

Flash Art

Cityscape Havana

Euridice Arratia

H A V A N A



Tania Bruguera.

Could you tell us about your trajectory as an artist in relation to the work of the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta?

I first heard of Ana Mendieta in 1986, at a lecture given by Gerardo Mosquera, just a year after she died. I was very excited and it was a shock to hear that she was dead. From then on, I began to

gather information about her. It was a way of looking for her through her work. I found out that in Cuba nobody knew who she was. It seems to me that Mendieta's work was very Cuban, and it's a shame that it doesn't belong to us. Thus I began to reproduce her work and later I began to make pieces as if they were collaborative pieces between Ana and me, which were presented in the exhibit "Ana Mendieta — Tania Bruguera" at Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, in 1992. This was my final project at the ISA, which is the opposite of what one should have attained after 5 years of study. At the center one is supposed to develop a personal vocabulary and instead what I did was to appropriate Men-

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Performance Artist

dieta's language. Also in 1992, a lot of people were leaving the country. This made me reflect upon whether being Cuban meant solely living here, or whether it signified a condition beyond borders.

Could you elaborate on the references that your installations and performances make to the political situation?

My work has always been in between the political and the human. From early age you are raised here with the idea that your individual life has repercussions in the collective and that one must have social responsibility. I always wanted to create responsible work, whether the subject was immigration, fear, or guilt. Although my boyfriend

and many friends have left Cuba, I haven't left because I feel I have something to do here. I have a mission.

What is the relationship between artists of your generation (born in the late 60s and early 70s) in Havana like?

The nice thing about being an artist in Havana is that we are a close-knit community, not only because we went to art school together but because we grew up together. We are used to seeing and critiquing each other's projects. In fact, although my house is not a gallery, I have used the space sometimes to show my own projects and performances and have invited other artists to exhibit their work here.