# Unit 5: Identity and Marginalization

### From the Margins to the Mainstream

## Unit Student Learning Objectives

### Unit 5: Identity and Marginalization (one week)

At the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify artists and describe qualities associated with Feminist and Black art: 1,2,4,5, GE: 1,4,6,7, Core Skills: A, D, E
2. Define core concepts associated with these movements and artists Course Goals: 1,2,4 GE: 1,4,6,7, Core Skills: A, D, E
3. Question the theory and philosophy behind the movement, with emphasis on Ana Mendieta and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Course Goals: 2,3,4,5,6 GE: 1,4,6,7,9 Core Skills: A, B, C, E, F, G

### Artists covered:

feminism:

* Judy Chicago
* Carolee Schneemann
* Ana Mendieta

race:

* Fred Wilson
* Kara Walker
* Carrie Mae Weems
* Ellen Gallagher
* Michael Ray Charles
* Kerry James Marshall

Judy Chicago, Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta, Fred Wilson, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Ellen Gallagher, Michael Ray Charles, Kerry James Marshall

## Unit Student Assessments & Activities

### Introduction (ULO 3-4)

This week we look at artists who's work deals specifically with identity, and often with the concept of marginalization. Identity politics is a broad topic in the visual arts, and we will be revisiting it through the remainder of the course. Today we are going to focus on two areas which were at the forefront in the fight for human equality in the 1960's and 70's: Feminist and Black identity.

We start by examining artists associated with feminism, and then artists associated with the black art movement. The media today will all be from the series Art21 put together by PBS. I have selected from the artists they have who deal with identity politics. These are more contemporary artists, progressing the ideas put forward by the artists of the 60's and 70's.

I'm jumping ahead to these artists because I want to show how these are ideas that are still very much alive in the contemporary art world. The artists are: Fred Wilson, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Ellen Gallagher, Michael Ray Charles, and Kerry James Marshall.

### Textbook : Read Chapter 9 Feminist and Black Art (ULO 1-3).

Please read Chapter 9 in *Twentieth Century American Art* by Erika Doss, pages 181-201. Then test your understanding by answering the Textbook Review Questions in the next section.

### Textbook Review Questions (self assess): (ULO 1-3)

The answer to these questions can be found in chapter X of *Twentieth Century American Art* by Erika Doss.

Answer these questions as best as you can after reading this weeks chapter in Twentieth Century American Art. You can try the quiz multiple times. You will be graded on the completing the quiz but you are allowed to make mistakes and correct your answers. Use this as an opportunity to test your comprehension of the material and see what you missed, and as preparation for the midterm and final.

Q: Judy Chicago's dinner party was a: A. performance piece where woman were invited to participate in a dinner party. B. sculpture made by a collection of woman celebrating famous historical woman. C. painting of the last supper with woman instead of men. D. video of woman eating and engaging in a discussion of feminist issues. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: What is mean by the term 'the male gaze'? A. The way men look at women objectifies woman and determines the way they see themselves. B. The way men see themselves is superior to their view of women. C. The way society perceives men is distinctly different from how it views women D. The female gaze is soft and nurturing, the male gaze is of strength and violence.

Q: Carolee Schneemann uses her body: A. in the way traditional artists used paint and canvas. B. To create sexual arousal as Art. C. As a weapon. D. To push herself to physical limits. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro’s “Womanhouse” was not: A. a large table setting showing the importance of women in history. B. a domestic setting turned into a space to view art. C. a critique of woman's role in society D. a group show of woman artists. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Robert Colescott's "George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware": A. is a satire of racial stereotypes based on a historical picture of George Washington. B. depicts historical events from the underground railroad. C. questions slavery at the time when George Washington was fighting for independence. D. is one of a series of panels depicting the civil rights movement. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: The People's Flag Show: A. challenged laws that restricted the display of the American flag. B. depicted patriotic tableaux featuring the American flag. C. displayed works such as Jasper John's American Flag. D. invited participants to create their own personal flag. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: T.C. Cannon's "Collector #5": A. challenged the idea of the primitive by presenting a Native American in traditional dress as a collector of fine European art. B. Depicted the massacre of Buffalo by European settlers in the Americas. C. Questioned the accumulation of material goods in contemporary society. D. organized museum collections in a way that created new meaning. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Chicana artists such as Judith Baca and Las Mujeres Muralistas: A. created contemporary community murals which continued the tradition of Mexican mural painting. B. produced billboards decrying social injustices. C. were excluded from the pop art movement due to sexism and racism. D. produced huge murals on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

### **Readings**: (ULO 3, 4)

### Megan Heuer "Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance"

#### Introduction

\*This is a review of a retrospective of Ana Menieta's work presented in 2004, reproduced in full. The original article was published in the Brooklyn rail and is available [here](http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/09/art/ana-mendieta-earth-body-sculpture-and-pe)

Here are some links to her work to give you a better idea what the article is about:

* [Self Portrait]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1900s.selfPortrait.jpg), 1900s
* [Untitled]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1972.untitled.jpg), 1972
* [Body racks]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1974.bodyTracks.jpg), 1974
* [Red on White Body rack]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1974.redOnWhiteBodyTrack.jpg), 1974
* [Tree of Life]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1977.treeOfLife.jpg), 1977
* [Isla]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.1981.isla.jpg), 1981
* [Silueta (Mexico)]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.73-8.silueta.mexico.jpg), 1973-8
* [Silueta Unknown]($COURSE_PATH$images/mendieta.73c.siluetaUnknown.jpg), circa 1973

#### "Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance"

A single shot of an abandoned beach at low tide in jumpy, color super-8 film, Ana Mendieta’s "Bird Run" (1974) has a wistful quality of emptiness for most of its silent two-minute duration. A small white figure is barely visible along the horizon as the water gently laps at the sand and the low grasses sway in the wind until, in a flash, a naked woman covered from head to toe in white feathers runs towards the camera, across the screen, and then vanishes as the film loops to the beginning. The presence of the bird-woman is fleeting: watching the film over and over, I strained to get a better look at this mysterious body, frustrated by its elusiveness, trying not to blink as she ran by. It is this flickering between presence and absence that characterizes the best work in Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance, the first large retrospective of Mendieta’s hybrid, yet truncated oeuvre.

Ana Mendieta has become something of an art world myth. Born in Cuba in 1948, but exiled to the United States as a child, she is the beautiful young multicultural woman artist working with ideas and forms of gender and culture in the heyday of feminist art and identity politics. She is also the beautiful young woman artist whose life ended mysteriously one night after a violent fight with her lover, the older and more established artist Carl Andre, as she fell to her death from the thirty-fourth floor window of their SoHo loft in 1985 (Andre was subsequently tried for her murder and ultimately acquitted). The particular details of her biography make Mendieta a tragically romantic figure and it is tempting to read her work through her life as her image reappears over and over within her work, a haunting reminder of her life and death. This problem is not unique: Francesca Woodman, Hannah Wilke, Diane Arbus, Eva Hesse, the list of women artists whose tragic biographies tend to overshadow their work is long. That Mendieta, like Woodman and Wilke, used her own body as an instrumental part of her artistic practice makes the distance between art and life appear to shrink even further. Although the current exhibition includes and sometimes highlights the details of her biography, it also allows for an unprecedented consideration of Mendieta’s art, fragmentary, stunning, and uneven as it is.

The earliest work at the Whitney dates to Mendieta’s time as a graduate student in painting at the University of Iowa where she was profoundly influenced by the dynamic avant-garde community and the rolling hills of the Iowa landscape. In 1969, her first year of graduate school, she began a decade-long affair with the artist Hans Breder, who founded the Intermedia program at Iowa, a special interdisciplinary arts program in which Mendieta studied and taught. The pieces from this period are truly inter-media, combining performance, photography and film, and conceptual art, without any genre taking precedence as the art object. In the series of headshots dubbed Untitled (Facial Cosmetic Variations) (1972), Mendieta grotesquely transforms her visage with stockings pulled over her head, torn in different places, caked on makeup, wigs, and distorted expressions; while the related series Untitled (Facial Hair Transplants) (1972) documents the transfer of fellow student Morty Sklar’s beard to Mendieta’s face. Although Mendieta appears in both projects, two of very few works in which her face is visible, she is not revealed in any traditional sense of a self-portrait. Rather these two works highlight indeterminacy—in individual identity and in the fluidity of artistic media—with a deadpan tone that verges on the absurd. The mocking film "Door Piece" (1973) limits vision to the gaze through a keyhole, an overly literal enactment of early feminist criticism of "the gaze" that ends in a humorous close-up of Mendieta rimming the peephole with her tongue. An odd and funny homage to Duchamp, the film casts the viewer into the space on the inside of the peephole of "Etant Donnés," limiting the viewer’s field of vision, and turning her into the object of the film’s blind gaze.

If Mendieta plays with vision and surface in these early works, she also explores physical and material transformations through body-based works. With a matter-of-fact, almost documentary aesthetic, "Sweating Blood" (1973) is a single shot of Mendieta’s head, eyes closed and unflinching, as blood slowly beings to trickle from her scalp. Without any sense of violence, "Sweating Blood" dramatizes the process of thought as a physiological experience. Blood is also the medium of artistic process in "Untitled (Blood Sign #2/Body Tracks)" (1979), a silent film projected directly onto a bare white wall of a woman in front of a bare white wall, her back to the camera, her body pressed into the wall, arms raised in a "V" above her head. As the film rolls, she slowly sinks to her knees, dragging her arms on the wall, leaving blood red tracks in their wake. Her ghostly image is seamlessly integrated into the gallery space, a haunting reminder of the presence of her body as integral to the performance. Accompanying the film are the paper and blood remains of Mendieta’s Body Tracks project, reminiscent of Yves Klein’s Anthropometries, but fragmentary and marked not with the artist’s signature color, but instead with the literal material of her body. Mendieta’s use of blood in her performances and in drawings, photographs, and films has been connected to Hermann Nitsch and the Vienna Actionists, who were well known among the students at Intermedia, but although Body Tracks shares a ritualistic character with the work of the Actionists, the encounter is between the artist and her own body and materials; it is visceral, not violent.

But violence also fascinated Mendieta. The dark scene in an 8×10 color photograph dated 1973 offers an almost matter-of-fact crime scene image: harsh spotlight illuminates an impoverished apartment with broken dishes on the floor and a decrepit wooden table, with the artist’s body bent at a right angle away from the camera, ass in the air, covered in blood dripping down her bare legs and pooling in the white panties around her ankles, head invisible in the shadows. "Untitled (Rape Scene)" (1973) is the record of a performance/ installation Mendieta created in her apartment in Iowa to recreate the scene of a real violent rape-murder of a young woman that March that had been reported in detail in the press. Although the image immediately suggests a feminist politics, a statement against violence against women, when coupled with the series of slides shown in a vitrine nearby of Untitled (People Looking at Blood, Moffit) (1973), rows of mundane street shots of ordinary passersby in front of a doorway where Mendieta spread animal blood, the effect is not a condemnation of violence, but a sense of detachment and displacement. The absence of causality in these images, the implication of violence but never its depiction, works to displace the viewer’s ability to comprehend each scene as a narrative; rather the images seem to challenge the viewer, to heighten a sense of dislocation, mediating any sense of transparency in Mendieta’s use of her own body in the work. These are images are some of the most tempting to read biographically given the intimate violence that lead to Mendieta’s death, yet it is precisely in these images that the artist refuses that paradigm: her defiant stare in "Untitled (Self-Portrait with Blood)" (1973), bloodied face filling the frame is one of the most powerful in the show.

And then there are the Siluetas (1973-1980), begun in Mexico on a trip with Breder, and continued in Iowa, including Mendieta’s best-known images, and representing her most complicated and successful intermedia work. In the early Siluetas made in Iowa, Mendieta herself appears in films and photographs that record her process as well as the "finished" sculptures. In "Corazón de Roca can Sangre (Rock Heart with Blood)" (1975), the artist, naked, kneels next to an impression of her body that has already been cut into the soft muddy riverbank. She places a rock in the center of this bodily hollow, covers the rock with blood, and then places herself, face down, into the cutting, like a puzzle piece or a key in a lock. The film reveals the indexicality of the early Siluetas: like a fingerprint, they register the trace of the body in the world, as well as the chronological gap between action and image. The presence of Mendieta’s body, her performance of merging with the earth as her mark making process, registers the trace of the body in the earth, rendering the silueta more than a mere icon. The combination of Mendieta’s films and photographs of her first Siluetas in Iowa inextricably connect the images of bodily traces to Mendieta’s body, not a generalized female body, but the specific body of their maker, the artist’s body that is intimate with her materials. Yet the Siluetas are as universal as they are specific, metaphorizing the relationship between the body and nature, recording the unavoidable fact of human impact in the natural world, shallow and brief in geological terms, but beautiful and inescapable nevertheless.

The films and photographs of the Siluetas are tightly framed and mostly employ a single shot, containing only Mendieta’s body and the immediate material surrounding her figure. The straightforward documentary style is standard 1960s conceptual documentation, but replacing the white walls of the gallery with a lushly colorful landscape. The cool clear water running over her body, face down, head turned to the sky away from the camera in "Untitled (Creek)" (1974) captures a silueta of water, possible only by the body’s interruption of the natural flow of the creek. In The Tree of Life series that marks the beginning of the Siluetas, Mendieta incorporated her body into the landscape by covering herself with mud or flowers and grass, making a raised impression against a tree or in a field. The scale of the works never exceeds the scale of the body, and the effect is an overwhelming sense of intimacy: with the land, with the viewer, with her own body.

The Siluetas are the quintessential "Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance" referred to in the exhibition’s title, which belies the complexity of Mendieta’s relationship to land art. While the comparison to Smithson and Heizer is certainly historically appropriate, the Siluetas have a quality similar to Richard Long’s and Andy Goldsworthy’s ephemeral natural sculptures: both artists build forms out of natural materials in the landscape without permanently transforming the environment, but "fixing" these delicate, ephemeral impressions with photography. Rather than altering the landscape in the usual sense implied by the categories "earthworks" and "land art," Mendieta’s work at its best centers on the sensations of landscape, the physical experience of the world through natural elements that shapes, transforms, and even erases identity.

As the Siluetas progress, their forms spin further and further from the outline of Mendieta’s petite figure into round primitivized goddess forms. With bulging hips and arms raised like tree branches, her cipher reappears in the leaf drawings, tree and twig sculptures, and Rupestrian Sculptures carved in the Cuban landscape and documented in large black-and-white photographs, creating a prehistoric, fossilized quality through iconography and materials. While the resulting images register the trace of Mendieta’s hand, the forms themselves are not the indices of the early Siluetas, but rather symbols for a generic earth goddess. The catalogue includes exhaustive discussion of the various sources of this imagery, and while Mendieta’s references were vast, the images themselves lack the personal force of her earlier work. Aggressively pursuing grants and gallery representation after leaving the seminal feminist collective A.I.R. Gallery in 1982, Mendieta’s interest in creating lasting objects that could be sold is obvious. The growing force of identity politics and postmodernism in the 1980s is also manifest in these later sculptures that fixate on subject matter—femininity, fertility, death and rebirth—rather than the processes of earlier intermedia projects that foregrounded experience rather than issues. At the time of her death, Mendieta was exploring one set of possibilities suggested by her early work. Although it is pointless to speculate about what might have been, Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance presents the gorgeous fragments and sketches of those possibilities. At its best, Mendieta’s work has a quality of displacement and longing, of indeterminacy and potentiality, which transcends identity politics and opens up the possibility of intimacy in a vast landscape.

### Presentations: Artist Videos (ULO 1-4)

Please watch the chapters indicated in each of these ART21 videos. Once the video starts, you can scroll over the video to view the chapters. If you have Netflix, they are also available on instant watch.

* [Fred Wilson, chapters 6-8 in "structures"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-structures)
* [Kara Walker chapters 3-5 in "stories"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-stories)
* [Carrie Mae Weems chapters 6-9 in "compassion"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-compassion)
* [Ellen Gallagher chapters 6-9 in "play"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-play)
* [Michael Ray Charles chapters 3-6 in "consumption"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-consumption)
* [Kerry James Marshall chapters 6-9 in "identity"](http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/episode-identity)

### Interactive activities: artwork identification, and terminology (multiple chances, self assess)(ULO 1, 2)

#### Identify names of Feminist and Black Artists

Q: Select all the artists who explore issues of feminism: A. Judy Chicago B. Carolee Schneemann C. Ana Mendieta D. Louise Nevelson E. Helen Frankenthaler ANSWER: A,B,C POINTS: 5 TYPE: MS

Q: Select all the artists who explore issues of race: A.Fred Wilson B.Kerry James Marshall C.Michael Ray Charles D.Ellen Gallagher E.Carrie Mae Weems F.Kara Walker G.Judy Chicago H.Robert Morris I.Ad Reinhardt ANSWER: A,B,C,D,E POINTS: 5 TYPE: MS

#### Identify artwork images from the slideshows

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Judy Chicago B.Dan Flavin C.Arshile Gorky D.Chuck Close Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/chicago.74-9.dinnerParty.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Carolee Schneemann B.Ad Reinhardt C.Arshile Gorky D.Jasper Johns Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/schneemann.1975.interiorScroll.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Ana Mendieta B.Michael Ray Charles C.Sol Lewitt D.Richard Serra Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/mendieta.1977.treeOfLife.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Fred Wilson B.Richard Serra C.Marc Rothko D.Arshile Gorky Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/wilson.1991.guardedView.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Kara Walker B.Barnett Newman C.Marc Rothko D.Judy Chicago Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/walker.1994c.girlAndMan.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Carrie Mae Weems B.Andy Warhol C.Kara Walker D.Richard Hamilton Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/weems.2008.theAssasinationOfMedgarMalcolmAndMartin.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Michael Ray Charles B.Kerry James Marshall C.Marc Rothko D.James Rosenquist Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/charles.1994.beware.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Kerry James Marshall B.Duane Hanson C.Roy Lichtenstein D.Carrie Mae Weems Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/marshall.1992.couldThisBeLove.jpg

Q: We studied the Cuban artists Ana Mendieta in Feminism, but she could fit into other categories as well. Which of the following is not a part of her work: A.pop art  
B.photography C.racial identity D.earth art Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: How do Michael Ray Charles and Fred Wilson use African American stereotypes differently in their work: A.Charles combines found images into paintings with critical messages, while Wilson arranges museum collections to create new contexts.  
B.Charles points out the racism in the images, while Wilson uses them to celebrate diversity among African Americans. C.Charles photographs his arrangements to make connections, while Wilson uses sculpture. D.Charles is interested in issues of superheroes in the black community, while Wilson is interested in issues of labor. Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

### Discussion Board Question relating to slideshows and readings (ULO 1-4)

Now that you have become familiar with the artists and concepts presented in this unit, it is time to start making connections. Here is your chance to apply what you learned in the readings to some of the artwork you have seen.

**First**, you will start a thread by answering the Essay question below.

**Then** you will reply to at least two (2) other students posts to get the discussion going.

Please make sure you meet the **due dates** for these posts.

#### Essay Question:

The artists of this week show a great range of artistic styles and strategies. Pick one of the artists presented that caught your attention. Explain how the work demonstrates techniques or styles that we have studied so far, and how the artist adds something unique in the process.

### Voice Thread Question

Here is another painting by Hans Hoffman. Describe how he used what he calls the "push and pull" of the composition to create space in the painting.

### Additional Artists to Study (ULO 1)

*You will not be tested on the following material, but if you are interested in studying further anything we discussed this week, these artists could also fit into this category*

Feminism

* Barbara Kruger
* Guerrilla Girls
* Sarah Lucas
* Linda Benglis
* Sophie Calle
* Marina Abramovic
* Tracy Emin
* Niki De Saint Phalle
* Miriam Schapiro
* Nancy Spero
* Sue Williams
* Hannah Wilke

Black Identity

* Bill Traylor
* Quilts from Gee's Bend
* Jacob Lawrence
* Romare Bearden
* Chris Ofili
* Chakaia Booker
* Renee Cox
* Kehinde Wiley
* Yinka Shonibare
* Faith Ringgold
* Betye Saar
* David Hammons
* Robert Colescott

### Optional links for further self-study (ULO 1-4)

*You will not be tested on the following material, but if you are interested in studying further anything we discussed this week, these links are a good place to start:*

* A good post on [Niki de Saint Phalle](http://slog.thestranger.com/2008/01/la_femme_niki)
* [Judy Chicago's website](http://www.judychicago.com/)
* [The Dinner Party](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/home.php) at the Brooklyn Museum
* [Nancy Spero's Obituary](http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/oct/23/obituary-nancy-spero) in The Guardian
* Off topic -- [Young Women Set Vocal Patterns](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/science/young-women-often-trendsetters-in-vocal-patterns.html)
* More about [Bill Traylor](http://www.high.org/Art/Exhibitions/Bill-Traylor-Exhibition.aspx)
* [The Gee's Bend Foundation](http://www.quiltsofgeesbend.com/)
* interview with [Kerry James Marshall](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug01/westkaemper/callaloo/marshall.html)
* re:making history-- David Spalding interviews [Fred Wilson](http://www.artpapers.org/feature_articles/feature2_2003_0102.htm)
* [Kehinde Wiley](http://www.kehindewiley.com/) website
* [Yinka Shonibare](http://www.yinkashonibarembe.com/) website
* Interview with [Robert Colescott](http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-robert-colescott-11502)