

The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow:
An Exploration of Embodied Feminist Curation

by

Cassidy Alejandria

A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice

Ignite Gallery - West, 100 McCaul St., March 4-8th, 2026

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2026

Abstract

The exhibition *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow* brings together artworks by Inéz Petrazzini, Jasmine Liaw, and Mina Keykhaei to consider arts-based methods for refuting ideas of objective truth and hierarchies of knowledge, and how these can contribute to discourses of U.S. Third World feminism. This approach builds upon key characteristics of U.S. Third World feminism, such as centering of embodied/lived experiences and using difference to fuel dialogue. As a curatorial project this exhibition naturally lends to a research-creation process in which my own embodied experiences can and must be made apparent. As a result, the exhibition provides vantage points to examine potential uses of embodied, experiential curation, foregrounding critical artworks which reflect contemporary ideas of U.S. Third World feminism, for supporting the broader representation of art to question the support for ideas of objective truth and hierarchies of knowledge.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to acknowledge all the people who made this thesis possible.

My present and past supervisors whose guidance has allowed me to fulfill my visions; Suzanne, Maria-Belén, Jen, and Allison. As well as the countless faculty who supported this work, especially Immony, Natalie, and Marsha. It has been a true privilege to work alongside you.

The friends I've made at OCADU and Queens, your support and love has meant everything to me. Talking through these ideas has been crucial in shaping this thesis and I can't wait to continue these conversations.

To my family, especially the incredible women who have been an inspiration throughout my life. Your strength has been a guiding pillar and your laughter fuels my every action.

*To my beautiful lola,
who taught me to love with everything I have.*

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Dedication	4
Table of Contents	5
List of Figures	6
Curatorial Essay	7
Support Paper	20
Introduction	20
Background	21
Literature Review	23
Exhibition Review	27
Installation/Exhibition Design	28
Conclusion	32
Bibliography	36
Appendix A: Exhibition Documentation	38

List of Figures

Figure 1. Jasmine Liaw, *name body*, (2026)

Figure 2. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*

Figure 3. Inéz Petrazzini, *Protège-moi*, (2025)

Figure 4. Inéz Petrazinni, *Ejército Descendiendo*, (2026)

Figure 5. Mina Keykhaei, *What Remains*, (2024)

Figure 6. Mina Keykhaei, *Not Quite There*, (2026)

Figure 7. Detail, Mina Keykhaei, *Not Quite There*, (2026)

Figure 8. Detail, Jasmine Liaw, *name body*, (2026)

Figure 9. Detail, Inéz Petrazzini, *Protège-moi*, (2025)

Figure 10. Detail, Inéz Petrazinni, *Ejército Descendiendo*, (2026)

Figure 11. Detail, Mina Keykhaei, *What Remains*, (2024)

Figure 12. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*

Figure 13. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*

Curatorial Essay

The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow

In 1981, Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta took part in the editorial collective for the New York-based publication called *Heresies: A Journal of Feminist Art and Politics* issue “Earthshaking/Earthkeeping: Feminism & Ecology.” Mendieta’s contribution in the issue responded to claims that her practice belonged to the Great Goddess movement,¹ a type of practice typified by white women artists of this time whose work depicts female spirituality.² In her critique, Mendieta distanced herself from the movement’s investment, registering her concerns with the movement’s investment in ideas of universality which failed to register its tendency to centralized whiteness. As a matter of contrast, she shared an untitled photograph from her *Silenta* series alongside her translation of the Cuban legend “La Venus Negra,” which recounts an Indigenous Black woman resisting assimilation Spanish colonizers.³ By naming the Black and Indigenous influences of her work, as well as foregrounding embodied experience, Mendieta challenged the homogenization of women of colour against the backdrop of whiteness, which is said to have characterize second-wave feminist thought.⁴

¹ The Great Goddess or Goddess movement was a movement of feminist spirituality that was popularized in the 1970s and had a resurgence in the 1990s, which encouraged women to draw strength and inspiration from the “Great Mother.” (Cassidy Alejandria, “Being ‘Other’: Ana Mendieta’s Artistic Practice and Feminist Politics within Arts Institutions” (Master’s Thesis, 2024): 41, <https://queensu.scholaris.ca/items/089a6e5f-41ab-410c-8da9-ea7e8c60017d>.; Adrienne Rich paraphrased in Denise Dijk, “The Goddess Movement in the U.S.A. A Religion for Women Only,” *Archiv Für Religionspsychologie / Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 18, no. 1 (1988): 258.)

² Mary Beth Edelson, Janet Culbertson, Carolee Thea, and Gloria Feman Orenstein are just a few women who selfidentified with the Great Goddess movement. (Editorial collective, “Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Feminism & Ecology,” *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Arts & Politics* 4, no. 1 (13) (July 1, 1981).)

³ Editorial collective, “Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Feminism & Ecology,” *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Arts & Politics* 4, no. 1 (13) (July 1, 1981).

⁴ Cassidy Alejandria, “Being ‘Other’: Ana Mendieta’s Artistic Practice and Feminist Politics within Arts Institutions” (Master’s Thesis, 2024): 45-46, <https://queensu.scholaris.ca/items/089a6e5f-41ab-410c-8da9-ea7e8c60017d>.

The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow is an exhibition that contributes to ongoing discussions about the needs of feminist thought to adequately address racialized and diasporic experiences, such as those Mendieta articulated in 1981. Artists Inéz Petrazzini (Jamaican-Argentinian), Jasmine Liaw (Hakka-Chinese), and Mina Keykhaei (Iranian) each contribute ongoing conversations about the role of arts-based methods in expanding understandings of U.S. Third World feminism, and thereby extending critiques registered by Mendieta in the 80s. In particular, these artists' practices support the growing and multi-faceted critique of often-naturalized ideas of objectivity and truth within Western thought. The exhibition demonstrates the ways that these latter concepts require ongoing challenge in order to attend to the lived experiences and knowledge belonging to women of the global majority. Through their artworks Petrazzini, Liaw, and Keykhaei draw on and connect to expressions of embodied experience through culturally specific references rooted in the artists' diasporic communities. In doing so, they underscore the limits of objectivity and truth as frameworks which support second-wave feminist thought, demonstrating instead the need for ongoing attention to the unfolding and embodied experiences of diasporic women, characteristic instead of ideas indebted to thinkers such as Mendieta, and the legacy of U.S. Third World feminist thought.

Considering the Green Goddess movement's homogenization of the category "woman," and the power differential between white and racialized artists for defining the contours and qualities of that category, resulting ideas of feminist thought emerged from a sensibility of unquestioned and objective truth. The idea of objective truth developed in the West during the Age of Enlightenment, and promoted the belief that truth or fact exists independently of the socially constructed nature of individual or collective understandings of the world and its

inhabitants.⁵ The naturalization of objective truth within dominant societal frameworks has, in turn, contributed to the devaluation of knowledge produced by women of colour. Ideas of academic rigor shaped through processes of racialization, have become closely associated with whiteness and the presumed naturalness of the male perspective.⁶ Emerging from the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Enlightenment thought privileged forms of knowledge grounded in ideas of scientific reason, granting primacy to rational thought as a concept that contrasted affect and embodiment. As art historian Alice Procter observe⁶, the Age of Enlightenment was shaped by “white, wealthy, educated, European men...[who] saw and believed themselves to be more rational than any other groups at the time.”⁷ Western ideas of knowledge remain ill-suited to comprehending the contributions⁷ by colour.⁸ As a result, those contributions are susceptible to criticisms which claim they are insufficiently rigorous or academic.

This dynamic is evident in the example discussed by educator, theorist, and social critic, bell hooks. In her critique of Diana Fuss’ chapter “Race’ Under Erasure? Poststructuralist Afro-American Literary Theory,” hooks notes the limited range of Black feminist critics cited by Fuss, writing:

I was stunned to see Fuss cite only essays by Barbara Christian, Joyce Joyce, and Barbara Smith. While these individuals all do valuable literary criticism, they certainly do not represent all black feminist critics...Summing up her perspectives on black feminist writing in a few paragraphs, Fuss concentrates on black male literary critics...It seems as though a racialized gender hierarchy is established...wherein the writing on ‘race’ by black men is deemed worthier of in-depth study than the work of black women critics.⁸

⁵ Alice Procter, *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk about It*, (Cassell, an imprint of Octopus Publishing Group Ltd, 2021): 84; Stephen Gaukroger, “Introduction: the varieties of objectivity,” In *Objectivity: A Very Short Introduction, Very Short Introductions* (Oxford, 2012; online edn, Oxford Academic, 24 Sept. 2013): 5-6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199606696.003.0001>, accessed 19 Mar. 2026.

⁶ Procter, *The Whole Picture*, 84.

⁷ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 78-79.

⁸ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 79.

Rather than dismissing Black feminist literary criticism as a whole, hooks suggests that Fuss might have engaged more deeply with specific thinkers she found compelling, such as Hazel Carby and Hortense Spillers. This example illustrates how white second-wave feminist scholarship has, at times, reproduced hierarchies of knowledge by implicitly or explicitly devaluing the work of women of colour.⁹

During the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. Third World Feminism emerged as a critical framework that refused the idea of a “universal womanhood,” championed by second-wave feminism. Instead, writer and art critic Aruna D’Souza identifies its central aims as building a “politics based on solidarity, tactical alliances, and coalition-building among oppressed groups.”¹⁰ D’Souza also emphasizes the movement’s distinctive role in theorizing the so-called Third World within the so-called First World, enabling feminists to “to critique the class and race privilege of Western feminism and frame their understanding of oppression and inequality as a continued legacy of colonialism and its multiple forms of violence.”¹¹ Similarly, theorist Chela Sandoval describes U.S. Third World feminism as a differential consciousness, one that allows for shifting between ideological positions in order for alliances across difference, both within the United States and globally.¹² This framework foregrounds the interdependence of race, gender, and class, insisting that these differences be understood relationally rather than in isolation.¹³ U.S. Third World feminism also emerged in response to the racism embedded within feminist thought, which often failed to address the intersectional nature of gendered experiences. Again, scholars such as bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Audre Lorde, and the Combahee River

⁹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 79.

¹⁰ Aruna D’Souza, “Early Intersections: The Work of Third World Feminism,” In *We Wanted a Revolution Black Radical Women, 1965-85: New Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, 73–95. (Brooklyn Museum, 2018): 74.

¹¹ D’Souza, “Early Intersections,” 76.

¹² Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 58.

¹³ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.

Collective, have all critiqued the tendency of white feminists to stabilize the category of “woman” to ways that support their own claims to equality. hooks does so by pointing to the challenges posed by Black women, and other women of colour to the category of “woman,” which prompted alliances among white scholars, both men and women, to establish¹⁴ Chandra Mohanty similarly addressed this tendency in her 1984 essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” where she critiques the homogenization of Third World women by white feminist scholars. She¹⁵ Where universal sisterhood was seen as an uplifting idea for white women, racialized women’s concerns were often left out by this lens.

It is through this context that scholars such as Audre Lorde fought for the recognition of difference through their writing, among women of colour and white women, as well as between distinct groups of women of colour. In her now famously quoted text, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House,” (1979) Lorde argues the importance of not only recognizing racial, sexual, and class difference, but utilizing these differences to create new ways of existing in the world through new structures and thinking.¹⁶ Faced with the homogenizing tendencies of second wave feminism and seeking self-determination, U.S. Third World feminists spoke back, suggesting instead that “where the physical realities of our lives – our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity.”¹⁷ Artists such as Mendieta engage in a politics that contests the flattening of experience by foregrounding the needs, desires, and expressions of different diasporic communities by using specific cultural references and drawing from lived experiences. Thus,

¹⁴ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 63.

¹⁵ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review*, no. 30 (1988): 66.

¹⁶ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House,” In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed. (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983): 99.

¹⁷ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed. (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983): 23.

when white women artists, such as those associated with the Great Goddess movement, looked to the spirituality of racialized women, it did so in uncritically appropriative ways which not only lifted from cultural knowledge outside of white hegemony, but it did so from a perspective that negates the relevance of those very cultures. Such reductive representations produce an effect of universality that obscures the specific cultural origins they reference.

Throughout her practice, Mendieta fore-fronted her embodied experience and prioritized uplifting Latin American artists and communities using tactical alliances and solidarity amongst marginalized groups. By drawing upon Afro-Latino and Pre-Colombian traditions, Mendieta resisted the tendency to blend cultural sources in her time through a practice of naming. This same impulse is present in the works of Petrazzini, Liaw, and Keykhaei, highlighting the ongoing relevance of U.S. Third World feminist thought in the current moment. For example, in her artwork *Protège-moi* (2025), artist Petrazzini depicts a Black female figure perched in the center of a wooden panel, slightly covered by two white curtains. For the showing in this exhibition, Petrazzini notably removed the curtains. The figure is missing arms and feet. Most significantly, the figure has a mirror in place of a face, and blood is rushing from her vagina, depicted with a cowry shell at its center. In this work Petrazzini draws from Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino spirituality, centering cowrie shells as a symbol for feminine protection. In addition to the symbolism of the cowrie shell, Petrazzini places blood as a focal piece in the work. In Santería (an Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino spiritual practice) blood is imbued with *ashé*,¹⁸ the ¹⁸ In combination with the visual elements of this work, one can read this figure as a deity. Notably, the figure in Petrazzini's work is missing its arms and feet. In place of a sculpted face, Petrazzini has placed a mirror so that viewers, when standing directly in front of the work, are

¹⁸ Genevieve Hyacinthe, *Radical Virtuosity: Ana Mendieta and the Black Atlantic*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2019): 6.

placed in the body of the Black deity who has blood dripping from her vulva. Displayed at a lower-than-conventional height, Petrazzini's *Protège-moi* in *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow* contribute to my reading of the figure as a deity. Displayed on an easel, the work is lower to the ground than standard hanging practices. This means that depending on their height, most viewers are required to bow their heads down to view the artwork, and to see themselves in the mirror. In my experience, the act of bowing one's head recalls gestures of prayer or, a manner of denoting respect to elders within certain cultures. The shadows cast by the piece also play a significant role in my reading. The shadows cast to the left and right of the wooden panel create shapes within the artwork in ways that are reminiscent of the shape of an open altarpiece where one directs their prayer. In her artwork statement, Petrazzini describes how her experiences with misogynoir serve as an inspiration for this self-representational sculpture. [06]

While the mirror challenges the viewer to empathize with the deity, not everyone will come to the viewing experience with the knowledge which would enable their attuned empathy. This detail supports broader understandings of how misogynoir, the lived experiences of Black women and the intersection of sexism and anti-Black racism, can lead to distorted understandings of racialized subjectivities. Her work proves how, despite women's shared experience of sexism and the several forms of violence it entails, the oppression experienced by Black women is not synonymous with experiences of universal womanhood. The choice to depict the figure as Black references both the cultural origins of this deity and emphasizes the importance of maintaining difference in feminist discourse. This is therefore not an argument for the absorption of difference, but rather a deliberate moment of distinction that highlights relational pathways for building knowledge *through an understanding of difference*.

In her later work, *Ejército Descendiendo* (2026), Petrazzini explores geographic and spiritual terrain relating to her Jamaican and Argentine heritage. The painting depicts multiple Black figures, moving toward the viewer against a mountainous background. Against this scene, a central figure rides a goat, another seen above is carried by a condor, and yet another holds what appears to be a flame. Petrazzini writes that these are depictions of her African ancestors and animal kin in an army atop the Sierras de Cordoba, a mountain range in Argentina, creating a magical realist landscape.¹⁹ Petrazzini specifies this mountain range as the one her family resides in Argentina, emphasizing her spiritual and physical connection to the pictured lands. The figures serve as a surrogate for Petrazzini, both the ancestors and animals alike. In combining the figures and mountains Petrazzini has intertwined African and Argentinian elements in a way that is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of a new mestiza consciousness. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa asserts that "if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture."²⁰ *Ejército Descendiendo* claims Petrazzini's place, crafted using her own cultural and spiritual references, firmly connected to both her Jamaican and Argentine heritage.

The positioning of the figures, particularly the detached lower and upper bodies that frame the painting, speaks to a sense of cyclicity. In this work the past and present bleed together, as Petrazzini references the wildfires that continue to devastate present-day Argentina. The placement of the figures supports this reading, as the lower and upper halves appear as though they can or should meet together. Petrazzini spoke of these two display variations during

¹⁹ Inéz Petrazzini "Ejército Descendiendo," Artwork Statement, March 2026.

²⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987): 22.

installation. The cyclical loop created by the positioning of these figures, I imagine, is never ending. As Petrazzini paints her ancestors into this work, she calls them forth into the present moment, reflecting their continued impact on her life. This work is reminiscent of U.S. Third World feminist's move towards spirituality as a manner of tracing back their roots to fulfill their vision. Anzaldúa states:

We, the women here, take a trip back into the self, travel to the deep core of our roots to discover and reclaim our colored souls, our rituals, our religion...Our spirituality does not come from outside of ourselves. It emerges when we listen to the "small still voice" (Teish) within us which can empower us to create actual change in the world.²¹

In this work, Petrazzini returns to herself as her ancestors return to her. Their dialogue appears as a result, illustrated throughout this painting as representations of the inner and "still small voice."

In *name body* (2026), Jasmine Liaw similarly engages with her ancestry with intentions of recording. *name body* is part of the ongoing project, *to name language* (2022-ongoing), where Liaw uses movement, projection, and acrylic plexiglass pieces to record Hakka (a Han Chinese sub-ethnic group) knowledge and respond to her given Hakka name. *name body* also incorporates ideas from her work *hard place* (2025), a durational site-specific performance created during a summer residency in Spain. In *hard place*, she stood atop a rock in a salt flat, moving and positioning her body in response to the site to explore definitions of "a hard place," physically and emotionally. By projection mapping onto stationary acrylic pieces, Liaw mimics the migratory patterns of the Hakka. I see this in how the projection moves and meets with the acrylic pieces before once again moving on. The path of the projection, as well as its contents, speaks to this balance of movement and stasis. In the center of the projection, multiples of Liaw's body move and contort to take forms of the Chinese characters in her given name, before

²¹ Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 195.

momentarily pausing and then drifting apart. Significantly, the individual projections become smaller as they move outward to fit the acrylic pieces and become larger when returning to the center.

name body utilizes clips and stills from a recorded movement where Liaw used her body to mimic the strokes and shapes within the Chinese characters that form her Hakka name. The acrylic pieces are made using stills from this movement while the projection consists of clips from the movement layer, stacked, and reversed. In both the projection and accompanying acrylic pieces, Liaw uses movement to record oral histories, which I read as a shift away from Western modes of epistemology and pedagogy. Rather than using written word or speech, she has chosen a form that arguably makes the information less accessible for a wider non-Hakka audience such as myself. However, those familiar with Chinese characters may recognize the shape of the acrylic pieces. This spectrum of legibility and illegibility connects to the concept of “right to opacity” defined by Edouard Glissant, and expanded upon by Aruna D’Souza in *Imperfect Solidarities*.²² D’Souza argues that:

When a postcolonial subject demands opacity...they are asserting the right to remain untranslatable into Western thought, the right to remain unrecorded by the colonizing institutions of the West, the right to remain irreducible to Western categorizations, and—most importantly for us—the right to remain unknown by the knowledge gatherers of the West.²³

Through this project, Liaw determines what knowledge is shared with her audience, as well as the legibility of said knowledge. Her movements are not one-to-one translations; therefore, they remain uncategorized in terms of Western knowledge.

²² Aruna D’Souza, *Imperfect Solidarities*, (Berlin: Floating Opera Press, 2024): 52.

²³ D’Souza, *Imperfect Solidarities*, 53.

For artist Mina Keykhaei, the needs, desires, and expressions of different diasporic experiences, are illustrated through visual meditations on women of colour's experiences of hypervisibility. Her work *Not Quite There* (2026) depicts a silhouette on fabric obscured by gauze. The shape of the silhouette contains slight curves, and it is unclear what exactly the subject creating the silhouette is. Is it a person behind the gauze, a landscape, or simply a shadow? When compared to Keykhaei's previous works, which utilize second-hand Persian rugs, it is possible to reflect upon the origin of the silhouette as an Iranian person resting on a Persian rug. By referencing the Persian rug as a central aspect of Iranian culture, used for daily actions in the home, such as sleeping and conversing, Keykhaei has historically leaned on the rug as a signifier of a particular expression of embodied knowledge. Notably, the rug is absent from this work, speaking to a shift in visibility and abstraction within Keykhaei's practice. For Keykhaei, this move towards abstraction is intended to inspire conversation around her works and their meanings.²⁴ This exploration of abstraction and visibility recalls U.S. Third World feminist motifs of visibility/invisibility. For example, Anzaldúa highlights the spectrum of invisibility and hypervisibility faced by women of colour, stating "I am visible—see this Indian face—yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist."²⁵ In *Not Quite There*, the silhouette is both hypervisible as the only subject in the composition but also invisible, as the viewer cannot definitively identify the silhouette. Keykhaei's work uses obscurity and visibility as a tool to encourage further exploration of the work's meaning. More importantly, Keykhaei is reclaiming visibility through their depiction of abstracted bodies as

²⁴ Mina Keykhaei, Correspondence to Cassidy Alejandria, "Conversation with Mina Keykhaei," Teams Call, January 15, 2026.

²⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 86.

something within her own control to return agency to those who have been denied agency through the inflexibility of objective truth.

At the time of writing in early 2026, civilians were being murdered in Iran where the country was experiencing an internet blackout for 10 days. In this context, Keykhaei's representation of the absent body in this context gives rise to readings that are embroiled within the violent engines of war wherein the West continues its historical vilification and erasure of Middle Eastern bodies. Alternatively, Keykhaei points to the possibility of the work being read as a landscape.²⁶ If the silhouette is of a landscape, where is the indication of life? The organic curves of the silhouette in combination with the naturally dyed gauze point towards a mountainous range as the subject. When read as a landscape, the silhouette seems unnaturally barren. The muted tones of the background fabric and overlapping gauze give a somber feeling to the piece. When read as a body, the gauze appears as a burial shroud, covering the deceased.

In Keykhaei's earlier work, *What Remains* (2024), the artist has wrapped three birch tree trunks in fabric. The trunks of these pioneer species, which are the first to colonize barren ground, have been stripped of their branches with small segments of the bark peeking through. *What Remains* acts as a metaphor to describe the displacement and hardship faced by immigrants who must leave physical objects behind to adapt to a new environment. The textiles wrapped around the trunks speak to the material possessions carried during immigration, and the absence of branches speaks to what has been left behind in the process. The strips of fabric wrapped around the trunks mimic the rings of a tree, marking its life and health. The state of the textiles enveloping the trees ground this reading, as we witness the wear and human effect on the second-hand fabrics. This depiction of displacement through cultural fabrics is tied to U.S. Third

²⁶ Keykhaei, "Conversation with Mina Keykhaei."

World feminists' struggles to negotiate their cultural identities in racist and sexist societies. In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), activist, poet, and writer, Cherríe Moraga states "Daily, we feel the pull and tug of having to choose between which parts of our mothers' heritages we want to claim and wear and which parts have served to cloak us from the knowledge of ourselves."²⁷ This idea is demonstrated in the cutting off of the branches and roots to fit into a new environment.

I found the presence of birch trunks in a gallery setting initially jarring. Their verticality is daunting and imposing, and at first seemed out of place. But this contrast prompted me to consider why I found these trees discordant. When combined with Keykhaei's references to displaced immigrants, I soon turned towards histories of displacement. Whose land do I occupy, and how has displacement afforded me with new opportunities? Who or what came before me and how can I honour them in my life? Through her use of second-hand materials, Keykhaei asks us to trace backward, to examine the history of our art objects as well as our own histories. I read this work as a "refusal of the *easy* explanation of the conditions we live in."²⁸ Rather than accepting dominant narratives that demand unwavering gratitude from immigrants, despite the effects of the ongoing colonial project of residing on stolen native land, Keykhaei's work identifies this generative complexity.

These artworks contribute to conversations regarding knowledge that emphasizes cultural difference and embodied experiences as sources of creativity. The contrast between the media used (painting, sculptural textile, new media/projection mapping) allows for a fulsome critique of ideas of objective truth and hierarchies of knowledge. This is to say that by presenting a selection of varying perspectives demonstrated by distinct media, *The Hypervisible Woman and her*

²⁷ Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 23.

²⁸ Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 23.

Shadow demonstrate an alternative to objectivity in which only one method or perspective can be correct. By suspending our belief in objective truth, we can read these artworks as sources of knowledge themselves. In these works, the artists pass down knowledge to their viewer; Petrazzini passes down symbolism of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino spirituality, Liaw documents her family's Hakka conversations, and Keykhaei presents the embodied knowledge of Persian rugs. These works also serve as sources of knowledge through their representation of the artists' embodied experiences. In *Protège-moi* the viewer learns of Petrazzini's experience with misogynoir, in *name body* Liaw relays how her body experiences the Hakka language, and in *Not Quite There* Keykhaei explores her experiences as a diaspora artist. Through the artists' differing approaches and backgrounds, we can understand how knowledge is shaped by personal experiences and societal expectations.

The politics of U.S. Third World feminism—focusing on difference and embodied experience—can be one way of refuting Western hierarchies of truth and knowledge. While the artists may not have explicit aims of challenging Western logic, their practices and modes of thinking are expansive beyond what concepts of knowledge established by the West recognize. By engaging the artists' contexts in my reading of the works, this exhibition denies the idea of objectivity in knowledge production, instead encouraging others to explore how their experiences shape the way they view and affect objects surrounding them.

Support Paper

Introduction

This paper expands upon the processes and theoretical frameworks employed in the curated exhibition: *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*. This exhibition brings together artworks by Toronto-based artists Inéz Petrazzini, Jasmine Liaw, and Mina Keykhaei, to consider how contemporary arts-based methods for refuting hierarchies of knowledge can contribute to contemporary discourses of U.S. Third World feminism. For the purposes of this thesis, I define U.S. Third World feminism as a politics of tactical alliances and solidarity amongst marginalized groups, drawing from embodied and lived experience to seek self-determination.²⁹ Specifically, each of these artists work to refute hierarchies of knowledge that place upper class Euro-American men as the arbiters of objective truth and knowledge. Their contributions each provide a distinct example of this critique into artmaking. This approach builds upon key characteristics of U.S. Third World feminism, such as centering of embodied/lived experiences and using difference to fuel dialogue.

As a curatorial project, this exhibition naturally lends to a research-creation process in which my own embodied experiences can and must be made apparent. The inclusion of writing that describes my experiences of the artworks, curation that reflects these experiences, as well as reflections on how my positionality affects my readings of the artworks are some of the means in which I have imbued my embodied experience into this project. As a result, the exhibition provides vantage points to examine potential uses of embodied, experiential curation,

²⁹ Aruna D'Souza, "Early Intersections: The Work of Third World Feminism," In *We Wanted a Revolution Black Radical Women, 1965-85: New Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, 73–95. (Brooklyn Museum, 2018): 74.

foregrounding critical artworks which reflect contemporary ideas of U.S. Third World feminism, for supporting the broader representation of art to question the support for ideas of objective truth and hierarchies of knowledge.

The primary methodologies I looked to when developing this project included historical and contemporary feminisms, and specifically U.S. Third World feminism and transnational feminisms, autotheory, and embodiment. I draw upon U.S. Third World feminism and transnational feminisms as frameworks to read the artworks and autotheory as a method for this support paper. Embodiment is thoroughly incorporated into all aspects of this project, including the artworks, my curation, and theoretical framework.

This paper will be divided into seven distinct sections: 1) Introduction; brief introduction to the exhibition and paper outline 2) Background; research questions, context, and relevance of exhibition 3) Literature Review; overview of related and existing literature 4) Exhibition Review; overview of relevant exhibitions 5) Installation Concept/Design; process of curation 6) Conclusion; findings from the research and curatorial process.

Background

This project is in large part inspired by my experiences within academia and arts institutions. Growing up as a woman of colour, in a predominately white, upper-class neighbourhood in Toronto, I often found myself feeling isolated from my peers but not quite understanding why. My parents are both immigrants, my mother is Filipino and my father is Argentinian, and they have been working class for as long as I can remember. For a considerable part of my childhood, I did not understand that I was visibly different from my peers, and after that realization, for a time I believed I was white passing (looking back at childhood photographs of myself I know I was not fooling anyone). I attended a Catholic high school, where the

majority of the students were racialized. The visibility of racialized peers was supportive of my sense of belonging. Intersectionally however, the shared experience of being racialized was complicated by my early realization that I am queer. Flash forward to university, and I am yet again in another predominately white, heterosexual environment, struggling to meet anyone whose experiences were even slightly related to mine. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate degrees, I felt most isolated in the classroom. My opinions vastly differed from my peers, and I often felt embarrassed when I shared a personal anecdote related to course topics. Soon I found it easier not to speak at all.

Through my studies, I was able to name the structures that silenced me. The colonial project of so-called Canada and the empires of Europe continue to shape our universities and arts institutions in subtle ways. Going back to the Age of Enlightenment, the basis of knowledge in the West was defined by “White, wealthy, educated, European men...[who] saw themselves as ‘enlightened’, and believed themselves to be more rational than any other society or time.”³⁰ Through the establishment of objective truth, white, upper-class European men simultaneously positioned themselves as the epitome of objectivity and positioned racialized, lower class, gendered people as the complete opposite.³¹ Particularly, women of colour, because of their marked bodies, are inherently delegitimized in this system and any of their work that draws upon their lived and embodied experience is also deemed non-academic.³² Additionally, these “enlightened” men and women rejected “spiritual knowledge and practice,” in effect positioning spirituality as the antithesis of objective truth. In this thesis I argue that this naturalized

³⁰ Alice Procter, *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk about It*, (Cassell, an imprint of Octopus Publishing Group Ltd, 2021): 84.

³¹ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 63-64; Lauren Fournier, “Introduction,” In *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, (The MIT Press, 2021): 14-15.

³² Yuk-Lin Renita Wong and Sheila Batacharya, eds. “Introduction,” in *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*, (AU Press, 2019): 12.

positioning of spirituality is connected to the delegitimization of knowledge from women of colour through the concept of body-spirit.³³

Through this exhibition and my own curatorial writing, I argue that the practices of Inéz Petrazinni, Jasmine Liaw, and Mina Keykhaei contribute to conversations challenging these hierarchies of knowledge, which were and are an essential aspect of U.S. Third World feminism. I use U.S. Third World feminism as a reference point for the work created by Petrazinni, Liaw, and Keykhaei due to my previous research and continual identification with the movement's primary aims. Popularized in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s, Third World feminism sought to build a "politics based on solidarity, tactical alliances, and coalition-building among oppressed groups."³⁴ In seeking self-determination, and in part a response to hegemonic feminism's call for a "universal sisterhood," U.S. Third World feminists highlighted the importance of drawing from their lived experiences and emphasizing difference.³⁵ By utilizing lived experience in their activism, U.S. Third World feminists counteracted claims that their marked nature made them incapable of producing valid knowledge.

Literature Review

Primary sources of U.S. Third World feminism largely consist of differing critical approaches to theorizing a politics based on lived/embodied experiences. In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour* authors Cherríe Moraga, Chicana feminist writer and activist, and Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana feminist scholar and theorist, supports the idea

³³ Roxana Ng, "Decolonizing Teaching and Learning Through Embodied Learning: Toward an Integrated Approach," in *Sharing Breath*, (AU Press, 2019): 34.

³⁴ Aruna D'Souza, "Early Intersections: The Work of Third World Feminism," in *We Wanted a Revolution Black Radical Women, 1965-85: New Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, 73–95. (Brooklyn Museum, 2018): 74.

³⁵ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed. (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983): 23.

that inclusion of various perspectives and issues faced by Third World women forefronts the importance of *difference* to the movement. Texts such as *Methodology of the Oppressed* by scholar of Chicana studies Chela Sandoval and feminist writer and art critic Aruna D'Souza's essay *Early Intersections: The Work of Third World Feminisms*, retroactively highlight the historical and cultural influence of U.S. Third World feminism, with Sandoval emphasizing the unique role of U.S. Third World feminism as a differential consciousness.³⁶ Differential consciousness enables shifting between ideological positions, which allows for the formation of alliances globally as well as emphasizes the interdependence of race, gender, and class.³⁷

Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization edited by Sheila Batacharya, professor of writing studies and pedagogy, and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong, professor of social work, explores how the framing of bodies within pedagogy---specifically a framing that prioritizes the body-spirit connection---challenges Western educational frameworks. This book has served as a key text in understanding different uses of embodiment. Contributors such as Roxana Ng and Susan Ferguson provide examples of incorporating embodiment practices in pedagogy. For example, Roxana Ng recounts her experiences with incorporating journalling in her curriculum, citing her students' writing as evidence.³⁸

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom by activist, educator, and theorist bell hooks has been a foundational text in understanding the importance of drawing upon embodied and lived experiences, as well as how the incorporation of these experiences in theory opposes ideas of objective truth. In this book, hooks emphasizes the liberatory possibilities of

³⁶ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 58.

³⁷ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.

³⁸ Ng, "Decolonizing Teaching and Learning Through Embodied Learning," 46-51.

education, recounting her experiences to critique structures that disadvantage marginalized groups in the classroom.

From these texts, I identify three areas of ideas of difference:

- 1) difference as creative fund,
- 2) importance of building theory from embodied/lived experience, and
- 3) reconnection to cultural and spiritual pasts, as U.S. Third World feminist characteristics that Petrazzini, Liaw, and Keykhaei build upon in their practices.

These three ideas are deeply connected, as their implementation supports one another. The idea of difference as creative fund, described by Audre Lorde as “a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic,” emphasizes the need to acknowledge differences between marginalized groups to engage in meaningful dialogue as well as address underlying racism amongst these groups.³⁹ In this perspective, differences between women, rather than shared oppression based on gender, becomes the foundation for dialogue and solidarity. For example, writer and photographer Barbara Cameron engages in this idea by recounting her experiences with misconceptions and stereotypes about Black, Chicano, and Asian peoples, as well as how the U.S. government employed tactics to pit Native American peoples against one another.⁴⁰ These texts highlight the continued need for building theory upon embodied and lived experience in combination with returning to spiritual and cultural roots, as scholars such as Batacharya and Wong (2019) endeavor to create theories that responds to their realities.

³⁹ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House,” In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983: 99.

⁴⁰ Barbara Cameron, “Gee, You Don’t Seem Like An Indian From the Reservation,” In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983: 49.

Historical overviews of theoretical biases within academia and museology, such as that provided by Alice Proctor in her book *The Whole Picture: The colonial story of the art in our museums and why we need to talk about it* provides insight into the ways that hierarchies of knowledge and ideas of objective truth are embedded within different Western structures and institutions.

In my research that centers embodied and lived experience, I also draw on theories of pedagogy, and specifically decolonial or liberatory approaches to learning and teaching. In this regard, both *Sharing Breath* by Batacharya and Wong, and *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks have been essential texts in suggesting pedagogical approaches that move past colonial methods. For example, hooks uses the term “passion of experience,” to describe a way of knowing through the body and explain how critical pedagogies of liberation can respond to this way of knowing.⁴¹ In their book, Batacharya and Wong connect pedagogy to embodiment by exploring examples of learning that originate in the body.⁴² Wong provides the integration of mindfulness in social work education as an example, a practice which focuses on bodily sensations and presence.⁴³ In *Teaching to Transgress* hooks emphasizes the importance of praxis, where practice and theory are intertwined and should be equally emphasized particularly in feminist movements, to create accessible theory that reflects concrete realities.

Existing literature on embodiment is quite extensive. Within the scope of curatorial practice, my thesis contributes to the role of visual art practice in understanding the potential of embodiment as a political thrust and way of being in the world. The primary implementation of embodiment within art theory appears to be acknowledging embodied knowledge as shaping the

⁴¹ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 91.

⁴² Batacharya and Wong, *Sharing Breath*, 3.

⁴³ Batacharya and Wong, *Sharing Breath*, 254.

experiences of art viewers and how to knowingly use this fact. In terms of this project, I found embodiment literature from pedagogical theorists the most helpful to determine my goals for incorporating my embodied experiences into curation. For example, in the essay “Reflections on/of Embodiment: Bringing Our Whole Selves to Class,” authors Trixie Smith, Katie Manthey, John Gagnon, Ezekiel Choffel, Wonderful Faison, Scotty Secrist and Phil Bratta, emphasize how “work on embodiment is not a subjective relativism, but a reminder that research and teaching is not objective, empirical, and disembodied. Epistemology also is not neutral and objective. Rather, embodiment offers the understanding that instantiations of bodies are rhetorically and culturally situated in relation to institutions and discourses.”⁴⁴ Through this project I brought attention to the implicit subjectivity of art and curation, by emphasizing how my positionality and that of the included artists indeed framed and shaped our practices. Rather than engage in debates around the value of subjective thought for understanding the world around us, as might be expected in spaces that have historically privileged ideas of objective truth, this research located the subjective within the literature of embodiment so as to evidence both the context which has necessitated the work of third world feminists, and the ways that objectivity and truth are linked and naturalized throughout history.

Exhibition Review

Through this project, I proposed an approach to utilizing embodied experience in curation which is supportive of the aims and purpose of third world feminist thought. In my research, I did not find similar approaches named as such, though I identified autoethnography and positionality within curatorial studies to share some aims. For example, in “The Author-Curator

⁴⁴ Trixie Smith, Katie Manthey, John Gagnon, Ezekiel Choffel, Wonderful Faison, Scotty Secrist and Phil Bratta, “Reflections on/of Embodiment: Bringing Our Whole Selves to Class,” *Feminist Teacher* 28, no. 1 (2017): 46.

as Autoethnographer,” Rui Amaral names Harald Szeemann and Ydessa Hendeles as participating in self-reflexive curatorial practices that produce autobiographical qualities in their exhibitions. Abdi Osman and Ellyn Walker similarly discuss self-reflexive practices in which they emphasize their own positionalities and how their experiences and those around them affect their work. Walker states, “overall, I use my curatorial practice as a form of research creation that I consider to be meaningfully shaped by the artists, institutions, and communities with whom I collaborate.”⁴⁵ Expanding on this, my curatorial practice acknowledges how my embodied experiences affect my reception of artworks and my use of curatorial methods. While these approaches have similarities to my own, I believe an embodied curatorial approach provides a more specific practice of naming—of my embodied experiences, cultural sources and the hierarchies of knowledge that they resist.

The curatorial approaches I built upon in this exhibition are feminist curation, dialogical approaches, and past exhibitions which provide foundational references for *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*. In terms of exhibition precedents, I identify affinity shows from the 1980s such as *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists in the United States* (1980) and *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar, and Sage: Contemporary Art by Native American Women* (1987) as a large influence on my approach to curating multi-disciplinary artworks connected through common political positionings.⁴⁶

In her discussion of *Dialectics of Isolation* (1980) D’Souza explains “how affinity might operate in curatorial terms,” where the common political positioning acts as the common goal

⁴⁵ Abdi Osman and Ellyn Walker, “Ongoing Conversations: Collaboration across Positionality, Time, and Space,” *Public (Toronto)* 32, no. 64 (2021): 221.

⁴⁶ Phrase coined by Carrie Rickey to describe shows that “substituted an emphasis on ‘political and social considerations for aesthetic ones.’” (Carrie Rickey, “The Passion of Ana,” *The Village Voice*, September 1980, reproduced in Ana Mendieta, Stephanie Rosenthal, Adrian Heathfield, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Hayward Gallery., and Salzburger Landessammlungen Rupertinum, *Traces: Ana Mendieta*, (Hayward Pub., 2013): 206.)

and the different aesthetic and material approaches stand in as the visual manifestation of the artists' cultural differences.⁴⁷ Thus, by curating a multidisciplinary exhibition based around political positioning, I built upon D'Souza's argument that positions affinity shows as an example of using difference as a creative fund. Co-curated by Ana Mendieta, Kazuko Miyamoto, and Zarina, this exhibition forms a key exhibition precedent for my work as it emphasizes the possibilities of solidarity amongst women of colour. At the time of the exhibition Mendieta and Kazuko were both members of A.I.R. Gallery where *Dialectics of Isolation* was hosted. Through their collaboration, Mendieta, Miyamoto and Zarina were able to forefront work by other Third World women artists who were not as well-known at the time, effectively demonstrating an idea of feminism which refused the flattening or universalizing of their experiences.⁴⁸

Installation/Exhibition Design

From the beginning of my work on this exhibition, I had always intended to include artworks by Ana Mendieta. In particular, I was interested in showing specific artworks including *Ánima, Silueta de Cohetes (Soul, Silhouette of Fireworks)* (1976) and *Untitled (Moffit Building Piece)* (1973). These video works highlight Mendieta's embodied approach to artmaking. In *Ánima, Silueta de Cohetes (Soul, Silhouette of Fireworks)* Mendieta collaborated with a local fireworks artist in Oaxaca, Mexico, who constructed the armature that can be seen burning in the performance and its documentation.⁴⁹ *Untitled (Moffit Building Piece)* depicts passers-bys interacting with an aftermath of domestic violence staged by Mendieta. Utilizing her body as

⁴⁷ Aruna D'Souza, "Curating Difference," *Dialectics of Entanglement: Do We Exist Together?*, exhibition catalogue, August 2-September 2, 2018, A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY: 11.

⁴⁸ Sadia Shirazi, "Returning to Dialectics of Isolation: The Non-Aligned Movement, Imperial Feminism, and a Third Way," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2021).

⁴⁹ Heidi Rauch and Federico Suro, "Ana Mendieta's primal scream," *Americas*, September-October 1992, 44. Gale Literature Resource Center (accessed July 20, 2025).
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A13665466/LitRC?u=anon~ed147a68&sid=sitemap&xid=35324f26>.

material and knowledge source, Mendieta incorporated a practice of naming that aligned with the politics of U.S. Third World feminism. This approach was in part a determining factor in how I selected the three artists and works that were in the show. However, I was unable to secure loans for Mendieta's works and in the end, the exhibition focused on three Toronto-based artists. Despite the absence of Mendieta's work, I believe it is necessary to speak to her practice as contributing to the selection of the works as well as the connections I established between the works. For example, by locating artists who are working with themes present in Mendieta's practice, such as Santería, exile/diasporic experiences, durational performance, I was able to locate artists with differing embodied approaches to artmaking. Notably, these are artists who are practicing today, contributing new works, which evidence the ongoing significance of themes explored by Mendieta in the 1980s.

My own desire for connection with women of colour feeds this research. When reading Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: A New Mestiza Consciousness*, I found the language to name the isolation I felt as a second-generation immigrant. In reading, I came to the realization that other people similarly feel torn between two or more cultures, particularly those who feel further ostracized due to their sexuality. In response to this isolation, Anzaldúa chose to instead forge a path where that in-between nature is recognized as its own distinct but equal culture.⁵⁰ In this project and throughout my practice, I platform the voices of women of colour, both out of necessity and desire to form personal and professional relations with those who can relate.

In planning the installation/exhibition design for this project, my process began first with viewing the artworks and having discussions with the artists individually. Through my studio

⁵⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987): 22.

visits, I learned the contextual background of the artworks as well as saw examples of their display. Through visits to Ignite Gallery and the creation of layout mock-ups, I explored how I could translate my experiences/readings of the works in the space. I also considered the unique characteristics of the gallery itself, as it is positioned in a high traffic hallway in the main building of OCAD University. I have also engaged with individual and group conversations with the artists throughout the process. In the discussions, I was able to establish and build relationships with each artist, through engaging with their practices as well as sharing stories affecting our embodied experiences. These conversations have in part informed my curatorial approach for these artworks and highlight the dialogical aspect I imbue in my practice.

Through exhibition-specific tools such as curatorial writing and wall labels, I responded to lived experiences of my family and myself.⁵¹ Over the course of this program, several of my family members have attended my exhibitions. I noticed how they interacted with the artworks, the ideas, and the labels (or the lack thereof). While some of my family did make the effort to understand what I was doing as a curator, I could tell some were a bit unsure of what it all meant. I primarily felt this in their lack of engagement in conversation about the artworks. While just their presence was enough, I realized that in my role as a curator, I need to make an effort to meet their understanding and experiences. Using my family as a starting point, I hope for these efforts and dialogical approach to extend to all exhibition viewers.

As an embodied pursuit of this audience engagement, I paid close attention to the way I installed the works. Through this process, I found some difficulties that required problem solving on the spot. For example, adjusting the placement and spacing of the works so they did not interfere with the projection from Liaw's work *name body* [Fig. 1]. I had created several layout

⁵¹ My family has continually supported my education and demonstrated great interest in my practice. Conversations with them have affected how I describe my work as I navigate their experiences with art.

mock-ups before installation, so I was able to simply choose a different layout to resolve said issues. In creating these mock-ups, my main goal was to ensure that certain works did not overshadow another. With *What Remains*, I decided to place the birch trunks 1-2ft away from the walls, so the works further in the gallery were not hidden from those walking through the hallway [Fig. 2]. I was also cognizant of lighting in the space, as a large part of the spotlight track is inoperable. Due to this, I knew Keykhaei's work *Not Quite There* would occupy that space as the fabric material was much more forgiving in terms of lighting than Petrazinni's works, *Protège-moi* and *Ejército Descendiendo* [Fig. 3][Fig. 4]. I had previously determined that Liaw's *name body* would occupy the back wall, as it would need the least amount of light, whereas the other two gallery walls received partial light from the hallway tracks.

Recalling the title of the show, I realized that lighting the exhibition also required me to consider the role of shadow in the exhibition. For Keykhaei's *What Remains* I exaggerated the shadows that emerged from the base and length of the trees in order to highlight the grouping of trunks [Fig. 5]. The three birch trunks in the work were separated into one group of two and a single, solo tree trunk across the gallery. This grouping as well as my use of shadow for the two-partnered trunks emphasize Keykhaei's discussion of displaced bodies through immigration by suggesting isolation and community.

The use of shadow in display also reflects my use of embodied experience. Whereas standard display techniques at times call for the minimization or complete elimination of shadows through lighting, I view shadow as another layer in meaning making.

I invited each of the artists to write their own extended wall labels to emphasize specificity and difference of individual experience within my curation.

My programming also aimed to encourage a variety of perspectives, as participants shared theory and/or ideas inspiring their practice and present their own readings of the included artworks. During the programming, Keykhaei and Liaw expanded on the ideas informing their artworks, their creative processes, and material choices, followed by participants and the artists offering their own thoughts about the works. For example, Liaw discussed the significance of the different finishes of her acrylic pieces and explained how they corresponded to the different characters in her name.⁵² The programming also contributed to my use of embodied experience, as I shared works that resonated with aspects of my life and encouraged participants to share personal readings. Through this, I gained greater insight into the themes and issues inspiring the artists' works.

Conclusion

Through the entire process of curating *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*, particularly the planning, installation process, and programming, I emphasized my embodied experiences as well as provided the artists with opportunities to expand on the ideas and embodied experiences they conveyed in the works; this was achieved in studio visits, artwork statements, and programming. Through studio visits I built a foundation of trust and understanding with the artists, discussing themes and processes pertinent to their practices. I shared the ideas influencing my work, to maintain transparency throughout the process, allowing the artists to discern whether their approaches aligned. These studio visits were important to my use of embodied experience, as I shared anecdotal information in response to the topics discussed and explained my desire to research U.S. Third World feminism. The artists were

⁵² Jasmine Liaw to Cassidy Alejandria, "Conversation with Jasmine Liaw," January 19, 2026.

intrigued by the politics and concepts of U.S. Third World feminism, and particularly resonated with discussions of embodied experience. My collaborative process—working closely with artists to articulate the ideas which underpin their work—echoed the politics of U.S. Third World feminism and were most pronounced during my conversations with the artists leading up to the exhibition. I held several meetings with each individual artist, as well as an online meeting as a whole group to introduce the artists to one another and discuss their works and practices. Through curation, I incorporated the artists' ideas or suggestions depending on how they emphasized their goals for the work. For example, in Keykhaei's *Not Quite There*, she wanted to emphasize the applied figure and draping of the overlapped gauze for her aims of obscurity/abstraction [Fig. 6]. To emphasize her ideas, I lit the work in order to cast a further shadow along the bottom of the work as well as adjusted the points and height in which the work hung from the wall [Fig. 7].

This approach in exhibition mirrored my approaches to programming a round table discussion for sharing theory and artwork readings between myself and the artists. Keykhaei shared Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* and Liaw read a passage from Việt Lê's *Return Engagements: Contemporary Art's Traumas of Modernity and History in Sài Gòn and Phnom Penh*. I found the conversations helpful in understanding more about the artists' practices as well as providing an opportunity to share how theory has connected to my lived experiences. Specifically, whilst discussing translation and language barriers, I shared an anecdote about my *lolo* (grandfather) and late *lola* (grandmother) and how I try to gage when I should or should not ask my mother to translate their Tagalog dialogue. I related this anecdote to Aruna D'Souza's *Imperfect Solidarities*, where she discussed ideas of mistranslation and right to opacity. In this text, D'Souza states, "just as some part of meaning gets lost in translation, so do parts of

ourselves as we are forced to translate our sense of being into another language or definition of personhood.”⁵³ Later, she discusses the complex intentions tied to domination implicit in the West’s desire for knowledge and translation.⁵⁴ It is through these ideas I have been considering how asking for translations of Tagalog from my mother can contribute to these histories of forced translation. As a whole, I found the theory sharing successful, and would integrate this type of programming into future endeavors.

The collaborative aspects of the curation as well as the installation were both successful relating to my research aims. My emphasis on the artists’ contexts and intentions through lighting, wall labels, and programming was particularly successful. The conversations I had with the artists gave me the most sense of accomplishment over the span of organizing this exhibition, as I believe I successfully formed working relationships built upon mutual respect despite our cultural differences. In future research, I would like to explore how I could employ more experimental display techniques, such as incorporating elements such as sound to further convey my embodied experience. One possible example I contemplated during installation was the incorporation of a shared altar. The artists and I would have contributed photographs and objects honouring deceased loved ones as a way of bringing them into the space and exhibition. This idea was inspired by the recent passing of my *lola*, as a central aspect of my Filipina heritage involves the creating and maintaining of altars. I would also like to expand this research by engaging with different contemporary women artists who are actively inspired by historical feminist artists. This would allow me to employ a similar research method while further emphasizing the ideas already present within the works, rather than finding resonance with theories I encountered.

⁵³ Aruna D'Souza, *Imperfect Solidarities*, (Berlin: Floating Opera Press, 2024): 37.

⁵⁴ D'Souza, *Imperfect Solidarities*, 52-53.

As expected for my first endeavor into an embodied approach to curation, I encountered some limitations. For example, there was only so much I could do to convey embodied experience without relying on written word or speech. While I am not opposed to the use of text or speech to convey meaning, I believe either approach were slightly misaligned with the subtle ways the artworks conveyed embodied experience. The resulting embodied approach in this project came out similarly subtle, noted in my use of shadow and wall texts written by the artists. I found my approach most effective in the conversational part of my process, as I believe the relationships formed contributed to the success of the show. It is also where I feel I best expressed embodiment, as through dialogue I could communicate the reasoning and events affecting specific decisions. Overall, this thesis allowed me to establish a significant basis for any future attempts of embodied curation I might explore.

Bibliography

- Alejandria, Cassidy. "Being 'Other': Ana Mendieta's Artistic Practice and Feminist Politics within Arts Institutions." Master's Thesis, 2024.
<https://queensu.scholaris.ca/items/089a6e5f-41ab-410c-8da9-ea7e8c60017d>.
- Amaral, Rui. "The Author-Curator as Autoethnographer." Masters thesis, OCAD University, 2015. <https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/273>
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: the New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.
- Briggs, Shirley, Florence Falk, Joan L. Griscom, Ynestra King, victoria garton, Rocky Olguin, Ana Mendieta, et al, "Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Feminism & Ecology." *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Arts & Politics* 4, no. 1 (13) (July 1, 1981).
- Cameron, Barbara. "'Gee, You Don't Seem Like An Indian From the Reservation.'" In Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 46-52.
- Dijk, Denise. "The Goddess Movement in the U. S. A.: A Religion for Women Only." *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 18, no. 1 (January 1988): 258–66.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/157361288x00144>.
- D'Souza, Aruna. "Curating Difference." *Dialectics of Entanglement: Do We Exist Together?*, exhibition catalogue, August 2-September 2, 2018, A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY: 9-12.
- D'Souza, Aruna. "Early Intersections: The Work of Third World Feminism." Essay. In *We Wanted a Revolution Black Radical Women, 1965-85: New Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, 73–95. Brooklyn Museum, 2018.
- D'Souza, Aruna. *Imperfect Solidarities*. Floating Opera Press, 2024.
- Fournier, Lauren. *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2021.
- hooks, bell. "Theory as Liberatory Practice." In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, 59-75. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Keykhaei, Mina. Letter to Cassidy Alejandria. "Conversation with Mina Keykhaei." Teams Call, January 15, 2026.
- Liaw, Jasmine. Letter to Cassidy Alejandria. "Conversation with Jasmine Liaw," January 19, 2026.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House." In Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 98-101.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 333–58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>.
- Moraga, Cherríe., and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 2d ed. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Ng, Roxana. "Decolonizing Teaching and Learning through Embodied Learning: Toward an Integrated Approach." In *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*, edited by Sheila Batacharya and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong, 33–54. AU Press, 2019.
- Osman, Abdi, and Ellyn Walker. "Ongoing Conversations: Collaboration across Positionality, Time, and Space." *Public (Toronto)* (Toronto) 32, no. 64 (2021): 218–27.
https://doi.org/10.1386/public_00084_7.
- Petrazzini, Inéz. "Ejército Descendiendo." Artwork Statement, March 2026.

- Petrazinni, Inéz. "Protège-Moi." Artwork Statement, March 2026.
- Rauch, Heidi and Federico Suro, "Ana Mendieta's primal scream," *Americas*, September-October 1992, 44. Gale Literature Resource Center (accessed July 20, 2025).
- Rickey, Carrie. "The Passion of Ana," *The Village Voice*, September 1980, reproduced in Ana Mendieta, Stephanie Rosenthal, Adrian Heathfield, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Hayward Gallery., and Salzburger Landessammlungen Rupertinum, *Traces: Ana Mendieta*, (Hayward Pub., 2013): 206.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Shirazi, Sadia. "Returning to Dialectics of Isolation: The Non-Aligned Movement, Imperial Feminism, and a Third Way." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2021).
- Smith, Trixie, et al. "Reflections on/of Embodiment: Bringing Our Whole Selves to Class." *Feminist Teacher* 28, no. 1 (2017): 45-63.
- Wong, Yuk-Lin Renita, and Sheila Batacharya, eds. *Sharing Breath : Embodied Learning and Decolonization*. AU Press, 2019.

Appendix A: Exhibition Documentation



Figure 1. Jasmine Liaw, *name body*, (2026). Image of Liaw's *name body*, consisting of acrylic plexiglas pieces and projection mapped video.



Figure 2. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*. View of exhibition in Ignite Gallery – West Side.

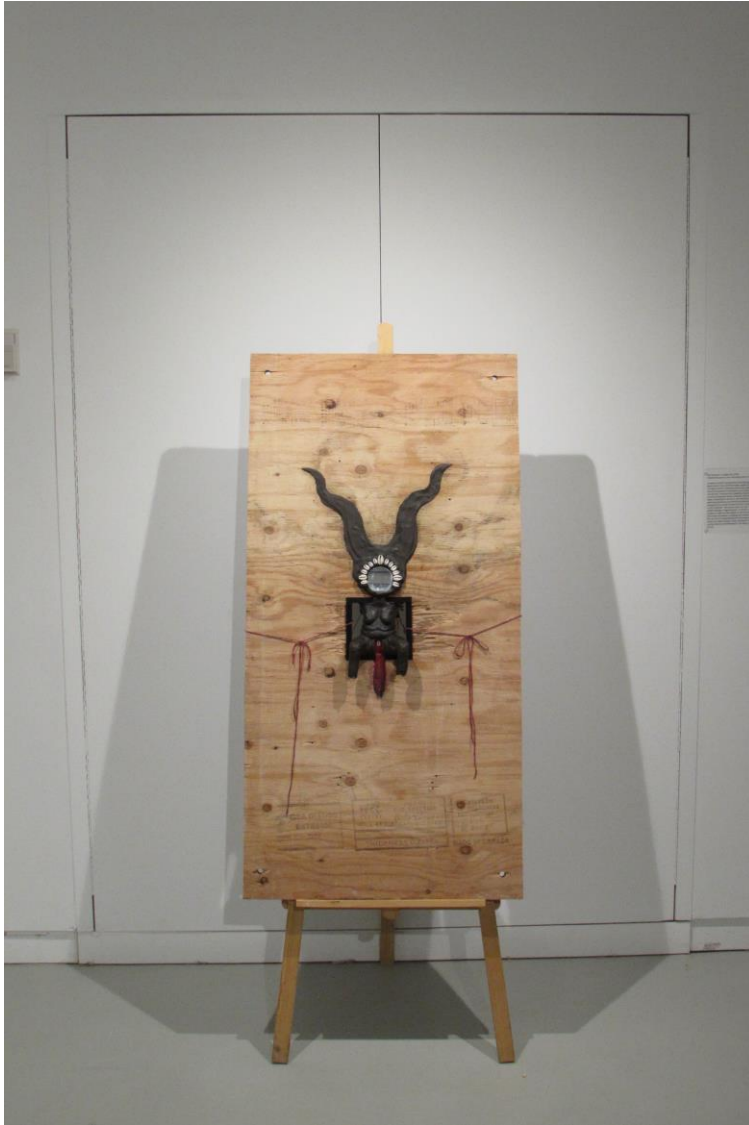


Figure 3. Inéz Petrazzini, *Protège-moi*, (2025). Image of Petrazzini's *Protège-moi*, depicting a Black figure with large horns, missing face, and limbs, positioned vertically on a wooden panel.



Figure 4. Inéz Petrazinni, *Ejército Descendiendo*, (2026). Image of Petrazinni's *Ejército Descendiendo*, depicting Black figures, a goat, and condor on a mountainous backdrop with pink/mauve sky.



Figure 5. Mina Keykhaei, *What Remains*, (2024). Image of two trunks from Keykhaei's *What Remains*, consisting of birch trunks wrapped in cut Persian rugs and textiles.



Figure 6. Mina Keykhaei, *Not Quite There*, (2026). Image of Keykhaei's *Not Quite There*, consisting of guaze and cotton fabrics depicting a slightly obscured, horizontal figure.



Figure 7. Detail, Mina Keykhaei, *Not Quite There*, (2026). Detail of Keykhaei's *Not Quite There*, focusing on the figure and shadow cast by the fabric.



Figure 8. Detail, Jasmine Liaw, *name body*, (2026). Detail of Liaw's *name body*, focusing on one acrylic plexiglas figure.



Figure 9. Detail, Inéz Petrazzini, *Protège-moi*, (2025). Detail of Petrazzini's *Protège-moi*, focusing on the Black figure.



Figure 10. Detail, Inéz Petrazzini, *Ejército Descendiendo*, (2026). Detail of Petrazzini's *Ejército Descendiendo*, focusing on the goat and flame.



Figure 11. Detail, Mina Keykhaei, *What Remains*, (2024). Detail of Keykhaei's *What Remains*, focusing on an opening/eye on one trunk.



Figure 12. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*. Detail of exhibition view, focusing on left side of Ignite Gallery – West Side.



Figure 13. Gallery view, *The Hypervisible Woman and her Shadow*. Detail of exhibition view, focusing on right side of Ignite Gallery – West Side.