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**WHITNEY OPENS ANA MENDIETA: *EARTH BODY*
JULY 1 – SEPTEMBER 19, 2004**



Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Body Tracks)*, 1974
Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection; courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.
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Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972–1985 is the most comprehensive survey to date of the artist's work. It aims to place Mendieta's art in a broader, international context and to examine her life and development as an artist. The exhibition, organized by Olga Viso, Deputy Director, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., premieres at the Whitney Museum of American Art on July 1, launching a four-venue national tour.

"The life and art of Ana Mendieta have frequently been the source of intrigue and speculation for decades as considerable debate about her untimely death has dominated public and critical discussion. As a result, the richness and complexity of her art, as well as its important legacy to contemporary culture, have not been fully

acknowledged," said Olga Viso. "This exhibition decidedly shifts the focus to Mendieta's life and significant production as an artist and places it in a broad international context as well as the social and artistic fabric of the 1970s and 1980s."

Ana Mendieta: Earth Body includes more than one hundred works and traces the artist's development from the early performance-based works she made as a student at the University of Iowa, where she was grounded in the conceptual and body-oriented practices of the 1960s and 1970s, to the creation of independent sculptures and objects in the early 1980s made with fragile, earthen materials. The objects on view include photographs, drawings, sculptures, film, and sequenced slide projections documenting early performance works and time-based actions in nature, which are drawn from numerous public and private collections in the United States and Latin America as well as from the Hirshhorn's own significant holdings of Mendieta's art.

Rooted in nature and in the body, Mendieta's art was inflected by personal identity and femininity, and distinguished by the singular hybrid form she created. Her earth-body works, or Silueta Series (silhouette series) -- sculptural interventions in the landscape that inserted her naked figure (or its outline or contours) in a natural setting -- fused aspects of Conceptual, process, performance, body, feminist, and land art. While contributing significantly to these varied dialogues, her work does not fit neatly within any of the accepted terms used to describe artistic activity in the decade of the 1970s.

Embracing the aims of feminism, Mendieta quietly subverted the monumental gestures of male land artists such as Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer by working at a human scale in the landscape. Critical of the exclusion of artists of diverse races and ethnicities from the art world and early feminism, she vehemently asserted her own trans-cultural identity. Borrowing freely from a variety of cultural traditions throughout the world, she frequently appropriated symbols and aspects of the ritual practices of ancient and indigenous cultures

of the Americas, Africa, and Europe in her art. While abnegating all forms of boundaries, Mendieta's cipher -- the naked female form that performs in the studio, merges with the landscape, is etched on a leaf, or is burned into the soil or a tree trunk -- remained at the center of her production.

THE ARTIST

Born in 1948 in Havana, Cuba, Mendieta came to the United States without her parents in 1961 as a twelve-year old fleeing Castro's Revolution. Her personal and professional development was greatly informed by the painful experience of exile as well as the cross-fertilization of Caribbean and North American values. In 1980 she returned to the island of her birth, eighteen years after her traumatic exile as an adolescent. Over the next three years, Mendieta made seven visits to Cuba, developing strong ties with a community of emerging artists there and immersing herself in the island's rich Afro-Cuban traditions. She also served as an important conduit of information between Cuban and North American art worlds. To this day, Ana Mendieta remains the only Cuban expatriate from the United States to participate fully in Cuban national exhibitions.

While deeply rooted in her personal experience, Mendieta's art reveals a passionate desire to connect with a wider, collective human heritage. Her aim to unravel layers of individual and society history and unmask latent ethnic, cultural, and gender biases in society, was to foster greater self-awareness and comprehension of the complex diversity of humanity. It is for this reason that her humble yet prolific production as an artist continues to be relevant today. The meaning of her work has particular resonance in a global society struggling to grasp the overwhelming points of correspondences and differences between individual, nation, and culture.

THE EXHIBITION

Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985 was organized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian

Institution, Washington, D.C. The exhibition is made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation, the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Bruce T. Halle Family Foundation, and The Judith Rothschild Foundation. Initial research was supported by Craig Robins and a Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Grant Program. Additional support for the exhibition catalog was made possible through the generosity of Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz and Isabel and Ricardo Ernst.

THE TOUR

Following its presentation at the Whitney, the Mendieta exhibition will be on view at the Hirshhorn from October 14, 2004 through January 6, 2005; the Des Moines Art Center from February 25 through May 22, 2005; and the Miami Art Museum from October 7, 2005 through January 15, 2006.

PROGRAMS

- **Artist's Talk:** On Thursday, July 8 at 7 pm, artist Janine Antoni will present **Under the Influence of Ana Mendieta**, the first of a new Whitney series exploring important inspirations and influences among artists. Antoni discusses her sculptures and performances in relation to the work of Ana Mendieta.
- **Panel Discussion: Spaces Between Body and Earth: The Art of Ana Mendieta**
On Thursday, September 9 at 7 pm, artist Carolee Schneemann, Olga Viso, curator of **Ana Mendieta: Earth Body**, and others explore a number of key issues in Mendieta's work, from the artist's early performances and ephemeral "Silueta" works, to her films, projections, sculptures and drawings of the 1980s. The discussion is moderated by Whitney curator Chrissie Iles.

THE CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated 288-page catalog, co-published by the Hirshhorn and Hatje Cantz Verlag in Ostfildern, Germany, and distributed by DAP. The publication is the most definitive monograph produced to date on the work of Ana Mendieta, and contains biographical, analytical and interpretive essays by curator

Olga Viso; Whitney curator Chrissie Iles; art historian Julia Herzberg; and art critic Guy Brett. Art historian Laura Roulet has contributed an extensive chronology of the artist's life and career.

ABOUT THE HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the nation's museum of modern and contemporary international art, serves an estimated 700,000 visitors annually. The museum's collection encompasses some 11,500 paintings, sculptures, mixed media installations and works on paper. The Hirshhorn maintains active exhibition and educational programs, examining and informing the public about the art of our time. The museum, open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., is located at Independence Avenue and Seventh Street S.W. Admission is free.

ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of 20th-century American art and includes the entire artistic estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Arshile Gorky, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become a measure of the state of contemporary art in America today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

Benton and America: Works on Paper	Through September 5, 2004
Art and Photography 1963-1978	Through September 5, 2004
Ed Ruscha Drawings	Through September 26, 2004
Ed Ruscha and Photography	Through September 26, 2004
California Dreaming	Through August 22, 2004
Ana Mendieta	Through September 19, 2004
LOT-EK: Mobile Dwelling Unit	Through September 19, 2004
Pop Concept: Highlights from the Permanent Collection	Through October 24, 2004

Jennifer Pastor
Romare Bearden
Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor

October 6, 2004-January 2005
October 14, 2004-January 9, 2005
October 28, 2004-January 16, 2005

The museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. For information, please call 1-800 WHITNEY or visit www.whitney.org.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria:

Architecture by Numbers	Through July 9, 2004
Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler	July 22, 2004 - October 22, 2004
Fight or Flight	November 4, 2004 - January 2005

The Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria is located at 120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street. Gallery hours: Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Sculpture Court Hours: Monday through Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sundays and holidays 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Whitney Museum at Altria is funded by Altria Group, Inc. Admission is free. Free gallery talks are offered every Wednesday and Friday at 1:00 p.m. For further information, please call (917) 663-2453.