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**(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity: Negotiating the Politics of
Space, Race, and Gender in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons' *Habla La Madre***

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**(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity: Negotiating the
Politics of Space, Race, and Gender in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons'**

Habla La Madre

by

Phillip A. Townsend, B.A.,

Thesis

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Dedication

To my father, Beverly Townsend, Sr.

Acknowledgements

I first met Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons two years ago when I was attending The University of South Florida in Tampa. I had never seen her work; however, when I spoke with her, she was accessible, generous, and interested in my scholarship. I knew at that moment I wanted to study her work in graduate school.

Thanks to Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, I have been able to realize this goal. Over the years, Campos-Pons has exceeded the bounds of generosity by agreeing to be the subject of this thesis and answering countless questions about her work in late night telephone and Skype conversations. She also entrusted me with dozens of her personal files and hosted me as her guest at multiple performances around the country. Campos-Pons is proof that working with living artists in the field of contemporary art can be a rich, enjoyable, and highly rewarding experience.

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Abstract

(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity: Negotiating the Politics of Space, Race, and Gender in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons' *Habla La Madre*

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Abstract: This study provides one of the first examinations of *Habla La Madre*, a 2014 performance by Afro-Cuban artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons launched in the Guggenheim Museum. The performance stems from practices that resulted in the marginalization and exclusion of artists of color from hegemonic cultural institutions such as the Guggenheim. *Habla La Madre* concerns itself with the politics of identity in its desire to function as a tool for (re)building African Diasporic solidarity. The project looks at historical, cultural, religious, and mythological texts in order to investigate *Habla La Madre* as a manifestation of Campos-Pons' hybridized "exilic," "female," "African," and "Cuban" identities. *(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity: Negotiating the Politics of Space, Race, and Gender in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons' Habla La Madre* situates the performance in a history of public performative acts of resistance enacted by enslaved Africans, Afro-Cubans, and African American communities which is a primary goal of this study.

The project pays close attention to *Habla La Madre* as it intersects with the politics of space. A critical objective of this study is to understand the sociopolitical implications of Campos-Pons' acts of spatial transformation and spatial appropriation around and within the museum. The project also looks at Campos-Pons' introduction of Santería into the Guggenheim as an attempt at its institutionalization. A history of African and African Diasporic altar production structures an investigation into Campos-Pons' construction of an altar within the Guggenheim.

As a performance that challenges discriminatory practices of art institutions, *Habla La Madre* situates itself within the genre of institutional critique. The project highlights its consistencies, deviations, and contributions to the field. This research also draws upon conversations with the artist to determine the extent to which her peers have influenced the production and goals of *Habla La Madre*. Most prior research on Campos-Pons focuses on her practice as mourning; however, this project focuses on the cultural diffusion and celebration the performance brings about.

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Introduction

If time is the dimension in which things happen one after the other, it's the dimension of succession, then space is the dimension of things being, existing at the same time: of simultaneity. It's the dimension of multiplicity

—Doreen Massey

There is a politics of space because space is political

—Henri Lefebvre

I first met Afro-Cuban artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons during my undergraduate studies in early 2014 at a panel discussion, “Africa in Relation,” hosted by the Art and Art History Department at The University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. After the event, Campos-Pons invited me to attend Carrie Mae Weems’ retrospective, where she would mount a performance, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Needless to say, I accepted the artist’s invitation and arrived in New York on April 24, 2014. From April 25-27, 2014, in conjunction with her retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, African American artist Carrie Mae Weems curated a weekend of programs focused on contemporary cultural production. Part of the retrospective *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video*, the multidisciplinary performance-salon featured activists, writers, and artists for a three-day celebration of spirit and ideas. Among the artists invited to participate in the event was contemporary artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons. I intriguingly watched as Campos-Pons led the event’s closing procession with *Habla La Madre*, a performance rooted in Santería ritual—an Afro-Caribbean syncretic religion based on Yorùbá beliefs and traditions (with some Roman Catholic elements) that grew out of the slave presence in Cuba. *Habla La Madre* celebrates Carrie Mae Weems as the first African American to have a retrospective in the Guggenheim and

launches a critique of the raced (white) and gendered (the male) space of the Guggenheim. *Habla La Madre*, I argue throughout this paper, protests the institutional marginalization of minoritarian communities in hegemonic spaces. *Habla La Madre* also points to the ways in which religion has historically been a continuous and reliable mechanism of resistance, rebellion, and protest throughout the African Diaspora. The goal of this study is to examine how Campos-Pons advocates for a new cultural space of representation in which collectivity is emphasized over autonomous art production.

Habla La Madre began with the exiting of Campos-Pons from the front door of the Guggenheim's Sackler Center of Arts Education on E. 88th Street. From there, carrying a bouquet of seven red roses and a white and blue *sopera* (a large lidded porcelain tureen used to house *los otanes* or stones of the Orichas), Campos-Pons walked along 5th Avenue to the beat of batá drums and chants of Yemayá Assessu and into the Guggenheim's main entrance. Campos-Pons wore a white and blue headwrap and a white cylindrical dress—whose construction mimics the exterior and interior architecture of the museum (Figure 1). The artist began an invocation where she petitioned the seven Santería (Yorùbá) Orichas and invited one of them, Yemayá—mother of all living things as well as the owner of the oceans and seas—to embody the institution by taking over her body. The artist placed the *sopera*, cake, watermelon, and cantaloupe on the ledge of the Guggenheim's fountain as an offering to Yemayá. To wind instruments and batá drums, Campos-Pons performed a ritual dance known as a Bembé (Yorùbá drumming festival to Orichas) using a large swath of blue fabric. Afterwards, she emptied into the fountain a vessel of blue water containing fish. Museum guests filled the second floor gallery where Campos-Pons repeatedly threw a white cloth bag of dishes (ceramic dinner plates) onto the floor of the museum as she proclaimed, “we are here to stay...it took so long to make the wrong right and embody the

beauty and the right of the Black body to be on these walls.”¹ She then flung holy water into the air and onto the floor and began to spin in a circular motion to spirited shouts of *ashe* and *Yemayá*.²

(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity: Negotiating the Politics of Space and Race in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons’ Habla La Madre examines how Campos-Pons’ rhetoric and action of traversing the exterior and interior of the museum function as mechanisms of spatial transformation. My study is one of the first to consider and contextualize *Habla La Madre*. It seeks to complicate Okwui Enwezor’s analysis which set the tone for how Campos-Pons’ practice is understood. In *The Diasporic Imagination: The Memory Works of Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons*, Enwezor frames her work as “introspective...acts of mourning.”³ I assert, rather, that *Habla La Madre* functions as an act of protest, cultural diffusion, and celebration, which perhaps signals a new trajectory in her practice. The politics of space in which *Habla La Madre* engages is tied up in the Guggenheim Museum’s status as repository of culture.

Over the past few decades, there has been a major shift in museums across the world. Several of these institutions have changed from being storehouses for artifacts into active learning environments for people. These new programmatic changes bear a resemblance to the Victorian museum model which emphasized the role of museums as institutions that collected objects and other ephemera deemed culturally, historically, and socially important and make them available for public consumption—viewing and interacting—mainly through exhibitions and

¹ *Habla La Madre*

² *Ase* (or *àṣẹ* or *ashe*) is an African philosophical concept through which the Yoruba of Nigeria conceive the power to make things happen and produce change.

³ Okwui Enwezor, “The Diasporic Imagination: The Memory Works of Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons,” in *Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons: Everything is Separated by Water*, ed. Lisa Frieman (New Haven: Yale University Press), 72, 79.

retrospectives. The Guggenheim is one such example. Just four years after opening its doors, the Guggenheim launched an aggressive exhibition campaign. Since 1963, the Guggenheim has presented visitors with hundreds of exhibitions and over 60 retrospectives. Displaying the work of international artists working in the conceptual mode coupled with an forceful global expansion project, the museum quickly affirmed its reputation as one of the foremost art institutions in the world. As such, I frame the Guggenheim as a proxy for other hegemonic institutions that *Habla La Madre* critiques.

(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity considers how the artist's divine utterances symbolically transform the Guggenheim into a "temple of spirit" as originally proposed by its female co-founder Hilla Rebay.⁴ For example, my project considers how the artist activates the Guggenheim into an altar for the Orichas. Moreover, I analyze the sociopolitical implications of that spatial appropriation. My investigation also considers how the artist's ritualistic actions transform the museum into a site for protest.

Many philosophers and theorists have offered compelling and useful treatises, theories, and/or descriptions on space, and each has its use in various fields and disciplines. For example, early conceptions of space, generally attributed to Aristotle, strictly related to cosmology. In scholarly use, it was generally accompanied by such epithets as 'Euclidean', 'isotropic', or 'infinite', and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one.⁵ Rene Descartes brought an end to Aristotelian ideas of empty space by equating the defining property of material substance with three-dimensional spatial extension as he notes, "the

⁴ The Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York. *The Hilla Rebay Collection*. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/about-the-collection/new-york/hilla-rebay-collection/1652>. 13 July 2015.

⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991) 1.

extension in length, breadth, and depth which constitutes the space occupied by a body is exactly the same as that which constitutes the body.”⁶ The shifting conceptualization of space from mathematics (science) to philosophy (humanities) would continue towards bodily associations.

Although these early theories of space are important to various discourses concerning the politics of space, the theories of philosophers Immanuel Kant, Henri Lefebvre, Gaston Bachelard, Dorren Massey and American Studies scholar of Black Studies George Lipsitz are most relevant to my project. Kant asserts that space and time are not objective, self-subsisting realities, but subjective requirements of our human sensory-cognitive faculties to which all things must conform. Space and time serve as indispensable tools that arrange and systemize the images of the objects imported by our sensory organs. The raw data supplied by our eyes and ears would be useless if our minds did not have space and time to make sense of it all. Kant’s argument that “space and time are not discovered by humans to be objective features of the world, but are part of an unavoidable systematic framework for organizing experiences” becomes useful in my analysis because historical experiences of Black people figure prominently in *Habla La Madre*.⁷ In relation to Black people, Kant figures importantly here because he was among the first to understand the connection between the identity of the constructed self and/or ‘other’ and meanings conferred upon specific time(s), space(s), and place(s).⁸

Habla La Madre deals with themes and methods central to Campos-Pons’ practice. Throughout her career, the artist consistently explores notions of representation, access, and

⁶ Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*., Volume 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 227.

⁷ John Randolph Lucas, *Space, Time, and Causality: An Essay in Natural Philosophy* (New York : Clarendon Press, 1984), 149.

⁸ In this paper the term ‘Black’ is used to describe more than one racial or political group. The term ‘Black’ is sometimes used to describe people of African or Afro-Caribbean origin and at other times ‘Black’ is used to mean all those of non-European origin.

presence as they relate to memory, identity, and space. In post-Revolutionary Cuba during the 1980s, she developed an important series of abstract painted reliefs dealing with the representation of female sexuality. While in the United States during 1990s, she began an investigation of the broad geopolitical implications of race and ethnicity through installation, photography and performance. For my thesis, I consider how Campos-Pons's strategic use of race and place fuse with religion to contribute to discourse surrounding the politics of space, particularly spatial censorship and exclusion, in *Habla La Madre*.

Advancing Kant's coupling of time and space, Massey asserts that, "space must be conceptualized integrally with time; indeed the aim should be to think always in terms of space–time."⁹ Within these relations, she recognizes that they are "inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification."¹⁰ This concept of how space and time carry meaning is important to my analysis of *Habla La Madre*'s temporal disruptions. She continues by noting, "It is not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time."¹¹ This theory helps frame my argument for the spatial transformation and appropriation that occur as a result of the performance of *Habla La Madre*.

According to Lefebvre "space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure."¹² Lefebvre's concern with various forms of social structure and changes that govern or take place

2. ⁹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994),

¹⁰ Massey, *Space*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 263.

¹² Lefebvre, *Production*, 3.

in them mirrors scholar George Lipsitz engagement with intersections of space and power in his essay “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race.”¹³ He argues that some public spaces are “racially marked” which complicates access to minoritarian communities through an “emphasis on exclusion.”¹⁴ This claim is germane to my overall project, but more importantly, it helps structure my argument against the Guggenheim’s exclusionary practices. I use Lipsitz’s notions of “White spatial imaginary” and “Black spatial imaginary” to examine divergent perceptions of the politics of space as it relates to the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on access and representation in contemporary hegemonic spaces and places.¹⁵

Habla La Madre is informed by a collective Black history. As such, it serves as an entry point into discourse surrounding Diasporic solidarity. I will examine the historical implications of Campos-Pons’ journey into the Guggenheim, carrying cultural signs. This examination relates to the transatlantic slave trade, African American/Afro-Cuban cultural retention and resistance strategies, and the political implications in relation to protests for racial spatial equality in Cuba and the United States. My study will also investigate how Campos-Pons’ positionality as an

¹³ George Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race,” *Landscape Journal* 26 (2007): 10

¹⁴ Lipsitz, *Landscape*, 10.

¹⁵ According to George Lipsitz, the ‘white spatial imaginary’ among other things exists as a central mechanism for skewing opportunities and life chances in the U.S. along racial lines that consciously and unconsciously ignores the effects of histories on contemporary societies, while the ‘Black spatial imaginary’ revolves around solitudes within, between, and across spaces. The ‘white spatial imaginary’ and ‘Black spatial imaginary’ that Lipsitz conceptualizes can also be understood through an anecdote by Eddie Chambers written in an introduction for his 1991 exhibition ‘History and Identity: Seven Painters’: Said Adrus, Medina Hammad, Godfrey Lee, Mowbray Odonkor, Eugene Palmer, Tony Phillips, Lesley Sanderson’ which reads: “During the course of a recent conversation, a white man said to me ‘Don’t talk to me about slavery, slavery was abolished over a century ago.’ Clearly, our conversation was getting more than a little uncomfortable, so, finding himself on the defensive, he decided to dismiss history as being a decisive and contributing factor in the position of Black people within the West, and within the world. He had failed to understand (or I had failed to make it clear to him) that for Black people, history and identity were inextricably linked and were ever-present in our individual and collective consciousness.

Afro-Cuban exiled in the United States functions in her critique of racial exclusion within the Guggenheim, an institution that granted her access to launch *Habla La Madre*.

The role of Santería as a religion and performance strategy is important to *Habla La Madre*. Religious studies scholar, Christine Ayorinde, has written on, and framed, Santería as a religion of resistance. In her 2012 essay “Afro-Cuban Religions as Resistance,” she examined the tactics employed by religious practitioners for combating the Cuban government’s “intense repression of Afro-Cuban religious and cultural practices.”¹⁶ My project draws from and contributes to discourses of Santería as religious resistance. It also examines nineteenth-century African Diasporic cultural resistance efforts embodied in public performance and twenty-first century resistance efforts enacted by Santería practitioners in the United States. Further, my project considers how Campos-Pons’ introduction of Santería into the Guggenheim mirrors Afro-Cuban efforts to situate Santería into hegemonic cultural discourse and spaces.

Mary Ann Clark has written extensively on the philosophy and practices of Santería as it has developed throughout the Americas.¹⁷ My thesis relies on her book *Where Men are Wives and Mothers Rule*, in which Clark explores the Yorùbá/Santería notion of ‘female’ as the “ideal religious type”, which challenges and displaces the “normative male perspective” within dominant religious doctrines such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.¹⁸ Expanding on Clark’s understanding of Santería as privileging “femaleness,” *(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity* argues that Campos-Pons utilizes Santería to contest gender marginalization.¹⁹ In her

¹⁶ Christine Ayordine, “Afro-Cuban Religions as Resistance,” *On the Centennial of Cuba’s Independent Party of Color, 1912-2012* 74 (2012): 21.

¹⁷ David H. Brown, Joseph Murphy, Michael Atwood Mason, Mercedes Cros Sandoval, Miguel A. de la Torres are among the vast numbers of scholars contributing important work on Santería.

¹⁸ Mary Ann Clark, *Where Men are Wives and Mothers Rule* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2005), 8.

¹⁹ Clark, *Mothers*, 2.

performances, Campos-Pons advocates for women of color and refuses an oppressive Western colonial gender binary that continues to regulate access and conditions for various experiences in art museums.

Luis Camnitzer has characterized art works rooted in Santería as “extensions of actual ceremonies.”²⁰ Lisa Freiman has similarly argued that, “they are distinct from actual rituals since they appear in public locations for a broad audience.”²¹ My study argues that *Habla La Madre* and similar performances are not extensions, imitations, nor representations. By examining issues of representation, simulation, and impersonation within *Habla La Madre, (Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity* intends to show that *Habla La Madre* is, in actuality a legitimate Santería ritual.

Transformation, as it pertains to my project, refers to symbolic or physical changes that alter the meaning(s) embedded in an object or space. The term also refers to the act, process, and/or instance of changing the character or condition of an object or space. Appropriation, on the other hand, refers to the act of using or taking possession of an object or space without proper authorization. Transformation and appropriation are important concepts because they highlight the agency of Campos-Pons and the work *Habla La Madre* carries out within hegemonic space.

This thesis draws from the extensive body of scholarship on institutional critique as practiced by artists such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, and Adrian Piper that has led the charge in calling into question the political, economic, and ideological interests that interfere with the fundamental tenets of art institutions—among them acquisition,

²⁰ Lisa Frieman, “Constructing Afro-Cuban Female Identity: An Introduction to the Work of Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons” (master’s thesis, Emory University, 1997) 81.

²¹ Luis Camnitzer, *New Art of Cuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 40.

preservation, interpretation, and exhibition. In order to understand what it means to critique an institution from within, I place *Habla La Madre* in dialogue with Andrea Fraser's, *Museum Highlights*, 1989, Fred Wilson's, *Mining the Museum*, 1992-1993 and *The Francis Effect*, 2014. I also compare Amalia Mesa-Baines' mixed media installation *Venus Envy, Chapter One (First Holy Communion, Moments Before the End)*, 1991 with the altar Campos-Pons constructs during her performance to flesh out the cultural and spiritual implications that exist in the construction of altars in secular spaces. The examination of altars relies on the work of art historian Robert Farris Thompson. Finally, *(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity* uses James C. Scott's notions of "public transcript" and "hidden transcript" to understand the political implications of Campos-Pons construction of an altar without the museums' permission.²²

Section One considers acts of resistance and rebellion throughout the African Diaspora from the 17th through the 20th century to draw attention to the types of strategies, tactics, and outcomes of spatial contestations that served as the framework for *Habla La Madre*. I also look at various conceptualizations of the Atlantic Ocean in African Diaspora studies to argue for the (re)location of the Atlantic to the sidewalk(s) Campos-Pons traversed during *Habla La Madre*. This reading encourages us to think about the many ways space is/spaces are subverted and transformed. It also calls attention to the effects of histories on contemporary notion of space. Through the lens of queer Diaspora theories, the section examines how the relationship between Campos-Pons and Carrie Mae Weems bears a resemblance to the *mati* figure and the work it does for Black solidarity.

²² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2, 4.

Section Two examines Campos-Pons' strategy for institutionalizing Santería. It considers the history of Santería and its function in the contemporary space of the Guggenheim. Moreover, the section looks at previous works by Campos-Pons and investigates how much of her life appears in her practice. The scrutinization of various elements of the performance helps uncover their links to African performative traditions and to determine their role in what appears to be a project of African Diaspoic solidarity (re)building. Ultimately, Section Two seeks to understand how *Habla La Madre* exists as an expression of her constructed identities.

Section Three considers the history of altars in various cultures and their connection to the altar Campos-Pons constructs in the Guggenheim. This section relies heavily on the work of Robert Farris Thompson to understand altar construction methods in various African communities. It also looks at the work each altar does in its vernacular areas including the altar Campos-Pons constructs in the Guggenheim.

Section Four asks whether *Habla La Madre* is a new approach to or form of institutional critique. Has religion been used in this genre? What are its implications? How does Campos-Pons' choice of medium (performance), genre (institutional critique), and costume contribute to *Habla La Madre* being received as anachronistic? How does it compare to other works within the genre of institutional critique? What is Carrie Mae Weems' role in *Habla La Madre*? I take up the Guggenheim's global expansion project and how it has influences sociospatial decisions made by institutions.

(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity is a study of connections. It connects visual culture to Black studies, spatial theories, music studies, literature, and theories of queer Diaspora. My study moves between past and present, archive and imagination, theory and everyday to focus on spaces negotiated by enslaved Africans and their descendants. This project

focuses attention on the practices of cultural institutions that stem from imperialist and colonialist projects while highlighting the effectiveness of collective Black resistance efforts enacted over at least four centuries. The spatial relationship between the past and present and racial geographies is crucial here, as it works to examine the ways in which understanding Blackness has been twinned with the practice of situating Blackness and rendering body-space integral to the production of space.

(Re)Framing Resistance and (Re)Forging Solidarity finds its footing in what Marlene Nourbese Philip calls “a public genealogy of resistance,” which she describes as histories, names, and places of Black pain, language, and oppression, which are spoken with the whole body and present to the world.²³ My study pushes beyond and through what is considered the given and knowable parameters of time, space, and place. What I am trying to illustrate are the powerful connections between race, gender, and displacement. These connections make clear how the liability of the world is bound up in a human geography story that is unjust, yet geographies reveal a workable terrain in which (re)spatialization can be imagined and achieved.

²³ Marlene Nourbese Philip, *Caribana: African Roots and Continuities: Race, Space and Poetics of Moving* (Toronto: Poui Publications, 1996), 14.

(Re)locating the Atlantic

Who is remembered—and how—is continually being transformed through a wall of interpretative systems...collapsing, ultimately, the demarcation of the prescriptive past, present, and future of linear time.

—M. Jacqui Alexander

Oceans and seas are sites of inequality and exploitation—resource extraction, pollution, militarization, atomic testing, and genocide. At the same time, oceans and seas are the sites of beauty and pleasure—solitude, sensuality, desire, and resistance. Oceanic and maritime realms are also spaces of transnational and diasporic communities, heterogeneous trajectories of globalizations, and racial, gender, class, and sexual formation.

—Kate Fajardo

Habla La Madre began when Campos-Pons exited the Guggenheim Museum's Sackler Center for Arts Education. Dressed in a gleaming white tiered cylindrical dress, the artist walked along the sidewalks of 88th Street and 5th Avenue towards the Guggenheim's entrance carrying roses and a soperá to rhythmic beats of bata drums and mesmeric chants of 'Yemayá Assessu (Figure 2).²⁴ This particular moment draws upon a rich African Diasporic history, specifically the Middle Passage, a tradition of public performative spatial protest, Santería, and acts of Black solidarity. In order to highlight the historical frameworks that undergird contemporary spatial conditions that Black people experience today, I examine the ways in which *Habla La Madre* acts as a (re)enactment of the Middle Passage.²⁵ Here the sidewalk metaphorically becomes the

²⁴This healing mantra is Yorubn in origin. It names Yemayá as the Goddess of the Sea from whom all other humans and gods come. Assessu is the Gushing Spring and Yemayá means the Ocean of Life. The mantra imagines the uniting of Yemayá and Assessu – the river flowing into the sea – the flow of consciousness meeting the ocean of Universal Being.

²⁵Here is use the term (re)enactment as a gesture towards complicating the temporality bound up in *Habla La Madre*. The term refers to both *Habla La Madre*'s simultaneity as a new performance in its owen right and as a new version of an old event (the Middle Passage).

Atlantic Ocean—the watery pathway by which enslaved Africans and their culture(s) were transported to the New World. Simultaneously, Campos-Pons becomes a vessel—the ship and the enslaved African—a reparative ship, a safe passage for the memories of the captured and enslaved. By imagining the sidewalk as the Atlantic, I disrupt discrete interpretations of time, place, and space as they relate to the transatlantic slave trade and its consequential effects. As a project of topographical relocation and diasporic historical recollection, I consider how this particular segment of *Habla La Madre* is structured by the politics of space, the politics of identity, and plays with queer biological and geographical borders.

From the 17th to the 19th century, the Atlantic Ocean served as a fluid conduit through which European slavers carried out the largest movement of people in history. Estimates suggest that 25 to 30 million people—men, women, and children—were violently removed from their homes and sold as slaves. Arguably, this phenomenon is the provenance, the root, the source of blackness.²⁶ In considering the histories that exist in the depths of the Atlantic, scholars in Black Atlantic and Caribbean studies figure oceans and seas as entities that have histories that are always present. For example, Cuban novelist Antonio Benitez-Rojo notes that the Antilles—situated where Atlantic meets Caribbean and migrants from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas cross and converge—beats out the rhythm of repeating histories.”²⁷ In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy evokes the Atlantic as the trope through which he imagines the emergences of black modernities.²⁸ Calling on the ship as the first image of this black Atlantic, Gilroy begins

²⁶ In *Black Like Who?* Rinaldo Walcott writes that blackness is most usefully understood as a “sign, one which carries with it particular histories of resistance and domination...questions of blackness far exceed the categories of the biological and ethnic...[it is] a discourse, but that discourse is embedded in a history or a set of histories which are messy and contested.” xiv-xv.

²⁷ Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 16.

²⁸ Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*, which was first published in 1993, remains remarkable for its introduction of the validity of ‘race’ as an analytical category in presenting the ‘Atlantic’ as a discrete geo-

stipulating that ships and oceans are not merely abstract figures but “cultural and political units” that refer us to the middle passage, to the half-remembered micro politics of the slave trade.”²⁹

As a Cuban exile, Campos-Pons has an intimate, loving, and troubled relationship with the sea. As an islander and a descendent of people who were transported across the Atlantic, she has little choice but to know it, embrace it, and reckon with it. Throughout her career, the sea has been a constant source of inspiration for her work, both for its appellation as a watery graveyard and waterway by which Cubans on rafts attempt and often times succeed, in reaching ‘dry’ land in the United States (Florida).³⁰ Gaston Bachelard argues in *Water and Dreams*, “Possibly more than any other element, water is the complete poetic reality” through which we enjoy, among other things, an intimate taste of our destiny. The “poetic reality” which water is capable of manifesting is a way of perceiving meaning in the world, a meaning which defies the linear and temporal assumptions.”³¹ Although Bachelard and Campos-Pons are working in two different eras and dealing with totally different ideas of art and the poetic, Bachelard’s association of water to power, destiny, and temporal disruptions corresponds to Campos-Pons’ use water in her works.

political unit in the modern capitalist world-system. The book elaborates a richly provocative critique of cultural nationalism, against which Gilroy posits black diasporic cultural and intellectual production. The ‘black Atlantic’ thus denotes a specifically modern cultural-political formation that was induced by the experience and inheritance of the African slave trade and the plantation system in the Americas, and which transcends both the nation state and ethnicity.

²⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 290.

³⁰ The “Wet foot, Dry foot” policy is the name given to a consequence of the 1995 revision of the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 that essentially says that anyone who fled Cuba and entered the United States would be allowed to pursue residency a year later. After talks with the Cuban government, the Clinton administration came to an agreement with Cuba that it would stop admitting people intercepted in U.S. waters. Since then, in what has become known as the “Wet foot, Dry foot” policy, a Cuban caught on the waters between the two nations (with “wet feet”) would summarily be sent home or to a third country. One who makes it to shore (“dry feet”) gets a chance to remain in the United States, and later would qualify for expedited “legal permanent resident” status and eventually U.S. citizenship.

³¹ Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities & Culture, 1999), 16.

Water and liquids feature prominently in two of Campos-Pons' works from 1989: *Isla* (Figure 3), which features a body-island from an aerial view, and *Untitled*, a photograph of the artist holding two little statues that depict Ochun or the Virgin of Charity, and Yemayá, or the Virgin of Regla (Figure 4).³² Campos-Pons described *Isla* as the first in a series that “speak[s] of Cuba, of my identity and my connection as a woman, with elements of my country; the sense of ‘island’ as a geographical formation in the sea and the importance of water in the female world.”³³ Here the black body becomes at once a topographical, geopolitical, and corporeal site that embodies historical patterns and processes that outline human-land, or in the case of the Atlantic, human-sea/ocean relationships. In *Untitled*, the statue in Campos-Pons' left hand is Ochun or the Virgin of Charity, and in her right hand is Yemayá, or the Virgin of Regla, both of which are associated with water. These deities will be considered at length in a later section.

Campos-Pons' aesthetic concerns are deeply imbued with the aquatic and cosmological qualities of Yemayá and Ochun: more directly in works such as *I am a Fountain* (1990) (Figure 5), *The Seven Powers* (1992) (Figure 6), *The Seven Powers Come by the Sea* (1992), *When I'm Not Here/Estoy Allá* (1994) (Figure 7), *When I'm Not Here/Estoy Allia* (1994) (Figure 8), *Susurro* (1997) (Figure 9), *Spoken Softly with Mama* (1998) (Figure 10), *Replenishing* (2001) (Figure 11), and *Elevata* (2002) (Figure 12), and indirectly in many others. In both versions of “The Seven Powers” she draws on the memory of the Middle Passage and builds upon “Tra...”, 1991, a work from the previous year, with its triple word association including but not limited to, *travesia*, *trata*, *tragedia*, *traversing*, *trade* [as in slave trade], and *tragedy*. In carrying the *sopera*, walking to rhythmic beats of the *bata* and mesmeric chants of Yemaya Assesu, Campos-Pons

³²The body-island that I refer to is a life-size silhouette of a naked body cut from wood and painted brown.

³³Carmen Contrera, “The Art of M. Campos,” *Aquelarre* 7-8 (1991).

hauntingly brought together the human, historical, and spiritual dimension of the Middle Passage, just as she had done in previous works. This diasporic space (and time) of rupture and renewal is underlined by James Clifford, “In diaspora experience the co-presence of “here” and “there” is articulated with anti-teleological...temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed future: a renewed painful yearning. For Black Atlantic diaspora consciousness, the recurring break where time stops and restart in the Middle Passage.”³⁴

Campos-Pons’ decision to use performance as a protest tactic is connected to 18th, 19th and 20th century African American and Afro-Cuban performances which contested racial marginalization in social spaces and contributed to spatial transformation and, in some cases, spatial appropriation. One such example can be found in the actions carried out in what is now known as Congo Square in New Orleans, Louisiana (Figure 13). Section V of the 1724 Louisiana Code Noir declared that enslaved Africans were not allowed to work on Sundays.³⁵ Critically, though, while Code Noir allowed enslaved Africans to take a day off work, there were no laws in place which granted them the right to congregate. Slaveholding societies feared that slave gatherings would allow them to trade, steal, and lead to slave resistance, rebellions, and uprisings. Congregating African slaves were subject to questioning, searches, whippings, beatings, and the threat, and often the fulfillment, of being sold at auction. Ignoring these constant threats, slaves

³⁴ James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9 no.3 (1994), 318.

³⁵ To regulate relations between slaves and colonists, the Louisiana Code noir, or slave code, based largely on that compiled in 1685 for the French Caribbean colonies, was introduced in 1724 and remained in force until the United States took possession of Louisiana in 1803. The Code’s 54 articles regulated the status of slaves and free blacks, as well as relations between masters and slaves. According to Section V of the 1724 Louisiana Code Noir: Sundays and holidays are to be strictly observed. All negroes found at work on these days are to be confiscated .

often gathered in remote and public places such as along levees, in public squares, in backyards, and other sites they deemed suitable and safe.

Around the 1740s, in a subtle act of rebellion, the African descended population of New Orleans began using the clearing on Rampart Street, just behind what is now known as the French Quarter, for Sunday gatherings. This clearing became known as "la place congo", a space where various ethnic and cultural groups of Colonial Louisiana traded and socialized.³⁶ In 1817, the mayor of New Orleans issued a city ordinance that restricted any kind of gathering of enslaved Africans to the one location of "Place des Nègres", later "Circus Square" or informally "Place Congo" where they would set up a market, sing, dance, and play music, which is a byproduct of the original market established during French reign.³⁷ This was advantageous because at that time the enslaved could purchase their freedom and could freely buy and sell goods in the square in order to raise money to escape slavery.³⁸ The tradition continued after the city became part of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase. As African music had been suppressed in the Protestant colonies and states, the weekly gatherings at Congo Square became a famous site for visitors from elsewhere in the U.S.

In 1893, the square was officially named "Beauregard Square" in honor of P.G.T. Beauregard, a Confederate General who was born in St. Bernard Parish and led troops at the Battle of Fort Sumter. The renaming project was part of an attempt by city leaders to suppress the mass gatherings of African descendants at the square. While this name appeared on some

³⁶ Daniel Henry Usner, Jr. 'Frontier exchange in the lower Mississippi valley: race relations and economic life in Colonial Louisiana, 1699-1793' (Thesis. PhD, Duke University, 1981), 251.

³⁷ Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery* (Hill and Wang, New York, 2003), 47.

³⁸ Jerah Johnson, *Congo Square in New Orleans* (Lafayette: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 2011),

maps, most locals continued to call it "Congo Square." In 2011, the New Orleans City Council officially voted to restore the traditional name Congo Square. The official renaming of the site to Congo Square and strengthens my argument that space can be constructed through repetition which also attests to the malleability of meaning/meanings attached to public spaces.

At face value, the allocation of leisure space for free and enslaved Africans appears to have been an effort on the part of the French/Louisiana legislature to recognize and acknowledge the sociospatial needs of the enslaved; however, the spatial accommodations for Blacks were purely self serving to the White elites. The activities—singing, dancing, playing music—taken up by enslaved Africans attracted wealthy White visitors from all parts of the country who contributed to the economic growth of New Orleans. A benefit the enslaved did not enjoy.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre examines the continuity between economics and the production of space. He suggests that just as everyday life had been colonized by capitalism, so too has its location—social space.³⁹ Lefebvre's notion of everyday life suggests that capitalism, often through the production and organization of space, has control over private life and leisure. Therefore, it becomes crucial to acknowledge the complex relationship between space, place, power, and the 'other' that existed in Congo Square. To prevent the social space of the enslaved from expanding beyond Congo Square, the Louisiana legislature relied mostly on virtual boundaries. Public acts of humiliation, violence, and terror enacted on border-crossers worked to reinforce and (re)establish power and dominant representation of the state.

³⁹ Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 8-9, goes so far as to suggest that social space is a synonym of everyday life—that everyday life is primarily (though not entirely) a spatial concept.

There is a societal recognition and adherence, by the free and captive, to the power embedded in systems of spatial exclusion and inclusion. As George Lipsitz notes, “the idea of racially specific spatial imaginaries is not a theory, but a metaphorical construct that reveals actual social relations.”⁴⁰ Even though there is pronounced power in spaces co-opted by the state, perhaps Campos-Pons was interested in the interstitial spaces that permit contestation and resistance. For example, in an interview with Lynne Bell, Campos-Pons notes:

I am part of a generation that was intent on reshaping the Cuban cultural landscape. I wasn't only an artist, I was an activist too...I thought people like me could make a difference.⁴¹

When asked about the spatial goals of *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons said, “I was trying to occupy every inch of the museum space, inside and outside.”⁴²

Another performance of spatial contestation more personal to Campos-Pons happens during the annual El Día de Reyes in Havana, Cuba (Figure 14). The festival tradition associated with El Día de Reyes dates back at least to the mid to late eighteenth century. Taking place annually on January 6 as a commemoration of the Catholic holiday of Epiphany of the Day of the Three Kings, the festival continued in ebbs and flows to until the late nineteenth century. Although Epiphany was celebrated in many forms throughout the Catholic world, in slave-era Cuba it was the official annual festival day for the island's African-descended population. According to Fernando Ortiz:

That day, black Africa, its people, its costumes, its music, its tongues, its song and dance, its ceremonies, its religions and political institutions, were brought across the Atlantic to

40 George Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape,” *Landscape Journal* 26 no. 1 (2007): 13.

41 Lynne Bell, History of People Who Were Not Heroes: A Conversation with Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Third Text* 12 no. 43 (1998): 38.

42 Interview with the artist, October 15, 2015.

Cuba, especially Havana. The tyranny and might of slavery that coldly separated parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, compatriots, was for one day mitigated as the negroes came together in the streets, with their own, with those of their tribe, their caravels, proud in the ceremonial attire of their land, venting the rousing monotonous African chant, charging the air with the noise of their drums and the bells and other primitive instruments, enjoying above all an illusion of freedom, in an orgy of ritual, dance, music, song, and cane spirit.⁴³

The significance of this festival lies in its insistence of incorporating West African components into its otherwise Catholic substructure in an attempt to thwart erasure and unmitigated assimilation. Dick Cluster and Rafael Hernández write in *The History of Havana*, “Anything that suggested African culture was even more controversial than the question of access to a restaurant or café. To the Cubans in charge of city government, African derived drums and dances smacked [of] the backwardness and barbarism.⁴⁴ In fact, the Día de Reyes celebration had been banished under Spanish authority when slavery ended on the grounds that they conflicted with the Catholic religion and no longer served any purpose.⁴⁵ When a group of Abakua took their rituals openly to the street to celebrate, local police promptly took them into custody, and they were sentenced to a year in prison for illegal association.⁴⁶ In a city council ordinance of 1900, “the use of the African drums in any sort of assembly, whether on the public streets or inside,” as well as the processions “known as *comparsas*, *tangos*, *cabildos*, and *claves*, or any

43 Fernando Ortíz, “The Afro-Cuban Festival ‘Day of the Kings,’” in *Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology*, ed. Judith Bettleheim and Fernando Ortiz (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993), 7. For clarity and to aid future researchers, English translations of Ortíz’s “La Antigua fiesta arfocubana del ‘Día de Reyes’” are drawn from Jean Stubb’s annotated translation in this work.

44 Dick Cluster and Rafael Hernández, *The History of Havana*, (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 119.

45 Cluster and Hernández, *Havana*, 120.

46 Ivor Miller, “A Secret Society Goes Public: The Relationship Between Abakua and Cuban Popular Culture.” *African Studies Review* 43.1 (2000): 161. Abakuá is an Afro-Cuban men's initiatory fraternity, which originated from fraternal associations in the Cross River region of southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. Known generally as Ekpe, Egbo, Ngbe, or Ugbe among the multi-lingual groups in the region. The first such societies were established by Africans in the town of Regla, Havana, in 1836.

other that make use of symbols, allegories, and objects which conflict with the seriousness and culture of this country's inhabitants" was strictly forbidden and punishable with imprisonment.⁴⁷ These threats were ignored, and within the same year *comparsas*, *tangos*, *cabildos*, and *claves* took place in various locations throughout the country.

Habla La Madre, like the above examples, "serves as counterstatements to the social-control designs of their respective societies" and "[re]defined physical spaces in positive terms for blacks and mulattos."⁴⁸ These spatial interventions, according to Daniel E. Walker, "redefined spaces in a manner that countered the debilitating effects of the slave regime's space-centered social-control initiatives."⁴⁹ The correlation between Congo Square and the Guggenheim can be found in the psychological meaning embedded in these spaces. For example, African Americans have notably lower rates of museum attendance nationwide than Whites do largely due to the legacy of historic discrimination.⁵⁰ A summary study of Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) data from the 1980s on white and black attendance at art events concluded that the measureable difference in participation could be tied to "subtle forms of exclusion."⁵¹ Studies that are more recent have identified a distinct cultural psychology among African Americans, rooted in historical and social experience, which has produced heightened sensitivity to stereotypes and real or perceived racism. For fifty years, the Guggenheim did not

⁴⁷ Cluster and Hernandez, *Havana*, 121.

⁴⁸ Daniel E. Walker, *No More No More: Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xii.

⁴⁹ Walker, *Resistance*, 19.

⁵⁰ In *Exhibiting Blackness*, art historian Bridget R. Cooks analyzes the curatorial strategies, challenges, and critical receptions of the most significant museum exhibitions of African American art. By examining the unequal and often contested relationship between African American artists, curators, and visitors, she provides insight into the complex role of art museums and their accountability to the cultures they represent.

⁵¹ Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva, *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (Washington, D.C., American Association of Museums, 2010), 14.

host a single exhibition of Black artists, which certainly could be read as a disincentive for Black museumgoers.

Furthermore, figures from the NEA's 2008 (SPPA), note that non-Hispanic White Americans were over-represented among adult art museum visitors (78.9 percent of visitors, while just 68.7 percent of the U.S. population). Hispanics and African Americans were significantly under-represented. Studies suggest that African Americans are more likely to attend events characterized by Black themes and in which Blacks are well-represented among performers, staff, and audience members. A photograph from the Weems retrospective at the Guggenheim reveals a large African Diaspora presence, similar to the audience makeup at the exhibition's inaugural showing at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, Tennessee (Figure 15). Weems show was a significant draw for non-Whites, which corroborates the conclusion in the SPPA study.

Campos-Pons' negotiation of space is an amalgamation of strategies that have been deployed throughout the African Diaspora in different historical eras. One of the most influential strategies stems from Black freedom struggles, which contested the racialized spatial marginalization practices throughout the United States, beginning in the 1930s and continuing throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. As noted art historian Cherise Smith highlights in her text *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deaverse Smith*:

The focus of the black freedom struggle was, of course, equality for African Americans, and political and social action would not have taken place were it not for the collective identification that such tactics created. African Americans were encouraged to look beyond class, color, region, gender, and other differences and to unite around the

recognition that disempowerment, disenfranchisement, and economic suppression were experiences shared by the collective and not solely endured by the individual.⁵²

In the Diasporic fight for self-determination, autonomy, and the pursuit of equality, Smith identifies “sit-ins” as an effective tactic.⁵³ When successfully deployed, sit-ins—a form of direct action that involves one or more people occupying an area for a protest, often to promote political, social, or economic change—transformed restaurants, cafes, bus stations, and other banal institutions into active sites of protest(s), rebellion, and resistance and material sites of memory. *Habla La Madre* seeks to replicate the spatial transformations that resulted from these acts of resistance.

In May 1942, a group of 27 people protested the racially discriminatory no-service policy of the Jack Spratt Diner on 47th Street in Chicago. Groups that included at least one Black person took each seating area in the diner. The peaceful patrons then tried to order; all were refused. The police were called, but when they arrived they told the management that no laws were being broken, so no arrests were made. The diner closed for the night but thereafter, according to periodic checks made by the *Congress of Racial Equality* (CORE) activists, it no longer enforced its discriminatory policy.^{[54][55]}

52 Cherise Smith, *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 32.

53 Smith, *Enacting*, 33.

54 Ron Grossman, "Birth of the Sit-In," *Chicago Tribune*, February 24, 2014, 17.

55 "Divine's Followers Give Aid to Strikers: With Evangelist's Sanction They 'Sit Down' in Restaurant," *New York Times*, September 23, 1939, 13: This article records one of the earliest racially connected sit-ins. According to the article, followers of Father Divine and the International Peace Mission Movement joined the Cafeteria Workers Union to protest racially unfair hiring practices at New York's Shack Sandwich Shops, Inc. According to the *New York Times* between 75 and 100 followers showed up at the restaurant at Forty-first Street and Lexington Avenue, where most of the strike activity has been concentrated, and groups went into the place, purchased five-cent cups of coffee, and conducted what might be described as a kind of customers' nickel sit down strike. Other patrons were unable to find seats.

A group of students from Morgan State College (now University) and the Baltimore chapter of CORE started one of the earliest lunch counter sit-ins of the American Civil Rights Movement. Their goal was to desegregate Read's drug stores. The peaceful impromptu sit-in lasted less than one-half an hour and the students were not served. They left voluntarily and no one was arrested. After losing business from the sit-in and several local protests, two days later *The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper* ran a story featuring Arthur Nattans, Sr., then President of Read's who was quoted saying, "We will serve all customers throughout our entire stores, including the fountains, and this becomes effective immediately". As a result, 37 Baltimore-area lunch counters became desegregated.^{[56][57][58]} At another early sit-in, the "Royal Seven", a group of three women and four men from Durham, North Carolina, sat in at the Royal Ice Cream Parlor on June 23, 1957, to protest practices of segregation. The activists' efforts are now recognized via historical markers in Durham.⁵⁹

Sit-ins and other practices of spatial disruption forever alter the perceptions and social structure of their respective sites not only for themselves but also for those groups who previously

56 Eli Pousson, "Why the West Side Matters: Read's Drug Store and Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage," *Baltimore Heritage*. . January 7, 2011. Accessed November 8, 2015. <http://baltimoreheritage.org/education/why-the-west-side-matters-reads-drug-store-and-baltimores-civil-rights-heritage/>.

57 Edward Gunts, "Read's Drugstore Flap Brings Baltimore Civil Rights History to Life," *Baltimore Sun*, February 8, 2011.

58 *The Baltimore Afro-American*, commonly known as *The Afro*, is a weekly newspaper published in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. It is the flagship newspaper of the Afro-American chain and the longest-running African-American family-owned newspaper in the United States.

59 Bruce Hartford, "Royal Ice Cream Sit-in — Durham, NC (June)." Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. <http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis57.htm#1957royal>: The "Royal Seven" are convicted of trespassing and fined \$10 plus court costs. According to the prosecutor, segregation laws provide the legal justification for charging prospective customers with "trespass." The seven appeal to Superior Court and demand a jury trial. An all-white jury again convicts them. They appeal to the state Supreme Court which upholds the guilty verdicts based on segregation ordinances. They appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court which refuses to hear their case. They end up paying \$433 in fines (equal to \$3,500 in 2012). [Historic Note: The term "sit-in" had not yet come into wide use, so they were initially identified in the press as "strikers."]

regulated their organization. In *Geographical Imagination*, Derek Gregory notes that the production of space refers to “any landscape that arises out of social practices...and through racialized, gendered, and classed forms of geographic organization.”⁶⁰ These events demonstrate how repetition and organization can result in the production of an altered, if not new, space.

These conceptual spatial interplays have “a continuum that turns the personal and mundane into something intimate and universal.”⁶¹ They enable one to think about the space and place African Diasporic subjects occupied and how it ultimately constituted our present spatial and geographic organization. *Habla La Madre* highlights the notion that black lives are necessarily geographic and are always at odds with attempts to erase and despatialize their sense of place. The performance is a demonstration of a long lineage of spatial interventions, which is a mode of Black protest germane to the circumstances of the transatlantic slave trade.

Colonial powers attempted to establish “here” as the New World—a land of promise modernized by Christianity, European wealth, technology, commerce, and culture—and “there” as Africa—“The Dark Continent,” a geographically troubled space teeming with barbarism, godlessness, magic, mystery, and uncivilized sub-humans with a non-existent or at best underdeveloped culture. For centuries, slavers and colonialists believed that enslaved Africans left “there” behind them as they were dispersed throughout the Americas; however, the presence of West and Central African cultural traits in religion, spirituality, music, food, dance, and other New World sociocultural practices serves as evidence to the contrary. The *sopera*—a blue and white lidded tureen containing the *otanes* or stones of the Oricha Yemayá—that Campos-Pons carries in her right hand during *Habla La Madre* counters colonial narratives of cultural erasure.

⁶⁰ Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (New Jersey, Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), 356.

⁶¹ Sally Berger, “Threads of Memory,” in *Diaspora, Memory, Place: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z* (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 215.

It confirms that enslaved Africans endeavored to maintain a connection with a place that they would never see again, and it also highlights their efforts to (re)locate “there” “here.”

The significance of the sopera in *Habla La Madre* lies in European colonial attempts to make slaves ‘forget’ their homeland. As Saidiya Hartman notes in her watershed text *Lose Your Mother*:

A slave without a past had not life to avenge. No time was wasted yearning for home, no recollections of a distant country slowed her down as she tilled the soil, no image of her mother came to mind when she looked into the face of her child. The pain of all she had lost did not rattle in her chest and make it feel right. The absentminded posed no menace. Yet more than guns, shackles, and whips were required to obliterate the past. Lordship and bondage required sorcery too.⁶²

Slavers forced captured Africans to engage in rituals of forgetting which included circling ‘trees of forgetfulness,’ marching through groves that induced forgetting, submersion in ceremonial baths to wash away their identities. In Ewe country, on the eastern coast of Africa, a brew or tonic was used to prevent slaves from retracing the path back to their country. In the north, African herbalists possessed medicine so powerful that it transformed able-bodied men and women into vacuous and tractable slave, slaves ingested the plant *Crotalaria arenaria*, known to West Africans and European slave traders, as *manta uwa*, which means “forget mother” in Hausa.⁶³ According to slave traders *manta uwa* robbed the slave of spiritual protection. Campos-Pons challenged that claim of spiritual erasure by identifying the sopera as a site of African spiritual and religious practices. Therefore, the artist’s action of carrying the sopera on the

62 Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 155.

63 Hartman, *Mother*, 157.

sidewalk became a (re)enactment of enslaved Africans transporting their spiritual beliefs across the Atlantic, which is an act of resistance.

West and Central African spiritual traditions can be found in various spiritual and religious practices throughout the Diaspora. The *sopera* usually has specific connections to Yemayá and Santería. In *Habla La Madre*, it represents spiritual and religious practices, and their respective deities that survived the Middle Passage (Figure 15). In essence, the *sopera*—a sign of cultural survival and mobility—destabilized the psychological domination thought to exist aboard the slave ship. Brutality and terror failed to strip the enslaved of her/his Africanness, and it did not succeed in preventing that Africanness from crossing the watery highway—the Atlantic. That fluid pathway constructed by white supremacy and imperialism was meant to transport African bodies to the New World, but not their culture(s) and certainly not their humanity.

Also accompanying Campos-Pons on her journey across the metaphorical Atlantic were the rhythms of Batá drumming—the most sacred and complex of the ritual music associated with the Afro-Cuban religion, Santería (Figure 16). Batá are double-headed, hourglass shaped drums, generally considered to be “owned” by the oricha Changó. The batá ensemble is made up of three drums: *iya* (mother drum), *itotele* (or *omelet enko*), and *okonkolo* (or simply, *omele*).⁶⁴ The percussion instrument is used primarily for religious or semi-religious purposes for the native culture from the land of Yorùbá, located in present-day Nigeria, as well as by worshippers of Santería. The Batá’s most popular functions are entertainment and to convey messages. In *Habla La Madre*, the artist employed the Batá to announce a message of resistance against spatial marginalization and cultural disregard. The Bata is also a symbol of unity; the shell is usually

⁶⁴ John Amira and Steven Cornelius, *The Music of Santeria: Traditional Rhythms of the Bata Drums* (Indiana: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992), 15.

constructed by hollowing out a single piece of wood.⁶⁵ As *Habla La Madre* figured as an (re)enactment of a unifying Diasporic experience, the shell of the Bata represented the unitary African Diaspora. Campos-Pons used the Batá not only for its African Diasporic connection but also for its divine reference. Because the shape of the drum is said to represent Changó's thunder axe, each strike against them leaves an otherworldly imprint on where they are played.

Ultimately, *Habla La Madre* transformed the sidewalk into a site of memory. Like the Atlantic, the sidewalk figures not only as a mechanism of travel but as a landscape that holds history. If the *sopera* and Batá drums represent cultural components that were retained during the transatlantic slave trade, then *Habla La Madre* became a reflection of a specific African Diasporic experience. This segment of *Habla La Madre* references the transport, survival, and syncretism of diasporic cultural— language, spirituality (Santería), dance, and music— traditions throughout the Americas. Although the material culture used in the performance can be read as specifically Afro-Cuban, the performance represents an “interplay of ethnic communities” which reinforces Jacqueline Nassy Brown's assertion that “Diaspora is best understood as a relation rather than a condition.”⁶⁶

In thinking about how Campos-Pons physically came to be on the sidewalk, African American conceptual artist, Carrie Mae Weems surfaces. Campos-Pons met Weems in 1988 at the Massachusetts College of Art. As a visiting artist who was an assistant professor at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, Weems shared work that critically addressed stereotypes of blackness, such as her *Ain't Jokin'* series, 1987-88 (Fig. 17), which pairs portraits

65 Amira and Cornelius, *Music of Santeria*, 15.

66 Anita Gonzalez, “Navigations: Diasporic Transports and Landings,” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 20.

of African Americans with racist jokes in order to point to the insidiousness of racism. The relationship that Weems and Campos-Pons share can be understood by their respective art practices which have been dedicated to exploring forgotten African Diasporic experiences and recovering and inserting marginalized peoples into historical records.

Weems highlights ignored and erased experiences of Black people in order to create a more inclusive and honest picture of humanity. The artist believes that her “responsibility as an artist is to...make art, beautiful and powerful, that adds and reveals, to beautify the mess of a messy world, to heal the sick and feed the helpless; to shout bravely from the roof-tops and storm barricaded doors and voice the specifics of our historic moment.”⁶⁷ Like Campos-Pons, Weems is generally interested in uncovering and critiquing historical and contemporary systems that construct and control power paradigms, entry and erasure from archives, and mechanisms of identity formation.

Dissatisfied with the representations of black families, Weems created her first major photographic series, *Family Pictures and Stories*, 1978-84 (Figure 18). Weems presented elements of contemporary experiences of African American life by capturing an “intimate yet unvarnished portrait of her own large and close-knit family.”⁶⁸ *Family Picture and Stories* feature Weems’ relatives to make comments on the contemporaneous conditions of African Americans, which are essentially a product of the journey across the Atlantic.

In her *Sea Island Series* (1991-92) (Figure 19) Weems participated in a project of cultural recovery and celebration by examining the Gullah culture found on the Sea Islands off the coasts

⁶⁷ Artist statement: www.carriemaeweems.net.

⁶⁸ Kathryn E. Delmez, ed., *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 2.

of Georgia and South Carolina (the Atlantic). Based on the sea islands' proximity to the mainland and their majority black—mostly direct descendants of enslaved Africans—population, the residents were able to retain many aspects of African culture to the present day. In fact, the Gullah society has been called “the most African of American cultures.”⁶⁹ By presenting particular African American cultural details, especially those with direct links to Africa, Weems uncovers and (re)presents a developed and persistent heritage, one that stands in contrast to what has often been erased in mainstream historical accounts. She explores Gullah spiritual beliefs, language, funerary practice which parallels Campos-Pons' exploration of Yorùbá (or Lucumi), Igbo, and Congo spiritual beliefs and language.

In a more explicit project, Weems examined the history and legacy of slavery in *Slave Coast* (1993) (Figure 20). She photographed “empty but once important centers along the slave trade route, such as the holding facilities on Goree Island. Powerful words summon the fear, humiliation, and helplessness inevitably felt by the recently captured Africans as they waited to embark on the treacherous journey across the Atlantic to a life of slavery.”⁷⁰

A project deeply resonant with Campos-Pons is Weems' series *Dreaming in Cuba*, 2002 (Figure 21). In this photographic series, where the artist wanders through a former slave barracks wearing attire reminiscent of a slave woman's, the artist focuses on the country's rich and tangled history, from its position as one of the leading producers of sugar and tobacco in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—a labor system requiring hundreds of thousands of slaves—to that of the longest-surviving communist state in the Western Hemisphere. Campos-Pons has explored similar issues in one of her largest installations to date, *Sugar/Bittersweet*, 2010 (Figure 22) and

69 Delmez, Weems, 24.

70 Kathryn E. Delmez, ed., *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 116.

her most recent exhibition, *Alchemy of the Soul: Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons*, 2016 (Figure 23) at the Peabody Essex Museum.^{[71][72]} In *Dreaming in Cuba* and *Alchemy of the Soul*, both Weems and Campos-Pons create dialogues with the inhabitants of Cuba, both past and present.

The non-biological bond between Campos-Pons and Weems might be conceived of as queer. In her watershed essay, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage,” Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley posits:

Queer not in the sense of a “gay” or same-sex loving identity...Queer in the sense of marking disruption to the violence of normative order and powerfully so: connecting in ways that commodified flesh was never supposed to, loving your own kind when your kind was supposed to cease to exist, forging interpersonal connections that counteract imperial desires for Africans’ living deaths.⁷³

Tinsley’s conceptualization of queer features prominently in my thinking about how the relationship between Campos-Pons and Weems factors into my reading of the sidewalk as the Atlantic. I am drawn to the *mati* figure that circulates within theories of queer diaspora. The *mati* is “a highly charged volitional relationship...that dates back to the Middle Passage—

71 *Sugar/Bittersweet* is a mixed-media installation of sugar, African spears, African stools, Chinese stools, Chinese weights, and Chinese rope. Campos-Pons combines one of each component to create one sculptural piece. The sculptures are aligned in five horizontal rows, each row contains five sculptures. The sculptures take on different forms as the components vary in shape and size and are assembled in two configurations: African stool, sugar or glass disk, Chinese rope and African spear; and sugar or glass disk, Chinese weight, Chinese rope, Chinese stool, and African spear. The sculptures are further differentiated by the color or gradient of the sugar and glass disks- ranging from black to white to translucent. The materials in *Sugar/Bittersweet* converge to illustrate a sugar cane field.

72 Using large-scale blown glass sculptures, paintings, photographs, and evocative soundscapes, the artist draws on the structural forms found in the abandoned sugar mills and rum factories of her childhood island home. Incorporating the sweet smell of rum, this multi-sensory exhibition creates an intoxicating reconceptualization of the often-brutal history of the Cuban sugar industry, offering a visceral experience that ignites the senses and our emotional awareness of place, memory, identity and labor.

73 Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no 2-3 (2008): 199.

originally ‘shipmates,’ those who had survived the journey out from Africa together...those who had experienced the trauma of enslavement and transport together.”^{[74][75]} In efforts to highlight both the traumatic and triumphant experiences of the enslaved African, Campos-Pons and Weems insert themselves into slave narratives which underpin many of their projects. For example, Weems’ *Dreaming in Cuba*, 2001 and *The Louisiana Project*, 2003 (Figure 24) and Campos-Pons’ *When I Am Not Here---Estoy Allá*, 1994, *Habla La Madre*, 2014, and *Alchemy of the Soul* (2016) all highlight histories of the enslaved. Both artists stack time and place on top of one another which foster a connection between past and present and weaken rigid sociospatial systems. Following this reading, both Campos-Pons’ and Weems’ practice(s) can then be seen as recuperative as they endeavor to prevent the erasure of specific histories.

Today the Atlantic is commonly thought of as an aqueous pathway to sites of pleasure: vacation cruises to the Caribbean, leisurely European excursions, and the less but still ‘exotic’ East. However, its murky associations with the transatlantic slave trade rarely surface. By (re)locating the sociospatial history of the African Diaspora and the Atlantic on the sidewalk, *Habla La Madre* encourages contemporary society—at the very least the Guggenheim and its patrons, passers-by, Central Park visitors, and members of the art world—to acknowledge the materiality of the African Diasporic experience which refuses invisibility. I am proposing an engagement with something barely visible or seemingly not there to our supposedly trained eyes. The sidewalk as Atlantic respatializes time and place which then allows it to become a site of

74 Sally Price and Richard Price, *Two Evenings in Saramaka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 3, 396, 207.

75 In *The History, Civil, and Commercial, of the British West-Indies*, vol. 2 (1794: rpt. New York: AMS, 1966), 94, Bryan Edwards remarks: “This is a striking circumstance; the term shipmate is understood among [West Indian slaves] as signifying a relationship of the most enduring nature; perhaps recalling the time when the sufferers were cut off together from their common country and kindred, and awakening reciprocal sympathy from the remembrance of mutual affliction.”

racial possibility, supernatural travels, and difficult epistemological returns to the past and the present. Conceptualizing the complex possibilities that lie in a temporary reading of the Middle Passage occurring in and around the Guggenheim calls attention to the enduring legacy of racialized spaces propped up by White supremacist ideology.

PERFORMING SANTERÍA

I don't need to think of Africa as over there—it is already in me, it was present in the way my father talked. Africa is in the place where I grew up and it affects how I perceive myself and how I relate to all these issues of territory and displacement and what they mean

—*Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons*

At the end of Campos-Pons' journey across the proverbial Atlantic, she entered the Guggenheim and announced, "I am not coming alone. I am coming with my ancestors. I am coming to embody this institution with the Black body (Figure 25)."⁷⁶ The artist's declaration signaled the institutionalization of Santería—an African Diasporic religion—into the Guggenheim—a New World hegemonic space.

Santería became part of the Cuban experience when Europeans in colonial Cuba began to import African slaves to develop urban centers, work in mines, and on sugar plantations.⁷⁷ Enslaved people brought with them symbolically complex religious traditions that transformed over time into Santería or Regla de Ocha (Lucumi, Sp. rule of oricha). Many of these Africans were noble patricians and priests who had been disloyal to the ascendancy of new rulers, specifically, in kingdoms of Benin, Dahomey, and the city-states of Yorùbá.⁷⁸ Displaced from their ordered spiritual lives, Africans were compelled to adjust their belief system to the new challenges presented by colonial Cuba.

⁷⁶ *Habla La Madre*, 2014.

⁷⁷ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Santería: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eedrmans Publishing Company, 2004), 2.

⁷⁸ De La Torre, *Santería*, 2.

The historical experience of slavery and repression required an atmosphere of secrecy as followers of the religion tried to protect themselves from the social forces that threatened their existence. In colonial Cuba, the practice of Santería by slaves was illegal; accusations of witchcraft resulted in imprisonment or death. Because their masters forbade them to worship gods of Africa, slaves masked their deities in the clothing of Catholic Saints. Thus, it appeared to priests, sea captains, and slave owners that slaves were praying to Saint Lazarus, for example. However, unbeknownst to the oppressors, slaves were worshipping oricha Babalú-Ayé.⁷⁹ Over time oppressed people developed Santería into a religion of resistance.

Christine Ayorinde, notes that in the early years of the Cuban Republic, 1902 to 1959, Afro-Cuban religious and cultural practices faced intense repression.⁸⁰ In fact, the first Cuban president, Tomas Estrada Palma, launched a campaign against Afro-Cuban cultural expressions. In the 1920s the *Afro-Cubanismo* movement emerged, which promoted the acceptance of African culture as a legitimate form of national expression in Cuban society.⁸¹ The unremitting US takeover of both geography and economy fueled a sense of nationalism that compelled whites to ally themselves with their Afro-Cuban compatriots in an effort to resist imperialist domination.

79 De La Torre, *Santería*, 3.

80 The Republic of Cuba of 1902 to 1959 refers to the historical period in Cuba when Cuba seceded from US rule in 1902 in the aftermath of the Spanish–American War that took Cuba from Spanish rule in 1898 until the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Cuban independence from the United States was guaranteed in the Platt Amendment proposed to the United States Congress in 1901. It was officially a representative democracy though at times it became controlled by a military junta. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 massively changed Cuban society, creating a socialist state and ended US economic dominance in Cuba. Prior to the Revolution, Cuba was regarded as a client state of the United States. In 1934, Cuba and the United States signed the Treaty of Relations in which Cuba was obligated to give preferential treatment of its economy to the United States, in exchange the United States gave Cuba a guaranteed 22 percent share of the US sugar market that later was amended to a 49 percent share in 1949.

81 In addition to Santería ritual, *iles* (temples), *patakis* (sacred stories), Odu (signs), divination tools (*obi* (coconut), *dilogun* (cowrie shells) and *epuele* (Babalawo's diving chain) were also valorized.

Some years after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the religion's rituals were slowly valorized, and by the late 1980s, the practice of the religion was decriminalized.⁸² Santería owes its continued existence to thriving diasporic oral traditions, which enabled believers to preserve and pass on its secrets through the generations.

Campos-Pons' introduction of Santería into the Guggenheim signals a clear departure from a tradition of secrecy. This public ritual raises questions not only of secrecy but also authenticity. Within the religion, secrecy protects ritual knowledge and the power it implies. The ethos of secrecy plays an important role in the religion of the *orichas* among the Yorùbá, as many ritual practices are secret, only known by initiated priestesses and priests. Divination, initiation, *rompimento* (tearing away), and *rogación* (petition) are private ceremonies. However, there are rituals sanctioned for public consumption. *Habla La Madre* is one such ritual, a *bembé*.

The *bembé* is a festival of drumming and dancing performed for the oricha (Figure 26). By means of three sacred ritual drums known as the *batá*, the messages of worshippers reach the orichas, and the orichas respond to their devotees. The centrality of drumming in Yorùbá religion traces to legends that tell of a time when Yorùbá people were at war with their neighbors, the Congolese. Today *bembés* are to honor, thank, implore, or repay oricha. *Habla La Madre* honors Yemayá and beseeches her to inhabit the Guggenheim and ensure that the “Black body” will be honored in this “place” (Figure 27).⁸³

The rhythm of the drums in a *bembé* invites oricha to come and to possess the dancers, bridging the gap between the physical and the spiritual worlds. Dancers are stirred into a

⁸² Michael Atwood Mason, *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 2002), 9.

⁸³ *Habla La Madre*

collective trance, their dance postures reflect physical or personality traits of the oricha to whom the *bembé* is dedicated (Figure 28). In *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons used a large swath of blue fabric to dance around the space. She danced in circles, to the beat of *batá* drums while asking Yemayá to inhabit her body through a rhythmic chant (Figure 29).⁸⁴

The cultural production of music and other forms of rhythmic modes of communications such as cheers, chants, songs, and poetry in the Black community have become more than a source of entertainment. Black music has morphed into a tool for social change and resistance. Throughout the African Diaspora, music served as a primary mechanism for disseminating cultural legacies. African musical traditions have endured and remained an integral part in the African Diaspora, while oral traditions have been a primary channel of cultural diffusion. Interwoven into the African Diasporic cultural fabric, African music combines communicative functions with pleasure and has never stopped telling the peoples' story.

African Diasporic musical tradition has been a tool of agency and a tool of liberation, particularly among Black communities in Cuba and the United States. Through music, Black people are able to articulate their pains, empower themselves, and resist oppressive forces. In "Gil Scott-Heron: Larry Neal's Quintessential Artist," African-American literary scholar, Joyce Joyce, elucidates the community-building role Black music has played:

The music of Black folk has always been the magnifying glass that illuminated the traditions and struggles of Black people. Thus, music is the quintessential medium through which the artist can liberate the Black masses.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ This chanting is traditionally referred to as mounting. The Oricha may 'seize the head' of a person (or 'mount them' as if they were a horse), and cause that possessed person to perform 'spectacular dances', and to pass on various messages from the Oricha to community members.

⁸⁵ Joyce Joyce, "Afterword: Gil Scott-Heron: Larry Neal's Quintessential Artist," in *So Far So Good* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990), 75.

Joyce's comments highlight that African Diasporic musical tradition has been and continues to be a tool of resistance against oppression and for disseminating African Diasporic cultural heritage. Renowned activist and poet LeRoi Jones, later known as Amiri Baraka, describes how Black music has been indicative of the state of Black society:

It seems possible to me that some kind of graph could be set up using samplings of Negro music proper to whatever moment of the Negro's social history was selected, and that in each grouping of songs a certain frequency of reference could pretty well determine his social, economic, and psychological states at that particular period.⁸⁶

Traditional African cultures did not separate art from life; the two elements were inextricably intertwined. In many African cultures, musicians are custodians of history and mythologies. For instance, in kingdoms of Benin, Dahomey, and Ashanti, if a drummer made a mistake with referencing the chief's lineage it could be a capital offense.⁸⁷ These kingdoms utilize song, dance, and music to address issues concerning all facets of life, from the mundane to the extraordinary. Ethnomusicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia agrees with this assertion:

Ashanti children sing special songs to cure a bed wetter; in the Republic of Benin there are special songs sung when a child cuts its first teeth; among the Hausas of Nigeria, young people pay musicians to compose songs to help them court lovers or insult rivals; men working in a field may consider it essential to appoint some of their number to work by making music instead of putting their hands to the hoe; among the Hutus, men paddling a canoe will sing a different song depending on whether they are going with or against the current.⁸⁸

86 LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963), 65.

87 J.H. Kwabena Nketia, *Sources of Historical Data on the Musical Cultures of Africa* (Ghana: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1972), 3.

88 J.H. Kwabena Nketia, *Music in African Cultures: A Review of the Meaning and Significance of Traditional African Music* (Ghana: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1972), 33.

Music touches all aspects of an individual's life; more so, the community participates freely in all musical celebrations. The functional roles of music and culture are seen as communal characteristics of African musical tradition. The element of collective participation is a distinguishing trait of African music and art.

Village members of the Ashanti people gather during celebrations and act as both audience and active participants through dynamic call and response. Ethnomusicologist, John Miller Chernoff, describes call and response as “a rhythmic phrase that recurs regularly amongst the chorus or response; the rhythms of a lead singer or musician vary and are recast against the steady repetition of the response.”⁸⁹ Campos-Pons performs this type of communal call and response in *Habla La Madre* when interacting with the witnesses accompanying her in the Guggenheim's rotunda (Figure 30):

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 1: She has eyes in the back of her head

Campos-Pons: She has eyes in the back of her head

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 2: Chin up and shoulders back

Campos-Pons: Chin up and shoulders up

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 3: Don't ask what I say

Campos-Pons: Don't ask what I say, say as I do

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

⁸⁹ John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 55.

Witness 4: I brought you into this world and I can take you out

Campos-Pons: I brought you into this world and I can take you out

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 5: Because I said so

Campos-Pons: Because I said so, because I say so, because I demand you, because I am here and I am not going any place

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 6: Do as I say and not as I do

Campos-Pons: Do as I say and be here and take all of this institution and show the power of the Black body and show the power of the Black ancestry. It was time, too long to be here, but we are here and Ashe

All Witnesses: Ashe

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 7: Yemayá got a look so hot she can set the sun at dawn

Campos-Pons: Yemayá got a look so hot she can set the sun at three o'clock

Campos-Pons: Yemayá

Witness 8: Will give you something to do

Campos-Pons: Will give you something to do⁹⁰

Similar to Sub-Saharan African cultures, the call and response segment of *Habla La Madre* functions as a pervasive democratic participation. By engaging witnesses in a call and response she not only distributed responsibility of leadership but also showed the Guggenheim visitors how participatory Santería can be. The historical intermix of art and life attests to the

⁹⁰ *Habla La Madre*

authenticity of *Habla La Madre* and its place within the context of African Diasporic cultural retention and dissemination.

For most audience members, including myself, *Habla La Madre* was their first public participation in a Santería ritual. Artist and scholar Luis Camnitzer contends that public performances, such as *Habla La Madre*, cannot be classified, lauded, or acclaimed as authentic rituals. For example, for the Second Havana Biennial in 1986, which Campos-Pons attended, Cuban artist Manuel Mendive created work based on actual religious ceremonies. He presented “elaborate choreographies based on Yorùbá rituals in which he painted the bodies of the dancers with his personal imagery.”⁹¹ Camnitzer characterized that performance and other art works rooted in Santería as extensions of actual ceremonies and not authentic or actual ritual because they appeared in public locations for broad audience and involved imaginative embellishment not seen in religious practice.⁹² Camnitzer’s argument does not take into account Santería’s lack of central dogma or strict orthodoxy to regulate the rituals and practices of its believers. Miguel De La Torre, an expert in social ethics and Latino/a Studies argues that dogma can be altered to suit new experiences or situations faced by the faith community.⁹³ Campos-Pons considered the lack of recognition of Black artists by the Guggenheim a reason to construct an altered ritual rooted in the foundations of Santería rituals.⁹⁴ For the artist, the performance reinforced African Diasporic

91 Luis Camnitzer, *New Art of Cuba*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 38-41.

92 Both Campos-Pons’s and Mendive’s works are reminiscent of the racially conscious art practices by African American artists during the Black Arts Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. For example, Houston Conwill performed in his altarlike Juju Funk Installation in 1978, painting his body like a shaman’s and sitting on a ceremonial stool. See Joseph Jacobs, ed., “Black Consciousness Since the ‘60s,” in *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art* (Lewisburg, PA: The Center Gallery of Buknell University, 1985).

93 De La Torre, *Santería*, xv.

94 Skype conversation with artist August 12, 2015.

solidarity and reflected an Afro-Cuban heritage.⁹⁵ What the belief system lacks in orthodoxy, it makes up in ritual.⁹⁶ Campos-Pons relied heavily upon the flexibility of Santería rituals to launch her critique of the Guggenheim.

Santería is a religion based on orthopraxis (right actions), not orthodoxy (right doctrine). This emphasis on rituals demonstrates that the religion is more than an abstract set of beliefs and teachings. In reality, it ties believers to a particular social order as a way of giving meaning and purpose to their lives, as well as justifying the overall faith in the community and in the larger society.⁹⁷

Campos-Pons looked to Santería as inspiration for *Habla La Madre* based on one of its main purposes which is to assist individuals, regardless of their background or affiliation, to live in harmony with their assigned destiny and to ensure they possess the necessary rituals to navigate life's difficulties.⁹⁸ Here, perhaps more than anywhere, the artist's consideration for the audience comes into focus. Based on De La Torre's description, Santería does not require audiences to possess accurate knowledge of its belief system in order to implicate them in rituals. The religion has developed a complex vocabulary to identify people with different levels of involvement with the rituals/spirits: *aleyo* (stranger), *omoricha* (children of the oricha), *aboricha* (one who worships orichas), and *oloricha* (one belonging to oricha). Campos-Pons understood that the Guggenheim's patrons would be from various socioeconomic, political, and cultural backgrounds. She chose a spiritual practice that would encourage participation from an ideologically diverse group. Perhaps, it would be safe to assume that the assigned destiny the

95 Skype conversation with artist August 12, 2015.

96 De La Torre, *Santería*, xv.

97 De La Torre, *Santería*, 102.

98 De La Torre, *Santería*, 4.

artist hoped to “live in harmony with” is the inclusion, recognition, and acknowledgment of African descendants and other marginalized communities by hegemonic institutions such as the Guggenheim.

This was not the first time Campos-Pons has used Santería in her practice. In 1988, she created a performance and Super-8 film called *Rite of Initiation (Rito de Iniciación)*, which reinterpreted ritual aspects of Santería. The film addresses the power and symbolism of female bodily cycles and the role of performative Yorùbá rituals. Working with Neil Leonard, the then Assistant Director of the Computer Art Center at the Massachusetts College of Art, Campos-Pons incorporated recordings of chants for Oshun and Yemayá, similar to the chants that she performed in *Habla La Madre*.

Another work engaging the symbolism and cosmology of Santería, *Untitled* (1989) is a nude self-portrait of the artist from her neck to just below her breasts. In front of each breast, the artist holds a religious statuette that symbolizes the Santería orichas Yemayá and Oshun. Each deity carries specific iconological significance. The Black icon on the left in the photograph represents Our Lady of Regla, who is associated with Yemayá, the Santería oricha of the seas and maternity. The white figure on the right depicts La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (the Virgin of Charity), the patron saint of Cuba associated with Oshun and the principles of eros, fertility, beauty, healing, grace, and generosity. The statuettes conjure connotations related to female sexuality, African identity, particularly reproduction, motherhood, love, and desire. Yemayá is often associated with Cuba, as well as to the transatlantic slave trade, or the Middle Passage.

Perhaps her most explicit use of Santería is featured in *The Seven Powers Come by the Sea* (1992). According to artist and scholar, Coco Fusco, *The Seven Powers Come by the Sea* calls upon viewers to take into account that Santería, embodied by those seven African powers, is

inextricably bound to the history of slavery.⁹⁹ The installation consists of seven large wooden carvings based on the historical deck plans of ships used during the slave trade, each of the carvings contains the name of a Santería god at its base, painted silhouettes of those seven deities (Yemayá, Oshun, Oya, Chango, Oggun, Ochosi, and Obatála), and dozens of framed photographic portraits of unidentified Black people from Cuba and the United States scattered on the floor, with the text “Let Us Never Forget” and “Prohibido Olivar.” The installation covered three walls and adjacent floor space. The installation’s composition loosely recalls the form of “artful” ritual altars made as part of the gift exchange system for orichas in Santería practice.¹⁰⁰

Another exchange system in Santería manifests itself through embodiment or re-enactment. In this process, believers take on the personality or traits of an orichas’ avatar. There are many roads or avatars of Yemayá, covering the entire gamut of her personality. Campos-Pons assumes the personality of *Yemayá Mayelewó*. In the patakí of *Yemayá Mayelewó*, the avatar heads to the marketplace and announces her arrival by smashing plates. As Campos-Pons walked from the Rotunda to the second level of the Guggenheim, she sang, chanted, and announced the arrival of Yemayá. Once in the second floor gallery, she resumed petitioning Yemayá and began throwing a bag of plates onto the floor. By smashing the dishes Campos-Pons did not only mark the arrival of *Mayelewó* as Yemayá, but also marked the inclusion and celebration of the Black female body—Carrie Mae Weems and her ‘body’ of work—within an institution that had refused it canonical recognition (Figure 31). By throwing water and smashing

99 Coco Fusco, “Beyond Visibility: Thoughts on the Situation of Postcolonial Culture,” in *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London and New York: Institute of International Visual Arts and Routledge, 2001), xiii-xvii.

100 For a detailed account of altar-making in Santería ritual practice, see David H. Brown, “Toward an Ethnoaesthetics of Santería Ritual Arts: The Practice of Altar-Making and Gift Exchange” in *Santería Aesthetics*.

the dishes onto the floor, leaving trace elements, Campos-Pons physically marks and carves out space for Blackness to exist where it had previously been denied (Figure 32).

In *Enacting Others* Cherise Smith examines several performances in which an artist enacts a persona similar to Campos-Pons'. Smith highlights how the performances "address, or perhaps redress, the stifling boundaries of identity categories as a way to explore how the politics of identity discourse has shaped the manner in which identity is theorized, understood, experienced, and subsequently represented in art."¹⁰¹ In *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons' enactment of Yemaya Melaywo appeared to blur the line between her identity and that of the avatar.¹⁰² Smith suggests that works like these "present and represent important concatenations of class, ethnicity, gender, and race wherein identity categories, which we sometimes prefer to think of as exclusive, actually deepen and involve themselves with one another."¹⁰³ Here, Campos-Pons identity as a Black Cuban, female artist was visually conflated with that of a Black Yorùbá ageless avatar.

Campos-Pons is not the first artist to deploy Santería in her practice; in fact, she follows a rich tradition of Caribbean visual artists incorporating Santería aesthetics in their work dating back to the 1940s. For example, in work such as *Deity with Foliage* (1942) (Figure 33), *The Noise of 1943 (Le Bruit, also titled The Murmur)* (Figure 34), and *The Jungle* (1943) (Figure 35) Cuban painter Wifredo Lam subverted traditional subjects by redefining the empirical world in

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Enacting*, 5.

¹⁰² The Avatars or Oricha paths refer to the different vicissitudes experienced by certain Oricha according to the corpse of Ifa. Yemaya has many caminos (roads) or avatars. Each avatar has a slightly different temperament and is found in a different place in nature. All roads of Yemaya are called "Ibú" and each takes a slightly different shade of blue in her eleke.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Enacting*, 4.

terms of the spiritual world.¹⁰⁴ These paintings signal to Santería and the oricha by way of hybrid figures that combine human and animal traits with nature (landscape and plants). Another artist looking to Santería is Afro-Cuban-American priest Juan Boza. According to Richard Viera and Randall Morris, Boza's 1980s installations, orchestrated as theatrical performances, are imbued with "very serious ceremonial intent."¹⁰⁵ The two dimensional works of Juan Boza—prints, drawings, paintings—have two main sources of inspiration: elements from symbols of the Cuban Abakuá (Leopard) secret society, and from *pataki* (narratives and legends) or specific oricha portraits and interpretations.¹⁰⁶

Ana Mendieta is perhaps the most well-known artist to incorporate Santería into her practice. Like Campos-Pons, Mendieta's works revolve around notions of identity and memory. According to American curator, writer, and scholar Mary Jane Jacob, "Mendieta reestablished contact with Santería in the 1970s, in part out of personal nostalgia and in part as a means of binding herself in a deeper and more thoughtful way to her ancestors and ancestral land...Santería also found a place in Mendieta's growing feminist consciousness."¹⁰⁷ One of Mendieta's most explicit allusions to Santería appears in her 1972 performance *Bird Transformation* where she became a sacrificial rooster by rubbing herself with blood and then rolling in white chicken feathers (Figure 36). Her performance relates to the *plante* (initiation rites) of the Abakuá cult

104 Julia Herzberg, "Reading Lam," in *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsay (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 151.

105 Ricardo Viera and Randall Morris, "Juan Boza: Travails of an Artist-Priest, 1941-1991," in *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsay (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1996), 171.

106 Ricardo Viera and Randall Morris, "Juan Boza: Travails of an Artist-Priest, 1941-1991," in *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, eds. Arturo Lindsay, Randall Morris, and Julie Edwards (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 178.

107 Mary Jane Jacob, "Ashe in the Art of Ana Mendieta," in *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsay (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1996), 191.

during which a white rooster is sacrificed. Although these artists incorporate Santería or Lucumí aesthetics into their artistic practice, *Habla La Madre* stands out as a project that specifically utilizes Santería and its various material and symbolic components as a tool for protest against the spatial marginalization of African descendants and other disparaged communities.¹⁰⁸

The artist's background as the child of an Afro-Cuban family with Yorùbá lineage also influenced the artists' decision to use Santería. In fact, Campos-Pons' grandmother was a Santería priestess. Her parents were not initiated into Santería, but they did participate in family and friends' religious ceremonies, which took place in their neighborhood in Mantazas, Cuba, and Campos-Pons raised the animals and gathered herbs used in ritual sacrifices. Campos-Pons's mother made her participate in yearly rituals such as taking special herbal baths, purifying the house, and making offerings to particular spirits.¹⁰⁹ In an effort to caution viewers against naturalizing Campos-Pons' relationship to Santería based on her Blackness, Luis Camnitzer has argued that Campos-Pons' interest in Santería was "coincidental" and "evolved purely from artistic pursuits."¹¹⁰ However, I argue that based on Campos-Pons' childhood immersion in the belief system, her continued exploration and incorporation of Santería material and visual components in her work, and her interest in identity and memory, her affiliation with Santería is more than a passive engagement but rather an expression of her Matanzan Afro-Cuban identity.

108 Others Cuban artists working in same vein are Manuel Mendive, Agustín Cardenas, Roberto Diago, Mateo Torriente, José Bedia, Arturo Lindsay, René David Chamize, Elaine Soto and Jorge Luis Rodríguez.

109 Lisa Freiman conversation with the artist, October 21, 1996.

110 Camnitzer, *New*, 211.

ALTAR-ACTION

An altar is a place where you realize your belief

—Gaanman Gazon Matoja

Through land, she will not answer

At the altar of water she responds at once.

—Pierre Verger

While performing a Santería ritual dance during *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons and one of her ‘witnesses’ intermittently walked over to the Guggenheim’s fountain and placed items—a *sopera*, a cake, watermelon, and cantaloupe— one at a time on its ledge (Figure 37). When the dance ended, Campos-Pons said, “Let me leave for a second to place an offering to my ancestors.” She walked to the fountain and poured out a container of blue water containing fish (Figure 38). That interventionist moment marked the transformation of the Guggenheim fountain into an altar for Yemaya. How does one read such a mode of communication or display? How does Campos-Pons altar-making address general concerns like ethnicity and subjecthood? This work examines Campos-Pons’ altar as a cultural marker of African Diaspora heritage and Santería affiliation, a symbol of African Diaspora rebellion, and a tool to further blur the line between the spiritual and the secular.

Altars are found at shrines, in temples, churches and other places of worship. Today, they are used particularly in Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shinto, Taoism, Santería, Neopaganism and ceremonial magic for veneration, worship, and other ceremonial practices.

Judaism used such a structure until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE by Roman soldiers. Historically, Mande, Akan, Fon, Yorùbá, Ejagham, and other civilizations from West Africa used altars in their spiritual and religious practices. This is also true among the Kongo of Central Africa. According to the renowned Africanist Robert Farris Thompson, “Our understanding deepens if we juxtapose Jewish and Roman Catholic definitions with those of the Afro-Atlantic world.”¹¹¹ In Judaism:

The altar, or bema, is seen as a raised platform from which the Torah is read. It is the reading of Torah—the inscribed word of God Himself to the People of Israel—that is at the crux of the Jewish service. Every reading of the word God is a reenactment of Moses’ meeting with God.¹¹²

The work of the Jewish altar is to elevate, literally and symbolically, the word of God. Elevation is also the main reason for the Roman Catholic altar; altar, from the Latin *altare* means “a high place.”¹¹³ Another etymology suggests, *ardere*, a place where things are burned in honor of the Lord, Exodus 38:1, “the altar of burnt offerings.”¹¹⁴ *Altare* and *ardere*, both suggest a “raised structure with a plane on which to place or sacrifice offerings to a deity.”¹¹⁵ Throughout the African Diaspora, altars function in similar roles, but with additional duties to honor and celebrate ancestors using structurally different designs. Farris Thompson argues that “Pygmy and San handling of the shrine concept, the point of sacrifice to forces from beyond, constitutes the dawn of the Afro-Atlantic altar. This is because the African areas they influenced became, in turn, major roots to black North and South America.”¹¹⁶ Africans arriving on the shores of North

111 Robert Farris Thompson, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas* (New York: The Museum for African Arts, 1993), 24.

112 Dominique Malaquais, “Toward an Understanding of the Afro-Atlantic Altar,” unpublished manuscript, Yale University, 1984, 1.

113 Thompson, *Face*, 24.

114 The Shorter English Dictionary, 53.

115 The Shorter English Dictionary, 53.

116 Farris Thompson, *Face*, 35.

and South America did not forget their ancestors or their gods. Under oppressive conditions, they managed to establish altars to their dead and blend them into Christian world. They coded their burial mounds as “graves” but studded them with symbolic objects, many deriving, in form and function, from the Kongo classical religion.¹¹⁷ Variations can be seen in Campos-Pons’ construction of the altar inside of the Guggenheim.

By placing objects around the fountain as offerings to Yemaya, the Guggenheim’s otherwise banal water feature took on a new role. The fountain’s ledge functioned as a table/altar found in the classic Lucumí and Santería tradition. As radical and crude as Campos-Pons’ construction method appeared, the altar adhered to prescribed tenets of Santería. Historically, all Oricha altars were collections of portable objects that could be assembled and disassembled and placed beside other altars to create a single comprehensive spatial context, which means any site which hosted an altar, prayers, and offerings was capable of becoming a temple at any time.¹¹⁸ Based on understandings of altar creation, how it affects spatial transformation, Campos-Pons visualizes her altar as (re)articulating spatial context(s) around and within the Guggenheim.

Santería altars, shrines, and thrones are lavishly adorned with cloth (*manto*, gown, *pañó*, and *ropa de santo*), soperas, canopies, backdrops, cowrie shells. However, each sanctum will vary based on the Oricha in question. Tribute variations also depend on practitioners’ socioeconomic status and the site of the altar. Campos-Pons’ altar to Yemaya consists of watermelon, cantaloupe, soperas, and cake. The objects used by Campos-Pons lack the splendor of traditional altar material; however, according to Lucumí tradition, the objects put into the space

¹¹⁷ Robert Farris Thompson, *The Four Moments of the Sun* (New Haven: Eastern Press, Inc., 1981), 21.

¹¹⁸ George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 153.

of the shrine and altar acquire religious significance, and through the placement of the objects in the shrine, personal experiences [the performance of *Habla La Madre*] have spiritual significance conferred upon them.¹¹⁹

Elements of Campos-Pons' altar can be found in other Cuban representations of altars to Yemaya. For example, the artist's introduction of live fish into the fountain echoes *Painting of Yemaya (Yemoja)* by Manuel Mendive (Figure 39).¹²⁰ Around 1968 Mendive painted a virtual altarpiece for Yemaya. Leopard dotting, which marks power, nobility, and initiation in the Yorùbá religion in Cuba, indicates bubbles in the site (placing Yemaya underwater). Coral on either side of the goddess restates wealth. Two fish rest upon her lap and two more fish flank her head like aquatic cherubs. She cradles a fifth fish in her arms like the infant Jesus. In *Yemaya* (1970), Mendive replaced the fish in Yemaya's arm with a figural representation of the Christ child (Figure 40). Thompson argues that Mendive's "Queen of the Ife" becomes "the Virgin of Regla beneath the sea."¹²¹

Thinking about Campos-Pons' larger project of spatial intervention, the altar stands out because of its appropriative quality. Guggenheim officials approved the initial performance proposal and the version they witnessed during rehearsals, which did not include any engagement with the fountain. Video footage of *Habla La Madre*'s rehearsal in the museum confirms the presence of the museum's curatorial staff and the absence of the materials, which the artist would

119 Brandon, *Memories*, 154.

120 Manuel Mendive Hoyo is internationally recognized as a master of contemporary Cuban art. His work has been exhibited throughout Europe, Africa, and Latin America. He creates paintings, sculptures, and objects that capture the rhythm of the Orichas, the ancestral spirits of Africa that are the source of his imagery. For today's world, Mendive continues to appropriate, transform, and adapt the visual language of Africa as a means of conveying its rich mythology to a new audience, informed less about its ritual than about its aesthetics.

121 Thompson, *Face*, 276.

later place on the fountain's ledge. When asked about the construction of the altar, Campos-Pons replied:

“I would not consider what I did an act of resistance. I would categorize it as an act of rebellion. I was very nervous when we started putting things there [the ledge of the fountain]. I was thinking that maybe someone would come out and stop the performance. I had not asked the museum for permission to do this. I did it on my own because I thought that it was necessary to achieve what I was planning for. The altar was necessary because I was trying to inhabit every bit of that space which in the end included the fountain.

Campos-Pons' refusal to seek permission should be seen as an act of rebellion and resistance, refusing to allow the visual and material culture, public practice, and dissemination of religious practices of attendees to be sanctioned by Western colonial powers.

By engaging the fountain, the artist takes up what political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott refers to as the hidden and public transcript—the awareness that the institution of power (the Guggenheim) did not grant approval for spatial interventions and their related ignorance of the new sociopolitical and cultural work that Campos-Pons makes the fountain perform.¹²² Scott also notes that, “With rare but significant exceptions, the public performance of the subordinate will out of prudence...be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful.”¹²³ It can be argued that Campos-Pons' altar existed as a minimal shrine.¹²⁴ Campos-Pons' tribute does not include many of the items traditionally seen at altars, shrines, and

122 “I shall use the term public transcript as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate...I shall use the term hidden transcript to characterize discourse that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by power holders. The hidden transcript is this derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears on the public. See *James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 2-4.

123 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

124 A minimal shrine is one that does not possess the amount of accouterment traditionally seen on Santeria shrines and altars.

thrones to Yemaya. According to George Brandon of the City University of New York, “the ritual technique for creating a minimal shrine is simple and straightforward. One does not have to be a priest to create a shrine. What was important was naming the shrine, the spatial relationships of the appropriate symbolic objects, and offering food and prayers.”¹²⁵

Another Diasporic altar tradition can be found in Rio, Brazil. The beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema become a vast altar to Yemaya. On New Year’s Eve, thousands of devotees arrive at the beach to make altars to Yemaya requesting her blessing and good luck in the coming year (Figure 41). The face of the goddess is the sea, and the sand becomes her sanctuary. Addressing this ultimate altar, a woman may stand with floral offerings for the goddess, make a prayer, and hurl the flowers into the sea (Figure 42). Others make prayers and leave roses on the sand.¹²⁶ Unlike these devotees, Campos-Pons distributes the roses she brings for Yemaya to the women in the audience in hope that the gift will inspire further interest in Santería or oricha.

Campos-Pons would not be the first artist to introduce altars into the museum space. Amalia Mesa-Bains created her altar artwork piece, *Venus Envy, Chapter One (or The First Holy Communion Before the End)* in 1993 (Figure 43). This altar was part one of a three-part altar series, or “chapters” she created in Venus Envy installations. In the piece, Mesa-Bains used white silk to form surrounding curtains around a stand of votive candles and a vanity. She placed a small chair beside the dressing table, adorned by a large rosary. In the middle was a large glass oval mirror, where viewers could see the reflection of Coatlicue, an Aztec deity whose mask is made from a serpent head. There were two small sets of drawers, and a statue of the religious icon Mary, as well as a small framed portrait.

¹²⁵ Brandon, *Memories*, 153.

¹²⁶ Thompson, *Faces*, 277.

Installing the artwork at the Whitney Museum of Art, Mesa-Bains had a row of mirrors that lined the walls, prompting viewers to look inward and consider their own autobiographical histories as they saw their own reflection. Alongside the mirrors were photographs of Mesa-Bains as a young girl in addition to photos of her ancestors and popular female icons. The collection of these different types of images, from childhood to deceased family members, prompted viewers to consider how their pasts continuously interact with the present to create a reality.

Surrounding the altar were other glass cases that housed collections of artifacts Mesa-Bains described as representing female rites of passage. Among them were gowns from a young girl's first Holy Communion, a confirmation gown, and a wedding dress. Additionally, there was a doll dressed as a nun, flower wreath that symbolized her religious initiation, satin and lace, as well as antique dolls, crushed rose petals, dried fruit, and small Mexican ceramic jars. Art historian and cultural theorist Jennifer A. Gonzalez describes these objects as symbolizing Mexican American traditions of initiations into "purity" and "beauty," and a woman's loss to control over her own body as she moves through religious and romantic traditions.¹²⁷ *Venus Envy* re-creates an autotopography of Mesa-Bains' own life, using intimate possessions and family snapshots to plot a personal narrative.¹²⁸

While both works, *Habla La Madre* and *Venus Envy*, represent private memories, public histories, and the formation of subjectivity using the spatial registers of religious sanctuary, domestic space, and museum display, the objects used in Campos-Pons' altar do not contribute to

127 Jennifer A. Gonzalez, "Archaeological Devotion," in *With Their Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture*, Lisa Bloom, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1999), 192.

128 Jennifer A. Gonzalez describes autotopography as a syntagmatic array of material signs which uses a spatial topography to represent a given subject's position within a network of social relations.

the construction of a personal narrative for the artist. When referring to the objects in Mesa-Bains *Venus Envy*, Jennifer Gonzalez notes:

Serving as a site of psychic projection and introjections, such collections include what might be called autobiographical traces, such as photographs, travel souvenirs, heirlooms, religious icons, or gifts. These coveted objects can be seen to form a syntagmatic array of material signs using a spatial topography to represent a given subject's position within a network of social relations, what I have elsewhere called an "autotopography."¹²⁹

The metaphoric and metonymic relations between objects and images, which Gonzalez makes reference, marks one of the greatest differences in the respective altars of Campos-Pons and Mesa-Baines.

In his 1964 essay "Rhetoric of the Image," Roland Barthes analyzes the "emphatic form of advertising images that combine both linguistic and photographic signs." His analysis concluded that not only words, which form a repressive textual anchor, but also the visible and identifiable objects in this image, along with their mode of presentation, possess the rhetorical means to convince and seduce the viewer.¹³⁰ He further observes that:

there is in fact a very great obstacle to the studying of the meaning of objects... the obstacle of the obvious: if we are to study the meaning of objects, we must give ourselves a sort of shock of detachment, in order to objectivize the object, to structure its significance: to do this there is a means which every semanticist of the object can use; it is to resort to an order of representations in which the object is presented in a simultaneously spectacular, rhetorical, and institutional fashion, which is advertising, the cinema, or even the theater.¹³¹

Thus, the rhetoric of objects exists in their ability to produce a visual or material argument at a particular historical moment and within a legible semantic "code." As mentioned earlier, Mesa-

129 Jennifer Gonzalez, *Devotion*, 183.

130 Roland Barthes, *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 35.

131 Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 186.

Bains' altar consists of photographs of her as a young girl and her ancestors, gifts, and religious icons—items that carry a legible and familiar code. Conversely, Campos-Pons' altar hosts Yemaya's favorite foods watermelon, cantaloupe, and cake, the *sopera* containing her *otanes*—items some people would not register as having a code to read. Campos-Pons' objects are totally dependent on their context, without it they have virtually no symbolic significance.

Other differences in the artist's respective altars are the manners of construction and maintenance. In *Habla La Madre*, the audience was invited to consider the process as the altar was constructed piece by piece in front of them. Conversely, the museum visitors entered the institution and encountered *Venus Envy* pre-assembled. Because the installations were shown at multiple sites simultaneously, it is reasonable to assume Mesa-Bains did not construct the artworks on her own. They were likely assembled by art handlers and preparators using printed instructions written by the artist.

The altar in *Habla La Madre* was site specific and was deconstructed immediately after the ritual ended. *Venus Envy* traveled from institution to institution. Circulation of the artwork requires contracts that set forth display parameters but also regulate its care. Despite their differences, the works by Campos-Pons and Mesa-Baines present the possibility that not only objects, but the context of their presentation, the museum, the church or *ile*, and the home, may accommodate more than one set of spatial practices. It is rarely the case that art installations using material culture are understood as arguments rather than merely unorthodox collections or decorative displays.¹³² In the case of the altar produced by Campos-Pons, its rhetorical success relies on the artists' physical engagement with the site.

132 Jennifer A. Gonzalez, *Devotion*, 186.

Campos-Pons' altar serves as another archetype of African Diaspora altars. Pygmy and San honor rainforests as god.¹³³ Within the rainforest's recesses, they make prayers and sacrifices. Therefore, the forest becomes their altar and shrine. Leaves, twigs, and meat are often offered as tributes to their gods (Figure 44, 45). The number of cultural objects involved in their nature-based altars is small, reflecting the material simplicity of hunting-gathering groups on the move.¹³⁴ Pygmies from the Central Republic of Africa often create fire altars to serve as the locus for worship and sacrifice. Flames are read for spiritual advice on how to improve the group's prosperity.¹³⁵ According to J.D. Lewis-Williams, painted rock faces served as altars for southern San groups. The rock face, "quite distinctly," functioned as "a focus of spiritual attention which without question constitutes it as an altar (Figure 46).¹³⁶ The altar in the Guggenheim used an architectural feature within a hegemonic space to function as a charged mystic site that attempted to decrease the proximity to the divine.

Campos-Pons' creation of the altar is part of her attempt to transform the Guggenheim into a Santería place of worship. Santería has few buildings devoted to the faith. Rituals, such as *Habla La Madre*, often take place in halls rented for that purpose, or privately in Santería homes, a house-temple or *casa de santos* (house of saints), also known as an *ilé*, which may be

133 The Pygmy live in several ethnic groups in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo (ROC), the Central African Republic, Cameroon, the Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Madagascar, and Zambia. The San territories span Botswana, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and South Africa.

134 Farris Thompson, *Face*, 36.

135 Farris Thompson, *Face*, 37: "The ritual importance of fire links Pygmies to the religious culture of the San,"

136 J.D. Lewis-Williams and T.A. Dowson, *Rock Paintings of the Natal Drakensberg* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, Ukhalamba Series, 1992), 16.

fitted with altars for ritual purposes. ^{[137] [138]} The *ile* serves as a kind of house church, as followers of Santería do not construct opulent temples or churches for the oricha. Shrines are built for different oricha and the space to worship is called an *igbodu*. During appropriate rituals the Oricha are able to meet believers at these sacred spaces in large part because of the presence of an altar. It could be said that Campos-Pons transforms the Guggenheim into a *casa de santos* not only through performance of the bembê, but by constructing an altar.

The importance of Campos-Pons' project of transforming the Guggenheim into a *casa* can be found in the sociohistorical implication of the *cabildo* as the "starting point for the African santaria [sic] of Cuba."¹³⁹ The twentieth-century Afro-Cuban *casa-templos* grew out of the *cabildos de nacion*. Still, scholars continue to debate the institutional origins of the modern Afro-Cuban *casa-templos*. Early twentieth-century Afro-Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz suggests "sorcery temples" (*templos brujos*) rose from the ashes of the *cabildos de nacion* after the 1886 emancipation. Discovering this development slightly later, Joseph Murphy said, "[a]fter Indendpence [1902], the *cabildos* were reformulated as Afro-Cuban cult houses, called *reglas*, after the *reglamentos* or regulations of *cabildo* life."¹⁴⁰^[141] In contrast, the Cuban anthropologist and historian Rafael L. Lopez Valdes locates the origin of the modern *casa-templos* not entirely

137 Miguel A. De La Torre, *Santería: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 102. De La Torre also notes that Ilé shrines are built, by the priests and priestess, to the different orichás which creates a space for worship, called an *igbodu* (altar).

138 The definition of the word *ile* is interestingly ambiguous, similar in some ways to the Christian term church. It can mean the entire earth (as the home of the oricha) as well as the individual, local spiritual community.

139 A *cabildo* is an early post-colonial, administrative council. The word *cabildo* has the same Latin root (*capitulum*) as the English word chapter, and in fact, is also the Spanish word for a cathedral chapter. See: David Brown, *Santeria Enthroned*, 62.

140 Joseph Murphy, *Ritual Systems in Cuban Santeria*, Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 210.

141 Joseph Murphy, *Santeria: An African religion in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 29-33

in the colonial *cabildos de nacion*, but, in greater measure, in independent “house-temples” (*casas-templos*) of free Africans and creoles, which had been established in the nineteenth century, prior to the moment of emancipation. Lopez Valdes argues that this class of *cabildos* formed the most significant starting point for Lucumi religious institutions—the *casas* of Havana and Mantanzas. With this history in mind, Campos-Pons’ desire to establish authority over the space reflects and theoretically guarantees historical continuity.

The Guggenheim was an ideal site for Campos-Pons’ project of spatial transformation because historically it excluded artists from the African Diaspora. The history and meaning of the *casa* depends on its inhabitants, April 27, 2014 made the Guggenheim an ideal site for a *casa* because the majority of its visitors on that date were members of the African Diaspora. The significant representation of the African Diaspora coupled with the *bembê*, the altar, and an unsuspecting audience allowed Campos-Pons to transform the Guggenheim into a *casa de santos*. It may be difficult to say to what degree Campos-Pons’ spatial interventions, appropriation through altar construction or transformation by symbolically creating a *casa de santos*, are read as confluences of piety and conceit or whether the altar should be read as “visual” or “material” culture.

CRITIQUING FROM THE INSIDE

The field is a network of objective relations (of domination or subordination, of complementarity or antagonism, etc.) between positions....All positions depend, in their very existence, and in the determinations they impose on their occupants, on the actual and potential situation in the structure of the field.

—Pierre Bourdieu

In actuality, as we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male. The fault lies not in our stars...but in our institutions and education.

—Linda Nochlin

Art...always was, and is, a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions.

—Theodor W. Adorno

Art institutions—galleries, museums, art schools, and other academic bodies —have proclaimed to be liberal; however, these institutions have remained “in the process of self-liberation.”¹⁴² Therefore, artists and scholars have taken up the work of critiquing the collecting, display, conservation, and viewing of art within art institutions, mainly museums. Since the late 1960s Hans Haacke, Eduardo Favario, Daniel Buren, Julio Le Parc, Enzo Mari, Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC), Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG) and many others have produced works and texts that probe the breadth of the field of art and call into question the many unspoken and fundamental tenets of the art world. This section examines parallel demonstrations, protests, and

142 Weislaw Borowski, Hanna Ptaskowska, Mariusz Tchorek, “An Introduction to the General Theory of Place 1966,” in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2009), 44.

other critiques related to the Guggenheim and similar institutions which allows me to establish just where *Habla La Madre* fits into the genre of institutional critique.¹⁴³ I argue that while key elements of *Habla La Madre* can be identified in other examples of institutional critique such as Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights* (1989), Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum* (1992-1993), and Tanya Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper, #5*, Campos-Pons' performance is something new and opens up possibilities for artists to seek unorthodox mechanisms to critique hegemonic institutions.

One such example is American artist Andrea Fraser's 1989 performance *Museum Highlights*. I chose to use *Museum Highlights* as a comparative work because of the different ways it interacts (borrows, takes on, enacts) with power and authority. Fraser's performance of a museum docent temporarily endowed her with museum-conferred authority.¹⁴⁴ For the performance, Fraser led a tour of the Philadelphia Museum of Art under the guise of a fictional docent named Jane Castleton.¹⁴⁵ Dressed in a stylish grey suit, Castleton, who introduced herself as a 'guest', 'a volunteer' and 'an artist', led the tour through the museum describing it and various object in verbose and overly dramatic terms to her unsuspecting tour group (Figure 47).

The museumgoers who encountered Jane Castleton perceived her as an agent of the museum and in possession of knowledge—operational and aesthetic—far beyond that of the

143 The genre of institutional critique exists as an artistic practice which critiques the institutions that are involved in the sale, display, and commerce of art.

144 Here I am relying on a simple definition of docent as a museum guide or educator trained to further the public's understanding of the cultural and historical collections of an institution (museum, gallery, cultural or historical site).

145 Fraser created the persona of Jane Castleton after the American artist Allan McCollum suggested that she explore the role of the museum docent. Her first gallery tour, *Damaged Goods Gallery Talk Starts Here* 1986, involved a series of performances as Castleton, which were not filmed, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. For Fraser, "Jane Castleton is neither a character nor an individual. She is an object, a site determined by a function. As a docent, she is the museum's representative, and her function is, quite simply, to tell visitors what the museum wants – that is, to tell them what they can give to satisfy the museum."

average museum guest. Fraser's business-like apparel contributed to the authenticity of her performance. The costume was a reflection of how Fraser and museum visitors expect a docent to appear. Conversely, Campos-Pons introduced herself as an outsider—someone not necessarily an agent of the museum—seeking to assert a measure of power through protest or agitation.

Campos-Pons' costume of a Santería performer draws attention to their legibility and inherent power. The differentiating assumptions of power in Fraser's simple gray suit and Campos-Pons' elaborate white and blue dress can be qualified in a 2006 study called "The Social Power of a Uniform" published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. The degree and basis of social power of uniformed figures was investigated in two field experiments. In the first experiment, subjects were stopped in the street by an experimenter dressed in one of three ways: a civilian, a milkman, or a guard. They were asked to pick up a paper bag, or give a dime to a stranger, or move away from a bus stop. The results indicated that the subjects complied more with the guard than with the civilian or milkman. In the second field experiment, designed to examine the basis of the guard's power, subjects were asked to give a dime to a stranger under conditions of either surveillance or non-surveillance. The guard's power was not affected by the surveillance manipulation. A logical analysis of social power indicated that the guard's power was most likely based on legitimacy.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the performances, Fraser's grey suit endowed her with authority similar to that of uniformed guard while Campos-Pons' dress, as elaborate and fanciful as it was, functioned liked the attire of the civilian and milkman.

While the color and movement of Campos-Pons' costume adhered to Santería regulations for the performance of a bembé to Yemayá, the tiered cylindrical dress was constructed to

¹⁴⁶ Leonard Bickman, 'The Social Power of a Uniform' in *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Volume 4 Issue 1 (July 31, 2006), 47-61.

resemble the architecture of the Guggenheim (Figures 48, 49). Campos-Pons and others, myself included, read the design of the dress as a way for the artist to simultaneously inhabit and embody the Guggenheim. In an interview the artist said, “I designed the dress to look like the Guggenheim because I wanted people to understand that I was not only inhabiting the building physically, but also metaphorically.”¹⁴⁷

Some guests and critics may read the dress read as parody. There is something anachronistic about *Habla La Madre*. Perhaps it lies in the fact that Campos-Pons used performance as a medium for institutional critique, a medium deployed often in the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1990s, Andrea Fraser’s performances, which addressed serious issues in a humorous, ridiculous, or satirical manner, popularized the institutional critique art movement. Fraser’s work typically comments on the politics, commerce, histories, and even the self-assuredness of the modern-day art museum, including the hierarchies and the exclusion mechanisms of art as an enterprise. *Habla La Madre* offered similar serious critiques of the Guggenheim. The humor in Campos-Pons’ dress and the anachronism of *Habla La Madre* strengthened my association of her with Fraser.

During *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons invites visitors to “follow [her] to see the work of Sister Carrie [Mae Weems],” which is similar to what Fraser’s character Castleton invites visitors to do (Figure 49). As a performance artist and not a fictitious character, Campos-Pons describes Weems’ work as “good” and “celebrating the beauty of the Black body,” which falls in line with what many critics have also said about Weems’ work. Conversely, in *Museum Highlights*, Castleton walks around the museum and draws visitors’ attention to architectural and decorative elements of the museum. For example, she describes a common water fountain as “a work of

147 Conversation with the artist October 15, 2015.

astonishing economy and monumentality ... it boldly contrasts with the severe and highly stylized productions of this form.”¹⁴⁸ Upon entering the museum cafeteria she proclaims, "This room represents the heyday of colonial art in Philadelphia on the eve of the Revolution, and must be regarded as one of the very finest of all American rooms.”¹⁴⁹ The language Fraser employs in her performance appears to be a parody of the descriptions commonly provided by docents, with Castleton applying extensive and exaggerated praise to the items she encounters.¹⁵⁰ There is often an odd disjuncture between the docent’s words and the objects she is describing, such as when she points to an exit sign and claims, “this picture is a brilliant example of a brilliant school.” Castleton’s script was constructed from an array of sources: Immanuel Kant’s “Critique of Judgment”; a 1969 anthology of essays called “On Understanding Poverty”; and a 1987 article in *The New York Times* with the headline “Salad and Seurat: Sampling the Fare at Museums.”¹⁵¹ Campos-Pons’ utterances, by contrast, were inspired by Santería rituals, African Diasporic histories, and the circumstances within the Guggenheim.

In satirical fashion, Castleton’s speeches in *Museum Highlights* draw particular attention to the assumptions that have historically been placed on the value of art, especially in relation to notions of class. As art historian Alexander Alberro explains, “Fraser does not critique just the institution of the museum; by extension, she also analyzes the type of viewer the museum produces and the process of identification that artists embody.”¹⁵² Similarly, through *Habla La*

148 Transcribed from video footage of *Museum Highlights* on April 12, 2016 at the Blanton Museum.

149 Transcribed from video footage of *Museum Highlights* on April 12, 2016 at the Blanton Museum.

150 Andrea Fraser *Museum Highlights* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), 112,

151 Martha Schwendener, “At the Mausoleum, Art About Art Houses,” *The New York Times* 10February 2012, C31.

152 Alexander Alberro, “Introduction: Mimicry, Excess, Critique” in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), xxvii.

Madre Campos-Pons draws attention to the lack of engagement and acknowledgement of Black artists by the Guggenheim, which ultimately excludes one ‘type’ of visitor and privileges another.

In 1992 Charles Lyle, then director of the Maryland Historical Society (MdHS), suggested in an informal meeting with staff from the Contemporary Museum Baltimore, that he was seeking new ways to up-date the way history was presented at MdHS, while at the same time developing “an audience that reflected the cultural diversity of the community.”¹⁵³ Up to that point, the Maryland Historical Society had a history of ignoring or under representing the contributions of African-Americans, Native Americans, women, and other groups, to Maryland’s rich history. The Contemporary enlisted African American artist Fred Wilson, known for creating mock museum installations during the 1980s. Wilson gained full access to the Maryland Historical Society’s sizeable collection of manuscripts, prints, paintings, and objects. From the institutions’ holdings, he created *Mining the Museum*, an emotionally charged exhibit that raised awareness of the way cultural institutions suppress, consciously or unconsciously, aspects of history that don’t fit into a specific narrative.

Using juxtaposition, redirection, irony, and his own idiosyncratic brand of humor, Wilson confronted viewers with powerfully symbolic uses of historical artifacts that put them in entirely new contexts. A whipping post—donated in 1963 by the Baltimore City jail and used for over fifty years as a punishment for wife-beaters—formed the most dramatic and visually arresting portion of the entire show. Wilson discovered the instrument of punishment among a number of antique cabinets. This bizarre storage arrangement provided the artist with his ironic title for the installation “Cabinetmaking, 1820-1960” (Figure 50). By arranging antique Victorian chairs,

153 Corrin, Lisa G., ed., *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson* (The Contemporary Baltimore in cooperation with the New Press: New York, 1994), 10.

dating from circa 1820 – 1896, around the post, Wilson created an effect that was jarring, laden with emotion, and provocative. The caption for the whipping post read simply: “WHIPPING POST, Platform and post, Gift of the Baltimore City Jail.”

Although the post was built around 1885, and had never been used on slaves, many of those who saw the exhibit left the museum certain that it had been employed for that very purpose. This notion has only persisted with time. A 2001 *Baltimore City Paper* article noted that those attending the exhibit expected to see the exquisite antique chairs, fine silver, and artfully rendered portraits in the gallery, “but it’s shocking to realize that the same institution even owns a post where slaves were whipped.”¹⁵⁴ By simply pairing two seemingly unrelated objects from within the institution’s holdings, Wilson created dialogue, and critiqued the institution. Coupled with rhetoric, Campos-Pons used items from outside the museum to achieve a similar effect. During her appropriation of the Guggenheim fountain, Campos-Pons (and her witnesses) placed a watermelon, cantaloupe, cake, and tureen (*sopera*) on its ledge and with a few words, these commonplace items took on new meaning. Although the objects used by Wilson and Campos-Pons conjure different affects, both artists use signs to create new meaning within hegemonic spaces.

While both artists incorporate objects in their critique, Campos-Pons does something vastly different; she uses music, language, her body, and the supernatural. In the African Diaspora view, spirit is understood variously as an unseen power, such as God, a divinity, a generative life force, a soul force, and a cultural ethos of a people, all of which have distinct interpretations across different cultures. This view also holds that spirit suffuses all aspects of

¹⁵⁴ Mike Giuliano, “The Installment Plan: Museum Mining Pioneer Fred Wilson gets a Museum Show of his own,” *Baltimore City Paper*, 28 November, 2001, B5

Black life and courses through the way Blacks understand and express themselves. Nigerian scholar Babatunde Lawal maintains that it is through the body that [the] spirit or life force manifests itself, acting as a threshold between the secular and the sacred, enabling the human being to interact directly with the super-human.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, Africanist theorists place specific emphasis on the expressive/dancing Black body—and its relationship with music and orality—as the site of spiritual survival and expression.¹⁵⁶ This deployment creates space for other artists looking for unconventional ways in which to forward institutional critique.

Like Campos-Pons' indictment of the Guggenheim's management and staff in *Habla La Madre*, museum staff at the MdHS were not exempt from Wilson's reproach—docents received little indication of the details of the exhibit prior to the opening and were essentially left to interpret and improvise tours on their own. This reflected Wilson's own method of creation: "I go in with no script, nothing whatsoever in my head. I try to get to know the community that the museum is in, the institution, the structure of the museum, the people in the museum from maintenance crew to the executive director. I ask them about the world, the museum, and their jobs, as well as the objects themselves. I look at the relationship between what is on view and what is not on view. I never know where that process will lead me, but it often leads me back to myself, to my own experiences."¹⁵⁷ *Mining the Museum* inspired other cultural institutions to examine the way they presented history.

155 Babatunde Lawal "The African Heritage of African American Art" in *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*, eds. Paul Carter Harrison, Victor Leo Walker II, and Gus Edwards (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 41.

156 Paris, Carl. 'Reading "Spirit" and the Dancing Body in the Choreography of Ronald K. Brown and Reggie Wilson' in *Black Performance Theory* eds. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 100.

157 Garfield, Donald, "Making the Museum Mine: An Interview with Fred Wilson, Museum News," May/June 1993.

While Wilson's unique approach is to examine, question, and deconstruct the traditional display of art and artifacts in museums, Campos-Pons challenges institutional discriminatory practices of acquisition and display by highlighting the absence of Black artist exhibitions and retrospectives at the Guggenheim. Wilson's work at the Maryland Historical Society was as much about exposing the Eurocentric structure of museums as it was a healing process for all of those affected by their history being concealed. Wilson stated, "Museums are afraid of what they will bring to the surface and how people will feel about certain issues that are long buried. They keep it buried, as if it doesn't exist, as though people aren't feeling these things anyway, instead of opening that sore and cleaning it out so it can heal."¹⁵⁸ Wilson's exhibition and Campos-Pons' performance were successful in that it made visitors more historically conscious of the racism that is an integral part of American history.

Tania Bruguera's eleven year-long project, *Tribute to Ana Mendieta*, channels the artist before art historical appreciation of Mendieta's work had taken shape in the United States —and before the popularization of re-enactment as a tool used to archive performance.¹⁵⁹ In this series of performance and site-specific sculptural works, Bruguera reenacts Mendieta's performances in order to resurrect them for a Cuban audience. Bruguera seeks to situate Mendieta in a cultural context from which both artists emigrated, within which only Bruguera was brought up. In *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons takes up a strategy similar to Bruguera's Mendieta project. Campos-Pons re-enacts the actions and rhetoric of *Yemayá Mayelewó*.

158 Lisa G. Corrin, ed. "Fred Wilson: Mining the Museum: An Installation," (Baltimore: New York: The Contemporary Baltimore; New Press, 1994), 34.

159 Re-enactment here refers to the re-staging of a performance to praise or critique. It also includes the launching of a performance in spaces where it had previously been censored.

What I find even more interesting are the spatial complexities tied up in these performances. Mendieta, Campos-Pons, and Brueguera are all Cuban born. Mendieta arrived in the United States as a refugee in 1961, two years after Marxist revolutionary leader Fidel Castro overthrew the authoritarian government of Cuban President Fulgencio Batista. Campos-Pons was born in Matanzas, Cuba, in 1959 and left Cuba to take a fellowship in Banff, Canada in 1989 where she eventually arrived in the United States in 1991 as an exile. Tania Bruguera was born in Havana, Cuba in 1968 and currently lives and works between Havana and New York. Cuba and displacement (exile, immigration, and emigration) appears to be a running theme in the biographies of these artists and it plays out in their respective practices.

Mendieta's practice was bound up in her desire to re-connect with Cuba, a homeland from which she was displaced. In a 1981 artist statement, Mendieta says, "I have been carrying out a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source."¹⁶⁰ Bruguera re-presented these works in Cuba to audiences that were unable to see Mendieta during her brief return in 1981. Campos-Pons re-presented *Yemayá Mayelewó*, an Afro-Cuban figure, to a predominantly US audience that perhaps was unaware of the avatar's existence. Campos-Pons and Bruguera both assumed roles of educators, griots, and cultural diffusers, crossing geographic and temporal boundaries.¹⁶¹

160 Elizabeth Manchester, "Untitled (Silueta Series, Mexico)". TATE. Retrieved October 2009.

161 A griot is a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet and/or musician. The griot is a repository of oral tradition and is often seen as a societal leader due to his traditional position as an advisor to royal personages. As a result of the former of these two functions, he is sometimes also called a bard. According to Paul Oliver in his book *Savannah Syncopators*, "Though [the griot] has to know many

For the past nine years, Bruguera has pursued two practices: *Arte de Conducta* (Behavior Art) and *Arte Útil* (*Useful Art*). Through the creation of *Behavior Art* works Bruguera not only performs certain power relationships for her audience/viewer, but also places him or her in a situation by which one may participate in the immanent expression of certain power dynamics as they unfold within institutions.¹⁶²

For example, in *Tatlin's Whisper #5* Bruguera employed mounted policemen to patrol the gallery, where they demonstrate various techniques of crowd control (Figure 51). The expressions of the audience conveyed anxiety and annoyance. Many of them seemed not to know they are participating in an artwork; the revelation only comes afterwards, or in the process of their participation. Their behavior thus enacts how (state) power operates spatially to coerce groups and multitudes. Bruguera tells scholar and curator RoseLee Goldberg in an interview from 2005, "I want to work with reality. Not the representation of reality. I don't want my work to represent something. I want people not to look at it but to be in it, sometimes even without knowing it is art."¹⁶³ Like Bruguera, Campos-Pons values audience involvement. Upon entering the Guggenheim during *Habla La Madre*, Campos-Pons asks permission from the audience to be there with them in the same space to petition the Oricha. Additionally, Campos-Pons constructs an altar, typically a private event, in front of the audience. She then, in the role of a docent, invites the audience to follow her through the museum to view the work of Carrie Mae Weems. Finally, with their permission, she re-enacts *Yemayá Mayelewó*. I must acknowledge the direct

traditional songs without error, he must also have the ability to extemporize on current events, chance incidents and the passing scene. His wit can be devastating and his knowledge of local history formidable." Although they are popularly known as "praise singers", griots may use their vocal expertise for gossip, satire, or political comment.

¹⁶² *Behavior Art* are works the artist relates through the performances of early Dada and Soviet Constructivists, as well as the 80s generation of artists in Cuba.

¹⁶³ Goldberg, Roselee. "Interview II," Tania Bruguera, *La Bienale di Venezia*, ed. Prince (Chicago: Lowitz and Son, 2005), 11-21.

and indirect audience involvement, but as De La Torre has said, audience ignorance does not prevent them from implication in Santería rituals.

The flip-side of *Behavior Art* is something Bruguera calls *Useful Art*: artworks which challenge art's autonomy from social and political practices and which attempt to create institutions that may intervene in an existing state of affairs. *Habla La Madre* falls under this category as it attempted to inspire Guggenheim visitors to consider the racial marginalization undertaken by the museum prior to Weems' retrospective. Bruguera's first *Useful Art* work may be considered *Memoria de la Postguerra (Memory of the Postwar)*, a newspaper in which she attempted to reactivate the socially and politically motivated work of a preceding generation of artists in Cuba during the 80s (Figure 52).

Bruguera's work is about the role of the artist in society and the possibilities for art to be directly involved in social endeavors. According to the artist, "in order to get involved in social issues, it is important to truly commit to real action. The challenge is that artists are very often confronted with the institutional wall. It is the old dilemma of responsibility in art and what the people in the institutions think the artist should be doing. Unavoidably the work starts dialoguing from an institutional critique standpoint. A new institutional critique where we do not wait for the institution, but we become 'institution builders.'" She continues, "In my case when I talk about institutional critique, I include the artist within the role of the institution itself. For example when I did my project at the Pompidou, *IP Détournement*, 2010 the main critique of the project was not of the way the institution dealt with [its] collection, but the ways in which the artists dealt with being part of collections and their involvement with such value markets."¹⁶⁴ Both Campos-

164 Thom Donovan, "5 Questions (for Contemporary Practice) with Tania Bruguera" *ART21 Magazine*. 14April 2011. Accessed October 06, 2015. <http://blog.art21.org/2011/04/14/5-questions-for-contemporary-practice-with-tania-bruguera/#more-39245>.

Pons and Bruguera actively sought to draw attention to the racism, social disparities, unjust laws, discrimination, affluence, and power abuse that affect the governing of cultural and art institutions.

Underpinning the politics of space are economic structures that propel its production and maintenance. In “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience,” Martha Rosler focuses on the factors that have produced the elitism that characterizes the institution of art. Rosler underscores the importance of social class in the field of art, acknowledging its significant impact on the relationship between artist and audience as well as on “the relation between those who merely visit cultural artifacts and those who are in the position to buy them.”¹⁶⁵ The purchasing power of the upper class and the fundamental role it plays in aesthetic production cannot be underestimated. It affects not only the immediate livelihood of individual artists but also the very definition of art by influencing museum collections, exhibitions, and retrospectives. The role class plays in the field of art is much more complicated than merely purchasing power; it is also, far more insidiously, what determines what is culture and art in the first place. The mounting of *Habla La Madre* which is rooted in a religion that is bound inextricably to the slave experience challenges the notion of ‘high art’ and blurs, perhaps destabilizes, distinctions of high culture and low culture.

By presenting Santería to the audience, Campos-Pons looked to shift the viewer’s perspective or make them see what they had previously taken for granted in a new and different light. For example, since the 1920s, Harlem, a large neighborhood in the northern section of the New York City borough of Manhattan, has been known as a major African

¹⁶⁵ Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 11

American residential, cultural and business center. This neighborhood is only 2.9 miles away from the Guggenheim Museum and yet between 1959 and 2013 the Guggenheim failed to profile the work of an artist that reflected the demographics of that neighborhood. This practice of marginalization demonstrates the Guggenheim's failure to consider the sociopolitical effects the exclusion of African American and other Black artists from their retrospective canon would have on their respective communities. This project of marginalization taken up by the Guggenheim is not reserved for artists but for its workers as well. *Habla La Madre's* spatial critique draws attention to the aggressive geographic expansion project taken up by the Guggenheim.

Recent Guggenheim expansion projects have come under intense scrutiny and have altered the way the international community perceives the institution. For example, in 2011, *Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F)*, a coalition of more than 130 international artists worked to ensure that migrant worker rights were protected during the construction of museums on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi. The group threatened to boycott the \$800 million Guggenheim museum that was under construction in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, unless conditions for the foreign laborers at the site improved. G.U.L.F. responded to a range of abuses that were reported on the island, including the failure of contractors to repay recruitment fees — which lead to crippling debt for laborers — hazardous working conditions and the arbitrary withholding of wages. Such problems are not uncommon in a region where almost all low-skilled jobs are performed by foreign workers with few legal rights. Walid Raad, a Lebanese-born New York artist who is one of the boycott's organizers, said in a statement, "Artists should not be asked to exhibit their work in buildings built on the backs of exploited workers...those working with bricks and mortar deserve the same kind of respect as those working with cameras and

brushes.”¹⁶⁶ The artists refuse to participate in museum events or to sell their works to the museum until their demands are met.

The protests, which have taken place for more than five years, illustrate the sensitivity of the project. Guggenheim officials have said they believe expansion is central to their mission and survival. The museum in Abu Dhabi is expected to bring in significant revenues. While expanding to the Emirates could add to the Guggenheim’s international prestige, it could also bring unfavorable attention because of the area’s record on human rights. Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation said that the museum was “deeply committed” to fair labor issues and that he had engaged in “continuous and constructive dialogue” on the issues in Abu Dhabi.¹⁶⁷ He added that the museum was discussing how to strengthen employment laws there. Because of the Guggenheim’s refusal to speak with protesters they decided to revive a campaign of demonstrations. On random evenings, a few men suspended a 40-foot banner reading inside the museum’s central rotunda, which read “Stop Labor Abuse.”

On February 22, 2014, G.U.L.F. dropped leaflets and educational materials from the museum's rotunda and hung a manifesto inside the museum’s central rotunda (Figure 53). On March 29, 2014, demonstrators from G.U.L.F repeated the February action by dropping mock dollar bills from the museum's rotunda (Figure 53). The bills contained illustrations of the

166 Kelly Minner, "Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Could Face Boycott by Artists." *ArchDaily*. 23 March 2011. Accessed February 21, 2016. <http://www.archdaily.com/121827/guggenheim-abu-dhabi-could-face-boycott-by-artists>.

167 Colin Moynihan, "At Guggenheim, Protesters Renew Criticism of Abu Dhabi Expansion Plan." *The New York Times*. 7 September 2014. Accessed February 06, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/07/nyregion/guggenheim-plan-renews-concerns-over-labor>

Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi surrounded by American dollars (Figure 54). As Mostafa Heddaya for *Hyperallergic* explains, “the only sound that could be heard after the bills were released was the collective gasp of the hundreds of patrons who packed the museum, where lines for entry wrapped around the block.”¹⁶⁸ On November 5, 2014, G.U.L.F. unfurled a three-story banner in the Guggenheim. Similar to *Habla La Madre* these demonstrations make statements inside of the institutions which they critique. There is also a similar use of visual and material culture to protest the institution’s treatment of non-white bodies. Just as the G.U.L.F protests at the Guggenheim Museum were designed to raise awareness about the exploitation of migrant workers, Campos-Pons aims to raise awareness about the exclusion and marginalization of Black artists by the institution.

Most recently, Armstrong revived an on-again, off-again push for a new Guggenheim in Helsinki, Finland. In 2012, the Helsinki city board rejected a Guggenheim bid to build a branch there because the city would have had to pay most of the \$130 million cost. Critics of the original Guggenheim Helsinki Plan, Leena-Maija Rossi, director of Finland’s Cultural Institute in New York, art critic Marja-Terttu Kivirinta and researcher Hanna Johansson, argued that the Guggenheim Foundation would benefit from the project without financial risks.¹⁶⁹ Finland’s Minister of Culture Paavo Arhinmäki noted that his ministry had no budget for the proposed museum and that he was already forced to cut funding to other cultural institutions. Statistics expert Aku Alanen calculated that the museum would not be an economical investment for Helsinki with respect to tourism. A March 2012 survey conducted by Finland’s largest

168 Hrag Vartanian, “Protest Action Erupts Inside Guggenheim Museum,” *Hyperallergic*, 23February 2014, accessed November 10, 2015.

169 Pekka Sakki, "Guggenheim Amazement Awoke Helsingin Sanomat: "These Lines Should Wake" *Iltä-Sanomat*. 19January 2012. Accessed November 11, 2015. <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/kotimaa/art-2000000469652.html>.

newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, showed that 75% of Helsinki residents opposed the project, and 82% of residents in neighboring Vantaa also opposed the project.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, funding for construction of the museum would need to come from new taxes or further drastic cuts in other museums and cultural institutions.¹⁷¹ Arhinmäki argued that the Helsinki brand is stronger than the Guggenheim brand, and so the museum would benefit the latter more than the former.¹⁷² The Guggenheims' aggressive expansion project does not consider the local economic impact(s) on the areas in which it inhabits. The term "Guggenheim effect" has been employed by critics who have denounced the museum as a symbol of gentrification and cultural imperialism. To most residents living and working in those geographies, the museums' desire to expand (consume terrain) beyond its borders is simply another American imperialist project. Like *Habla La Madre*, these protests highlight the Guggenheim's disregard for the voices of others. These protests outline a historical accounting of agitation centered on the Guggenheim's practices of capitalism and spatial ignorance. These examples also draw attention to issues of imperial power—as in institutional power, or state power—and the mechanisms used abroad and domestically to combat its global dominance.

170 "POLL: Widespread opposition to Guggenheim museum in Helsinki", *Helsingin Sanomat*, November 8, 2012.

171 Paavo Arhinmäki, "Minister Says No Culture Budget for Guggenheim" *Yle Uutiset*. 12 January 2012. Accessed November 14, 2016.
http://yle.fi/uutiset/minister_says_no_culture_budget_for_guggenheim/5294388.

172 Pereltsvaig, Asya. "Helsinki Guggenheim museum debates", *GeoCurrents*, April 20, 2012

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the sociopolitical and economic implications in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons' ritualistic performance, *Habla La Madre*. The study has also sought to understand how a tradition of Black oppression, resistance, rebellion and resilience could inform resistance strategies and tactics in the struggle against contemporary structures of marginalization and exclusion. The study sought to answer three of questions:

1. How does *Habla La Madre* transform space?
2. Is *Habla La Madre* a 'real' Santería ritual or just an art performance?
3. How does *Habla La Madre* fit into the genre of institutional critique?

In my search for answers to these questions, I discovered the ways in which politics, economics, and power influence the frameworks of various art and cultural institutions. What surfaced mostly was an imperialist fear-induced project of power retention and expansion on the part of the Guggenheim. However, I also found a rich history of celebration, music, and dance bound up in performances of resistance throughout the African Diaspora as well as a history of collaboration that existed "before the ship" and still exists "on the other side of the Atlantic."

What also became clear is how repetition can alter meaning on both geographic and psychological space. I was astounded by how the oppressed exercised power in moments of rebellion. My astonishment is in no way a romanticization of the positionalities of the oppressed, but rather an admiration of the ways in which oppressed communities have historically been resilient in the face of unbridled imperialist power.

Habla La Madre highlights the constant and seemingly never-ending African Diaspora struggle for spatial equality. The performance also demonstrates the ingenuity of Black people to adopt and rework resistance strategies and tactics to best suit the situation they are confronting. There is potential in Campos-Pons' project of spatial appropriation and spatial transformation to extend beyond art institutions and into other public spaces. (Re)presenting the past in public spaces allows for a more nuanced and perhaps imaginative reading of contemporary spatial conditions and their resultant reactions. Consider the work that a similar ritualistic performance could do in the spaces where Dontre Hamilton, Eric Garner, Tanisha Anderson, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Trayvon Martin, and Renisha McBride inhabited at the time of their deaths.

Campos-Pons not only inserts herself and *Habla La Madre* into the genres of institutional critique, Black conceptual art, resistance/protest art, critical race theory, gender studies, spatial theory, and religious studies, but also into a rich and diverse history of African Diasporic resistance that relies on a collective cultural effort to subvert power, oppression, marginalization, and ultimately erasure.

The various African Diasporic histories and spatial interventions taken up by Campos-Pons not only attempt to (re)frame the way resistance is conceptualized in contemporary art and culture but also seek to (re)forge the diasporic solidarity that became fractured under the Kennedy and Castro regime. *Habla La Madre* highlights what Michael Hanchard has called "racial time": the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations between racially dominant and subordinate groups" within Western civilizations.¹⁷³ *Habla La Madre* strategically recalls

¹⁷³ Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, and the African Diaspora" in *Alternative Modernities* ed. Dilip Paraeshwar Gaonkar (Durham: Duke Press, 2001), 256.

centuries of African Diasporic oppression, resistance, and rebellion to highlight the continued spatial marginalization and exclusion that people of color experience today. *Habla La Madre* not only puts institutions on notice through an internal critique but also participates in a consciousness raising project for those groups that may or may not be aware of the exclusionary practices which undergird art institutions.

Since the mounting of *Habla La Madre*, the Guggenheim has acknowledged and honored both Indian Modern Painter *Vasudeo Santu Gaitonde* and Colombian Sculptor Doris Salcedo with retrospectives I would argue that those events relate to the question of whether *Habla La Madre*, the ritualistic performance, is real.

FIGURES



Figure 1 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 2 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]

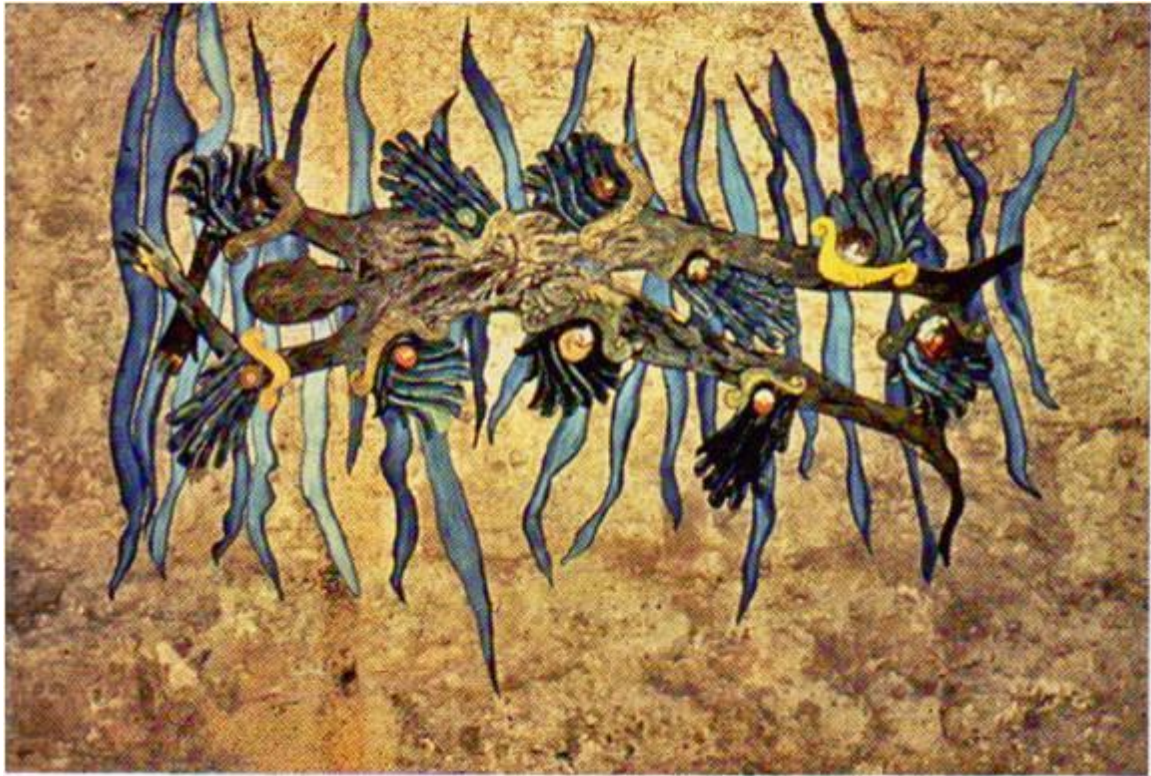


Figure 3 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Is/a*, 1989. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 4 María Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Untitled* (María Magdalena Campos-Pons Holds in Her Hands Two Popular Religious Images), 1989 [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 5 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Soy una fuente / I Am a Fountain*, 1990, Width: 2.40 mtrs ; Height: 3 mtrs., Medium: Sculpture – Installation [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 6 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *The Seven Powers*, 1994, Cibachrome photos with over painting, black and white photos framed, installation varies in size [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 7 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *When I Am Not Here / Estoy Allá*, 1994. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 8 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *When I Am Not Here / Estoy Allá*, 1994. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 9 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Susurro Whispering*, 1997. Polaroid Polacolor photographs.



Figure 10 María Magdalena Campos-Pons *Spoken Softly with Mama*, 1998, embroidered silk and organza over ironing boards with photographic transfers, embroidered cotton sheets, cast glass irons and trivets, wooden benches, six projected video tracks, stereo sound 8.6 x 11.7 m (installation dimensions variable), National Gallery of Canada



Figure 11 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Replenishing*, 2001. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 12 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Estudio para Elevata / Study for Elevata*, 2002, Width: 24 inches ; Height: 20 3/4 inches, Medium: Photography - 6 Polaroid prints [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 13 Dance in Congo Square in the late 1700s, artist's conception by E. W. Kemble from a century later



Figure 14 *Carnaval*, by Victor Patricio Landaluze (1828-1889).

Afro-American Religions			
Religion	Location	Ancestral roots	Also practiced in
Candomblé	Brazil	Yoruba	Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Venezuela, United States
Umbanda	Brazil	Yoruba	Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, United States
Quimbanda	Brazil	Kongo	Argentina, Uruguay, United States
Santería	Cuba	Yoruba	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela
Cuban Vodú	Cuba	Fon, Ewe	Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, United States
Palo	Cuba ^[1]	Kongo	Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, United States
Abakuá	Cuba	Ekpe	United States
Dominican Vodú	Dominican Republic	Fon, Ewe	United States
Haitian Vodou	Haiti	Fon, Ewe	Canada, Dominican Republic, United States
Obeah	Jamaica	Igbo, Akan	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Virgin Islands, United States
Kumina	Jamaica	Kongo	United States
Winti	Suriname	Akan	Guyana, Netherlands, United States
Spiritual Baptist	Trinidad and Tobago	Yoruba	Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, United States
Trinidad Orisha	Trinidad and Tobago	Yoruba	United States
Louisiana Voodoo	Southern United States	Fon, Ewe	United States

Other closely related regional faiths include:

Puerto Rican Vodú or Sanse (Fon and Ewe, Puerto Rico)

Comfa (mixture of Igbo, Akan, Kongo, and Yoruba knowledge)

Xangô de Recife (Yoruba, Brazil)

Xangô do Nordeste (Yoruba, Brazil)

Tambor de Mina (Yoruba, Brazil)

Santo Daimé (folk Catholicism and Spiritism, Brazil)

Espiritismo (mixture of Indigenous American, African, European, and Asian beliefs, Puerto Rico)

Hoodoo (mixture of West African, Indigenous American, and European traditions, Mississippi Delta)

Figure 15 Chart of African Diasporic Religions (partial).



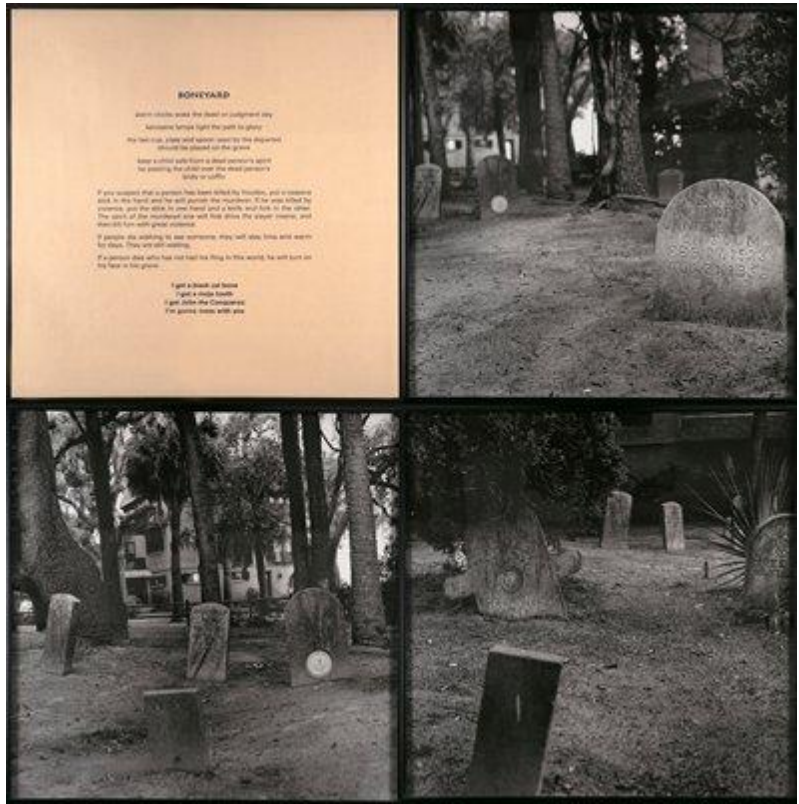
Figure 16 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph of the batá drums used during *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 17 “Mirror, Mirror” from “Ain’t Jokin’”, 1987–88. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 16 in.
International Center of Photography, New York, Gift of Julie Ault, 62.2001. ©
Carrie Mae Weems



Figure 18 Carrie Mae Weems, Image from *Family Pictures and Stories*, 1978-84



BONEYARD

When death was the deed or judgment day
...
The last day, they will know, when the departed
...
If you suspect that a person has been asked by Heaven, and someone
...
If people who walking, to see someone, they will stay, they will wait
...
If a person dies who has not had his flag in this world, he will burn on
...
I get a drink of water
I get a drink of water
I get a drink of water
I get a drink of water
I get a drink of water

Figure 19 Carrie Mae Weems, Image from *Sea Island Series*, 1991-1992



Figure 20 Carrie Mae Weems, Image from *Slave Coast Series*, 1993



Figure 21 Carrie Mae Weems, Image from *Dreaming in Cuba Series*, 1993.



Figure 22 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Sugar/Bittersweet*, 2010. Mixed-media installation, including wood, glass, raw sugar, metal, video, and stereo sound; dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure23 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, *Alchemy of the Soul, Elixir for the Spirits*, 2015, blown glass, cast glass, steel, cast resin, silicone, acrylic, polyvinyl chloride tubing, water, and rum essence, dimensions variable, Peabody Essex Museum. Photographs by Peter Vanderwarker.



Figure 24 Carrie Mae Weems, Image from *the Louisiana Project*, 2003.



Figure 25 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 26 Image of Santeria Cubana Bembé



Figure 27 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 28 Trance state at a bembé, Courtesy Earthen Vessel Publishing



Figure29 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 30 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph of call and response participants from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 31 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph of Campos-Pons with bag of plates from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 32 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph of Campos-Pons emptying holy water on the floor during *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 33 Wifredo Lam, *Deity with Foliage*, 1942



Figure 34 Wifredo Lam, *The Noise of 1943* (*Le Bruit*, also titled *The Murmur*)



Figure 35 Wifredo Lam, *The Jungle*, 1943



Figure 36 Ana Mendieta, *Bird Transformation*, 1972, photograph, 25.4 x 20.3 cm



Figure 37 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph of witness placing cake on the ledge of the Guggenheim fountain during *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 38 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph Campos-Pons emptying water and fish into Guggenheim fountain from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]

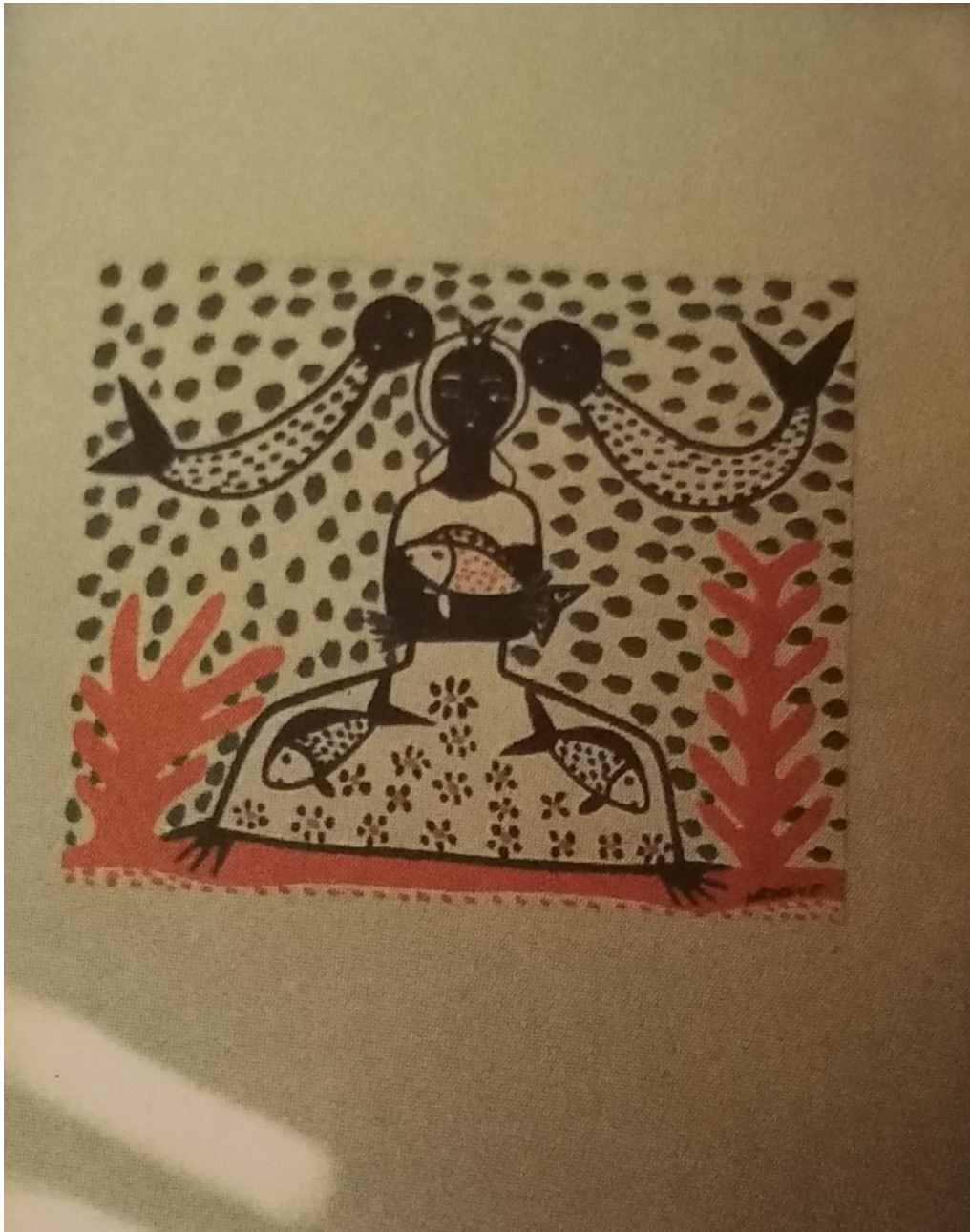


Figure 39 Manuel Mendive, *Painting of Yemaya (Yemoja)*, c. 1968, Havana, Cuba. Photo: Robert Farris Thompson, 1988



Figure 40 Manuel Mendive, *Yemayá*, 1970. Pan American Art Projects



Figure 41 Copacabana Beach, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, New Year's Eve, 1985. Photo: Clark August Hood Thompson, 1985.

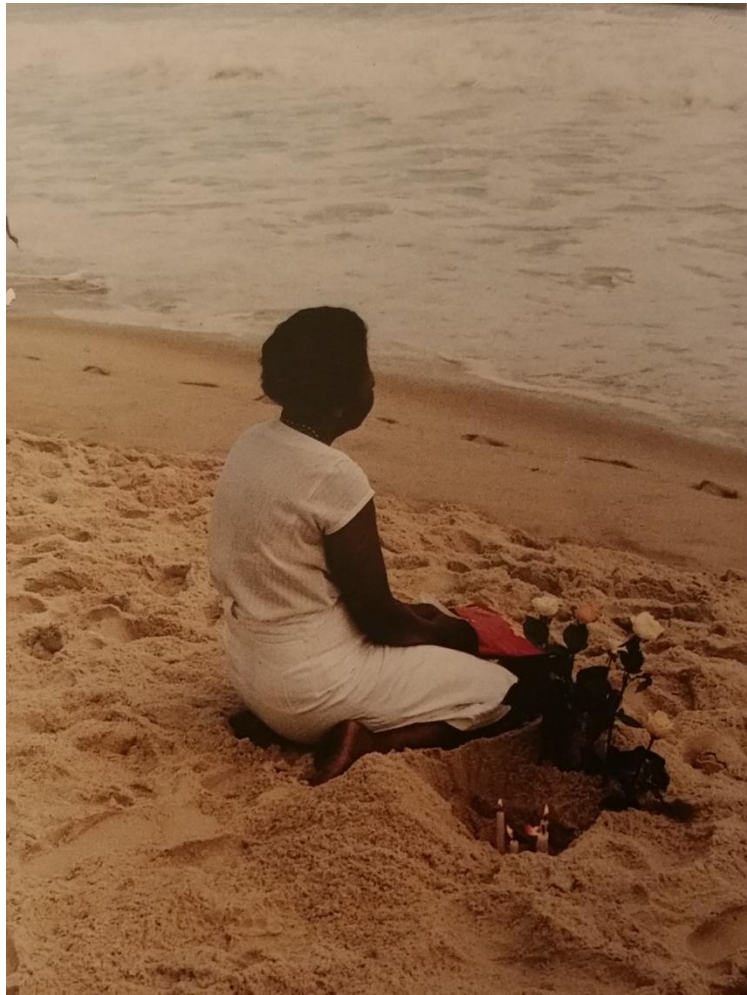


Figure 42 A Servitor of Yemanjá, Copacabana Beach, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, New Year's Eve, 1985. Servitor, candles, and flowers resume the essence of the Rio sand altar for Yemanjá. Photo: Clark August Hood Thompson, 1985.

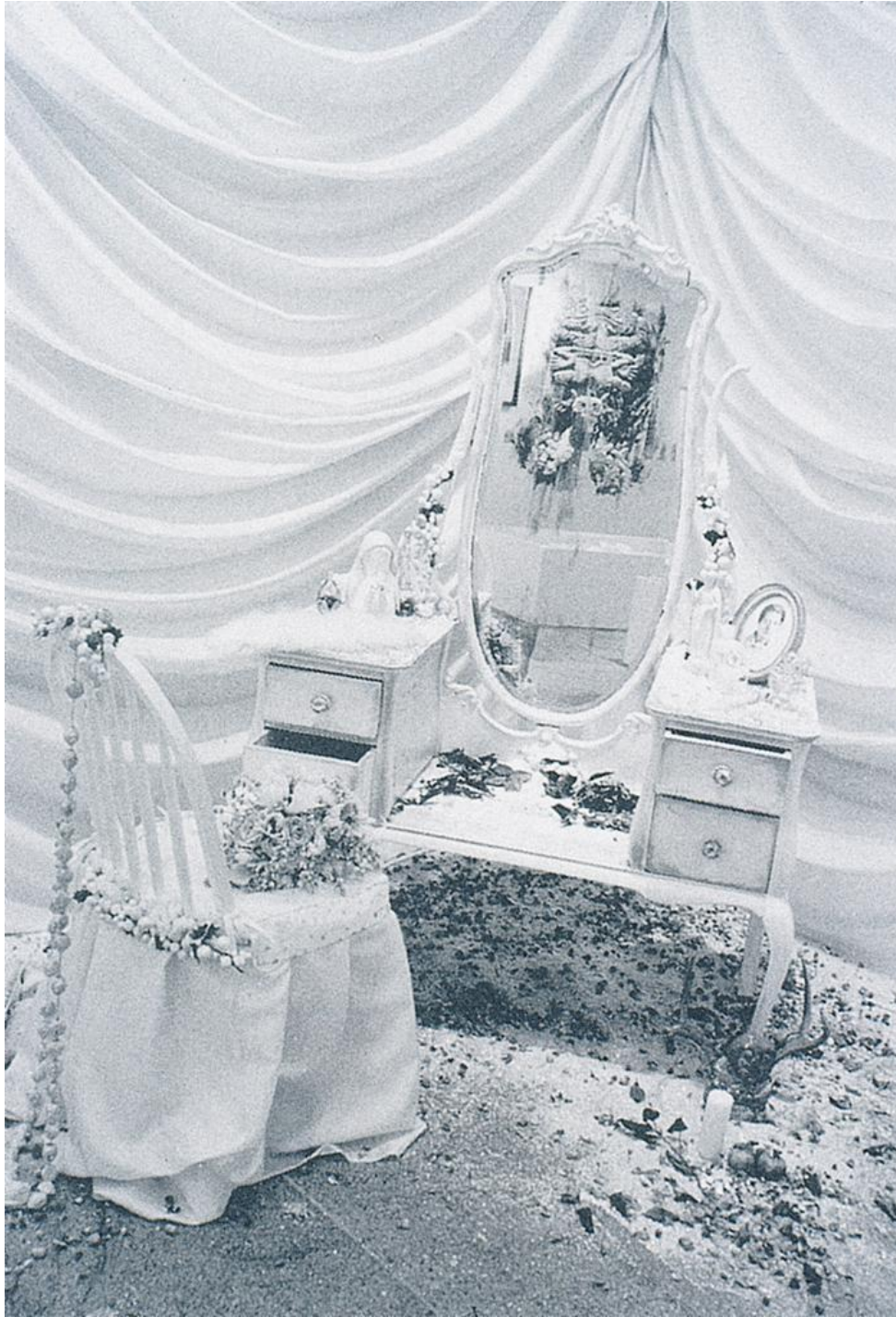


Figure 43 Amalia Mesa-Bains, *Venus Envy, Chapter One (or the First Holy Communion Before the End)*, 1993, Mixed Media.



Figure 44 Kongo/Angola Tree Altar to the Spirit Tempo, Candomblé Bate Folha, Bahia, Brazil, Twentieth Century. Arrived in Brazil, Bakongo refocused the honoring of Tempos (the Kongo spirit Tembo) from the African nsanda tree to the gameleira. Here they set *quartinha* and two-handled *talha* vessels, and a shallow bowl of food, as votive offerings among the tree's roots. Photo: Robert Farris Thompson, 1989.

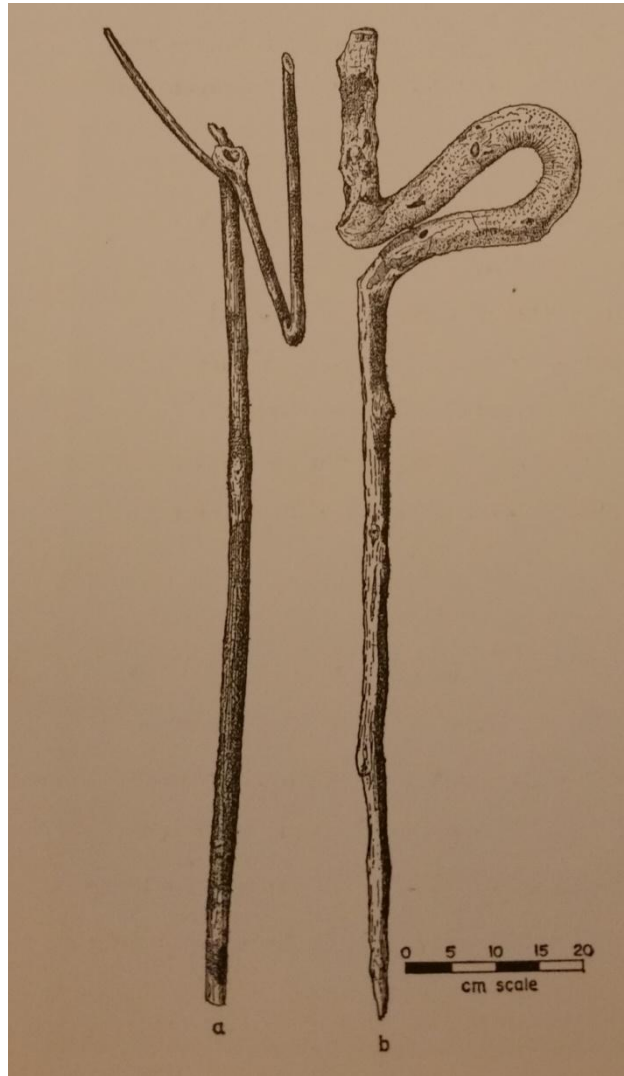


Figure 45 Bira Amati A Oni Ganza (Tortoise-Saw-The-Circumcision), Central Ituri, Zaire, 1950s. These wooden "found altars" are sticks of distorted or twisted shape to which Bira and Pygmies, coming across them in the forest, attribute spiritual presence. From Colin Turnbull, "The Mbuti Pygmies: An Ethnographic Survey," *The Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, 1965.

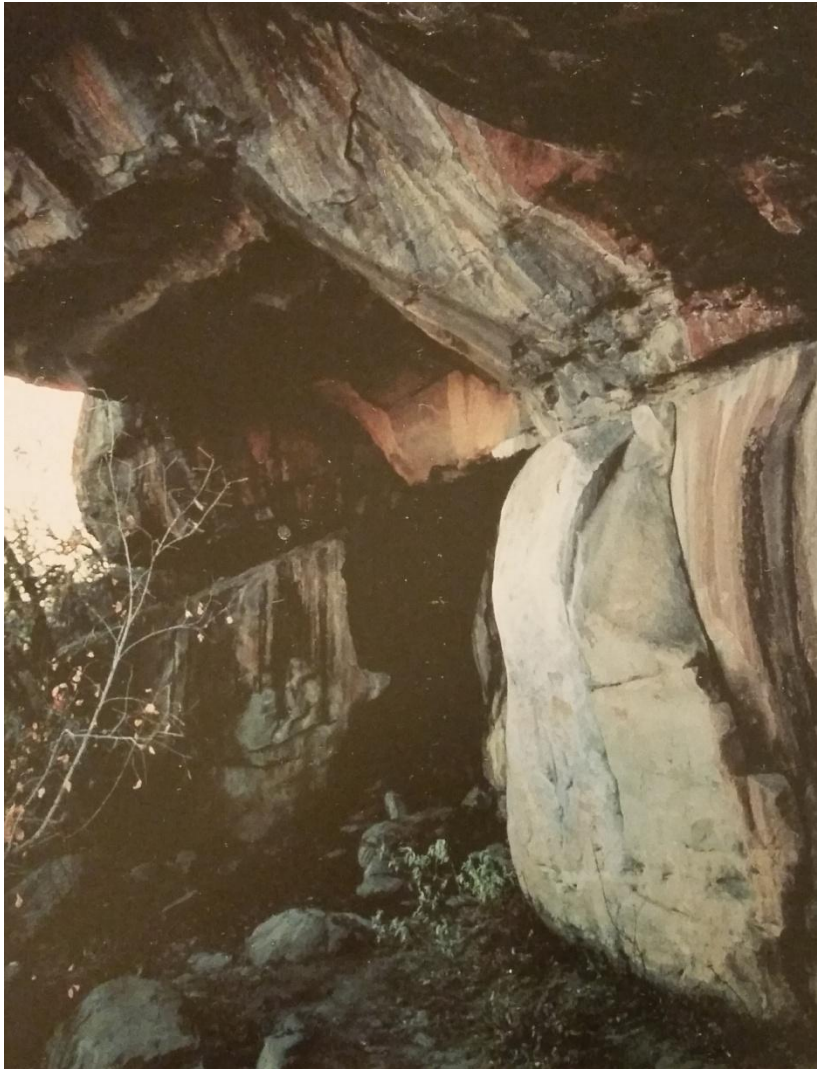


Figure 46 Tree, Stone, Blood, and Fire: Dawn of the Black Atlantic Altar. Photo: Robert Farris Thompson.



Figure 47 Composite of stills from Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 1989



Figure 48 Lourdes Lopez, *Ropa de santo Yemayá*, 1984. Courtesy Caribbean Cultural Center and Lourdes López. Photo by David H. Brown.



Figure 49 Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Photograph from *Habla La Madre*, 2014. [Courtesy of the Artist]



Figure 50 Fred Wilson, "Cabinetmaking, 1820-1960," 1992-93



Figure 51 Tania Bruguera, "*Tatlin's Whispers #5*," 2008. Medium: Decontextualization of an action. Year: 2008. Materials: Mounted police, crowd control techniques, audience. Dimensions: Variable Performance view at UBS. Openings: Live The Living Currency, Tate Modern. Photo: Sheila Burnett. Courtesy Tate Modern.



Figure 52 Tania Bruguera, *Memoria de la Postguerra I (Memory of the Postwar I)* Medium: Editing of a newspaper Year: 1993 Materials: Collaboration with Cuban artists living inside and outside Cuba, black ink/newsprint. Dimensions: 13.4" x 8.4" Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Tania Bruguera



Figure 53 Members of the Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction (known as G.U.L.F.) unveiled a large parachute in the Guggenheim Museum rotunda with the words “Meet Workers demands now”



Figure 54 G.U.L.F. Labor banknote designed by Noah Fischer for the Guggenheim protest of March 29th, 2013.

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