

"Nothingness"; An Exploration of Anamnesis Through Materiality.

by

Jimena Diaz Jirash

Masters in Philosophy and Cultural Analysis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2000

BArch, Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father.

“The thing that’s important to know is that you never know.
You’re always sort of feeling your way.”

Diane Arbus¹

¹ Diane Arbus cited in *Art Blart*. <https://artblart.com/2012/01/25/exhibition-diane-arbus-at-jeu-de-paume-paris/>



Figure 1. *Trapos al sol*, 2023

Introduction

Before starting the MFA program my practice was about nothing though I knew even then that this was not entirely accurate. I knew that it couldn't be about nothing when it felt so important and close to me. However, whenever I started a new art project, I never seemed to focus on a particular subject, concept, or idea. In fact, I never truly knew what the art was about until it was finished, and time had passed. In some cases, I realized, even years later that it was not about nothing, it was about "nothingness".

This thesis is a reflection on this apparent inaccuracy. It is an exploration for which there is no precise word to describe it. It is a meditation on my artistic research, the process I follow and the richness that comes from not knowing², being open to uncertainty and wonder through my specific perspective, a female who was born, raised, and has lived most of her life in Mexico.

I began the MFA with the intention of researching anamnesis, involuntary memory and the female body. Initially, I explored with the same photo base practice I had been working with, but soon recognized that an experiential approach would be better suited to explore these concepts. For this reason, I decided to investigate different forms of knowledge through materiality.³ While the thinking process of my artistic research allowed for transferability across media such as painting, photography, and architecture, the creative process shifted to an embodied one, achieved by "working-through" the materials chosen: concrete, beeswax and textiles.

Each of the works I developed raised new questions, which became the backbone upon which the next work was created. They allowed the realization that even as the work I was making was based on my research questions, I became aware of alternative reasons for my actions and decisions, motives which were originally hidden but apparently present in my body. It was unexpected and interesting to become aware of these other motives that seemed to be in contradiction to my reasoning process and my cognitive knowledge. In a way, I embodied what I was researching without realizing it. Nearing the end of the program, the most recent work I have made raises questions that bring me back to where I started. I have circled my way back to "nothingness" through anamnesis, involuntary memory, and my own body. Far from reaching any definitive conclusions, I have arrived at a point where more questions have been raised. I recognize that some of my artistic decisions do not have definitive answers and that this

² Rachel Jones 'On the Value of Not Knowing: Wonder, Beginning Again and Letting Be'. Lecture for the Symposium 'On not Knowing', hosted by Kettle's Yard and New Hall College, Cambridge, 29th June 2009

³ These different forms of knowledge are information and skills that we possess but that we do not necessarily understand as will be addressed in this thesis.

openness, even when it might seem paradoxical, makes the search worthwhile. In this way, the "nothingness" of my practice entering the MFA program has become fuller and more complex.

A New Medium. The Unknown-Known, and Involuntary Memory

In this section I give the context for the thesis and delve into the theory behind my understanding of involuntary memory, anamnesis and Historical Multitude which form part of my artistic research.



Figure 2. *Untitled, 2022*

My mother once told me that one of the saddest sounds for her is the horn of ships. I believe this feeling is ingrained in her soul's essence, passed on to her by her family's history. My great grandmother, *la abuela* Victoria, immigrated to Mexico from Lebanon when she was just 14 years old. She had fallen in love with a Turkish boy and her family decided the best thing to do was to send her as far away as possible from him. She was sent on a ship to Mexico with some relatives, where she was to marry a Lebanese man that the family had chosen for her, as soon as she arrived. A man she knew nothing about. The month-long journey became even longer when the ship had to stop and quarantine in the middle of the ocean because one of her relatives became gravely ill with a contagious disease and died. He was thrown overboard, and the sea became his grave.

There is a different type of knowledge beyond cognition and that we all possess, even when we don't know that we do. It comes to us through experiences we have had and also experiences that haven't been lived by us directly but by past generations, by our "*Historical Multitude*", to borrow Min Jin Lee's term.⁴ "Historical Multitude" informs in many ways who we are, how we feel, act and relate to the world, and our sense of belonging. It is a form of knowledge that is "remembered" by us in an involuntary way. I say "remembered" but it is actually an unforgetting.⁵

Admittedly, it is an elusive concept.

This "unforgetting" can take place as an involuntary memory or as anamnesis. In "Anamnesis of The Visible II", Jean François Lyotard tells us how "Anamnesis and history keep present what causes itself to be forgotten. But while the latter [history] does so by testifying, by attempting to be faithful to what happened, the former [anamnesis] lets itself be led by the unknown that happened then, by what is unpredictable and invisible in the event. One can, one must remember the Shoah, but its terror is not a historical object; it is a matter of anamnesis."⁶ While history remembers the event, anamnesis cannot forget, or "unforgets" its affects.

The best known example of involuntary memory is probably Proust's scene with the madeleines in *In Search of Lost Time*. Here the narrator experiences a childhood sensation when tasting the madeleine that he has dipped in tea. It is a "memory" that the narrator was not looking for and which according to Jullie Gallard, "No act of voluntary memory would have been able to reconstruct such a past in its sensory vivacity and presence."⁷ We could be tempted to say that Proust's narrator has re-experienced a childhood event, but this would be a misunderstanding. "Re" implies repetition and therefore difference and a past, while the experience of the affects produced by the tasting of the madeleine are unique. There is no "re", the affects are experienced in the exact same way as a single event, without difference between then and now.

4 Jin Lee, Min "In Praise of bell hooks", *New York Times*, Feb. 28th, 2019.

In this article Jin Lee explains how bell hook's *Ain't I a Woman* made her realize how her body contained "Historical Multitudes" alluding to hooks understanding of feminism as being intersectional. In a similar way the other type of knowledge we possess and which I am referring to in this thesis is also intersectional. The other knowledge we possess comes from the intersection of experiences we have had in as much as those we haven't had but that our past generations have.

5 Donato Mancini tells us how "Anamnesia is the loss of amnesia. Versus the loss of memory, anamnesia is the loss of forgetting." Donato Mancini "Times as Plural Differential" in *Anamnesia: Unforgetting. Polytemporality, implacement and possession in The Crista Dahl media Library & Archive*. Pg. 45

6 Jean François Lyotard "Anamnesis of The Visible II" in *Qui Parle*, pg. 23

7 Julie Gallard "Recherche I" in *Re- An Errant Glossary* Pg. 4

Anamnesis, like involuntary memory, collapses time. What happened in the past and was experienced by our Historical Multitude, is not remembered as much as forgotten. It is a form of knowledge that lives within us unmodified by time flourishing without us seeking for it to emerge. Involuntary memory and anamnesis are difficult concepts to grasp. We can theorize but can never have certainty about how they work. In my understanding there is an important difference. While involuntary memory arrives to us as passive subjects triggered by something external, anamnesis happens to us constantly through our actions. According to Lyotard it is only by "working-through"⁸ that it is possible to grasp what is not possible to understand rationally and where anamnesis makes itself present. As Lyotard explains "Painting struggles, it *labors*...to leave a trace or to make a sign in the visible of a visual gesture that exceeds the visible...A double paradox: first of a chromatic matter that one cannot see because it exceeds the visible, and which nevertheless is, if I may say so, already colored. And then...of a gesture that is not the doing or not simply the doing of a conscious subject, namely the painter."⁹ Here Lyotard is alluding to the fact that what painting does is try and make visible, probably in an attempt to understand, that which can't be reduced to sight and lies beyond cognitive knowledge. However, the painter by *laboring*, by "working-through" is able to unforget this other type of knowledge because their actions belong not only to them but to their Historical Multitude. Involuntary memory and anamnesis work in the same way on an individual level as they do collectively.

During the fall semester, 2022 my practice was photo based. I created small, ephemeral installations with organic materials, or actions with my body that I then photographed. Most of these images were taken either with a macro lens focusing on details, textures and perspectives that reduced the depth of field, or a very low shutter speed rendering a blurred image of the action performed. For example, *Untitled*, 2021 (Fig. 3) the photographic body of work that I created during Fall, 2021 showed close-ups of my lips while performing tense and aggressive actions. Because the frame is tightly cropped, all perspective is removed and with it, any reference. The lips are fragmented from the body. The viewer is left with texture, colour and the frozen action making it difficult to recognize what it is they are observing, because what are lips without a body?

8 Jean François Lyotard "Anamnesis of The Visible II" in *Qui Parle*, Pg. 22

In his lecture, Lyotard uses "working-through" in relation to Freud's *Durcharbeitung*. implying an active form of involvement, a relation to remembering through actions. For Freud *Durcharbeitung* was the last step in a new form of clinical analysis where the patient found his way through actions, in contrast to previous forms of analysis like hypnosis where the patient assumed a passive approach.

9 Jean François Lyotard "Anamnesis of The Visible II" in *Qui Parle*, Pg. 21

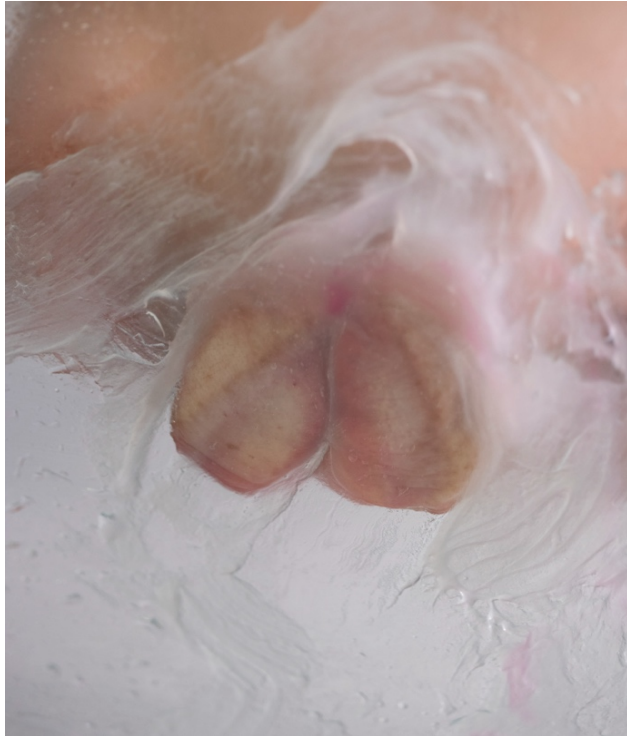


Figure 3. *Untitled*, 2021

Because I was exploring knowledge that comes from not knowing, uncertainty and wonder through the female body in a patriarchal society, it was probably the hardest medium to work with given vision's strong relation to cognitive knowledge. As Juhani Pallasmaa tells us in *The Eyes of The Skin. Architecture and The Senses*, under the Cartesian Model sight has been linked since the Greeks to the idea of knowledge and Truth: "Since the Greeks, philosophical writings of all times abound with ocular metaphors to the point that knowledge has become analogous with clear vision and light the metaphor for truth".¹⁰ Therefore, investigating anamnesis through a visual medium like photography would make it



Figure 4. *Untitled*, 2021

¹⁰ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and The Senses*, pg. 6

more complex given that it is a visual centered medium.

It is true that photographs can possess what Roland Barthes called the "punctum"¹¹, which could trigger an involuntary type of memory. Nevertheless, that which we perceive with our eyes in a photograph, the emotions it produces in us, "require the rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture."¹² Perhaps this is the reason why Barthes states that "Ultimately, or at the limit, in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes."¹³ If a photograph "pierces us", with its "punctum" it is neither through sight, nor through a rational process that we perceive its affects.

For this reason, I decided to try a new medium that would allow me on the one hand, to subdue sight's hegemony and on the other, to investigate anamnesis in an embodied way. I would try something new and give myself permission to not know and potentially fail. The shift from digital photography to a more material base practice allowed me to explore phenomenological and embodied research where cognitive knowledge would be moved to the background. The process became tactile, olfactory, and much more physical. It taught me to feel comfortable with the loss of control, when failure happens, and to work in partnership with the "materials intelligence".¹⁴ It forced me to embrace uncertainty and remain open to the results and possible changes of direction. With these reasons in mind, I chose to work with concrete and beeswax, generous materials to investigate anamnesis because the work's final form would be determined by variables that enter the equation during the creative and material processes as they interact with each other in unexpected ways. I discovered that uncertainty as a methodology needed to be embraced in order to move forward while embodying this research.

¹¹ Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* Pg. 26-27

¹² Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* Pg. 26

¹³ Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, Pg. 53

¹⁴ Rachel Jones claims that "aesthetic wisdom lies at least in part in knowing how to let go of knowledge so as to let matter bring its intelligence to bear on the ways in which we work with it.". 'On the Value of Not Knowing: Wonder, Beginning Again and Letting Be'. Pg. 6



Figure 5. Beeswax elements of *Untitled*, 2022

Wax is a highly ductile and malleable material that has a strong olfactory component: it smells extremely sweet. According to Didi-Huberman, it is "...characterized only by being uncharacterizable. Each time we recognize a material quality in wax, we immediately see another material quality that is exactly the opposite."¹⁵ Wax expands and contracts with changes in temperature, it is simultaneously flexible and brittle. And yet you can't really control it since it is alive and allows alterations in its form albeit only to a certain degree. Its ability to capture tactile traces makes it ideal to register an embodied type of practice.

Working with concrete requires strength. The chemical reaction that happens when you add water generates heat, dryness, and a burning sensation on your hands. Depending on the type of concrete, within a few minutes it becomes heavier. It is harder to mix as it starts its curing process and begins to solidify. By constantly moving concrete while it is in a liquid state, you can extend its working time before it sets. This material also has a strong olfactory component, an earthy-musty smell due to a dampness

¹⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman "The Order of Material: Plasticities, malaises, Survivals", 1999 in *Materiality. Documents of Contemporary* Pg. 46

that remains for days. Drying too fast will diminish its strength and fractures may appear. The concrete's process is dependent on the weather and the surrounding environment since results vary depending on fluctuating temperature, and humidity conditions. Because this material is composed of various elements, its colour and properties change according to where the cement, sand and gravel were sourced, and the proportions used. Even when using the same brand and batch of concrete, results are inconsistent. Another important characteristic of concrete is being simultaneously strong and fragile, the latter due to its lack of flexibility if not used in combination with some type of metal like rebar.



Figure 6. *Untitled*, 2022

The pieces I made exclusively with wax for *Untitled*, 2022 (Fig. 6) traced the movements of my body. The process started with the melting of wax, pouring it onto silicone-coated paper and moving the viscous liquid around by tilting the paper in different directions while it cooled back into a solid state. The solid and flexible "skin" that resulted was then peeled from the paper leaving behind a record of my body's movements.

The installation of these wax pieces gave the work a floating quality while still anchored to the floor. The lighting came from two sources close to the ground hitting the suspended objects at different angles and creating multiple shadows on the back wall. My intention with the wax pieces was to convey the notion of

repetition suggesting both similarity and variation. I saw them as tangible records of my body's knowledge. Documents that archive its movements and reactions. In turn, the shadows casted by the wax figures symbolized the Historical Multitude contained within that knowledge.

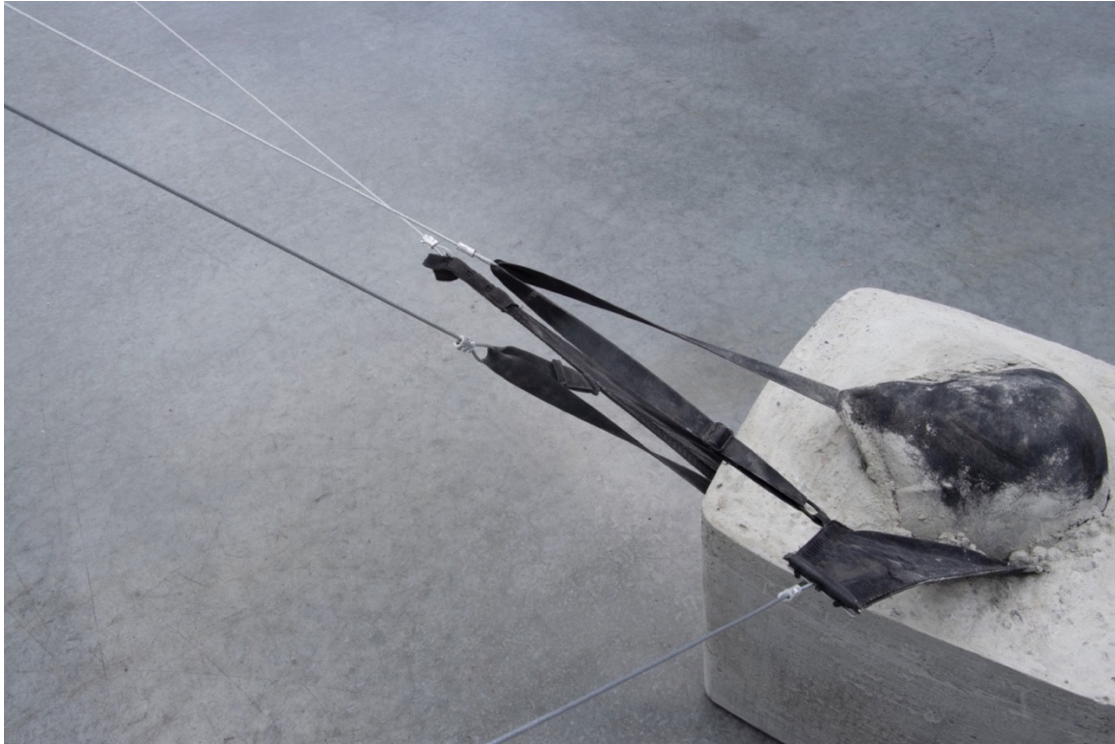


Figure 7. *Untitled*, 2022



Figure 8. *Untitled*, 2022

As I worked with wax, I simultaneously began experimenting with the possibilities of concrete. The artwork created from this material allowed me to embody and explore the violence, tension, suffocation, and resistance that female bodies endure in patriarchal societies. I navigated this through the material qualities of concrete juxtaposed with the softness of garments conventionally worn by women. (Fig. 7 & 8). I created three cubes with bras embedded in them with the straps and other parts, such as a cup, escaping the grip of the concrete cube. They were installed by stretching the fabric to its maximum capacity with steel cables. Testing the limits of their flexibility created a powerful contrast with the strength of the concrete. The installation raised questions for me such as what would happen if they were suspended and how much could the garments hold? What would be my body's reaction if I engaged more with the cubes if I "labored" or "worked-through" their heaviness by pushing and pulling or dragging them?

Exploring with wax and concrete was unsettling at first. I was used to having far more control over the creative process with digital photography. Not knowing how the materials would react and work was, at times, nerve-racking. It made me realize that it wasn't me working with the materials but that a partnership was being formed, and we were working together. It allowed a stronger connection to how my body moves and recognize its limits, to how my hands know when something needs more or less water, heat, or pressure. It forced me to stop thinking and listen more deeply to other ways of knowing. These new materials encouraged me to feel instead of understand my research questions. They made me "work-through".

Affective Landscapes. Exploring anamnesis through materiality

In this section I discuss the work Affective Landscapes, 2022 which is the result of my exploration with anamnesis through an embodied process using concrete, beeswax, and textiles.

"Losing too is still ours; and even forgetting still has a shape in the kingdom of transformation. When something's let go of, it circles; and though we are rarely the center of the circle, it draws around us its unbroken, marvelous curve."

Rainer Maria Rilke¹⁶



Figure 9. *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

16 Rainer Maria Rilke "For Hans Carossa" in *Ahead of All parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Pg. 165



Figure 10. (Above) *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Figure 11. (Center) *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Figure 12. (Below) *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Affective Landscapes, composed of three horizontal plywood bases, is 60cm high, 200cm long and 51 cm wide. On top of each of these forms lie four slabs of concrete 33 x 46 x 1.5 cm with embedded wax and textile. The slab at the bottom of each structure holds a strip of textile that falls to the ground and continues for another 2.5 meters. The shapes and folds molded with the strips of fabric can be read as vaginal-like or wounds. The texture of the wax's wrinkles appear skin-like, whether as a residual trace in the concrete or at certain points adhered to its surface. There is simultaneous tension and fragility in how the concrete grasps and precariously holds the textile and wax. The concrete shows different textures, and at certain points it creates crevasses and fractures held together by the wax covered fabric. There is a sensation of a presence and absence in how these materials are worked-through in the final form.

During the summer, after my first year in the MFA program, I decided to focus my artistic research on femicides in Mexico. It is a subject that deals with violence, death, trauma, pain, grief, absence, forms of remembering, mourning and giving voice to those who have been unjustly silenced because of their gender. This subject affects everyone, transcending political boundaries, social and economic classes, and genders because death, pain, grief, and mourning are universal. I didn't intend to find a solution, or to provide an answer but to possibly create a space to feel the absence and mourn. Creating work specifically about this form of violence was undertaken as a further exploration of anamnesis and involuntary memory not only on an individual level but collectively as well.

As a Mexican woman, who was born, raised, and lived most of her life in Mexico City, I know what it means to be a female body in a patriarchal society. I have experienced first-hand many of these forms of violence. However, I also know that I don't know what it means under different circumstances. I have been fortunate to enjoy many privileges and have not had to experience what numerous others still endure.

When I started this body of work, I questioned how ethical it would be to give voice to those who have been silenced? How could I produce an artwork that would appropriately create the space to forget? How could I evade the problem faced by most monuments? According to James E. Young, "once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember. In shouldering the memory-work, monuments may relieve viewers of their memory burden"¹⁷ How could I and the viewer possibly relate to the experience that those missing had gone through? How can we respond to an experience that generates uncertainty in us, not because we don't acknowledge it has happened but because we haven't experienced it ourselves? Is it possible to create an artwork that generates the space where the maker and viewer can connect to experiences we haven't actually lived but with which we could empathize with? Would an embodied process help generate such artwork by allowing us to "work-through" empathic affects in the same way that Transversal Feminism¹⁹ "assumes that the shifting process involves a careful examination of the "compatible values" that "cut across differences in positionings and identities."²⁰ I am fortunate enough to be alive, and yet I can relate

17 James E. Young "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today" Pg. 273

18 I did not intend for *Affective Landscapes* to be a monument since it was not about remembering a historical event, or about remembering more generally as much as a space to forget the affects. Nevertheless, I recognized that just like monuments it was dealing with absence.

19 Transversal Feminism "[recognizes] that from each positioning the world is seen differently, and thus any knowledge based on just one positioning is 'unfinished'". For this reason, it proposes to work across differences through two stages: *rooting* and *shifting*. Roth, Jenny et Chambers, Lori. "Transversal and Post-Modern Feminist Praxis in Everyday Politics.", Pg. 7-8

20 Jenny Roth et Lori Chambers "Transversal and Post-Modern Feminist Praxis in Everyday Politics." Pg. 8

to the feelings of absence, death, pain and grief that the victims and their relatives live with because of other experiences albeit in no way as painful as that felt by the victims' families. Maybe, an artwork that presents the opportunity to not think but to call upon those affects through a bodily encounter might be a valuable approach.

Affective Landscapes, produced over the summer 2022, was an attempt to create a space to mourn the femicides of Mexico through an anamnesiac process. It is an exploration of the questions raised after the work produced the previous Spring (Fig. 7-8). For this purpose, I chose to keep exploring with concrete, beeswax, and textiles. However, this time the materials were chosen not only for their qualities but also for symbolic reasons. I decided to keep working with beeswax because of its material qualities and the partnership I had cultivated with it. I also appreciated how its flexibility and fragility reminded me haptically of skin. This was especially evident in the places where it rested on the surface of the concrete and the fabric.

I chose the fabrics for their strong historical connection to women in Mexican Culture. The colours, two different shades of pink and a vivid red, emphasized a gendered connection. The lighter tone of pink is a colour often associated in Mexico with baby girls and is thought of as feminine and soft. The stronger tone is a saturated pink which stands closer to magenta and since the mid twentieth century has been called "Mexican Pink". It is a term coined by artist Ramón Valdiosera, who described it as "intrinsic to Mexican Culture: traditional toys, the garments used by Indigenous People, Mexican candies and vernacular architecture; in Mexico, everything is painted with that colour".²¹ Lastly, the vivid red colour was chosen for its strong association with blood, life, and death.

21, Ramón Valdiosera cited by Ana Elena Mallet in "Ramón Valdiosera, inventor del rosa mexicano" Gatopardo November 4th, 2017 <https://gatopardo.com/reportajes/ramon-valdiosera-inventor-del-rosa-mexicano/>



Figure 13. (Above) Detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022



Figure 14. (Below) Detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022



Figure 15. Detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Concrete is the construction material most often used in the built environment in contemporary Mexico. There is a strong parallelism between how the natural environment is violently altered and destroyed to construct cities in colonized societies and how female bodies are treated in patriarchal ones. As Jane Darke claims, "Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete."²² The power exercised in patriarchal societies is one of domination, not consensus.

In Mexico concrete has taken over large urban areas. In more remote places and in Indigenous communities it is still possible to see more traditional and environmentally friendly forms of construction like those built with adobe. However, the possibility of concrete taking over everything is a constant threat. Building with adobe implies impermanence. People yearn for concrete's solidity, and because it is falsely perceived as a synonym for development. "In theory, the laudable goal of human progress is measured by a series of economic and social indicators, such as life-expectancy, infant mortality and education levels. But to political leaders, by far the most important metric is gross domestic product, a measure of economic activity that, more often than not, is treated as a calculation of economic size. GDP

²² Jane Darke Cited by Leslie Kern in "Upward-thrusting buildings ejaculating into the sky. Do cities have to be so sexist?" *The Guardian*, July 6th, 2020

is how governments assess their weight in the world. And nothing bulks up a country like concrete."²³ Equating progress to a country's GDP is problematic on many levels because it does not take into consideration factors that affect quality of life such as equal opportunity, health, education, or the environment amongst other things.



Figure 16. Urban landscape in Mexico City

Poor and marginalized people in Mexico often see concrete as a symbol of social and economic status. Those with the economic means, construct one-room spaces with concrete blocks and rebar. Often, the rebar sticks out from the columns' structure. They are left there with the wishful thought to one day expand the construction with a second floor. Since this rarely happens, the landscape becomes a gray mass with "hopeful" rebar piercing the sky.

I have come to recognize how contradiction dwells within me. Another reason why I probably chose concrete was that, as someone who studied architecture, it is a material that felt familiar even when I knew how challenging it is to work with. For example, it took Peter Zumthor, the Pritzker Prize architect, 10 years and several experts to build the project for his "rammed concrete" house in Devon.²⁴ (Fig.17). I am also aware that even when I know how destructive concrete is towards our environment and how it

²³ Jonathan Watts "Concrete: The most destructive material on Earth." *The Guardian*, February 25th, 2019

²⁴ Oliver Wainwright "Brutal beauty: how concrete became the *ultimate lifestyle concept*" *The Guardian*, February 26th, 2019

reinforces ideas of patriarchy, some of the most compelling spaces are those of Brutalist Architecture. This might have to do with Brutalist Architecture's interest in creating spaces that engage all the senses through the honest use of raw materials according to their properties. This is unlike other trends such as Postmodernist Architecture, where the use of materials and forms pretend to be what they are not, flattening the spaces to a mostly cold visual encounter.



Figure 17. Peter Zumthor's house in Devon, UK

Early in the process of making *Affective Landscapes*, it became clear that one of the more interesting aspects was the relationship that wax, textiles and concrete formed amongst each other. Their qualities were amplified or diminished by the characteristics of the other materials. Sometimes they complimented each other, sometimes they would repel. Concrete has the potential to be a totalizing, devouring material, tightly holding a grip on wax and textiles. If not handled with care, it can suffocate and make them disappear. However, if wax manages to stay on the surface of concrete, it creates the appearance of skin. Wax penetrates concrete's porous surface refusing to let go or be displaced forming a barrier that protects and separates.



Figure 18. (Above) Macro detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022



Figure 19. (Below) Macro detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022



Figure 20. Macro detail from *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Textiles are more forgiving. They are the more passive material of the three. Their flexibility, opaqueness, colour, and texture can potentially be transformed by wax. Its relation to concrete varies according to the textile's location. If submerged, concrete holds it tightly in place, potentially consuming it entirely. If the textile remains on the concrete's surface, it simply bonds to it. One of the exciting aspects of this relationship is how the textile's flexibility complements concrete. Once the concrete completely settles, and the curing process is finalized, even if it breaks or suffers fractures, the textile will hold them together. At first, the textile seems to be inoffensive towards the concrete. However, if the textile is in contact with the concrete, even when removed, it leaves a trace behind and it remains present as an echo. Depending on the amount of time and the amount of water introduced to the concrete's mixture, the textile bleeds into the concrete some of its properties like its texture, colour, and in some cases, it even sheds small particles of its fabric.



Figure 21 Macro detail of *Affective landscapes*, 2022

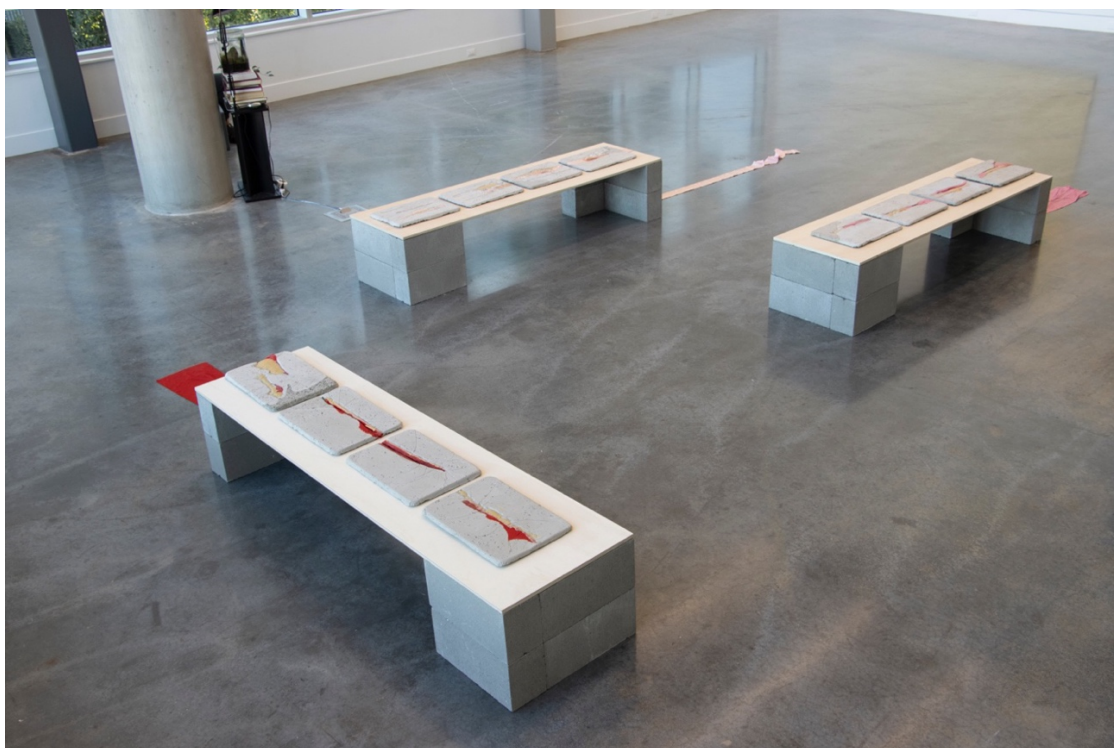


Figure 22 *Affective Landscapes*, 2022

Affective Landscapes is in close conversation with artworks such as *Untitled*, 1997-1999 by Doris Salcedo (Fig. 23 & 24) and *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)*, 1991 by Felix González-Torres (Fig. 25). Salcedo's *Untitled*, 1997-99 is a mixed media object composed of a wooden chair, concrete, and rebar. The chair's *raison d'être* has been transgressed. The seat has been perforated with rebar and the space between the chair's legs, filled with concrete, transforming it from a utilitarian object to a poetic one. This piece, like others the artist created during the '90s, deals with the disappearance of civilians during the decades-long Colombian conflict between the government, the guerrillas, and para-military forces. It is a work that speaks directly to absence, death, pain endured and grief. Salcedo recognizes "[her] work is based on experiences [she] lacks...Therefore, it is made from an unfamiliar, unstable place, simultaneously strange and proper. It is made from an indirect perspective, and place of insufficiency from which a fragmentary, incomplete history is precariously told and retold."²⁵ By recognizing that her starting point is as someone who stands outside of the experience in question, Salcedo makes her work feel honest and in solidarity.

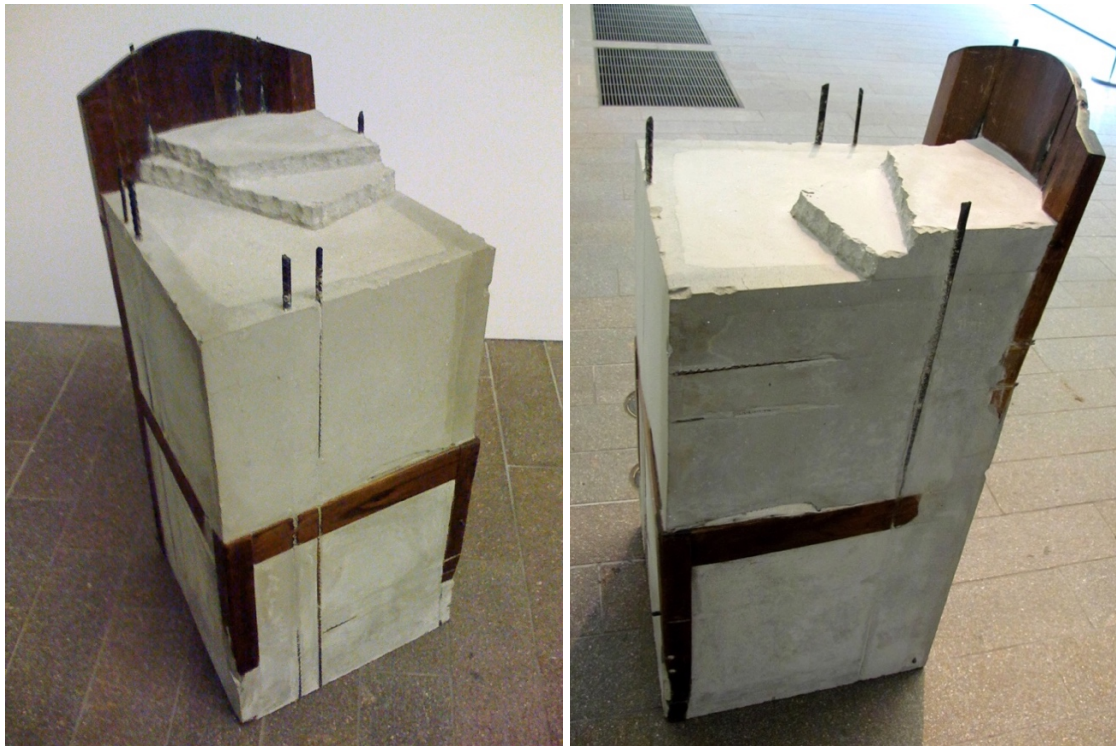


Figure 23. *Untitled*, 1997-99, Doris Salcedo

Figure 24. *Untitled*, 1997-99, Doris Salcedo

²⁵ Doris, Salcedo, quoted in MoMA's website (<https://www.moma.org/artists/7488>) after *Doris Salcedo: The Materiality of Mourning*, Mary Schneider Enriquez (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums, 2016), xvii.

Salcedo employs worn out furniture belonging to the victims that her practice addresses. She makes their experiences more palpable by filling the empty spaces within these objects with concrete. In the artist's words, she uses concrete "to articulate that kind of radical silence that is death and that radical pain. And so I [she] thought concrete was just that kind of brutal material. It is the last word...when you put concrete on something there is no rescuing it. That is the absolute end of that object."²⁶ Ultimately, the artwork becomes the "catalyst for internal reflection and public dialogue about trauma and grief."²⁷ In this sense, Salcedo's interventions offer a space and an opportunity to unforget.

Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)*, 1991, consists of 175 pounds of candy wrapped in multi-colour cellophane. It is a complex and multilayered artwork that speaks to death, loss, and absence. I find the way in which the artist navigates these concepts to be deeply thought-provoking, and the experience it offers the viewer equally compelling. The work was created in response to the passing of the artist's partner, and it serves as a poignant tribute to his life. However, it is also about the violence inflicted upon victims and their loved ones by society's neglect during the HIV crisis. The artwork invites viewers to interact with it by taking a piece of candy. This gesture highlights our involvement in the disappearance of the victims while simultaneously marking our communion with them through the act of eating the candy.

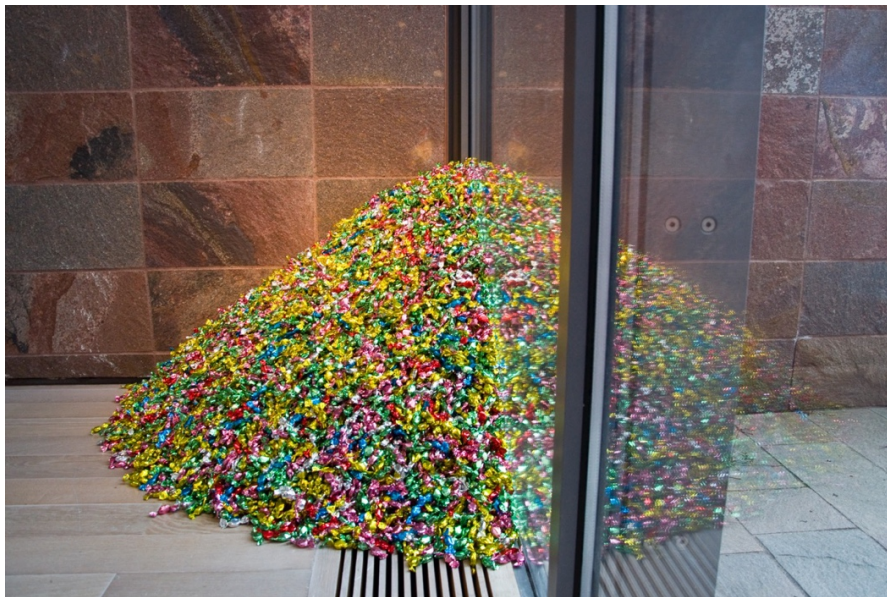


Figure 25. *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)*, 1991 by Félix González-Torres

²⁶ Doris Salcedo in YouTube video of Doris Salcedo at Glenstone (5'7"-5'21")
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw5U48pJ9vk>

²⁷ The MET Museum on Doris Salcedo's *Untitled* 1997-99
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/838202>

Both of these works, like *Affective Landscapes*, deal with violence, trauma, pain, grief, mourning and absence. Each artist takes up trauma through unconventional materials as a means of reminding the viewer of what is absent. While there are similarities between them, the differences are the most revealing to me. Salcedo uses concrete to mark absence, while *Affective Landscapes* uses it to signal patriarchy's oppression over female bodies. It presents concrete as a strong and simultaneously brittle material alongside softer mediums such as wax and textiles that manage to escape its destructive force. The wax and textile residue communicate something like hope and resilience. Salcedo has chosen to flesh out the idea of the body by using concrete, which is radically different to how González-Torres works with candies or *Affective Landscapes*' material and symbolic exploration of wax and textiles.

A lingering question since the making of *Affective Landscapes*, is whether the body needs to be overtly present in the work or if it should inform the research and creative process only. I wonder whether by preserving the presence of the body in the artwork, I am falling into the same trap that monuments do. It was not my intention to create a monument, and I do not think that *Affective Landscapes* works as one since it is not remembering an event but trying to create the space to unforget the affects. However, by formally alluding to the idea of a body through its horizontality, length, and skin like traces, it might inadvertently trigger a remembrance, a voluntary type of memory. Some viewers of *Affective Landscapes* at Emily Carr University's MFA interim exhibition *State of Practice* questioned whether it was a memorial, which meant that there was still something unresolved in the work. I wonder whether a stronger solution would be to create a formless or shapeless sculpture that encapsulates the affects generated by the body throughout the creative process. If not a counter-monument, perhaps it could be a counter-artwork?

Side note:

Several months after I finished *Affective Landscapes*, while looking for an aerial view of some of Mexico City's concrete and rebar landscapes, I came across an image of its gray urban grid with a "Mexican Pink" line that ran along its streets for many blocks. This line, created by the pink tarps used by street vendors in what is called *mercados sobre ruedas*,²⁸ visually reads as an urban wound, a division, a fracture within the concrete urban maze. Markets are traditionally experienced in Mexican culture as feminine spaces where most of the vendors and the buyers are women because it is women who take care of domestic endeavors such as the cooking of all meals. It is within these spaces that fresh produce

²⁸ *Mercado sobre ruedas*, literally translates as Market over wheels. These are markets that are held typically once a week on a specific street which is closed on that day to vehicular traffic.

is bought and sold. I see this as a softer space cutting through the city's urbanization, a fracture within the concrete. I now realize that my experience of having lived in these spaces informed *Affective Landscapes* without being aware that it did until I saw this image.



Figure 26. Aerial view of Mercado sobre ruedas in Mexico City.

Attempted. Accessing the body's anamnesiac archive.

In this last section I speak about the work Attempted, 2022 which explores the idea of a "formless" artwork as a direct response to questions raised after the creation of Affective Landscape, 2022. It also addresses the idea of the body as an anamnesiac archive.

"A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus, formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit."

Georges, Bataille²⁹



Figure 27. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022

²⁹ Bataille, Georges in "Formless", 1929 in Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art Pg. 90

As part of *Skulptur Projekte 87*, (Fig. 28 & 29) Sol Lewitt designed *Black Form*, a concrete cube made of aerated concrete blocks painted in black. The sculpture, placed in front of Münster's Palace in Germany, was dedicated to the missing Jews of the city. Shortly after its construction, the faculty from the city's university and other citizens complained that it ruined the plaza aesthetically and despite the curator and the artist's complaints, the sculpture was demolished in March 1988. "An absent people would now be commemorated by an absent monument...Memory of the monument remained strong in the community's mind however."³⁰ Lewitt's sculpture, without his intention, might have become one of the first counter-monuments.



Figure 28. (Right) *Black Form*, 1988 Sol Lewitt



Figure 29. (Left) *Black Form*, 1988 Sol Lewitt

According to James E. Young the idea behind counter-monuments was born in Germany amongst its young citizens as a response to the challenge of creating a memorial for an event they did not directly experience and that would address the criticisms to traditional monuments raised by scholars, art critics, and historians.³¹ There are many examples of counter-monuments that have been erected in Germany, but as rightly pointed out by Young, "the best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all, but simply the never to be resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name and to what end."³² Perhaps the best German memorial to the Holocaust is an absent physical memorial. By not being able to find a consensus on how to appropriately remember the absence of the missing and murdered of the Holocaust, this event remains unforgotten, and their affects continued to be felt.

³⁰ James E. Young "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today" Pg. 267

³¹ James E. Young "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today" Pg. 267-273

³² James E. Young "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today" Pg.270



Figure 30. *Attempted*, 2022

Attempted, 2022 was created in response to the questions that *Affective Landscapes* raised. The intention was to produce a "counter-artwork" following the arguments behind counter-monuments. An artwork where the idea of the female body would be present throughout the creative process but removed from the final piece in an attempt to return to the viewer the possibility to "work-through" their own anamnesis. What would it mean to focus on the process as the most important aspect of the research rather than on the resulting physical object? What would a formless or shapeless artwork look like?

Giacometti, was one of the first artists to explore a formless art-object with the small sculptures created during his Surrealist period which he referred to as "*Objets désagréable à jeter*" (Disagreeable objects to throw away). Giacometti was likely inspired by George Bataille's idea of the *informe* or *formlessness*. "The sense was that art making should be an act of debasement and destruction: a breaking down, rather than a build up".³³ Since then, formlessness has become a significant artistic strategy for exploring difficult and challenging subject matter.

³³ Karen Rosenberg "A Throwaway? Not From This Angle." New York Times, October 4th, 2012
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/05/arts/design/a-disagreeable-object-at-the-sculpturecenter.html>

The website for *The Institute of Artificial Art Amsterdam, Department of History* describes, under *Radical Art. An analytical anthology of anti-art and meta-art*, a section dedicated to *informe*. In it, a comprehensive list of the different types of formlessness that various artists have investigated, is given: tangle, jumble, litter, mound, heap, junk, foam, fluff, mud, dirt, fat, trash, gooz/ooze/putty and mess.³⁴ Under the section titled "heap" a quote by Lucy L. Lippard points out how some of these artists "[...] were more concerned with allowing materials, rather than systems, to determine the form of their work."³⁵ Furthermore, as Ska, the author of the list, rightly states "one may plausibly try to find the form of formlessness at the level of methods and procedures rather than at the level of individual objects. Then it gives rise to *process art* and *chance art*. Or one may give up altogether, and embrace *nothing* or *destruction*."^{36 37} All of the artists included in this list address in one way or another the idea of formlessness. However, some do so in a more literal sense while others come closer to Bataille's definition, where the formlessness comes not from whether or not they have a form, but from their inherent operational nature. I expand on this difference below.

Conceptually, *Attempted*, 2022 is about those women who suffered an attempted murder due to their gender, and miraculously survived. The artistic process for this work was material based as it redirected the affects of gendered violence into the handling of the materials. An attempt towards formlessness was physically impossible given that matter takes up space as form. However, it comes close to Bataille's *informe* in that it debases and undermines the resulting artwork. As Yve-Alain Bois affirms, Bataille's "*informe* has only an operational existence: it's a performative, like obscene words, the violence of which is not so much a question of what they refer to as it is of their very form of delivery. The *informe* is operation."³⁸ In the same sense, the pieces that compose *Attempted* are formless not because they don't take up space but because they are performative. They channel/activate the affects that have been "worked-through" in the process.

34 For a full list of the artists cited within each of the categories under "informe", see [The Institute of Artificial Art Amsterdam, Department of History's](#) website.

35 Lucy Lippard cited by Remko Ska "Informe" in *Radical Art. An analytical anthology of anti-art and meta-art*. The Institute of Artificial Art Amsterdam, Department of History.

36 Remko Ska "Informe" in *Radical Art. An analytical anthology of anti-art and meta-art*. The Institute of Artificial Art Amsterdam, Department of History.

37 For a list of artists dealing with "Formlessness" at the level of methods and procedures see ["Physical Processes Generating Works of Art"](#). For a least of artists dealing with "Formlessness" as nothing or destruction see ["Nothing"](#) and ["Destruction"](#)

38 Yve-Alain Bois "To Introduce a User's Guide", Pg. 29



Figure 31. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 32. (Above) Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 33. (Below) Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 34. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 35. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 36. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 37. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022

The pieces that constitute *Attempted* were created with concrete and red velvet. Their scale and traces are a direct result of my body's movements, strength, capability, and capacity. They are formed with the maximum amount of concrete I could handle in order to wrap around the red textile and tightly secure all the material components. A large sheet of plastic is placed on the ground with the red velvet in the center. Concrete is poured on the top and sides and then wrapped around with the help of the plastic with different tools used to secure it in place. Because moving concrete becomes more difficult as it sets, rapid movements are required. It was a physically demanding process. The pieces were so heavy that shifting, rotating, and rolling them to better distribute the mass to cover the textile demanded great strength. It was an embodied and performative practice that left no room for cognitive thought. Tightly tying the concrete with the plastic involved forceful actions. The way the concrete swallowed the velvet felt violent.

Each piece weighs around 35 kilos which translates to not being able to pick them up on my own. Moving them meant dragging across the polished concrete floor of the workshop. Because the pieces were held by translucent plastic two things were feasible. First, my hands were able to feel the heat emanating from them as the chemical reaction of the concrete curing took place. It felt like the pieces were reflecting the energy captured during their creation. Second, it slowed down the concrete's setting times, allowing the possibility to visually and haptically capture how water evaporated from the concrete and condensed as it touched the plastic's surface. Inside the plastic it was possible to see the formation of droplets of water,

which my hands were able to touch a few days later, as I unwrapped the pieces. The shape obtained was the recording of my body's anamnesiac archive.³⁹ That is to say, of my body's actions, movements and capacity which are informed by the knowledge given to me by my Historical Multitude. In some areas, it was still possible to see the red velvet through a fracture. The textile was still present, but it was engulfed by a mass that restricted its visibility.

To push the work further, I decided to break one of the pieces, which again required strength and violence. Removing the concrete from the textile was demanding and a labor-intensive process. Even when the textile was "liberated" from the concrete, it had lost most of its properties. It was no longer red, soft, or pliable. It showed the tears and scars that the actions had left behind. However, it was fascinating to see that the textile, just as I had noticed in *Affective Landscapes*, also left traces on the concrete. Small pieces of concrete showed a haunting of the textile, its texture, colour, and particles. The dried-up textile generated a pink cloud that settled as pink dust. The textile's colour had bled onto the concrete's composition of cement and sand.

³⁹ I realize that speaking of an anamnesiac archive might seem a contradiction in terms if we understand that at the core of the archive's nature lies Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* "sublation" implying preservation and cancellation. The idea behind an archive is to organize and preserve but there is also a selection that takes place which differentiates. Anamnesis as unforgetting implies that there is no selection, no differentiation. When I speak of an anamnesiac archive what I would like to highlight is that the body could be understood as the vessel that stores and preserves the information and skills, the Unknown-known that we possess through our Historical Multitude, but where we do not get to select or cancel the affects it contains. In this sense an anamnesiac archive is particular.



Figure 38. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 39. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022



Figure 40. Detail from *Attempted*, 2022

Attempted, 2022 was shown during the final critique of the Fall 2022 term. It is composed of five "formless" pieces made with concrete containing red velvet inside, along with the transformed textile and the pink dust it left behind. These five pieces have strong ties with the creative process of artworks such as *Up to and Including Her Limits*, 1971-1976 by Carolee Schneemann and *Resilience of the 20%*, 2013 by Cassils. *Up to and including Her Limits*, is the visual record of Schneemann's suspended body as she moved up, down, and across a corner space covered with large sheets of paper. It was performed nine times between 1971 and '76 before becoming an installation, even though the artist thought of it as a painting. *Up to and Including Her Limits* is an exploration of the limits of painting in as much as a feminist response to Pollock's action paintings, where the artist wanted her body to become part of the canvas.⁴⁰ As Schneemann herself expressed: "My entire body becomes the agency of visual traces, vestige of the body's energy in motion."⁴¹ *Up to and including Her Limits*, is a portrait of Schneemann's anamnesiac archive. *Resilience of the 20%*, by Cassils is a sculpture formed with the bashed clay resulting from the artist's performance *Becoming an Image*, 2013-Ongoing, where they "unleash an attack on a 2000 pound clay block...The title points to a sickening statistic: In 2012, murders of trans men and women increased

40 MoMA on *Up to and Including Her Limits*
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/carolee-schneemann-up-to-and-including-her-limits-1973-76/

41, Carolee Schneemann cited by MoMA
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/carolee-schneemann-up-to-and-including-her-limits-1973-76/

by 20 percent around the world".⁴² Just as with Schneemann's work, Cassil's sculpture is the record of the body's movement and strength.

Like the Schneemann's and Cassil's examples given above, *Attempted*, is the physical trace of the body's anamnesiac archive which is registered by a "working-through" during the creative process. While Schneemann chose to restrain her body, Cassil's body and my own remained free to move around as they were met by the material's own resistance. This fact is important because it removes the artist from a place of being in full control as an intentional subject (which arguably Cartesianism promises) to one guided by the materialities engaged.⁴³ In the case of *Attempted*, the pieces created were as much a result of my body's laboring as the concrete's properties marking my limits.

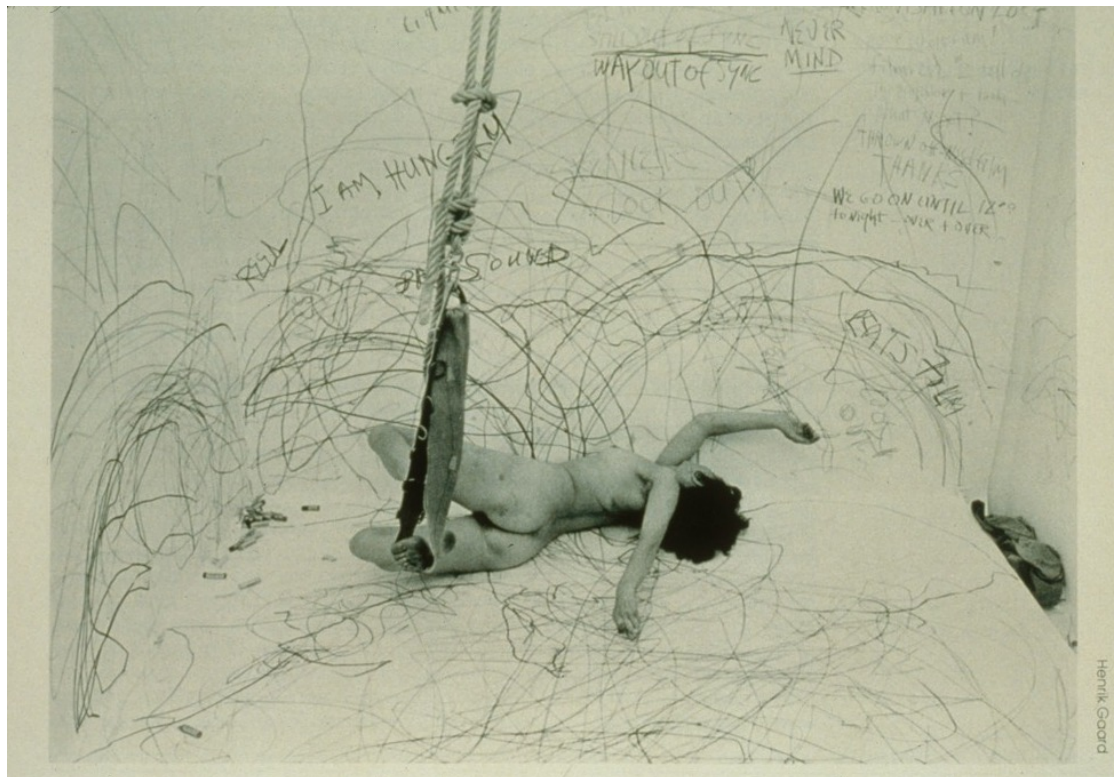


Figure 41. (Above) *Up to and including Her Limits*, 71-1976 by Carolee Schneemann

⁴² Cassil's "Resilience of the 20%" in *The Creative Capital Retreat*, 2015 You Tube Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CluvsqpzTns>

⁴³ Amelia Jones "Material Traces: Performativity- Artistic "Work" and new Concepts of Agency" Pg. 25
 While Amelia Jones uses Barad's theory of "Agential cuts" from the perspective of the viewer/"experiencer", I am using it from the point of view of the maker.

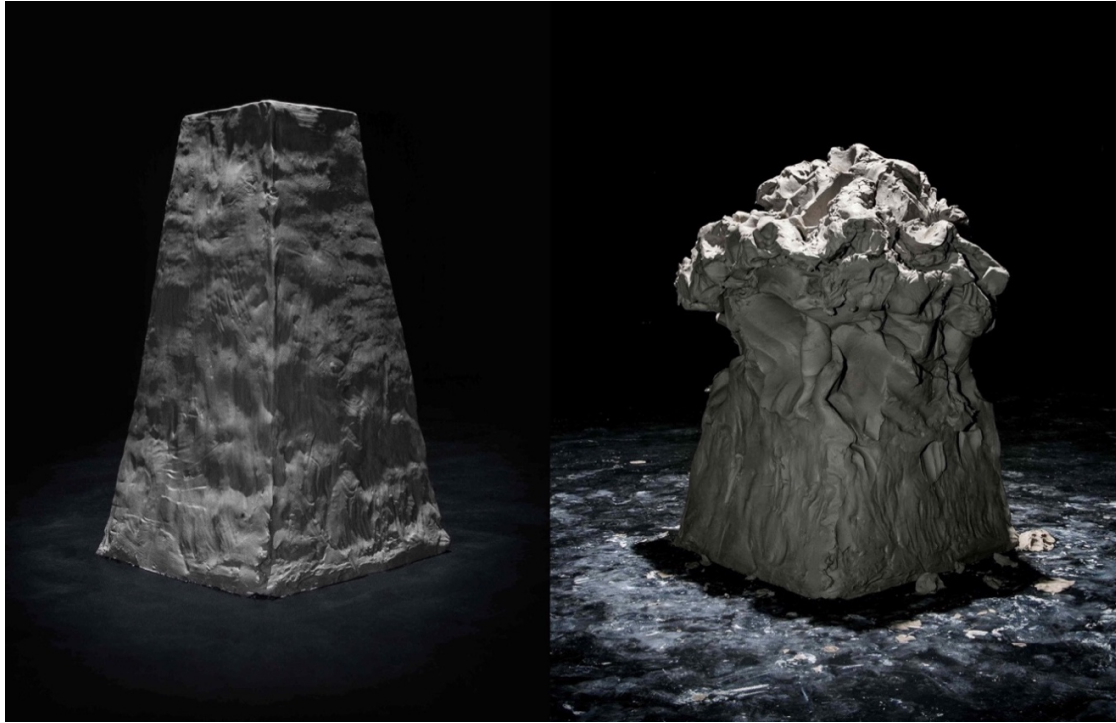


Figure 42. (Below) *Resilience of the 20%*, Cassils, 2013.
 Installation Image No. 5 (Body of Work, Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York), 2013
 photo: Cassils with Megan Paetzhold. Courtesy of the artist

Both *Resilience of the 20%* and *Attempted* are works that reference the violence, pain and grief endured by people due to their gender identity. They are **works** of art that show the signs of the **work's** production and what Amelia Jones calls the "having been made" of the **work** of art.⁴⁴ In the case of Cassil's **work**, the traces left behind allow the viewer to read direct references to their body. The **work** has imprints of fingers, fists, elbows, feet, and knees. In contrast, *Attempted* doesn't show direct traces of my body but does encapsulate its movements and labourjhg while simultaneously showing the viewer signs of the tools used to contain the concrete.

Schneemann's, *Up to and including Her Limits*, requires showing the resulting object, an installation (a painting, according to the artist), together with the harness and ropes used to restrain her body to better communicate the performative aspect behind the work. In contrast, *Resilience of the 20%* and *Attempted*,

44 Amelia Jones "Material Traces: Performativity- Artistic "Work" and New Concepts of Agency" Pg. 22-23

As Amelia Jones explains "Rather than assuming that making art involves process while subsuming the process into a final object through interpretations that focus only on the object as static and immutable (as art criticism, curating, and art history do), I [she] engages with objects as themselves in process and more importantly as *indicating previous processes of making* or what I [she] call the *having been made* of the work of art."

as "new forms of hybrid practice"⁴⁵, do not require showing anything other than the final object. Even when these two artworks are not about the shape created, their materiality fully displays the intensive embodied labour it went through, allowing the "experiencer"⁴⁶ to perceive it and go through their own working-through.

Thinking back to Lewitt's *Black Form* made me wonder at first whether a better way to display *Attempted* would be to show only the pink dust. However, probably just like *Black Form*, it would require the viewer to have previously experienced the five concrete pieces and the transformed textile to be able to feel their absence and then "work-through" the pink dust as an echo. I wonder whether showing the transformed textile with the pink dust would be sufficient for the viewer to perceive the work's "having been made" quality? Would it be sufficient to generate a space where they could labour their own affects?

45 Amelia Jones "Material Traces: Performativity- Artistic "Work" and New Concepts of Agency" Pg. 20

Amelia Jones calls these projects "a new hybrid practice that draws on a legacy of body, conceptual, and installation art to render new complex art experiences that are performative yet exist in various material forms (including, arguably, that of the artist's laboring body...art that is not lodged in or as only a final object, but that, in its performativity, also involves materialities clearly manipulated and foregrounded, with the processes of artistic making indicated or marked through these materialities."

46 Amelia Jones believes using "experiencer" over "viewer" better evokes all levels of interpretive engagement. Amelia Jones "Material Traces: Performativity- Artistic "Work" and New Concepts of Agency" Pg. 22

A Non-conclusion

I find it incredibly hard to do so. To be honest, I can't really say I have reached one. The idea of a conclusion feels definitive and if there is anything I have learned through this journey is that sometimes far from getting to an endpoint, far from reaching answers, what you discover is to have arrived at a new departure point with more questions to explore. Perhaps it is this openness, this uncertainty that keeps me wondering and exploring.

I have spent my time in the Masters program investigating themes of anamnesis and involuntary memory through the specificity of my embodied experience, a female, born and raised in Mexico City, a patriarchal society, in an effort to try and understand my creative process. Each of the projects I created, navigated a space I have called the unknown-known, a space I have accessed through materiality, specifically in partnership with concrete, beeswax and textiles.

Anamnesis and involuntary memory proved to be elusive concepts that can't be tackled in a direct and rational way. While I still don't fully understand how they work, I can say that following an embodied practice allowed me to experience them. Through actions and by working-through, I was able to learn something I hadn't been aware of rationally and which sometimes seemed to be in contradiction to my thoughts and decisions. It is also true that the moment that I experienced them and became aware I had done so, they had already morphed into something else by having been rationalized by me.

Perhaps, it is precisely this slippery nature that makes them so compelling and interesting. Not being able to find answers and constantly developing new questions is what truly pushes my practice forward. It forces me to remain open to the unknown, and to feel my way through the nothingness.

Reflections after *Trapos al sol*, 2023



Figure 43. *Trapos al Sol*, 2023



Figure 44. *Trapos al Sol*, 2023

Trapos al sol, 2023 which formed part of the *biometaphysicalmateria* MFA Thesis Exhibition, 2023 was the last work I developed in the program. It consists of 5 pieces of transformed red velvet which I "worked-through" in partnership with concrete, along with two pieces formed solely with the pink dust residue of the process involved.

Since I finished installing the work I have been thinking about Jorge Luis Borges's short story "Funes el memorioso", Jean François Lesage's documentary *Prayer for A Lost Mitten*, and what it means to install directly on the floor. In "Funes el memorioso", Borges tells us the story of Ireneo Funes, a peasant from Fray Bentos, Uruguay, who one day falls from his horse, hits his head, becomes paralyzed and gains the incredible skill, or perhaps curse, to be able to remember everything. Almost at the end of the story, Borges tells us how even though Funes had learned many languages effortlessly, he was not very capable of thought. Perhaps he was too busy remembering and therefore, had no time to think? Borges story is influenced by Nietzsche, calling Funes "a precursor of the supermen, a vernacular and rustic Zarathustra."⁴⁷ Furthermore, Nietzsche himself writes, "Imagine the most extreme example, a person who did not possess the power of forgetting at all, who would be condemned to see everywhere a coming into being. Such a person no longer believes in his own being, no longer believes in himself, sees everything in moving points flowing out of each other, and loses himself in this stream of becoming. He will, like the true pupil of Heraclitus, finally hardly dare any more to lift his finger. Forgetting belongs to all action, just as both light and darkness belong in the life of all organic things."⁴⁸ Maybe this could also be the reason why it is impossible to fully grasp what anamnesis is? Becoming aware of all the knowledge that we possess through our Historical Multitude would paralyze us. Instead, by being ungraspable it just becomes known through our actions.

Lesage's documentary *Prayer for a Lost Mitten* meditates on the loss of things as a symbol for deeper loss. He interviews and follows people who visit the lost and found office of the Montreal Metro System. Some of these people have lost objects which are important to them not because of their economic value, or what they are, but because they can't be replaced even if it were possible for them to buy the exact same object again. These are objects that have acquired special meaning through the emotional journey they encapsulate.

Installing on the floor has made me look back and think about the long history of artists that have decided to place their work directly on the floor and the broad range of reasons why they do so. Some link

⁴⁷ Jorge Luis Borges "Funes el memorioso" Pg. 1

⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche in "The Use and Abuse of History for Life." 1874

it to moments of political turmoil and change.⁴⁹ Others, to a shift from traditional aesthetics to phenomenology, to the floor being used as symbolic element or as sacrificial altar.⁵⁰ For me, installing on the floor *Trapos al sol* makes it antiphallic, anti-monumental, anti-art (If we consider art under the Western Canon). Bringing the work down from the pedestal makes it feel more approachable. It makes us crouch to inspect it, changing our perspective. I see it as a reaction to the violence by laying down in a quiet space, close to our essence and roots.



Figure 45. *Trapos al sol*, 2023
Photo by Jimena Diaz

⁴⁹ Smallwood, Christine "Why Are So many Artist Installing Work On The Floor?", NYT Style Magazine August 16, 2017
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/t-magazine/art/flat-sculpture.html>

⁵⁰ Pepe Karmel, Abstract of "Shrouds and Relics: The Floor as Symbol of Space"
<https://britishart.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2022-12/Works%20on%20the%20Floor%20schedulespeakers.pdf>

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