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Reenactments and the Politics of Remembrance: A Tribute to Ana Mendieta, 40 Years after Her Death

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Keywords

Performance, reenactments, remembrance, cultural memory, embodied practices

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_Abstract

Forty years ago, on September 8th, 1985, Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta died after falling from the window of the 34th-floor Manhattan apartment she shared with her husband, the Minimalist artist Carl Andre. Andre was accused of murder but later acquitted in a highly publicized trial that split the art world.

Born in Havana in 1948 and exiled to the United States at the age of twelve, Mendieta became a prominent voice of the 1970s feminist art movement. Her 'earth-body art' combined elements of 'land art' and 'body art,' transforming her experience as a woman into the central theme of her work. At the same time, she challenged Western conceptions of both 'nature' and 'culture,' drawing on pre-Hispanic cultures in Mexico and Cuba and asserting her identity as Other. For all these reasons, recent major exhibitions and scholarly debates on feminism and decoloniality have returned to Mendieta's work with renewed attention.

I take the fortieth anniversary of Mendieta's death as an occasion to investigate the intersection of performance and remembrance. One way of considering this is by examining how various artists engage in reenactments of Mendieta's work as acts of cultural memory and collective remembrance. My goal is to understand how these reenactments open up possibilities for affective, embodied modes of celebration.

1_Introduction

On September 8th, 2025, I invited a group of friends to join me in a private tribute. They were told to meet me in a laboratory room at the theater department of the University of Giessen, Germany. An empty chair was placed at the center of the space, lit with dimmed lights. In the back, a wooden board leaned against the wall. The board had a long white sheet of paper attached to it. Beside it, some painting supplies were lying on the floor. A candle was lit next to a white rose in the foreground. I greeted my friends who had joined. I told them that, that night, I would present a tribute. Not a lecture, not a performance, but a tribute to Ana Mendieta, 40 years after her death.[1]

Born in Havana and exiled to the U.S. at the age of twelve, Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) became a prominent voice of the 1970s feminist art movement. Her 'earth-body art' combined elements of 'land art' and 'body art,' transforming her experience as a woman into the central theme of her work.[2] In so doing, she challenged Western conceptions of both 'nature' and 'culture,' as she described in a notorious statement about her work:

> For the last 12 years I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body. Having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast out of the womb

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> (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 the making of earth/body works I become one with the earth. It is like being encompassed by nature, an afterimage of the original shelter within the womb.[3]

Mendieta's art speaks of her desire to reunite with the universe, return to the maternal source, and, finally, find shelter within the earth. Her rhetoric on nature combines elements of an early ecofeminist discourse with ideas of the so-called 'goddess art movement' of the 1970s.[4] At the same time, her method of exploring earth as a female body foreshadows a pluriversal approach to nature, drawing on pre-Hispanic cultures in Mexico and Cuba, and asserting her identity as Other within the predominantly white feminist movement of her time. For all these reasons, Mendieta's oeuvre remains an important body of work that challenges dominant Western narratives—such as the body as human and the earth as nonhuman.

Mendieta died tragically on September 8, 1985, in a fall from the window of the 34th-floor apartment in New York where she lived with her husband of eight months, the Minimalist sculptor Carl Andre.[5] Andre was accused of her murder but later acquitted on February 11, 1988, during a highly controversial trial. As B. Ruby Rich, a film critic and Mendieta's friend, wrote:

> Stories do not always end the way we'd like. Certainly not the life of Ana Mendieta. Certainly not the trial of Carl Andre. Ana's life may have ended, with fatal prematurity, on that morning of September 8, 1985, but that moment marked a beginning as well: the beginning of another scenario to which Ana's friends and family would dedicate themselves for the next two and a half years. That was the scenario of Ana's death and its cause, and it would come to an end in a courtroom in Manhattan on February 11, 1988, when Judge Alvin Schlesinger delivered his verdict in the murder trial of Carl Andre. He decided that there was not "sufficient evidence" to convince him "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Andre had been proven guilty of her murder.[6]

Mendieta's death at the age of thirty-six and Andre's trial were reported in sensationalist terms by the media, and the New York art scene at the time was divided between those who stood behind Andre, offering him financial and institutional support, and those who, dissatisfied with the judicial system, promised never to forget Mendieta's legacy.

2_Where is Ana Mendieta? The Politics of Remembering

In 1992, more than 500 people gathered outside the newly inaugurated Guggenheim Museum site in SoHo, New York, to shout: "Where is Ana Mendieta?" The protest, organized by the *Women's Action Coalition*, challenged the gender imbalance of the

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artists presented, with only one female artist to four white male artists. Furthermore, they interpreted the presence of Andre's works—and the absence of Mendieta's—as a sign of the institution's complicity in the erasure of marginalized voices.[7]

The protest marked the beginning of a movement against the invisibility and marginalization of women artists under the banner of remembering Mendieta's story.[8] And yet, the way these protests have engaged politically with her biography, turning Mendieta into a kind of a symbolic victim of patriarchal violence, is far from unproblematic. Coco Fusco, a Cuban-American artist, curator, and friend of Mendieta, explains:

> I think she's become a symbol used by many people to address sexism in the art world through personal attacks directed at Carl Andre. Many younger artists exploit the memory of Ana for their own professional advancement […] All of the post-mortem canonization has nothing to do with how she lived or how she was treated during her life.[9]

Like Fusco, Mendieta's family, who carefully administer the artist's estate, are known for not publicly discussing the circumstances of Mendieta's death and Andre's trial. In a recent interview, Raquel Cecilia Mendieta, administrator of the Estate of Ana Mendieta and the artist's niece, commented on the current wave of media projects that have revisited Mendieta's story.[10] She expressed discomfort with projects that focuses particularly on her aunt's death: "Not only are we forced to relive her death over and over again, but we have no say in how she is being portrayed […] How many times does she have to fall?"[11] From this interview, it becomes clear that the family's focus is on promoting Mendieta for her art, and avoiding the media sensationalism that exploits their pain.

And yet, I consider the politics of remembering Mendieta's death fundamental to understanding the place her art occupies today. As historian Jane Blocker has argued, the question "Where is Ana Mendieta?" is rhetorical and has a political character, as it does not really demand an answer: "The one literal answer—that she is dead and her ashes buried in Cedar Rapids, Iowa—is painfully dissatisfying."[12] I agree with Blocker that this question "neatly summarized the central paradox of writing about this artist."[13] Over the 40 years since her death, Mendieta has become increasingly known around the world, and her work has been shown in hundreds of exhibitions—including, this year, a major retrospective planned at the Tate Modern.[14] And yet, the question still points to the need to "rescue" Mendieta from the "peril of being forgotten."[15] But how is this possible? The complexity lies in the fact that Mendieta's death raises broader

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questions about the politics of memory: honoring her trajectory as a human being and artist cannot be achieved simply by including her name in major museum collections around the world. As Blocker herself argued:

> Certainly, the monstrous way in which she died and the sense of raw justice that persists as a result of it suggest that no amount of celebrity, exposure, critical acclaim, or financial success is enough. Remembrance is a process, not a task to be completed: it is carried out through constant repetition and renewal. To be satisfied that Mendieta has been sufficiently memorialized is to admit, finally, that she is gone. "Where?" serves as a living reminder rather than a stone marker for that loss.[16]

The idea that remembrance is a process, rather than a task to be accomplished, makes me contemplate the responsibility that we (artists, curators, academics, cultural theorists, museum directors, art pedagogues) have when it comes to honoring Mendieta's trajectory. Engagement with figures like Mendieta seems indispensable to reckoning with gender inequalities in the art world. Yet, in my experience, many of us still have limited familiarity with who she was and what her work and death represent.

During the five years I spent developing my PhD research, I was struck by how often I found myself explaining my project to art historians, artists, and cultural theorists in Europe who told me they had never heard of Mendieta.[17] It seems to me that, even when we try to avoid the problematic idolatry that follows the marginalized artist when they die, in Mendieta's case, refusing to talk about her death might contribute to an economy of exclusion. What makes the 1992 protest's question still relevant today is its demand for a 'place' in art history that is capable of accommodating all of Mendieta's complexity—not as martyr or an icon of social justice, but as an artist ahead of her time.

3_Reenactments

Another way of understanding the politics of remembrance vis-à-vis Mendieta's work is through the concept of reenactments, a term originally linked to the practice of recreating historical events. In the U.S., practitioners of reenactments dress in historical uniforms and organize large scale gatherings, where they stage aspects of a historical event, particularly those related to the Civil War. For performance scholar Rebecca Schneider, such reenactments shed light on a particular relationship with time—one that is "multiple, layered, or crossed," insofar as Civil War reenactors "consider themselves to be alive but not think that everything that happens live is (only) live, or only

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'now.'"[18] In considering these reenactments as a performance practice of their own, Schneider contests the notion of performance as disappearance:

> The definition of performance as that which disappears, which is continually lost in time, is a definition well suited to the concerns of art history and the curatorial pressure to understand performance in the museal context where performance appeared to challenge object status and seemed to refuse the archive its privileged "savable" original.[19]

For Schneider, the definition of performance as "that which disappears," or which "is continually lost in time," is a definition situated within the context of an emerging generation of artists in the 1970s, who rejected the art object and its commercialization. That is, the 'disappearing' mode of performance served the purpose of confronting the authority of the art object, continuously preserved through archival practices. However, Schneider wonders whether the privileging of such understanding—of performance and its refusal to remain—risks ignoring "other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in how performance remains, but remains differently?"[20] An example of such "other modes of remembering," Schneider argues, is Robert Lee Hodge, a U.S. Civil War reenactor, who became notorious for his "ability to fall to the ground and contort his body to simulate convincingly a bloated corpse."[21] For Schneider, because Hodge's bloated body performance is capable of "touching" the more distant historical record, and even being perceived as "authentic," it evidences the body as an "affective remain" through which performance remains differently.[22] That is, through his physical performance, Hodge embodies the idea of reenactment as a specific mode of remembering, while highlighting reenactment as a form of cultural memory.

Similarly, various artists have also sought to remember the power and force of Mendieta's work through reenactments, using their own bodies as a vehicle for a politics of remembrance.[23] Between 1991 and 1995, American visual artist and Mendieta's friend Nancy Spero recreated *Body Tracks*, a performance that Mendieta created in 1974, and presented at Franklin Furnace in 1982.[24] As Johanna S. Walker, who interviewed Spero, narrates:

> On the evening of Thursday, 8 April 1982, in an intimate performance space known as Franklin Furnace in New York City, a small audience of around 20 people sat waiting in the darkness for something to happen. They had come to see a performance entitled *Body Tracks* (*Rastros Corporales*) by the Cuban artist Ana Mendieta (1948–85). The press release for the event stated that the work had been performed previously in 1976 at the International Cultureel Centrum in Antwerp, Belgium, and it involved "white cloths and animal blood." Aside from this brief description of the event, the audience was literally in the dark as to what might

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> happen once the lights would be dimmed at 8.30 pm. Waiting in anticipation in a semi-circle directed away from the main area of the performance space, this small cross-section of the New York art community sat facing three blank pieces of paper attached to a softly lit wall. Suddenly, the sound of beating drums pierced the silence, and Mendieta entered the room wearing a baggy white shirt and a pair of trousers. Without acknowledging her audience, she walked in a purposeful stride up to the wall where a bowl of animal blood and tempera sat positioned on the floor. Dipping and thoroughly coating her hands and arms in the mixture, she walked up to the first sheet of paper and pressed her hands and arms firmly to its surface.[25]

Based on her recollection as an audience member, Spero reenacted Mendieta's work on three different occasions.[26] During one of these performances, Spero's actions were carefully documented by Irene Sosa in the film titled *Nancy Spero: Homage to Ana Mendieta*. Sosa's hand-held camera follows Spero's actions at close distance, and we see Spero dipping her hands in a bucket of red liquid paint and then pressing her hands and arms against the wall. In a voice-over, we hear Spero say:

> I want her name remembered, which I know it will be. And her work to me was very meaningful. And so, in a way, I would like through my actions to keep it alive. And this is not [sic] This is not just a mere act of, let's say, imitation, but it is a recreation, and it always creates kind of a very powerful emotional feeling in myself of remembrance and of the power of the Santeria drums that we're playing, and just the intensity of the whole experience.[27]

In reenacting Mendieta's performance, Spero not only re-presents the work of her close friend and collaborator but also re-tells her story and re-traces her body. Influenced by post-structuralist linguistic theories, Johanna Walker interprets Mendieta's act of pressing her hands and arms firmly against the surface of the paper and slowly dragging them down as "a visceral track of movement."[28] She speaks of Mendieta's movement of tracking her body on paper as an 'index.' According to the American semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, the index is a type of sign, like the symbol and the icon. But unlike the symbol and the icon, which display a representational or cultural relationship to the thing they refer to, the index is materially linked to its referent.[29] Footprints are indexical signs of walking, and "a low barometer with a moist air is an index of rain."[30] In the same way, Walker argues that Mendieta's imprints function as an index of her body in performance. What is left on paper is materially linked to the action performed.

What is most interesting in Spero's reenactments, however, is that the act of tracing is doubled by another kind of trace. That is, in Spero's recreation of Mendieta's *Body Tracks*, remembrance is revealed as a fundamental part of the actions involved: dipping the hands in paint, bringing them down on the wall, and finally, writing the words

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"Homage to Ana Mendieta." In performing these actions, Spero does not seek to imitate, but to relive the intensity of the experience she had as an audience member. At the same time, her actions are motivated by a sense of honoring her friend and keeping her name alive. As Walker argues, these reenactments staged by Spero in tribute to Mendieta mark an artistic encounter dominated by "re-tracing, re-presenting, and re-telling."[31] In this sense, the indexical sign of Mendieta's body is re-traced by another body—Spero performs her body as an agent of history. In tracing not only her body on the wall, but also Mendieta's body in the act of tracing, she embodies the notion of remembrance as a process. Her reenactments open up the possibility of thinking performance as a site of subversive and embodied politics of remembrance.

4_A Tribute

On the day that marked the 40th anniversary of Mendieta's death, I decided to take part in the politics of remembrance associated with her legacy through a tribute drawing on the movement structure and imagery of Body Tracks. I began the tribute seated and facing my friends while reading fragments of this *_Perspective*. Then, I crossed the room and started a track from *Rythmes Africaines* by Algerian percussionist Abdelmajid Guemguem—also known as Guem—on the speakers.[32] As the drums took the lab, I walked to the back where I had a blank sheet of paper taped to a wooden wall. I dug my hands into a bucket of red tempera, stretched my arms toward the wall, and pressed them against it. Slowly, I let the trance drums pass through my body as I sank to the ground, my hands sliding down the wall. As I reached a kneeling position, I kept my arms extended toward the wall, creating a counterpoint between my upper and lower body. I held this position for a moment as the drums faded. In silence, I imagined my body as both agent and surface of this action. Slowly, I removed my arms from the wall, allowing the red traces to remain.

Unlike Spero's reenactments, my actions were not aimed to reawaken a sense of remembrance in me—and how could they, if I had not witnessed Mendieta's performance myself? Instead, my tribute functioned as an act of collective remembrance. First, my engagement with *Body Tracks* was based on the analysis of her movements in the Super 8 film of the same name. Later, watching Spero's *Homage* and reading her firsthand account, I was able to imagine aspects of Mendieta's performance that the silent film omitted—such as the beating of the Santería drums. While reading Spero's

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description of the beating drums Mendieta used in *Body Tracks*, I immediately imagined the African drums in Guem's work. Although Guem's album predates *Body Tracks* by one year, and I have no evidence that Mendieta knew of it, I imagined a dialogue between these two artists. And in so doing, I incorporated elements of my own imagination into Spero's reenactment, filling the gaps left by the record. Therefore, by responding to Mendieta's performance through Spero's reenactment, I explored the idea of remembrance as a collective process, rather than a form of personal reawakening.

Through my tribute, I embodied the idea of remembrance not only as collective but also as creative. For example, Spero's action of dipping her hands in red paint and pressing them against the wall suggests the notion of remembrance as both 're-tracing' and 'retelling' as Walker argues. Going one step further, my actions explored the idea of remembrance as akin to re-creation. In this sense, what is at stake is not the authenticity of the 're-traced' actions, but the affective dimensions of the performing body as a site of cultural memory. As Schneider has put it, what reenactments highlight is the possibility of performance as a practice not opposed to the archival:

> When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the *act* of remaining and a means of re-appearance and "reparticipation" (though not a metaphysic of presence) we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh.[33]

If performance remains through the body, as Schneider proposes, then performance is tied less to ephemeral aspects of disappearance, and more to embodied modes of experiencing the archive. In this sense, we can imagine the performing body as a site of cultural memory, since reenactments open possibilities for collective and creative forms of remembrance. And such forms cannot be reduced to the personal, but rather take place in the affective and interpersonal space in between different cultural actors—a space akin to the notion of celebration.

Within the context of my tribute to Mendieta, I situate the notion of celebration within the wider category of cultural performances. As sociologists Rusu and Kantola remind us, "celebration" appears to be linked with a set of ideas "such as ritual, commemoration, anniversary, ceremony, holiday, festival, carnival, and festivity."[34] And yet, as the authors claim, "different types of celebration could have radically different outcomes in terms of how they shape social relationships."[35] For example, they compare the egalitarian ethos of festivals that provisionally erase social hierarchies, such

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as carnivals, with the reinforcement of power structures during political celebrations. To navigate such ambiguities, Rusu and Kantola invoke Frank E. Manning's wider definition of celebration as performance, since it entails "the dramatic presentation of cultural symbols."[36] Or, as they put it, a cultural performance is "a symbolic action carried out by a collective actor staged in a spectacular and dramatic fashion. Celebration is, thus, a type of cultural performance that involves a dramatic display of symbolic action and cultural values."[37] In the case of my tribute, the engagement with Mendieta's *Body Tracks* seems to fit their definition: it involves a "symbolic action" (the dipping of hands in red paint symbolizing blood) that is carried out by a collective actor (Mendieta, Spero, and myself), displaying cultural values (collective remembrance). In this way, as I drew on Mendieta's *Body Tracks*—both through engagement with her movements and in dialogue with Spero's reenactment in *Homage*—my tribute was also a way of placing myself within a living and embodied form of collective remembrance. Asking "Where is Ana Mendieta?" became a way of celebrating her work.

I concluded the tribute by reading a letter I had written to Ana:

> Dear Ana,
>
> This is the first time I am writing directly to you, rather than about you. Our lives overlapped for a brief period of ten months—I was born in November 1984, and you left us in September 1985. We never met, were we ever in the same place at the same time. The first time I saw one of your artworks was in 2017. It was also on that occasion that I heard your name and learned more about your story.
>
> Your work spoke to a dormant place inside me; your images awakened an intimacy with the earth. Your connection to the earth as a source of knowledge has sparked memories in me of my childhood, the way my grandmother always seemed to know how to cure illness using plants and seeds she had in her backyard. Such memories were awakened when I walked into the museum where your films were being shown. I remember the immediate feeling of butterflies in my stomach. The first image I saw was your face, in close-up, projected on a wall over three meters high. Your face had a calm expression, and your eyes were closed. A trickle of red liquid began to run down the middle of your forehead. The liquid slowly trickled down your temple until it reached your cheek. It was as if you were wounded at the top of your head and blood was now gushing out. But it wasn't an image of pain; at least, you didn't seem to feel any discomfort.
>
> Many years after making that film, you explained in an interview the relationship between blood and your work. You denied seeing blood as something violent or negative, describing it instead as something charged with divine energy. That definition transformed the way I came to see your work. You brought an understanding of blood that was rooted in your knowledge of Santería rituals, which you learned about in your childhood in Cuba. I still saw blood as a sign of carnal suffering, given my experience with Catholicism as a child in Brazil. But I have always been a very doubtful person, whereas you, on the contrary, showed yourself

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to be a person of outstanding faith. And that faith seems to be part of your work as well.

In your works, you addressed the theme of finitude in a precise and poetic way. Without Christian moralism, you spoke of death as something that was part of life. And I think your frankness about death is one of the aspects of your work that resonated with me. And maybe that is why you often relied on the knowledge of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and Cuba. In these traditions, death is a fundamental part of life—something to be celebrated rather than mourned.

And yet, your tragic and premature death makes it more difficult to talk about. The tumultuous murder investigation and the controversial trial that acquitted your husband are more than enough reasons for family members, friends, artists, collectors, and researchers to ask ourselves, 'Where is Ana Mendieta?' The first time I heard about the circumstances of your death, I felt deeply indignant. Not only did it seem terribly painful to imagine what your family and friends felt during the three years it took to bring Carl Andre to trial, but I also felt enormous anger directed at art education institutions: Why had this part of history been so thoroughly omitted during the many years of art education to which I had dedicated myself? How is it possible that in more than 20 years of being in academia, I had heard so little of your work, life, and death?

Since 2020, I have been researching your work more systematically, investigating aspects of performance in your films. It is academic work, and I never had the opportunity to thank you. And today I am writing you this letter because I want to ask your permission. I feel it is my responsibility as an academic, artist, and person to reflect on your death, not only as mourning, but as a starting point for contemplating new ways to celebrate you. A tribute is something given or contributed voluntarily as due—a gift or service showing respect, gratitude, or affection. This letter is my tribute to you.

_Endnotes

1 This tribute was conceived as a constrained research exercise within a closed laboratory setting, without recording, documentation, or public audience.

2 The terms 'land art' and 'body art' refer to two major art discourses from the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. The first is used interchangeably with 'earth art,' dating back to the late 1960s when it first appeared in the context of two U.S. exhibitions, *Earth Works* (1968) and *Earth Art* (1969). The latter relates to the emergence of the artist's body as a locus of artistic experimentation during the same period, marking a fundamental shift of attitude against the repression of the body within Modernism. See Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, *Land and Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2012); Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

3 Ana Mendieta, "A Selection of Statements and Notes," in *A Sulfur Anthology*, ed. Clayton Eshelman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 322–325, here: 323.

4 What is generally referred to as the 'Goddess art movement' was a popular discourse among women artists during the 1970s, which involved working with rituals and ancient female archetypes of Mother Earth as part of a feminist strategy. For an account of this art movement, its discourse and practice, see Gloria Feman Orenstein, "Recovering Her Story: Feminist Artists Reclaim the Great Goddess," in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970's, History and Impact*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrad (New York: Abrams, 1994), 174–189.

5 For further information on the circumstances of Mendieta's death and Andre's trial, see Robert Katz, *Naked by the Window: The Fatal Marriage of Carl Andre and Ana Mendieta* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990).

6 Rich B Ruby, "Ana Mendieta: A Postscript," in *A Sulfur Anthology*, ed. Clayton Eshelman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 326–329, here: 326.

7 For information on the protest, see Elizabeth Hess, "Born Again," in *Village Voice*, July 7, 1992, 38.

8 In 2017, on the occasion of the exhibition *Carl Andre: Sculpture as Place, 1958–2010* at the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles, protests were again organized by local artists and art workers, who handed out postcards with Mendieta's picture and the text: "Carl Andre is at MOCA Geffen. *¿Dónde está Ana Mendieta?*" [Where is Ana Mendieta?]. See Caroline A. Miranda, "Why Protesters at MOCA's Carl Andre Show Won't Let the Art World Forget about Ana Mendieta," in *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-ana-mendieta-carl-andre-moca-protest-20170406-htmlstory.html>. Since then, a group of female and non-binary people of color entitled WHEREISANAMENDIETA, organize events through social media to fund raise their cause of digital archiving as "radical forms of resisting erasure," see WHEREISANAMENDIETA, Facebook, community page, accessed May 20, 2026, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100078211359459>.

9 Jared Quinton, "Coco Fusco on the Enduring Legacy of Groundbreaking Cuban Artist Ana Mendieta," in *Artsy*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-ana-mendieta-s-enduring-legacy-in-the-words-of-coco-fusco>.

10 Among the recent media projects involving Mendieta's story is the podcast, "Death of an Artist", Season 1, hosted by curator Helen Molesworth. Despite public success—currently 1.6 million downloads—the podcast has been criticized for its sensationalist retelling of the events as described by Katz's 1990 book, without including connections between Mendieta's legacy and contemporary artists. See Helen Molesworth, "Death of an Artist", Season 1, n.d., accessed June 1, 2025, <https://www.pushkin.fm/podcasts/death-of-an-artist>. For a critical reception, Alex Santana and Néstor David Pastor, "The Death of an Artist Podcast Failed Ana Mendieta," in *Hyperallergic*, December 1, 2022, <https://hyperallergic.com/785803/the-death-of-an-artist-podcast-failed-ana-mendieta/>.

11 Kate Dwyer, "When an Artist Dies, Who Owns Her Story?," in *The New York Times*, March 2, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/02/style/ana-mendieta-family-estate.html>.

12 Jane Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 2.

13 Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?*, 2.

14 For information on the recent change on global representation of the Estate of Ana Mendieta, and future exhibitions plans, see "Now Representing the Estate of Ana Mendieta," *Marian Goodman*, accessed September 13, 2025, <https://www.mariangoodman.com/news/1143-now-representing-the-estate-of-ana-mendieta/>.

15 Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?*, 3

16 Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?*, 3.

17 In my PhD project titled *Earth-Body Performances: Performativity, Embodiment, and Mediation in Ana Mendieta's Filmworks (1972–1981)*, I investigate how performance emerges as a mode of mediating relations between the earth and the body, focusing on a selected group of filmworks shot in 1972–1981 at locations in Iowa, U.S., Oaxaca, Mexico, and Havana, Cuba. My dissertation was submitted in July 2025, and its defense took place on November 7th, 2025.

[18] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 90.

[19] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 98.

[20] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 98.

[21] Carlson cited in Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 101.

[22] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 101.

[23] Between 1985 and 1996, Cuban artist Tania Bruguera reenacted various Mendieta's works for her thesis at Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana. She also executed unrealized project left by Mendieta after her death, based on the artist's notes. For a detailed analysis of Bruguera' reenactments, see Gerardo Mosquera, "Tania Bruguera: Reanimating Ana Mendieta," *Poliester: Pintura y No Pintura* 4, no. 11 (1995): 52–55.

[24] *Body Tracks*, directed by Ana Mendieta (March 1974; Iowa: Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, 2014), Super 8 film, color, silent 1:01 min. In August 2024, I was granted permission by the Estate of Ana Mendieta and the Galerie Lelong in New York to watch her film.

[25] Johanna S. Walker, *Nancy Spero, Encounters* (Farnham: Ashgate Pub. Ltd, 2011), 13.

[26] *Homage to Ana Mendieta* by Nancy Spero was performed at the Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal, Germany, in 1991; the Whitney Museum Biennial, New York, in 1993; and the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Connecticut in 1995. See Walker, *Nancy Spero*, 19.

[27] Nancy Spero in Irene Sosa, *Nancy Spero: Homage to Ana Mendieta*, directed by Irene Sosa (2004); "Nancy Spero Papers, 1940–2009," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, online version, <https://vimeo.com/645817093>, accessed on September 13, 2025, my transcript.

[28] Walker, *Nancy Spero*, 15.

[29] For further discussion of the difference between the symbol, icon, and index, see Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce Principles of Philosophy* (Place: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960).

[30] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 161.

[31] Walker, *Nancy Spero*, 19.

[32] Guem, "Rythmes Africains," track 3 on *Rythmes Africains, Afro-Cubains Et Orientaux*, Le Chant du Monde, 1977, LP.

[33] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 10, emphasis in original.

[34] Mihai-Stelian Rusu and Ismo Kantola, "A Time of Meta-Celebration: Celebrating the Sociology of Celebration," *Journal of Contemporary Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2016): 1–22, here: 9.

[35] Rusu and Kantola, *A Time of Meta-Celebration*, 6.

[36] Frank E. Manning, "Cosmos and Chaos: Celebration in the Modern World," in *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. F. E. Manning (Bowling Green, Ohio: University Popular Press, 1983), 3–30, here: 7.

[37] Rusu and Kantola, *A Time of Meta-Celebration*, 8.