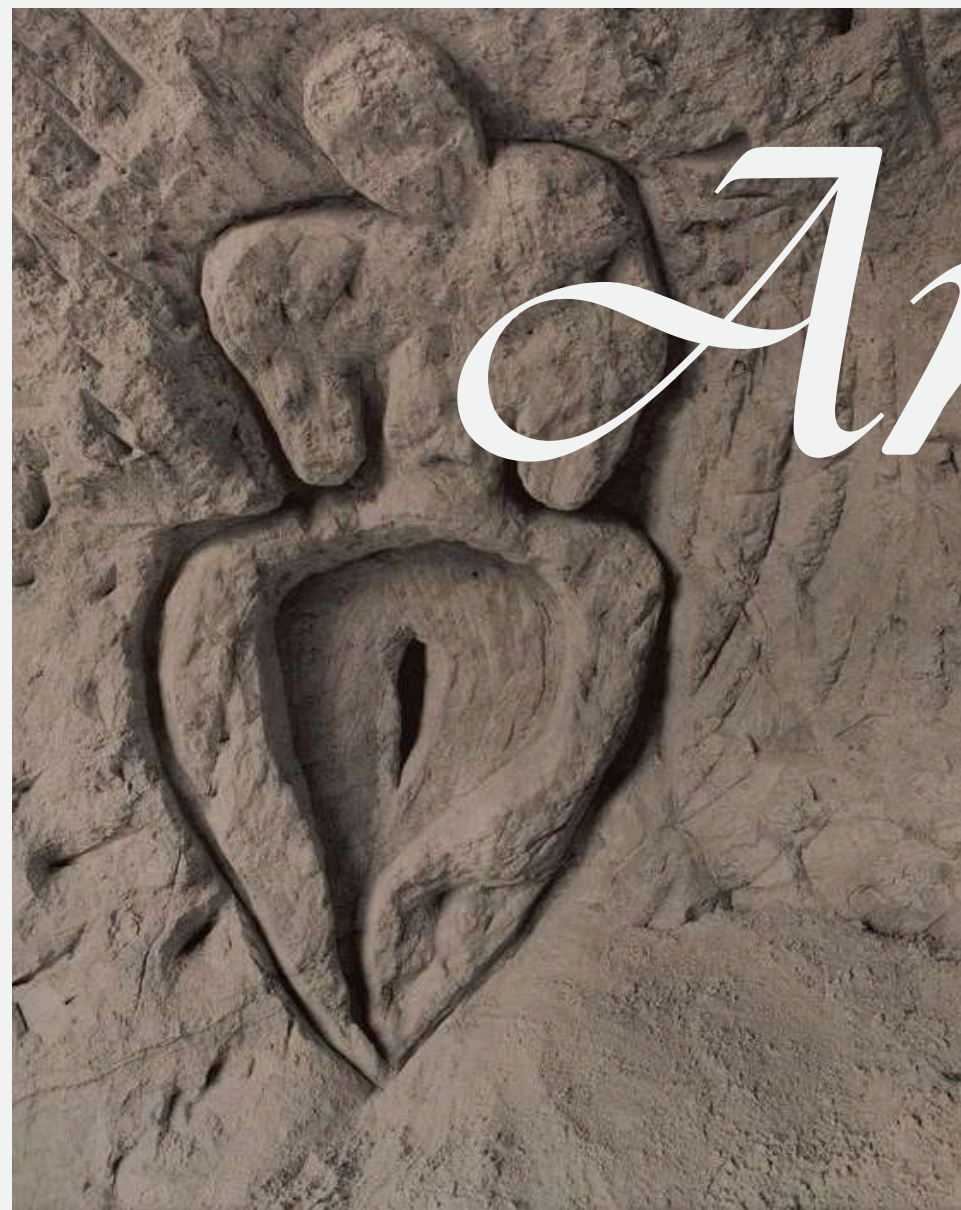
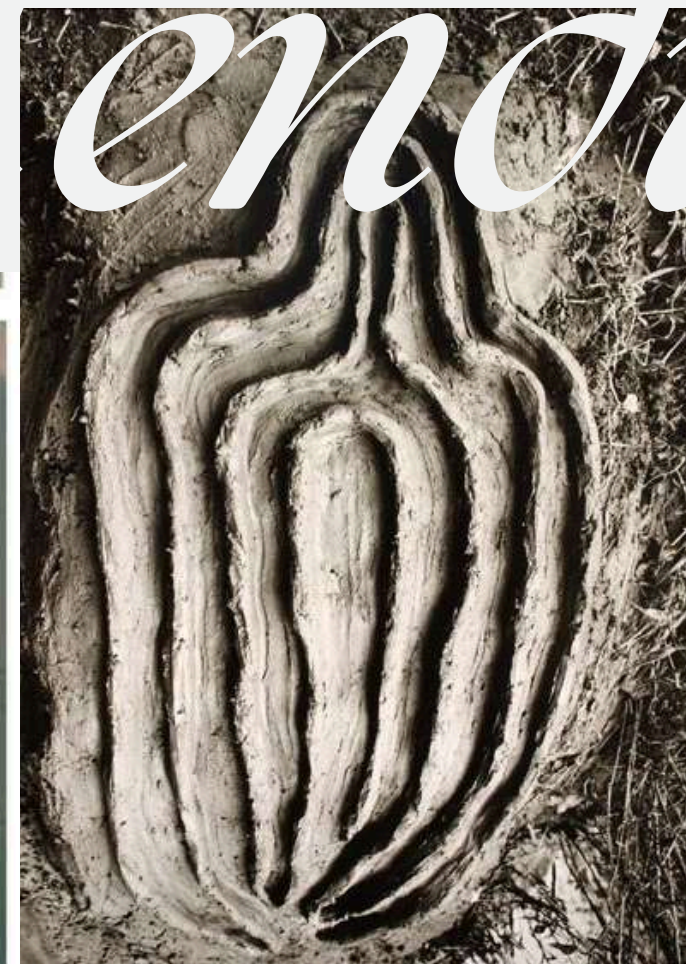




# Ana Mendota



Presented by: Elizabeth Miller





# *Ana Mendieta*

Ana Mendieta was a Cuban-born multidisciplinary artist whose work explored identity, exile, and the human connection to nature. Forced to flee Cuba at the age of 12 through Operation Pedro Pan, Mendieta's dislocation and early encounters with cultural alienation deeply influenced her artistic practice. She worked across performance, sculpture, video, and photography. And is best known for her "earth-body" art, which merges the human form with natural landscapes.

Ana Mendieta, Untitled (Facial Hair Transplants), 1972. Courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

# *Family*

- Ana Mendieta came from a prominent family. Her father, Ignacio Mendieta, was an attorney and the nephew of Carlos Mendieta, who briefly served as president of Cuba. Ignacio was imprisoned for 18 years after the Bay of Pigs invasion.
- Her mother, Raquel Oti de Rojas, was a chemist.
- In 1961, Ana and her sister Raquelin were sent to the U.S. as part of Operation Peter Pan.
- Raquelin daughter, Ana's goddaughter and niece, Raquel Cecilia Mendieta, is a filmmaker and writer who manages the Ana Mendieta Estate and has overseen the digital restoration of Ana's film and video works.



Raquelin (left) and Ana Mendieta (right) in 1985.  
The Estate of Ana Mendieta Colleciton, LLC Courtesy Galeire Lelong,  
New York





# *Religious Customs*

Raised in a devout Catholic family and later placed in a Catholic orphanage in Iowa, Ana Mendieta was deeply shaped by Catholicism in her early life. Her artistic practice reflects this foundation, drawing heavily on religious iconography and ritual.

However, as her work evolved, she began to reconnect with the indigenous and Afro-Cuban spiritual traditions of her homeland, particularly Santería, a religion blending of West African Yoruba beliefs with Catholicism. This fusion of faiths resonated with Mendieta, who incorporated its symbols, rituals, and materials such as: blood, water, and natural elements into her art to evoke a spiritual presence and ancestral connection.



Untitled by Ana Mendieta, 1973. Source: Ana Mendieta Estate

# Important Dates

Ana Mendieta was born on November 18, 1948, in Havana, Cuba. Her childhood was sheltered and she came from an upper-class family. She attended an all-girls Catholic private school.

↑  
1948

1961  
↓

After the Cuban revolution in 1961, Ana Mendieta and her sister fled Castro's regime and landed in Iowa through a program that was run by the US government and the Catholic Charities for Cuban children. The sisters were able to stay together due to a power of attorney signed by their parents. The two sisters started out in refugee camps, and then moved between institutions and foster homes throughout Florida and Iowa, and ultimately ended up staying in Iowa.

Mendieta received her bachelor's degree in art from the University of Iowa

↑  
1969

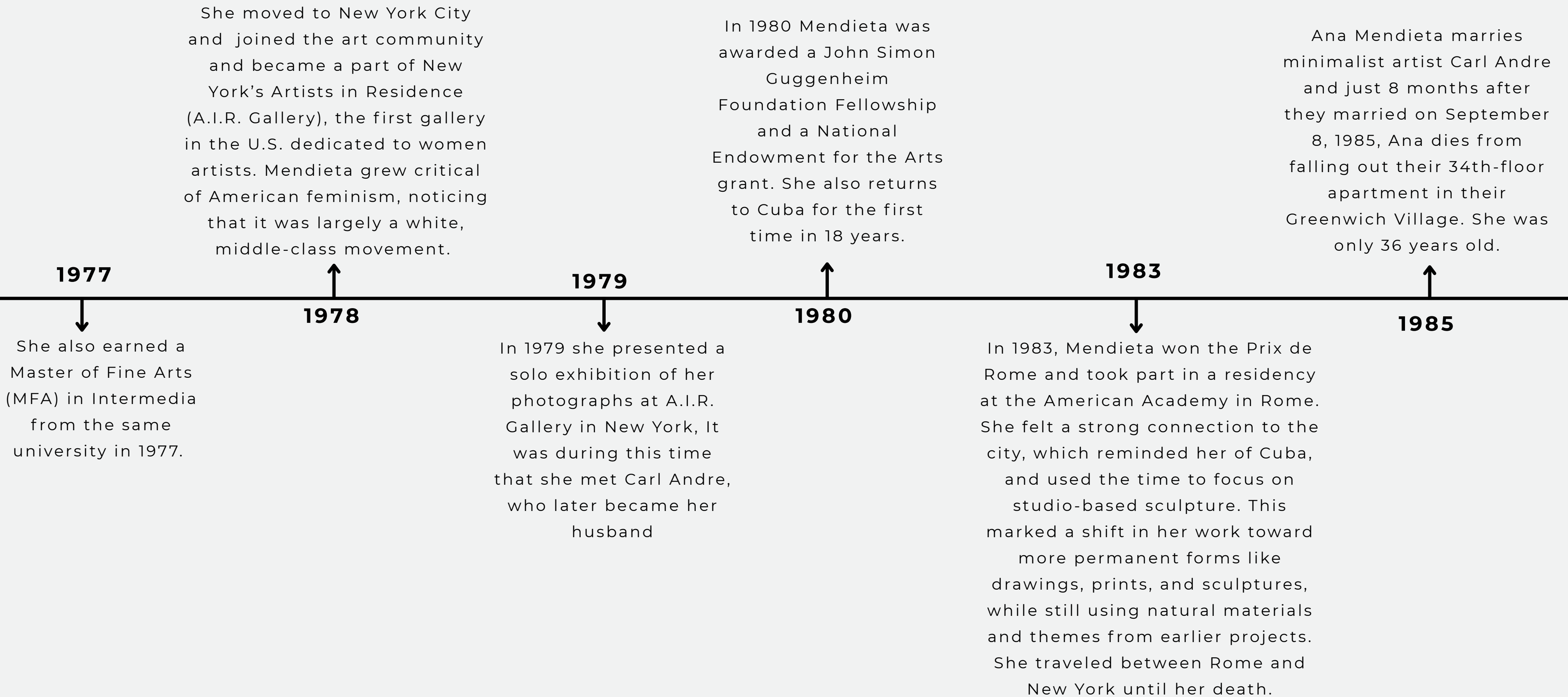
1971  
↓

Mendieta first visited Mexico in 1971, where she became deeply inspired by pre-Hispanic rituals and imagery. She described the experience as "going back to the source." During this time, she began her iconic Siluetas series (1973–1980), embedding female forms into natural landscapes.

Ana Mendieta received her Master of Arts (MA) degree in painting from the University of Iowa in 1972

↑  
1972

# *Important Dates*



# *Early Works*

Ana Mendieta's early work, developed during her graduate studies in the early 1970s, focused on themes of violence against women, cultural exile, and the female body. She used her own body as a central medium, creating intense performance pieces captured through film, photography and performances. Some works include: *Untitled (Rape Scene)* and *Sweating Blood*, which confronted the viewer with the harsh realities of gender-based violence.



*Untitled (Body Tracks)* 1974  
Colour photograph, lifetime print  
© The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, L.L.C.  
Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York and Paris and Alison Jacques  
Gallery, London



*Sweating Blood*, 1973, single channel, super-8mm  
film transferred to high-definition digital media,  
color, silent; 03:18 minutes, © The Estate of Ana  
Mendieta Collection LLC. Courtesy Galerie Lelong &  
Co. Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY



# *Sílueta Series* (1973–1980)

Ana Mendieta's "Silueta" series, created from 1973 to 1980, is an intimate exploration of the connection between her body and nature through earth-body performances. The films explore themes of history, memory, culture, time and ritual, expressed by placing her body on the land. She lays directly on the earth, imprinting silhouettes that are enhanced with natural materials that represent her absence from her homeland.

**“With her Siluetas Mendieta conflated land with home. Such a personal mark on the land represented a mythic whole in Mendieta's attempt to reconstitute ties to her home and assuage the pain of exile. ‘[I was] trying to find a place on the earth and trying to define myself,’ she explained. When she stepped away from the work, the feeling of displacement reasserted itself.” (Cabañas, 1991, 14)**



Ana Mendieta, *Siluetas* Works in Mexico, 1973–77/1991. Pigmented inkjet prints, four parts, 13 1/4 x 20 inches (33.7 x 50.8 cm); eight parts, 20 x 13 1/4 inches (50.8 x 33.7 cm). Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. Gift of Barbara Lee, The Barbara Lee Collection of Art by Women. Courtesy the Galerie Lelong © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC.



Poem by Ana Mendieta (c.1981)

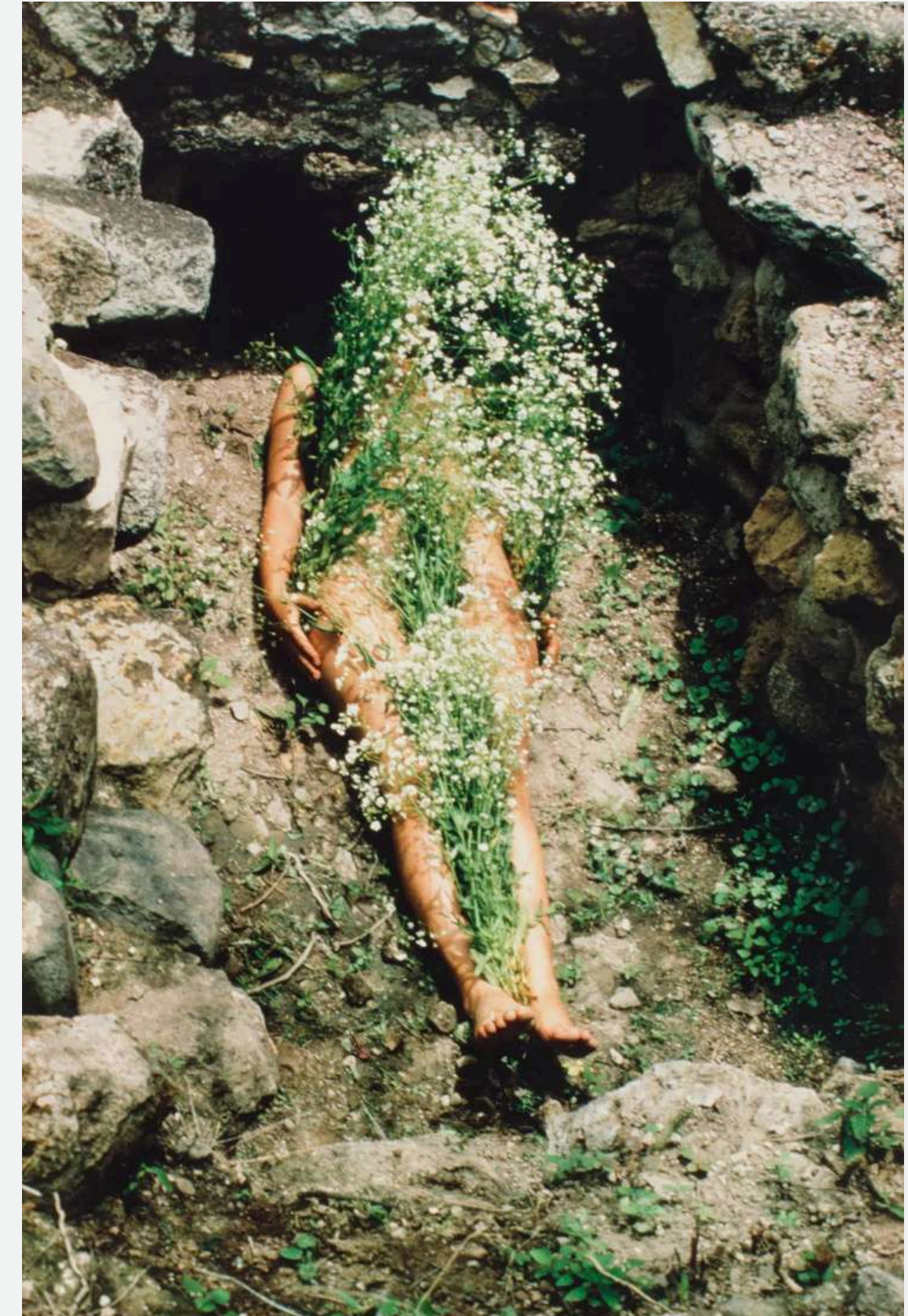
***Pain of Cuba  
body I am  
my orphanhood I live***

***In Cuba when you die  
the earth that covers us  
speaks.***

***But here,  
covered by the earth whose prisoner I am  
I feel death palpitating underneath  
the earth.***

***And so,  
As my whole body is filled with want of Cuba  
I go on to make my work upon the earth,  
to go on is victory.<sup>9</sup>***

Imagen de Yagul, from the series  
Silueta Works in Mexico 1973-1977





- As seen throughout her Silueta series, her body and her relationship to land become both the subject and object within each piece.
- Ana Mendieta was influenced by her surroundings and was able to form environments out of the earth and natural materials that served as rituals to heal parts of her pain.
- Though many of these works were lost to erosion and changing uses of the land, they live on through Mendieta's films and photographs, representing her search for a universal energy that connects all living things



Alma, Silueta en Fuego, 1975 Photograph © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York



*“My art is the way I  
reestablish the bonds that  
unite me to the Universe. It  
is a return to the maternal  
source.”*

*—Ana Mendieta*



Ana Mendieta, Blood and Feathers (2), 1974, color photograph  
© The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.



# *Super 8 films*



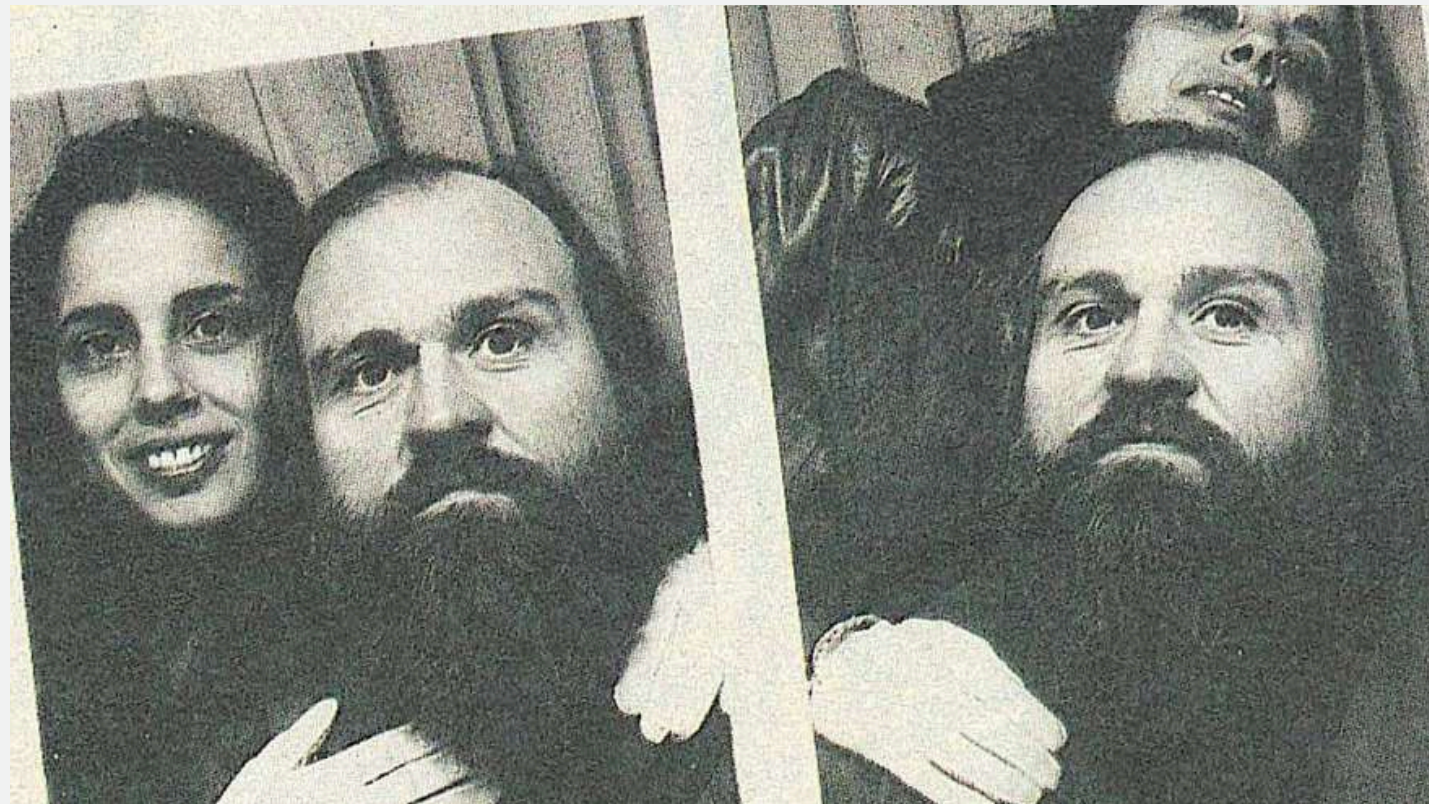
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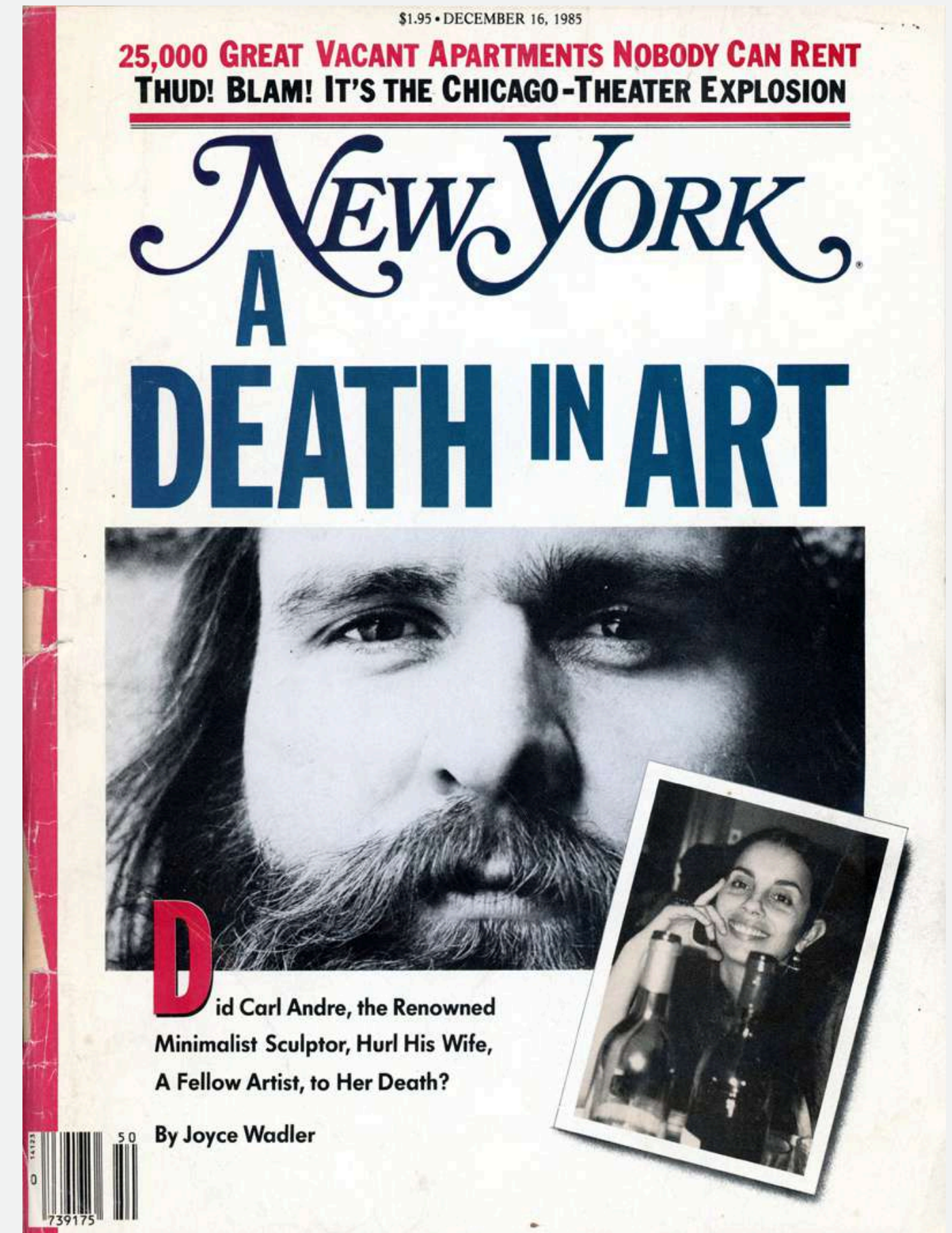
# Marriage

In 1979, while holding a solo photography exhibition at the A.I.R.

Gallery, Ana Mendieta met Carl Andre, a prominent Minimalist sculptor. Their relationship was frequently described as tumultuous. They married in early 1985. Later that same year, Mendieta died after falling from the 34th-floor window of the New York apartment they shared. The circumstances of her death remain unclear, with Andre offering varying explanations. He was charged with second-degree murder but was acquitted in 1988. The verdict sparked widespread criticism. Protests have continued to follow exhibitions of Andre's work, including a group show at Guggenheim Soho in 1992 and a 2014 retrospective at the Dia Art Foundation in Beacon, New York.



Ana Mendieta and her husband, a sculptor Carl Andre, in 1985 | Image source: villagevoice.com



New York Magazine, Carl Andre and Ana Mendieta, A Death In Art, December 1985



# *Where is Ana Mendieta?*

Andre was subsequently charged with her murder, but after a trial in 1988, he was acquitted. Mendieta's death sparked intense debate and sadness within the art world, particularly among feminists, who believed that Andre pushed her out of their apartment window. Despite the verdict, many continued to believe that Mendieta's death was not a suicide and that justice had not been served. Andre's career was largely unaffected by the trial, and his work continued to be exhibited in major museums.

## **WHAT DO THESE MEN HAVE IN COMMON?**



**CARL ANDRE**  
ACQUITTED IN 1988 OF MURDERING HIS WIFE,  
ANA MENDIETA

**O.J. SIMPSON**  
ACQUITTED IN 1995 OF MURDERING HIS EX-WIFE,  
NICOLE BROWN

**Every 15 seconds, another woman is assaulted by her husband or boyfriend. Some of these assaults end in murder. Usually there are no eyewitnesses to these crimes.**

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

Image from: Guerrilla Girls poster. Guerrilla Girls.



Protesters outside Tate Modern, London, demanding the removal of a work by Carl Andre from Tate's new collection display, June 2016. Photo: Charlotte Bell



# *Bringing Ana to life*

Ana Mendieta's work deeply influenced the vision and development of my womenswear collection by showing me how art can serve as personal sanctuary. Her practice grounded in nature, ritual, and the body guided me to approach fashion not just as design, but as a dialogue between self, material, and environment. Like Mendieta, I sought to create from a place of introspection, using raw, natural materials and antique laces to craft garments that feel grown rather than manufactured. Her ability to express both vulnerability and strength through elemental forms inspired my use of organic shapes and protective silhouettes, drawing from imagery such as cocoons and cells. This collection honors Mendieta's legacy by embracing slowness, regeneration, and emotional depth, reflecting a fashion practice rooted in care, connection, and ecological awareness.



Ana Mendieta. Guanaroca (Esculturas Rupestres) [First Woman (Rupestrian Sculptures)], 1981. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co. Licensed by the Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

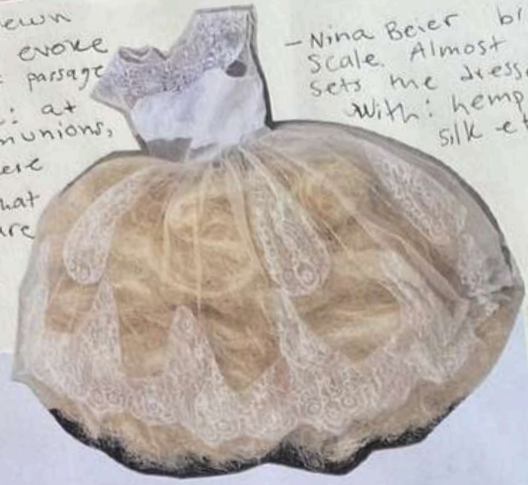


# *My collection*

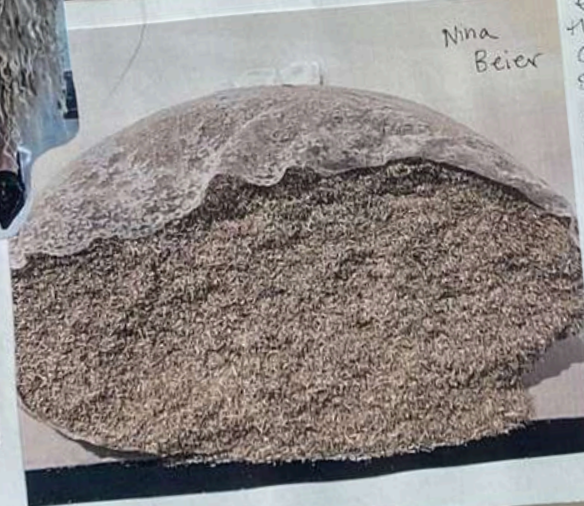




These dresses strewn  
across the floor evoke  
different rites of passage  
in a woman's life: at  
christenings, communions,  
or weddings these  
synthetic outfits that  
come in all sizes are  
both caricature  
and sculptural.

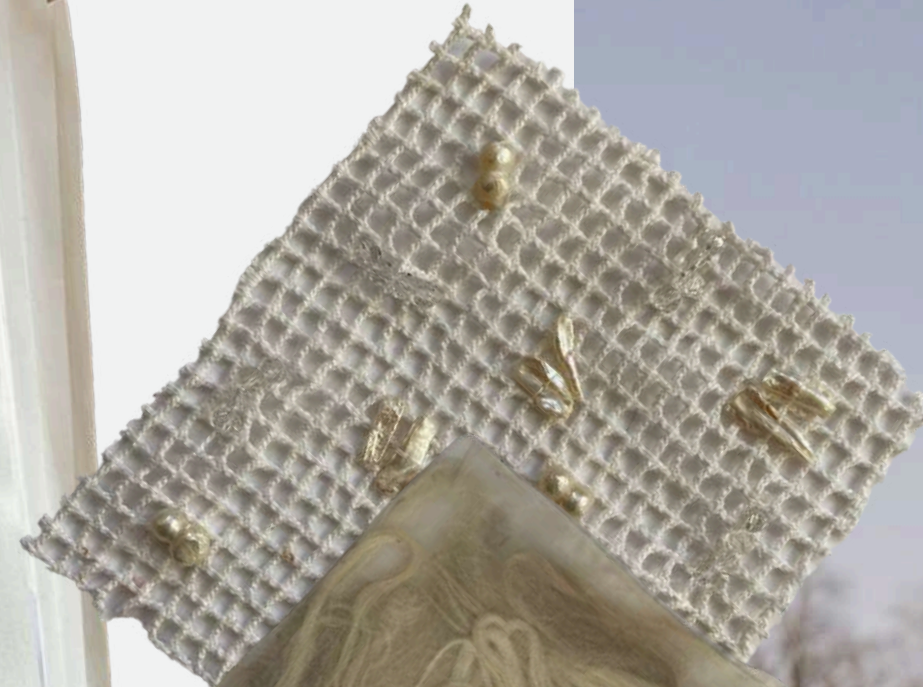


- Nina Beier brings them together and plays with  
scale. Almost like photographic enlargement. What  
sets the dresses apart are what they are stuffed  
with: hemp, llama wool, coir, horsehair, mohair,  
silk etc.



Nina  
Beier

These nat-  
elements  
the var-  
chang-  
status of  
dresses fr-  
icons of po-  
filled contain-  
The artist propo-  
a meeting between  
the artificial and  
natural worlds.  
distinctive feature  
of the material  
being extracted  
and totally raw













# *Creative Project*

For my creative project, I created a short, silent film inspired by Ana Mendieta's Super 8 works, particularly her use of nature, simple movements, and the body to explore identity and presence. Filmed outdoors and featuring two women moving gently through a landscape shared with llamas, the piece reflects Mendieta's quiet, meditative style and her deep connection to the natural world. Like her Silueta series, my film emphasizes the relationship between body and environment, using stillness, softness, and silence to evoke themes of reconnection and femininity.

