



Tania Bruguera
"The Burden of Guilt," 1997
Department of Fine Arts, Caracas
Grandal

Bruguera's early artistic projects involved the re-enactment and then the continuation of the oeuvre of Ana Mendieta, as a way of marking the importance of Mendieta's work for Cubans living on the island. Bruguera also published *Memoria de la Posguerra* (Memory of the Post-war), one of only a few independent artists' magazines of the time that included works by Cubans outside the country. An active participant in the entire network of non-official artist-run spaces that sprang up in Havana in the 1990s, Bruguera uses part of her apartment as a performance space.

The Burden Of Guilt

Tania Bruguera

There are events that are talked about in whispers; it's not known if their purpose is to serve as testimony or if these stories are created because somebody needs to hear them.

That was the uncertainty I felt when someone told me that the Indians in Cuba – at least a group of them – chose to rebel against their Spanish conquerors by eating dirt, and only dirt, so that their deaths would mark their resolve.

The practice of eating dirt is found primarily in Africa and Latin America, where it is used as a means to be close to the place where you are from as you travel to a new destination, to supplement necessary vitamins and proteins in the diet, to feed (physically and metaphorically) the fetus that is about to be born.

But the Cuban Indians, however, ate dirt as a weapon of resistance. They ate from earth where they had been born, which is to say, they ate their ancestors, themselves, their history, their memory, as if they were committing a cultural suicide.

"The Burden of Guilt" is the recovery and realignment of this story. The burden is really the slaughtered lamb that hangs from the neck like a shield, like an open wound that reveals what's inside. The lamb is the weight that is carried as a consequence, as well as a symbolic attitude; the emotion, saltwater which drops like tears and washes the earth, which is the guilt, before it is digested.