



Untitled (Havana, 2000), 2000, live figures, milled sugar cane, video monitor, DVD player and disc

to an artist for an early career survey and catalogue. Its first recipient, Cuban born, Chicago-based artist, Tania Bruguera brings her provocative performances and installations, examining the relationship between ideology, power, and social behavior to the museum. The focus of the show is a twenty-year retrospective of her work, justly titled, *On the Political Imaginary*.

The artist, who is known for pushing the envelope on politically-sensitive topics, often falling just short of being incarcerated— in one of her performances in Columbia a tray of cocaine was passed out to the audience—began her rise to prominence in the early '90's by channeling the "earth-body" works of Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta (1948-1985).

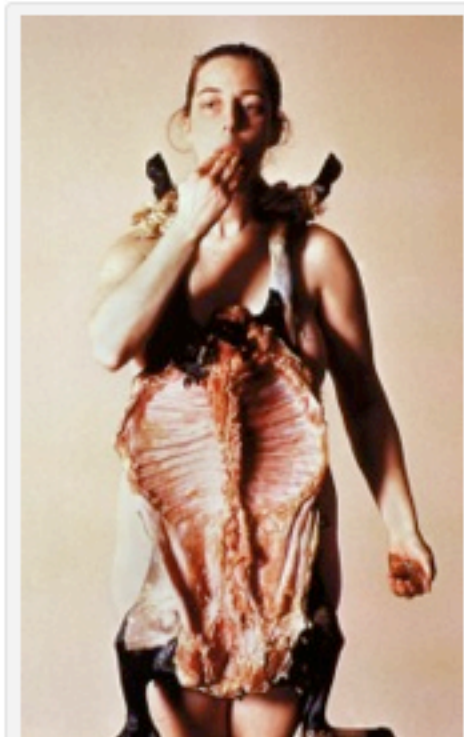


Displacement (1998-99), fabric, dirt, rusted nails

performing, *Displacement* (1998-99) in which a nether-worldly, mud-covered, nail-studded Bruguera is dressed as Nkisi Nkonde, an Afro-Cuban spiritual icon. She wanders through the crowded streets of Havana, attracting repulsed, but curious onlookers. *Poetic Justice* (2002-2003) leads viewers directly into the main exhibition galleries, through a long, pungent-smelling, teabag-lined tunnel, referencing the economic and colonial relationship between those colonized and their master; in this case, India under the brutally-oppressive British Empire.

Performance artists have recently been enjoying a major resurgence in popularity, worldwide. Museums and biennales are spearheading this renaissance. And why not! Their one-of-a-kind theatrical events are primo entertainment, where anything can and usually does, happen. Here in New York City and its environs, five major art museums have played host to this re-emergence of the art of performance. *The Kiss* and *This Progress*, two of Tino Sehgal's live 'constructed situations', with nary a painting in sight, recently occupied the Guggenheim Museum's lobby and exhibition ramps. Another Sehgal piece, *This is Propaganda* (2002) is being presented as part of the Jeff Koon's-curated, *Skin Fruit* exhibition, at The New Museum. Additionally, four decades of Marina Abramović's work is being re-performed at the Museum of Modern Art; while the 2010 Whitney Biennial incorporates some ten performance artists, both live and on film.

The Neuberger Museum of Art—just an hour outside of New York City—has recently announced the creation of the Roy R. Neuberger Prize awarded



The Burden of Guilt (1997-99), decapitated lamb, rope, water, salt, Cuban soil

In *Burden of Guilt* (1997), arguably the artist's most powerful and widely known work, Bruguera, standing naked with a slaughtered lamb hanging from her neck, spends 45 minutes eating soil mixed with water and salt—a re-enactment of the suicide ritual that many Cuban natives once practiced when faced with the threat of the Spanish conquistadores. The harrowing piece was first performed in Havana, where the audience was duly reminded that freedom, liberty and self-determination are not abstract ideals, but achievements that deeply inscribe their meaning on our physical being.

Under the watchful eye of curator, Helaine Posner and using Bruguera-trained performance artists, the Neuberger has faithfully recreated a dozen of the artist's most politically provocative works. The most poignant are supported by intricately designed installations that threaten, frighten, lecture, educate, and entertain, albeit in a carnivalesque, sideshow atmosphere. Just inside the entrance to the museum a film shows the artist