.

1981 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Rupestrian Sculptures/Esculturas Rupestres*, November 10-28.

1982 Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., *Earth/Body Sculptures*, April 19-May 12.

The Lowe Art Museum, The University of Miami, Miami, Fla., *Outdoor Sculpture*, October 14-November 28.

The University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M.

Yvonne Seguy Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Amategrams and Photographs*, November 2-21.

1983 Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba, *Geo-Imago*.

1984 Primo Piano, Rome, Italy, *Earth Archetypes*, March 21-April 30.

1985 Gallery AAM, Rome, Italy, *Duetto Pietro e Foglie*, January-February (with Carl Andre).

1988 Terne Gallery, New York, N.Y., to open February 18, 1988.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1975 112 Greene Street, New York, N.Y.

1977 Hurlbutt Gallery, Greenwich, Conn., *Contact: Women and Nature*, January 7-29.

Women's Building, Los Angeles, Calif., *Feminist Statements*.

Corroboree: Gallery of New Concepts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, *Mexico-University of Iowa Summer 1976*, March 11-April 2.

A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., *A.I.R. Invitational*, May 28-June 28.

The Museum of Art, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, *M.F.A. Exhibition 1976-77*.

1978 Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, State University of New York at Old Westbury, *Spaces II*, April 25-May 12.

C Space, New York, N.Y., *Work in Progress*, June 11-17.

The Center for Inter-American Relations, New York, N.Y., *Variations on Latin Themes in New York*, June 14-July 28.

1979 Mason Gross School of the Arts Gallery, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., *A.I.R. Gallery*.

Henry Street Settlement, Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, New York, N.Y., *Window to the South*, February.

Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y., *Raíces Antiguas/Visiones Nuevas, Ancient Roots/New Visions*, February (traveled to The Museum of Contemporary Art).

112 Greene Street, New York, N.Y., *8th Anniversary Exhibition*, February 21-March 4.

The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, N.Y., *Private Icon*, February 29-April 22.

The Roosevelt Public Library Art Workshop Gallery, Roosevelt, N.Y., *Lines, Points & Planes*, May 5-June 4.

Henry Street Settlement, Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, New York, N.Y., *Exchanges I*, May 11-June 8.

Queens Museum, Flushing Meadow, N.Y., *By the Sea*, June 16-September 9.

Bevier Gallery, Rochester Institute of Technology, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Rochester, N.Y., *CAPS Sculpture Show*, September 22-October 11.

Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., *Expression of Self: Women and Autobiography*.

A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y.

1980 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*.

Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y., *Dialectics*.

Frankfurt, Germany, *Plakat Action*.

Sculpture Garden, Wards Island, New York, N.Y.

Central Park, New York, N.Y., *Art Across the Park*, July 20-September 24.

Joseloff Gallery, University of Hartford, Hartford, Conn., *Renderings of Modern Woman*, October 8-November 13.

Cayman Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Latin American Artists—80*, October 16-November 22.

Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. (traveled to Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y.), *Women/Image/Nature*, December 1-19.

1981 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y.

Westbeth Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Voices Expressing What Is*, February 1-March 1.

Art Expo 1981, New York, N.Y., *Transformation: Women in Art 1970-1980*.

Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, D.C., *Streetworks*. (Postcard designed by Mendieta.)

Touchstone Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Ritual and Landscape*, May 5-30.

Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, Medellín, Colombia, *IV Medellín Art Biennial*.

Sculpture Garden, Wards Island, New York, N.Y.

Just Above Midtown, New York, N.Y., *From the Files: VARS at JAM*.

Galeria Habana Libre, Havana, Cuba, *Primer Salon de Pequeño Formato*.

A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., September 29-October 17.

Lunds Kontshall, Lund, Sweden, *A.I.R.*, October 3-November 1.

Helen Sklien Gallery, Boston, Mass., *A.I.R. Group*.

Frances Wolfson Art Gallery, Dade Community College, Miami, Fla., *Latin American Art: A Woman's View*, October 5-November 13.

Hunter Gallery, Hunter College, New York, N.Y., *Art and Ecological Issues*.

1982 Lerner-Heller, New York, N.Y., *Four Manifestoes*, January 5-23.

Greene Space Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Nature: Image and Metaphor*.

Real Art Ways, Hartford, Conn., *Seventh Season Part II*, May 7-30.

Primer Salon de Fotografia, Galeria Havana Libre, Havana, Cuba.

Taller Latino Americano, New York, N.Y., *!Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America*, June 19-July 9.

Museo del Barrio, New York, N.Y., *Art Across the Park*.

The Guild Inn, Toronto, Canada, *Contemporary Outdoor Sculpture at the Guild*, August 3-October 14.

The Center for Inter-American Relations and Konkos Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Women of the Americas: Emerging Perspectives*, September 15-October 17.

Kenkeleba House, New York, N.Y., *Ritual and Rhythm: Visual Forces for Survival*, October 17-November 21.

Wave Hill, N.Y., *Projects in Nature*.

1983 California State College, Stanislaus, Calif., *Exchange of Sources: Expanding Powers*, February 28-March 25.

The Print Club, Philadelphia, Pa., *Printed by Women*.

Hamilton College, Clinton, N. Y., *Feminist Art: Issues and Images*.

Central Hall Artists, New York, N.Y., *Latin American Women Artists*, March 8-April 3.

Cucalon Gallery, New York, N.Y., *The Fertility Imperative*, May 11-June 15.

P.S. 1, The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc., Long Island City, N.Y., *Seven Women: Image/Impact*.

Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va., *Contemporary Latin American Art*.

1984 Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R.I., *Furrows*.

MacArthur Park, Los Angeles, Calif. (organized by Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design), MacArthur Park Public Art Program, *Phases I-IV*, September 18-October 20.

American Academy, Rome, Italy, *Annual Exhibition*, June 4-July 5.

Il Signo a Spoleto, Palazzo Piccoli, Spoleto, Italy, *Borsiste Straniere in Italia*, June 28-July 15.

Art Awareness, Lexington, N.Y., *Latin American Visual Thinking*.

Edith C. Blum Art Institute, Bard College Center, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., *Land Marks*, September 16-October 28.

Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Calif., *Aquí: Latin American Artists Working and Living in the United States*, October 30-December 15 (traveled to May Porter Sesron Gallery, Porter College, University of California, Santa Cruz, January 15-February 17, 1985).

Stellweg-Seguy Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Soul Catchers*, November 27, 1984-January 12, 1985.

1985 Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, N.C., *Awards in the Visual Arts 4*, August 2-September 29, (traveled to Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y., May 11-June 23; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 12-January 26, 1986).

1986 Zeus-Trabia, New York, N.Y., *In Homage to Ana Mendieta*, February 6-25.

Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York, N.Y., *Caribbean Art/African Currents*, April 17-May 25.

Hunter Gallery, Hunter College, New York, N.Y., *Race and Representation*.

1987 Terne Gallery, New York, N.Y., *On the Other Side*, May 16-June 27.

Terne Gallery, New York, N.Y., September 22-October 17.

PERFORMANCES

1972 The Center for the New Performing Arts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

1973 The Center for the New Performing Arts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, *Freeze*.

The Clinton Arts Center, Clinton, Iowa.

1974 The Museum of Art, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

The Center for the New Performing Arts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Unidad Profesional Zacatenco, Mexico City, Mexico, *Escultura Corporal*.

University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

1975 The Center for the New Performing Arts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

1976 International Culture Centrum, Antwerp, Belgium, *Body Tracks*.

Studentski Kulturni Center, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, *Body Tracks*.

1978 Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y., *La Noche, Yemaya*.

1982 Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y., *Body Tracks*.

FILM AND VIDEO SHOWINGS

1976 112 Greene Street, New York, N.Y.

Li Yan-Chia Museum, Cambria, England.

Studenski Kulturni Centar, Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Hochschul für Bildende Kunst, Hamburg, Germany.

Kunstverein Kreis, Gutersloh, Germany.

1978 Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y., *Films, 1975-77*, Mexico and Iowa.

1980 Fondo del Sol, International Sculptors Conference, Washington, D.C.

1981 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., *Recent Films*.

1982 Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y., *Isla and other works*.



**NILE-BORN (NACIDA DEL
NILO), 1984**

**Sand and binder on wood
61 1/2 × 19 1/2 × 2 1/2 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

Bibliography

All items referring to Mendieta's work have been listed as fully as possible. Unannotated items either do not mention Mendieta or simply list her as a contributor to an exhibition.

BOOKS

BREDER, Hans, and Stephen C. FOSTER.

Intermedia. Iowa City: Corroboree, Gallery of New Concepts, University of Iowa, 1980, illus.; artist's statement. Documents artists participating in the University of Iowa series of workshops and performances stressing multimedia and intermedia art, starting 1976-77. Artists include Vito Acconci, Hans Haacke, Ana Mendieta (pp. 117-20), Marjorie Strider, Martha Wilson.

BRENTANO, Robyn, and Mark SAVITT.

112 Workshop/112 Greene Street: History, Artists and Artwork, New York: New York University Press, 1981.

HAMMOND, Harmony. *Wrappings*. New

York: ISL Mussman Bruce Publishers, 1984, ill. In the chapter "A Sense of Touch" (pp. 77-85) Hammond includes Mendieta with women artists working with vaginal imagery, using elements including boxes, caves, containers, and the landscape. She refers to Mendieta in the company of Judy Chicago, Betsy Damon, Mary Beth Edelson, and others. (p.83) Previous versions of the text were published in *New Art Examiner* (Summer, 1979) and *Heresies*, #12, Sex Issue, 1981.

LIPPARD, Lucy R. *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974, 314 pp, ill. In "Making Up: Role Playing and Transformation in Women's Art," Lippard refers to Mendieta's early rape tableaux. (p. 101) Other more detailed accounts of her works are found in "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women's Body Art" (p. 137) Certainly the most accessible source of information on Mendieta's work to this date.

LUCIE-SMITH, Edward. *Art in the Seventies*, Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1980, ill. Brief reference to Mendieta's work in the chapter "Art as Environment and Architecture," under the heading, "Mock Archaeology and Ethnography." Mendieta's assistance with the book is acknowledged on p. 4.

LIPPARD, Lucy R. *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, New York: Pantheon

Books, 1983, 270 pp, ill. In the chapter "Feminism and Prehistory," Lippard gives a thorough account of feminist revisions of prehistoric matriarchies, taking a stand against descriptions of "primitivism" as retrograde for feminism. Mendieta's work is discussed not only as an example of "a generalized expression of body-earth-identification" but is seen in the context of her Cuban origin. Lippard writes: "Her subject is resurrection in a double sense—mythical/personal and historical/political. Her poetic use of her own body is paralleled by a revolutionary metaphor" (p. 49)

MAPPLETHORPE, Robert. *Black Book*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. Poem by Ntozake Shange, "irrepressibly bronze, beautiful and mine"(for Ana Mendieta).

GADON, Elinor W. *The Once and Future Goddess: A Symbol for Our Time*, New York: Harper and Row, to be published in 1988.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

All exhibitions are listed in the exhibition history. Catalogues listed separately here include a component in the catalogue essay referring to Mendieta or to her work.

1979

Window to the South: Works by Fourteen Contemporary Artists from Latin America, February, Henry Street Settlement and Solidaridad Humana, Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, New York, N.Y. Renata Karlin's essay includes Mendieta as a conceptual artist, comparing her color photographs to work by Richard Long and Robert Smithson.

Exchanges 1, May-June, Henry Street Settlement, Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, New York, N.Y. Note by Lucy R. Lippard, suggests that Mendieta "carried on a dialogue between the landscape and the mythical female body (based on her own silhouette)." Discussing the variety of these silhouettes, Lippard comments "Unlike some artists working today with 'primitivizing' motifs, Cuban-born Mendieta's heritage is a real one and the force of her art lies in part in its concreteness." She concludes that Mendieta's "Silueta" series "recalls the prehistoric beliefs of an omnipresent female force whose body parts

could be seen in every natural feature."

Expressions of Self: Women and Autobiography, Douglass College Art Gallery, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., November 19-December 7, ill. Note by Jan Gura, a student curator for this exhibition, originating in a course on curatorial practice. A thorough account of Mendieta's work, using the artist's biography as the key to her work. Gura says specifically that Mendieta "thinks of the Earth as the Goddess," and endorses the notion that the work has a mystical "aura."

1980

Art Across the Park, July 20-September 24, Central Park North; Ana Mendieta, August 17. Unsigned note introduces the concept of urban artists expressing a growing need to work in the environment and places Mendieta as an artist interested in the "uniting of self with nature."

1981

Rupestrian Sculptures/Esculturas Rupestres, A.I.R. Gallery, New York, N.Y., November 10-28, 4pp. In a comprehensive and sensitive text published in English and Spanish, Gerardo Mosquera suggests that Mendieta's first works in Cuba, her birthplace, derive from profoundly personal motives of reconciliation with her past, and offer "a way of sublimating an obsession." One of the most comprehensive published critical responses to Mendieta's work, with important details about the physical, historical, and cultural contexts of the Cuban works. Translated and republished from Mosquera's article in *Areito* (see under ARTICLES, 1981).

Latin American Art: A Woman's View, Frances Wolfson Art Gallery, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Fla., October 5-November 13, 7 pp., ill. Roberta Griffin's introduction states the rationale of the exhibition is to redress the previous emphasis on male Latin American artists. The note on Mendieta's work stresses biographical sources for her motivation as an artist, suggesting that "Ana Mendieta became a political activist seeking the right to reclaim her own lost history and in her art has participated in the process of women artists reclaiming their own authenticity as creators."

1982

Women Artists Series, Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., Ana Mendieta, April 19-May 12, p.13, ill. Lisa Horn-

ing's brief note refers to the "Escaleras de Jaruco" works, says Mendieta "works alone, in what she calls her private ceremony," and stresses the identification between woman and earth that Mendieta proposes.

1983

Geo-Imago, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba, April. Includes statement by Mendieta and essay by Alberto Quevedo.

1984

Aquí: 27 Latin American Artists Living and Working in the United States, Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Calif., October 30-December 15. Mendieta's work is discussed in two essays in this broadly conceived account of contemporary Latin American art. John Stringer (p. 19) discusses Mendieta as a body artist and how she related her own physical constitution to particular sites, contrasting her work with that of other artists of the 1970s working with the body. Stringer concludes that other women artists interacted with the natural environment and seeks to place Mendieta's work firmly within the "current feminine sensibility." Donald Goodall's brief account of Mendieta is included under the heading "The Dilemma of the Latin American Artist-Immigrant in the United States" (p. 27).

1985-1986

Awards in the Visual Arts 4, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, N. C., 110 pp., ill. Peter Frank's essay, "The Human Figure: Present and/or Accounted for," discusses contemporary interest in the human figure and figurative art. But he points out that Mendieta uses the figure as a "jumping-off point for abstract statements concerning natural process and natural space." (p.15) On the other hand, her works seem more metaphorical in character than those of other earth artists. Frank notes that Mendieta's works are specifically gynomorphic, invoking prehistoric prototypes, and referring to the biblical creation myth, he suggests that "instead of God fashioning man out of clay, Mendieta fashions woman." (p.16)

1986

Rape, Ohio State University Gallery of Fine Art, Columbus, Ohio. Text by Arlene Raven, pp. 5-12, dedicated to the memory of Ana Mendieta. 104 pp; ills. Two colored photographs documenting Mendieta's *Rape-Murder* performance of 1973 were included.

Made in the U.S.A.: Art from Cuba, Amelie Wallace Gallery, State University of New York at Old Westbury. Text by Lucy R. Lippard, bibl., ill.

ARTICLES

1975

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Transformation Art." *Ms.* (New York) 4, no. 4 (October 1975): 33-34, 36, 38-39. Brief mention of Mendieta's "rape tableaux."

1976

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art." *Art in America* (New York) 64, no. 3 (May-June 1976): 73-81, ill. Important article considering works by women artists using their own bodies and relating the works to feminism in the 1970s. Lippard champions the range of women's practices in body art, and contributes a key early account of Ana Mendieta's work.

1977

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Art Outdoors, In and Out of the Public Domain: A Slide Lecture." *Studio International* (London) 193 (March 1977): 83-90. Text of the Power Lecture for 1975, commissioned by the Power Institute for Contemporary Art, University of Sydney, Australia. Mendieta's *Rape*, 1975, is referred to in the context of a broad account of art works and actions undertaken outdoors as public art.

BOURDON, David. "There's a New Kid (or Two) in Town." *The Village Voice* (New York) 22, no. 24 (June 13, 1977): 67. Portmanteau review of new artists refers to Mendieta's work in the *A.I.R. Invitational* exhibition.

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Quite Contrary: Body, Nature, Ritual in Women's Art." *Chrysalis*, no. 2 (1977): 31-47, ill. An ambitious account of contemporary art by women dealing with themes suggested by women's relationships to nature and to the culture-nature dichotomy. Lippard argues: "Now we must analyze how the perception of woman as nature is altered when reflected in the art and ideas of women." (p. 32) Mendieta's early work is situated with other contemporary artists and against historical figures like O'Keeffe and Kahlo. One of the most detailed accounts of Mendieta's work to this date, though still very brief.

LUBELL, Ellen. "Invitational." *Arts Magazine* (New York) 52, no. 2 (October 1977): 26. Description of the *A.I.R. Invitational* exhibition.

PERRIN, Marlene J. "Ana Mendieta Works with Nature to Produce her Art." *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, December 2, 1977, p. 5A, ills. Discusses Mendieta's forthcoming exhibition at Corroboree: Gallery of New Concepts; incorporates biography, interview, account of the work.

KITTREDGE, Cherry. "Mendieta Incorporates Herself, Earth and Art." *The Daily Iowan* (Iowa City, Iowa), December 6, 1977, p. 7, ill. Anecdotal background to Mendieta's one-

woman exhibition at Corroboree: Gallery of New Concepts.

1979

HARNETT, Lila. "Making a splash." *Cue*, August 31, 1979, p. 113.

"Silueta Series." *Heresies* (New York) 2, no. 4, issue 8 (1979): 89, ill.

FRIEDMAN, Jon R. "Exchanges!" *Arts Magazine* (New York) 54, no.3 (November 1979), p. 11. Friedman's account of this group exhibition focuses on work by Mendieta and Christine Oatman, commenting that "where Mendieta's work celebrates the interpretation of the human and the material worlds on a physical plane, Oatman's does so in the domain of the imagination." Friedman recognizes the dual purpose of Mendieta's documentation photographs: to simultaneously capture an image and register its loss.

ZIMMER, William. "Artists Only." *Soho Weekly News* (New York), 1979.

1980

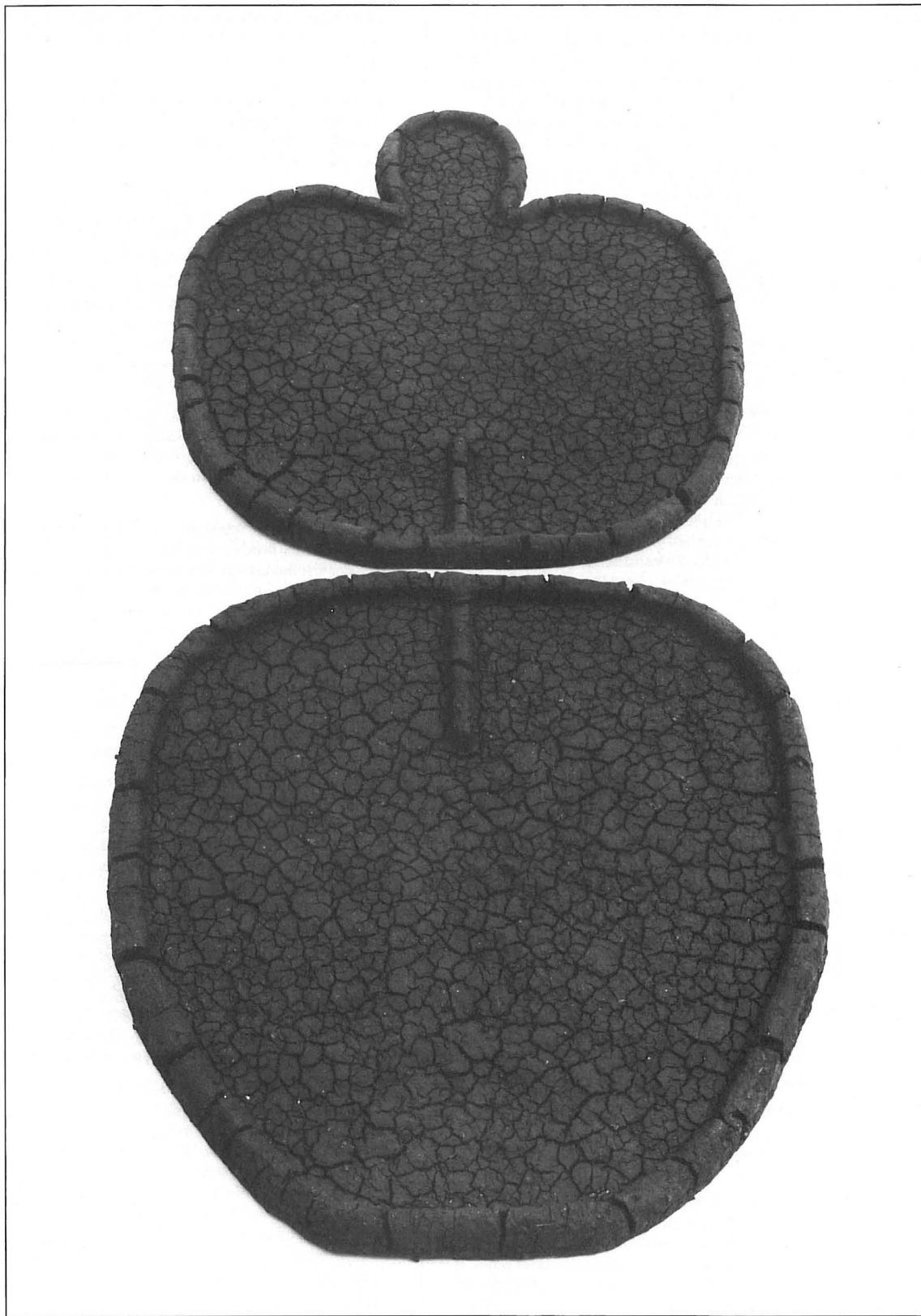
HEIT, Janet. "Ana Mendieta." *Arts Magazine* (New York) 54, no. 5 (January 1980): 5, ill. A thoroughly researched and markedly sympathetic response to Mendieta's solo exhibition at A.I.R. Heit's account of the artist's work with transformations of natural sites is one of the most developed in the critical literature on Mendieta. She comments: "By staking out her claim in a territory that is only temporarily hers, Mendieta subjects herself to the laws of the earth, accepting its values and limitations and working harmoniously within them."

LARSON, Kay. "Theoretical Tap Dancing." *The Village Voice* (New York) 25, no.5 (February 4, 1980): 72. Reviews Franklin Furnace exhibition *Dialects*.

COKER, Gylbert. "Ana Mendieta at A.I.R." *Art in America* (New York) 68, no.4 (April 1980): 133-34, ill. In this thoughtful review of Mendieta's solo show, Coker expresses regret that her work cannot be seen at its original sites, rather than through films and photographs.

HEIT, Janet. "Speaking the Measure of Feminist Art." *Women Artists News* (New York) 5, no. 10 (April 1980):3, ill. A brief note reporting the panel discussion "Theoretical Concepts in Feminist Art" at A.I.R. Gallery, New York, on March 24, 1980. Mendieta was one of six self-defined panelists, and for her, "involvement with the women's movement began as part of a search to find out more about who they were." Slides were shown. Panelists were Joyce Kozloff, Ana Mendieta, Martha Rosler, Joan Semmel, Miriam Schapiro, and May Stevens. Harmony Hammond acted as moderator.

CASSEL, James. "Varied Visions on Video from a Minority Viewpoint." *The Washington Star* (Washington, D.C.), June 22, 1980, p. E2. Re-



**FIGURE WITH GNANGA
(FIGURA CON GNANGA),
1984**

**Earth and binder on wood
Two pieces: 35 × 31 × 2 1/2 inches;
37 × 32 × 2 1/2 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

views Fondo del Sol video program, in which Mendieta showed her films.

McFADDEN, Sarah. "Going Places, Part II: The Outside Story." *Art in America* (New York) 68, no. 6 (Summer 1980): 51-61. A guide to ten outdoor sculpture installations in New York, including the extensive exhibition at Ward's Island Psychiatric Center, New York, in which Mendieta showed.

POGGI, Christine. "The New Spiritualism." *Women Artists News* (New York) 6, nos. 2-3 (Summer 1980): 6, ill. (Caption "Silueta" series). Report on a panel discussion, "Feminism, Spirituality and the Arts," at the N.Y. Feminist Art Institute, May 16, 1980. Panelists Nancy Azara, Bambi Brown, Catti, Donna Henes, Ana Mendieta, and Merlin Stone (moderator Linda Hill) worked with concepts of spirituality associated with feminism. The note on Mendieta's contribution is brief, but Heit comments on her images: "Perhaps their meditative power derives from a longing for a feeling of connection with nature and home that is pervasive in our fragmented culture."

ORENSTEIN, Gloria. "The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women." *Heresies*, Spring 1978, pp. 74-84.

GLUECK, Grace. "Guide to What's New in Outdoor Sculpture: Art Across the Park." *The New York Times*, September 12, 1980.

OLIVETTI, Gary. "Mingling with Nature." *The Vermont Vanguard Press*, October 7, 1980, ill.

HANSON, Bernard. "Modern Woman's View of Woman." *The Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Conn.), October 19, 1980, p. G2. A sympathetic and occasionally querulous response to the group exhibition *Renderings of the Modern Woman*. Mendieta's work is characterized as "completely symbolic but moving."

LARSON, Kay. "Constructive Criticism." *The Village Voice* (New York), October 29-November 4, 1980, p. 85.

HJORT, Oystein. "En mur til de undertrykte." *Politikien* (Copenhagen), November, 1980. On mural and minority artists in Los Angeles and New York. Mendieta is quoted.

KATZ, Jonathan G. "Are Women Better at Taking Pictures?" *The Philadelphia Bulletin* (Philadelphia, Pa.), December 7, 1980, p. G15.

MELINE, Carolina. "Is Women's Art Really Different? Shows such as this suggest so." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, Pa.), December 12, 1980, Weekend, p. 3.

WILSON, Judith. "Ana Mendieta Plants." *The Village Voice* (New York) August 19, 1980, p. 90.

1981

PERREAULT, John. "Manifesto Destiny." *The Soho News* (New York), February 24, 1981. A review of the exhibition *Four Manifestoes*, Lerner-Heller Gallery, New York, January 1981. Vito Acconci, Rudolf Baranik, Joseph Beuys, and Ana Mendieta each showed one work.

MENDIETA, Ana. "Venus Negra, based on a Cuban legend." *Heresies* (New York) 4, no. 1, issue 13 (1981): 22. Illustration of a work from the "Silueta" series (1980, earth and gunpowder), accompanied by an account of a legend associated with the Cuban struggle against slavery. In the *Feminism and Ecology* issue.

MOSQUERA, Gerardo. "Ana Mendieta: Esculturas Rupestres." *Areito* (New York) 7, no. 28 (1981): 54-56, ills. In Spanish, in an American-published journal dedicated to Cuban culture and society, and Latin American affairs. Mosquera is a leading Cuban art critic.

STEIN, Judith E. "Natural Disposition." *Afterimage* 8, no. 7 (February 1981): 14-15. Review of exhibition *Women/Image/Nature*, Tyler School of Art of Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. Mendieta exhibited works from the "Silueta" series (1978-79) in this national show of forty-seven photographers curated by Martha Madrigan.

WILSON, Judith. "A Month at the Races." *The Village Voice* (New York) 26, no. 8 (February 18-24, 1981): 74. Appreciative reference to Mendieta as an emerging artist participating in the multiracial group exhibition *Voices Expressing What Is*.

WRIGHT, Martha McWilliams. "City Braces for 'Guerrilla Art.'" *Unicorn Times* (Washington, D.C.), March, 1981. Forward notification of the Washington Project for the Arts program of street pieces by thirteen artists. Ana Mendieta contributed a work in which a female figure was carved on a hillside of a Georgetown cemetery and the sod over the earthwork set afire.

RICHARD, Paul. "Out of the Galleries Into the Streets: The Mischievous Art of the Urban Guerrilla." *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), March 24, 1981, pp. B1-B2. A lively account of Washington Project for the Arts group project/exhibition *Streetworks*. Mendieta's contribution is mentioned only briefly in a review that prefers more explicitly urban art.

TOMAS, Angel. "El arte como refugio." *El Cairmán Barbudo* (Havana, Cuba) April, 1981, p. 26, ill. An appreciative account of Mendieta's life and work.

CANO, Ana María. "Como se siente en Medellín?" *El Mundo* (Medellín, Colombia), May 15, 1981. An interview with artists visiting Medellín for the Biennial. Quotes a brief statement by Mendieta on her response to the experience of the 4th Biennial.

ARANGO DE TOBÓN, María Cristina.

"Tendencia conservadora con selección de vanguardia." *El Espectador*, May 17, 1981, Supplement "Hogar", p. 4-B. Assesses the selections for the 4th Biennial, mentioning Mendieta as a "Cuban" artist. Quotes critic Eduardo Serrano's opinion that the selection for the Biennial is conservative.

HOYOS, Juan José. "Obras de arte...de hierba!" *El Tiempo* (Colombia) May 18, 1981, p. 6-E. Reviews the IV Biennial at Medellín. Half of the article is devoted to Ana Mendieta's and Carl Andre's grass sculptures.

WILSON, Judith. "Small Crafted Warnings." *The Village Voice* (New York) 26, no. 21 (May 20-26, 1981): 90. Review of the exhibition *Ritual and Landscapes*, citing Mendieta's work as among the most intriguing.

GRAHAM, David. "Women/Image/Nature." *The New Art Examiner* 8, no. 8 (May 1981): 19. A review of the eponymous exhibition at the Tyler School of Art. Mendieta's work is accorded special critical favor.

ARNO Michele. "Spring Fever." *Spring*, May 1982, p. 22, ill. Brief biography of Mendieta stressing the importance of the works at the Escaleras de Jaruco in Cuba as "monuments to freedom of expression and to the fact that dreams do come true."

MEJIA, Adriana. "Tertulia con las artistas." *El Mundo Semanal* (Medellín, Colombia) no. 108 (June 6, 1981), pp. 6-9. Group interview.

"Connections: An Invitational Portfolio of Images and Statements by Twenty-Eight Women." *Exposure* 19, no. 3 (1981): 35, ill.

DOBBS, Lillian. "Beauty and harsh reality merge in Latin exhibit." *The Miami News* (Miami, Fla.), October 16, 1981, p. 7. Highly laudatory brief review of *Latin American Art: A Woman's View*, at Frances Wolfson Art Gallery, Miami, October-November, 1981.

PORONER, Palmer. "The Latin American Art Infusion." *ArtSpeak* (New York) 111, no. 10 (November 26, 1981): 5. Suggests a developing tendency in contemporary American art from Latin American sources, comparable with the "injection" of European art during World War II. Refers to Mendieta's exhibition at A.I.R. as part of this efflorescence.

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art." *Art in America* (New York) 69, no. 9 (November 1981): 136-50, ill. Text of a slide lecture commissioned as the second Willard W. Cummings Memorial Lecture for the Skowhegan School of Art, July 1979, and later developed in *Overlay*. Mendieta is briefly mentioned on p. 140.

AUTHOR UNIDENTIFIED. "Obras de Arte de Hierbas." *Diario de Xalapa*, December 29,

1981, pp.1-2C. Reviews IV Biennial at Medellín, mentions Mendieta's grass sculpture.

1982

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Making Manifest." *The Village Voice* (New York) 27, no.5 (January 27-February 3, 1982): 72-73, 75. Review of the exhibition *Manifesto*, at Lerner-Heller Gallery.

BARRACKS, Barbara. "Ana Mendieta: Rupes-trian Sculptures/Esculturas Rupestres." *Art Express*, March-April 1982. An abbreviated but laudatory account of Mendieta's one-woman show at A.I.R. Gallery, New York, November 1981. Barracks points out that Mendieta's Super-8 film of the Cuban site helps establish relationships between the carved female figures, which otherwise tend to maintain a certain solitariness or, as Barracks remarks, "the figures don't converse."

AUTHOR UNIDENTIFIED. "Keating Exhibit, Readings at Real Art Ways." *The Hartford Courant*, Weekend section, April 30, 1982.

BUCKBERROUGH, Sherry. "Real Art Ways/Hartford-Ana Mendieta." *Art New England*, June 1982, p.7. An account of the exhibition at Real Art Ways and the simultaneous work for the University of Hartford. Discusses the sculpture *Arbitra*, pointing out that its relative permanence and public siting in Hartford are unusual in Mendieta's oeuvre. Mendieta's own biographical account of her work is central: "Mendieta insists that alienation is essential to being an artist. It precipitates self-understanding and a knowledge of one's relationship to the world."

GLUECK, Grace. "Critic's Choice." *The New York Times*, October 10, 1982. Seasonal listings and preferences.

LEVIN, Kim. "Art." *The Village Voice* (New York) 27, no. 42 (October 13-19, 1982): unpaginated centerfold, between pp. 67 and 70. Recommends the exhibition *Women of the Americas*.

AUTHOR UNIDENTIFIED. "Still Life." *The Miami News* (Miami, Fla.), October 15, 1982, ill., brief caption.

AHLANDER, Leslie Judd. "New Season Begins at the Lowe." *The Miami News* (Miami, Fla.), October 22, 1982. Approving descriptive review.

RICKEY, Carrie. "Why Women Don't Express Themselves: Put the Blame on Boys, Mame." *The Village Voice* (New York) 27, no. 44 (November 2, 1982): 1, 79. Mendieta is listed as an "Expressionist" woman in this spirited assessment of women's exclusion from the contemporary enthusiasm for Expressionist Art.

MELUZA, Lourdes. "Un segredo a la naturaleza." *Miami Herald*, (Miami, Fla.), November 20, 1982, ill.

BUJAN, Juan. "Ana Mendieta: El Llamada de la Tierra." *La Voz Hispana*, November 26-December 2, 1982, p.19.

ZIMMER, William. "Mendieta at Yvonne Seguy." *Art Gallery Guide* (New York), November, 1982. A brief review, interesting for Zimmer's assertion that Mendieta's use of photographic documentation places her work in a contemplative mode beyond the "baggage of modern life" and its distractions, thus rendering it more forceful than the actual earthworks. Zimmer argues that most artists working with the look of primitivism suffer from intrusions from modern life, but "keeping the camera, Mendieta has pared her consciousness, effecting a raw clarity."

1983

COCKROFT, Eva. "Culture and Survival." *Art and Artists* (February 1983):16-17, ill. An interview with Willie Birch, Ana Mendieta, and Juan Sanchez about the exhibition *Ritual and Rhythm: Visual Forces for Survival*.

FOLLIOTT, Sheila. "Expanding Powers." *Artweek* (Oakland, Calif.), 1983, p. 6. Review of *Exchange of Sources: Expanding Powers*, at California State Gallery, Stanislaus. Mendieta is mentioned. Folliott remarks on the nonhierarchical structure of the exhibition, in which ten selected artists, Mendieta among them, in turn selected three others each: "The network itself becomes, perhaps, the most clearly feminist work of art in a show whose component parts display a healthy plurality."

LUBELL, Ellen. "Ana Mendieta at Yvonne Seguy." *Art in America* (New York) 71, no.6 (Summer 1983): 161, ill. Appreciative review, relating Mendieta's previous photographs of her installations to her current drawings. Lubell writes: "These images are so simple and rough, and rendered so summarily, that they resemble figures created for invoking spirits, or for some other ritual.... All Mendieta's work has a dark incantatory power that is mysterious and compelling—basic and primitive without being falsely mystical OR superficially feminist."

COCKROFT, Eva. "Latin America Women Artists at Central Hall Artists." *Art in America* (New York) 71, no. 9 (October 1983): 183. Review of group exhibition, *Latin American Women Artists Living in New York*. Fifteen artists were represented.

1984

DE CANDIA, Mario, ed. "Ana Mendieta." *La Repubblica*, "Piacere dell' Occhio" supplement, March 23, 1984. Exhibition notice, Galleria Primo Piano.

"Ana Mendieta rescopre la terra." *Corriere della Sera* "Mostre d'Arte!" March 26, 1984, p. 20. A descriptive account of Mendieta's exhibition at Galleria Primo Piano, enlivened by a warmly appreciative tone.

SCHLOSS, Edith. "Ana Mendieta's Sculpture Reliefs of Baked Earth Exhibited in Rome." *International Herald Tribune*, April 7-8, 1984. Brief note, suggesting "this use of the oldest art materials, and the paring down of form and ornament to essentials, are refreshing."

MANGO, Lorenzo. "Le mostre a Roma: Ascensione per tracce d'incendio." *Paese Sera*, "Cultura e Societa" supplement, April 13, 1984. Review of Mendieta's Galleria Primo Piano exhibition. Descriptive and appreciative, in the apparently prevailing Roman mode.

GRAY, Channing. "Earth Art: Ana Mendieta looks into the past to find our relationship with nature." *Accent/Arts, The Providence Journal-Bulletin*, April 21, 1984. Sympathetic account by the paper's arts writer of Mendieta's installation *Furrows* at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art. Mendieta is quoted: "I'm not saying 'Let's go back to the caves.' My interest in nature is concerned more with the fact that we've lost touch with ritual, that we've lost touch with who we are and why we are here" and "I'm interested in man's ties with nature, and not all of his cultural baggage."

MENDIETA, Ana. Illustration (Lithograph from *Duetto pietre e foglie*). *Legionnaire* (The Drawing Legion, Iowa City) December, 1984 : 82
"Latin American Visual Thinking." *Art Awareness* (Lexington, N.Y.) Summer, 1984, pp. 4-5. Brief biography in descriptive account of the exhibition.

"Exhibition set for MacArthur Park slated to open Sept. 18." *Gardena Valley News Tribune*, August 22, 1984.

"Ana Mendieta—Works." *Appearances*, no. 11 (Fall 1984): 45, ill. only.

WILSON, William. "MacArthur Park To Get Public Arts Program." *Los Angeles Times*, Calendar, October 8, 1984, pp. 1,5. Introduces Al Nodal's proposal for MacArthur Park art installations, in which Mendieta was to have participated. Mendieta's earthworks are described as "primal as aboriginal mud men."

IANCO-STARRELS, Josine. "Latino Artists Featured." *Los Angeles Times*, Calendar, October 28, 1984, p. 92. Notice of exhibition *Aquí: Latin American Artists Working and Living in the United States*.

1985

P.L. "Un 'duetto' di pietre e foglie." *Corriere della Sera*, January 19, 1985. Reviews Mendieta's exhibition with Carl Andre at AAM/Cooperativa Architettura Arte Moderna, in Rome, of their joint publication of lithographs in book form.

MONFERINI, Augusta. "Carl Andre e Ana Mendieta." *L'Espresso Roma*, February 10, 1985. Notice of exhibition of the book *Duetto pietre e foglie*.

BANNON, Anthony. "Exhibition a Credit to Program That Aims to Advance Artists." *The Buffalo News*, May 14, 1985. Reviews the Albright-Knox Art Gallery showing of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art exhibition; refers to Mendieta's *Mud Figure*.

TRIPLETTE, Laurie. "A Proud Homecoming: The Awards in the Visual Arts Exhibition Comes Home to Shine." *The Spectator* (Winston-Salem, N.C.), August 13, 1985. In a general account of the exhibition, Mendieta's work is assessed thus: "While superficially bordering on formalism, Mendieta's earthworks actually reach back to symbol systems of primitive times."

NODAL, Al. "Obituary." *High Performance* (Los Angeles) 8, no. 3, 1985.

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Obituary." *Art in America* (New York) 73 (November 1985): 190.

EDITORIAL, "Ana Mendieta 1948-1985." *Heresies* (New York) 5, no. 2, issue 18 (1985), Frontispiece. Obituary and dedication of the issue to Mendieta's memory.

WADLER, Joyce. *New York* (December 1985):36-46. Extensive and controversial report on the circumstances of Mendieta's death, including biographical material.

1986

LIPPARD, Lucy R. "Cultural Exchange: Made in the USA, Art from Cuba." *Art in America* (New York) 74 (April 1986): 27-35, ill. Review of the eponymous exhibition at SUNY Westbury of the work of young Cuban artists Bedia, Brey, and Garciandia. Mendieta was the first "outside" Cuban artist to be supported by the Cuban Ministry of Culture to work there, and Lippard comments: "There is little question that her site work, with its earth-body-history references and passionate identification with the Cuban land, have left their mark on new Cuban art."

LOVELACE, Carey. "Two Impressive Recent Exhibitions Provide Fitting Eulogies for a Pair of Trend-Setting Modern Artists." *The New Manhattan Review*, March 19, 1986, pp. 26, 34. On the occasion of the exhibitions *In Homage to Ana Mendieta* at Zeus-Trabia Gallery, New York, and Joseph Beuys' last exhibition at Marisa del Re Gallery, New York.

TULLY, Judd. "In Homage to Ana Mendieta." *New Art Examiner* (Chicago) 13, no. 9 (May 1986): 59-60. Warm response to Quimetta Perle's memorial exhibition at the Zeus-Trabia Gallery, N.Y., pointing out works by Guiterrez, Spero, and especially by Betsy Damon, made in response to Mendieta's death.

INDIANA, Gary. "Home." *The Village Voice* (New York) July 8, 1986, p. 89, ill. Reviews the group exhibition *Immigrants*, New House Gallery, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island. Mendieta's sculptures are characterized as "hard,

poetically inconsolable presences."

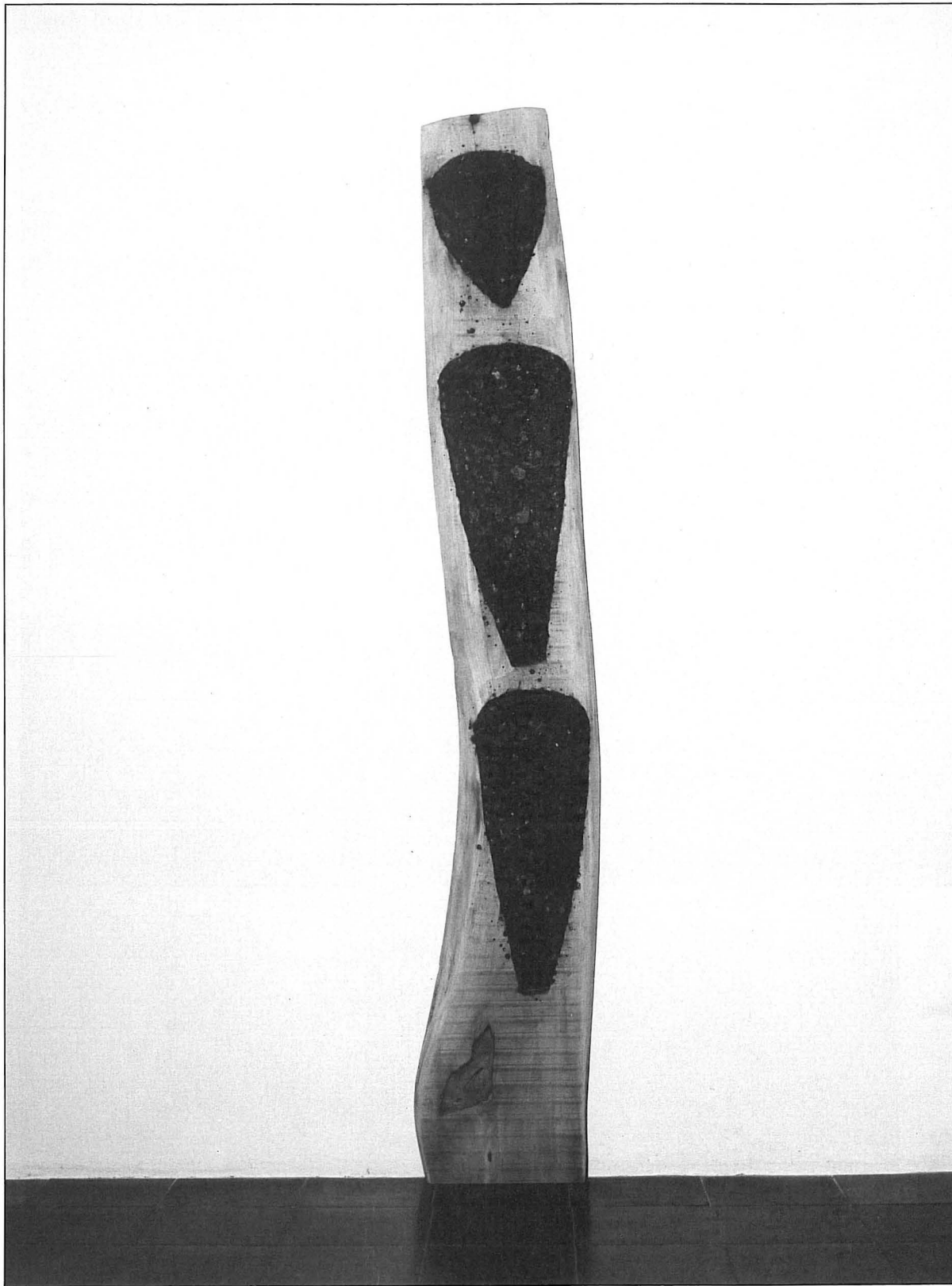
"Multiples, Objects and Books." *Print Collectors Newsletter* (New York) 16 (July-August 1985): 102.

RICH, B. Ruby. "The Screaming Silence." *The Village Voice* (New York), September 16-23, 1986, pp. 23-24. Article by friend of Mendieta and member of the Committee managing her artistic estate, discussing responses to Mendieta's death in the art world.

CAMNITZER, Luis. "Obituario, Ana Mendieta." *Arte en Colombia, Internacional*, no. 29, p. 75. Gives an account of Ana's life and career and comes to the conclusion that Ana's success in the United States was almost a product of a misunderstanding. He says Ana's work was not a feminist manifesto but simply a self-portrait.

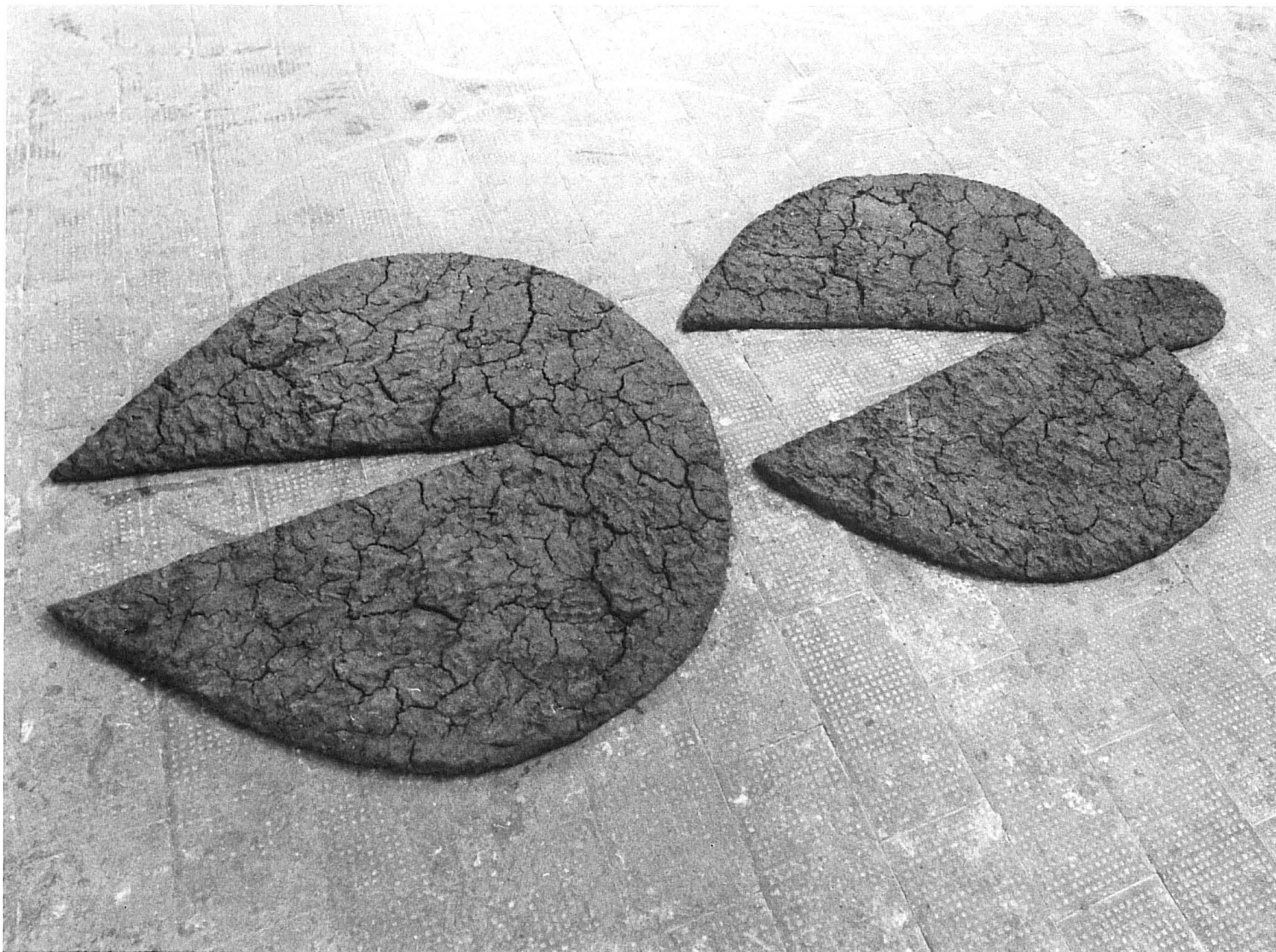
1987

MOSQUERA, Gerardo. "La Ultima Silueta." *El Caimán Barbudo* (Havana, Cuba) February, 1987, p. 23. Recounts and reminisces about Ana's life, death, and her works, in particular the ones done in Cuba in 1981.



UNTITLED, 1985

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**Wood slab carved and burnt
with gunpowder
80 1/2 × 11 1/4 × 1 1/2 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**



UNTITLED, 1984

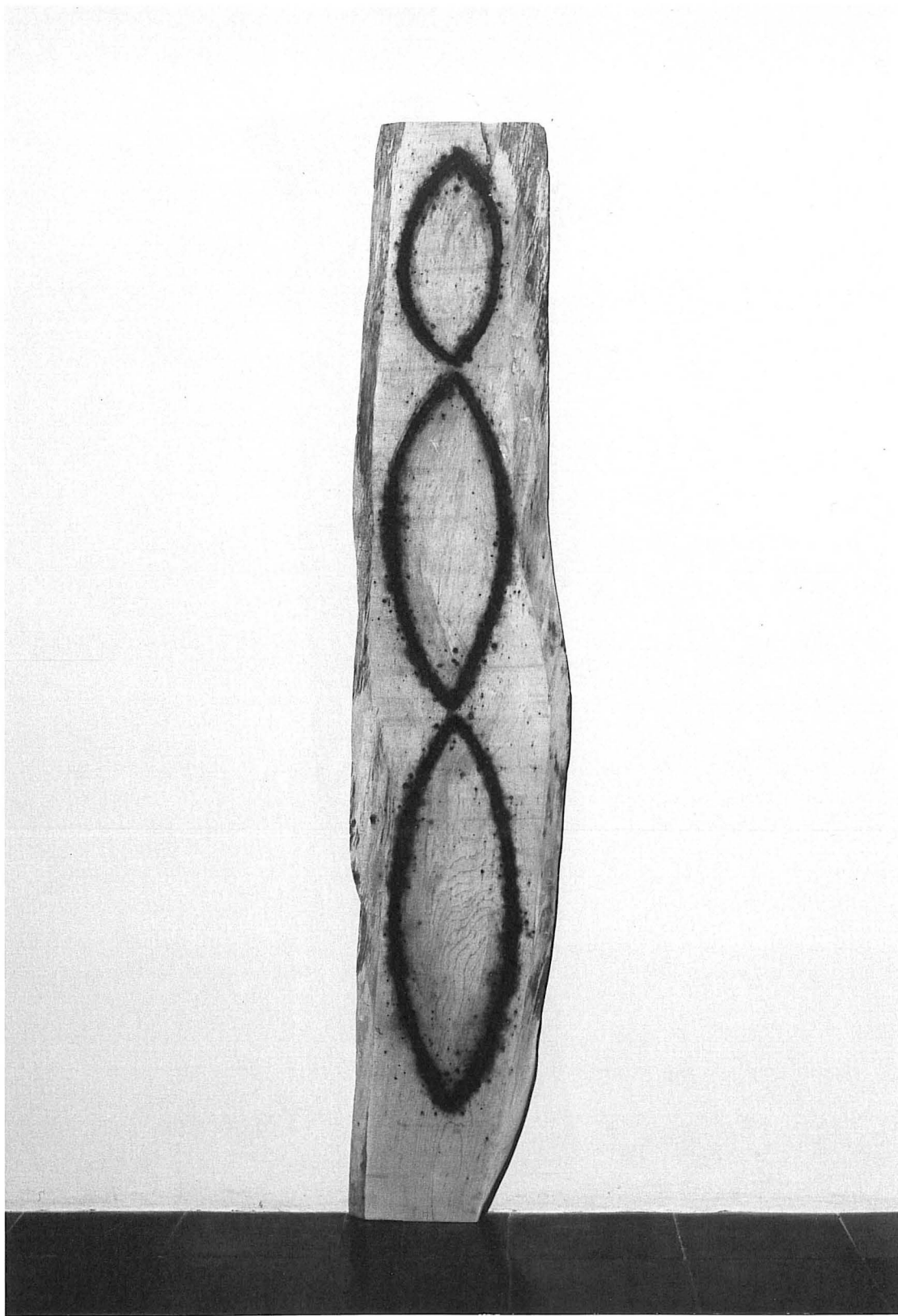
Earth and binder on wood

Two pieces: 39 × 34 × 1 1/2 inches;

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Courtesy of the Estate of

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UNTITLED, 1985

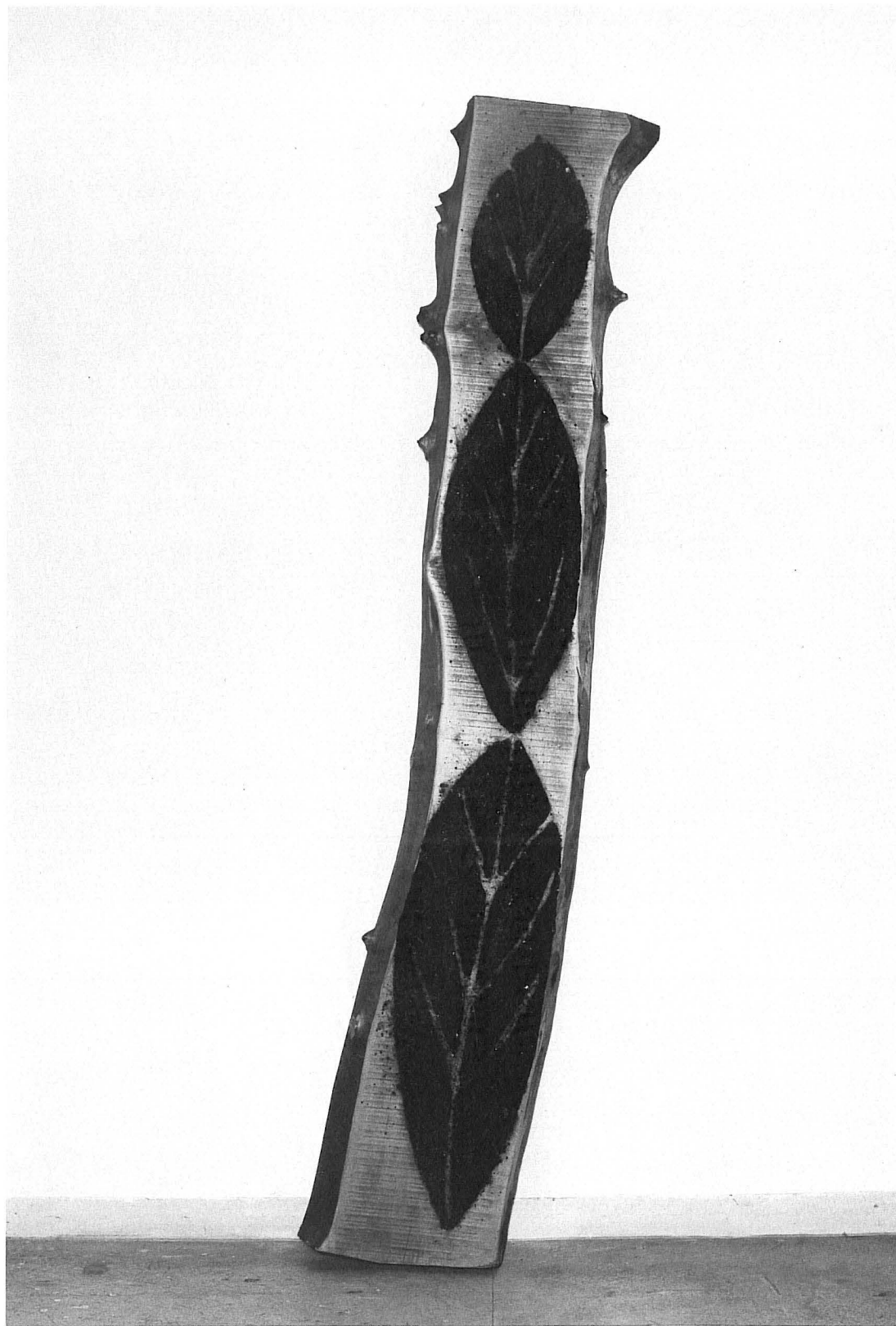
—
**Wood slab carved and burnt with
gunpowder**

65 5/8 × 13 × 1 inches

**Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

UNTITLED, 1985

—
**Wood slab carved and burnt with
gunpowder
79 1/4 × 11 1/2 × 3 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**





UNTITLED, 1985

**Carved semi-circular tree trunk
73 × 15 1/8 inches
Courtesy of the Estate of
Ana Mendieta**

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Development Assistant

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