

Public Program

Saturday Jan. 28, 1-3 p.m.

Panel Discussion with Karen Fiss,
Laura Perez, B. Ruby Rich

Cover: Ana Mendieta: still from *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece)*, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1976; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 2:23 mins.-

All works © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.

Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta is organized by the Katherine E. Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota and coordinated at BAMPFA by Apsara DiQuinzio, curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX Curator. The exhibition is made possible in part by the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota, the National Endowment for the Arts, a gift of Agnes Gund, the Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts, Kate and Stuart Nielsen, Syma Cheris Cohn, Metropolitan Picture Framing, the Epson Corporation, and the Tierney Brothers Corporation.

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**UC BERKELEY ART MUSEUM
& PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE**
2155 Center Street, Berkeley
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PROJECTOR 7



Untitled: Silueta Series, Iowa, 1978; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:14 mins.



Untitled: Silueta Series, Iowa, 1979; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 1:37 mins.

PROJECTOR 8



Untitled: Silueta Series, Iowa, 1979; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:09 mins.



Birth (Gunpowder Works), Iowa, 1981; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; B&W, silent; 2:59 mins.

PROJECTOR 9



Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian Sculptures), Cuevas de Jaruco, La Habana, Cuba, 1981; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; B&W, silent; 9:17 mins.



Untitled, Guanabo, La Habana, Cuba, 1981; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; B&W, silent; 1: 26 mins.

PROJECTOR 10



Ochún, Key Biscayne, Florida, October 13, 1981; 3/4 in. U-Matic videotape transferred to Blu-ray; color, sound; 8:17 mins.

THEATER 2



Ana Mendieta, Nature Inside, 2015, 8:23 mins. Documentary short produced and edited by Raquel Cecilia. © Corazón Pictures, LLC.

PHOTOGRAPHS (on view in the Crane Forum)



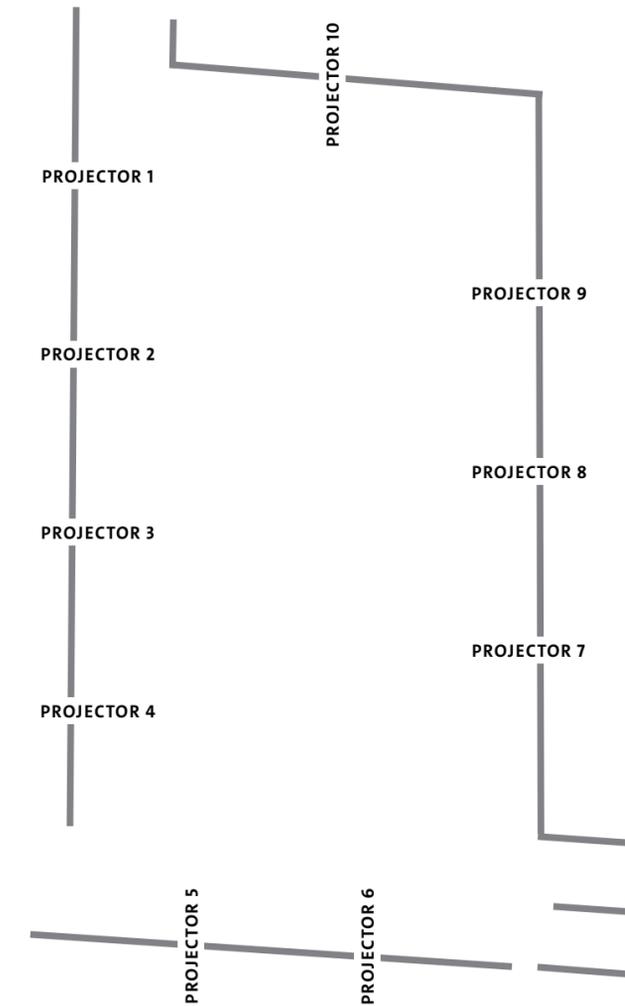
Volcán, 1979/1997; color photographs; 16 x 20 in. ea. (6).



Untitled: Silueta Series, 1976/2001; color photographs; 16 x 20 in. ea. (5), 20 x 16 in. ea. (4).



Untitled, 1981/1994; black-and-white photographs; 20 x 16 in. ea. (3), 16 x 20 in. ea. (3).



COVERED IN TIME AND HISTORY: THE FILMS OF Ana Mendieta

November 9, 2016–February 12, 2017

During her brief career, from 1971 to 1985, Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) produced a stunning body of work that included performances, drawings, sculptures, installations, and photographs. Less known, however, is her remarkable and prolific production of films and videos—she produced just over one hundred within a span of about ten years, more than many of her contemporaries who are known for their use of the film medium. **Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta** brings together twenty-one recently preserved filmworks—many of which have had little previous exposure—in addition to a selection of related photographs; to date it is the largest grouping of the artist’s films to be presented in an exhibition in the United States.

Mendieta’s particular merging of sculpture, earth art, and performance (“earth-body,” as she termed it) stands as a unique and singular artistic expression. Her work crosses many borders including artistic and time-based disciplines; geographical and political boundaries; and the interrelated explorations of history, gender, and culture. As a result of her sustained and embodied investigation of what it means to be human, Mendieta’s artwork continues to speak powerfully to diverse audiences across the generations. The artist’s personal biography encompasses many existential dilemmas of the modern era: personal, cultural, and political displacement; the loss of connection with one’s individual and collective past; and the pressure to conform and assimilate in a foreign environment, language, and value system.

Ana Mendieta was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1948 and was sent to the United States (without her parents) in 1961 at the age of twelve as part of Operation Peter Pan, an initiative of the US government and Catholic charities that brought 14,000 Cuban children to Miami between 1960 and 1962. She was moved from Miami to Iowa, where she lived in several foster homes and then attended the University of Iowa. After receiving undergraduate and graduate degrees in studio and intermedia art, Mendieta moved to New York in 1978 and joined A.I.R., the first gallery of women artists, which had been established in 1972. She received grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and in 1983 the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. Mendieta was a highly disciplined and prolific artist; she produced important artworks in Cuba, Italy, Mexico, and the United States. She died in 1985 at the age of thirty-six in a fall from the thirty-fourth-floor apartment she shared in New York with her husband, the artist Carl Andre.

Mendieta’s aesthetic lexicon encompasses a persistent dialogue with history and the process of affirming her Latin American identity while simultaneously absorbing aspects of North American culture. Her work demonstrates an economy of means and a complicated beauty that embraces the fragility of life. The artist was influenced by and interested in many of the artistic movements of her time, including Minimalism,

Conceptualism, earth art, performance art, and feminism, as well as the historical and spiritual legacies, both ancient and modern, of many indigenous cultures from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. She drew from each of these influences, but ultimately it is the originality and surprising inventiveness of her work that sets it apart. As Olga Viso has perceptively noted, “For many, her art subtly embodies the conflicts of identity commonly suffered by displaced individuals. [This] interpretation has particular relevance at this time, given that contemporary culture is increasingly focused on recognizing the human consequences of global conflict and migration.”*

The exhibition title prefix, **Covered in Time and History**, refers to the artist’s invested engagement with the past, while underscoring the element of temporality that is intrinsic to the time-based medium. It derives from a statement made by the artist about her work in an interview with Linda Montano published in 1988 in *Sulfur*:

In 1973 I did my first piece in an Aztec tomb that was covered in weeds and grasses—that growth reminded me of time. I bought flowers at the market, lay on the tomb, and was covered with white flowers. The analogy was that I was covered by time and history.

FILMS

The exhibition includes several early films from the 1970s that bravely explore gender stereotypes and address violence toward women. Mendieta made *Moffitt Building Piece* and *Sweating Blood* in response to the sexual assault and murder of University of Iowa nursing student Sarah Ann Ottens in 1973. These silent films speak out against that crime with the language of art unfolding through the temporal structure of film. In *Blood Writing* and *Blood Sign* (both 1974) the artist is shown writing out declarative statements by hand with animal blood onto white walls. In the first she spells out the phrase “she got love,” and in the second she writes, “there is a devil inside me”—both obliquely refer to the exoticism she felt as a Latin American living in the United States. Her use of blood also reflects her interest in Afro-Cuban rituals relating to Santería, the Yoruba-based syncretic religion.

Nearly every summer during the 1970s Mendieta traveled and worked in Mexico. With *Creek*, *Silueta del Laberinto (Labyrinth Blood Imprint)*, and *Burial Pyramid*, all made in Mexico in the summer of 1974, Mendieta established her unique earth-body aesthetic, merging her figure with the natural landscape through an exploration of history and memory. *Mirage*, made the same summer, symbolically tells the story of Mendieta’s separation from her family and home in Cuba through a dual narrative of the mother/daughter relationship.

Blood Inside Outside (1975), screened publicly for the first time in this exhibition, is an astonishing psychological investigation of autonomy and vulnerability, rendered with unflinching honesty. *Energy Charge* (1975) uses the technology of filmmaking to establish the ancient mythological tree-of-life theme in Mendieta’s oeuvre. The stunning *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece)*, made in Oaxaca in the summer of 1976, is a poetic metaphor on the passage of time, the soul, and sacrifice in relation to the physical body.

Mendieta uses the four classical elements—earth, water, air, fire—to evoke layers of history and meaning. *Untitled: Silueta Series* (1978) further explores the tree-of-life theme through a burning tree from which glowing hands magically appear. *Silueta de Arena*, from the same year, finds the sublime edge of memory and experience where the surfaces of sand and water meet. Also from 1978, *Untitled: Silueta Series*, exhibited publicly for the first time in this exhibition, brings together Mendieta’s interests in the ritualistic aspect of making art and of the transformation of the earth into sacred space.

In *Volcán* (1979) the artist uses the form of the volcano as a metaphor for the earth as a site of both solace and disaggregation. *Untitled: Silueta Series* (1979) takes place at the opening of a small cavelike structure that Mendieta carved into her silhouette shape, anticipating her epic *Rupestrian Sculptures* made in Cuba three years later. The next film from the same series, also *Untitled: Silueta Series* (1979), is thematically related to *Blood Inside Outside*. The burning silhouette shape in this film exists as a fully abstracted idea that is part human, part earth, and part tree. *Birth (Gunpowder Works)*, from 1981, is an evocative film in which the dried, cracked mud and raking light of the Iowa landscape gives birth to a dream of artistic magic and power.

The last three filmworks in the exhibition, all made in 1981, can be seen together as a trilogy addressing displacement, return, and reconciliation. *Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian Sculptures)* is Mendieta’s epic cycle of sculptures carved into the limestone walls at the Cuevas de Jaruco, La Habana, Cuba, and interpreted through this film. A journey through real and metaphorical time, *Esculturas Rupestres (Rupestrian Sculptures)* marks Mendieta’s return to Cuba and her connection to the ancient myths of the caves at Jaruco. *Untitled*, circulated publicly for the first time in this exhibition, takes place at the beaches of Guanabo in Cuba. The film tells the story of longing for homeland, the stretched-out time of separation. *Ochún* was made as a video off the coast of Key Biscayne, Florida. The silhouette figure in this work points toward Cuba, the water between Florida and Cuba rippling through its form. Named after a Santería goddess, *Ochún* transforms the pain of separation into a restrained poem of color, light, movement, and sound.

PROJECTOR 1



Creek, San Felipe Creek, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:11 mins.



Silueta de Arena, Iowa, 1978; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 1:33 mins.

PROJECTOR 2



Silueta del Laberinto (Labyrinth Blood Imprint), Yágul, Mexico, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:19 mins.



Burial Pyramid, Yágul, Mexico, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:17 mins.

PROJECTOR 3



Mirage, Iowa, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:12 mins.



Volcán, Old Man’s Creek, Sharon Center, Iowa, 1979; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:11 mins.

PROJECTOR 4



Energy Charge, 1975; 16mm film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 49 sec.



Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece), Oaxaca, Mexico, 1976; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 2:23 mins.



Untitled: Silueta Series, Old Man’s Creek, Sharon Center, Iowa, 1978; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 6:31 mins.

PROJECTOR 5



Moffitt Building Piece, Iowa City, Iowa, 1973; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:17 mins.



Sweating Blood, 1973; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:18 mins.

PROJECTOR 6



Blood Writing, Iowa, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 3:17 mins.



Blood Sign, Iowa, 1974; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 5:36 mins.



Blood Inside Outside, Old Man’s Creek, Sharon Center, Iowa, 1975; Super 8 film transferred to Blu-ray; color, silent; 4:19 mins.

*Olga Viso, ed. *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance, 1972–1985* (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2004), 21.