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THE WOUND OF THE MALINCHES

A Thesis

by

LETICIA MARGARITA LOWRY-GARCILAZO

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

May 2019

Major Subject Art

THE WOUND OF THE MALINCHES

A Thesis

by

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May 2019

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ABSTRACT

Lowry-Garcilazo, Leticia M., The Wound of the Malinches. Master of Fine Arts (MFA), May, 2019, 52 pp., 25 figures, references, 30 titles.

Since the foundation of Mexico, the Mexican culture has leaned towards chauvinism becoming a cruel and coward spectator of the violence perpetrated against women. As a survivor of violence, I was overwhelmed and tired of being blamed and told that I deserved what my abuser did to me and needed to get over it. I was told that as a woman I needed to suffer in silence – just as La Llorona. Because, as women, we are las Chingadas, we are Eve, we are Las Malinches.

As a statement to fight against my impotence, I created *The Wound of The Malinches*, a multi-media project of ceramic sculptures. They seek to tell the stories of women who have survived and of those who have perished under the rage of violence; their stories are cries of frustration, desperate howls, sparks of anger, sadness, and impotence.

The Wounds portray the pain of The Malinches through their texture. Texture akin to fragile bones, dry breasts, emptied innards, the innocent voices that somebody robbed from them. They create a sculpted environment that calls on us to never forget those without a voice and those who will never return. This installation is created to honor the memories of all the victims that have suffered or disappeared because of hate crimes of violence. Furthermore, The Wound is a cry for justice, recognition, and action against violence. It is our cry – the survivors.

DEDICATION

The completion of my master studies is foremost dedicated to God. This journey would not have been possible without the love, patience, sacrifice, and continued support of my lovely husband, Jason Lowry. For teaching me courage, patience, and love, Margarita Garcilazo and to my sister, Melissa Romano. For your support, mother-in-law, Meredith Lowry; father-in-law, William Lowry; siblings-in-law, Katharine Lowry and Matthew Lowry. For your kind help, Mark Kaswan. Also, to my lovely friends. All of your motivation and encouragement helped me to accomplish my MFA. Thank you all for your constant love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mentor and the chair of my committee, Raheleh T. Filsoofi, MFA, for believing in me and pushing my limits; for helping me to understand the complexity of how to create an art installation and her challenges for me to focus and push my work to be more professional. My thanks also go to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Robert Bradley, for sharing all your stories and your support. Timothy Gonchoroff, MFA, thank you for your incitement and sharing your wood and fibrous skills with me.

Also, I extend my gratitude to those who helped and supported me in my MFA journey. Dr. McAllen, Professor Stephen Hawks, and Professor Tejera-Stoleson, to the School of Art staff, Veronica Chavarria and Robert Axtell. Finally, for all of your amazing pictures and your kind help, thank you, Carlos Limas.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to the countless Mexican women who have survived the stigma of their gender in their everyday confrontations with violence, sexism, and misogyny, among others. They still wake up every day to go work for their families, as my mother did every day. Margarita Garcilazo Espinosa, this work took inspiration from your everyday endeavors and hard work. Foremost, this is for you. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INCEPTION

Introduction

No sé que tienen las flores, Llorona, Las flores del campo santo, Yo te soñaba dormida, Llorona, Dormida te estabas quieta, Pero en llegando el olvido, Llorona, Soñé que estabas despierta... Si porque te quiero, quieres, Llorona Quieres que te quiera más, Si ya te he dado la vida, Llorona ¿Qué más quieres? ¡Quieres más!

—Chavela Vargas, La Llorona.¹

Mexico is known for its beautiful colors, folk and culinary art, architecture, and violence. The deaths, disappearances, human trafficking and forced prostitution that Mexico has been facing at this moment and during recent years is a consequence mostly, of drug trafficking and corruption. Since pre-Columbian era, the Mexican culture has leaned towards chauvinism, becoming a cruel and cowardly spectator of the violence perpetuated against women,

1. Chavela Vargas, “La Llorona,” October 22, 2002, track 16 on Frida (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack), Universal, compact disc. [I do not know they have flowers, Llorona, The flowers of the holy field, I dreamed you asleep, Llorona, Asleep you were still, But in coming forgetting, Llorona, I dreamed that you were awake ... If because I love you, you want, Llorona you want me to love you more, If I've already given you my life, Llorona What else do you want? Do you want more!]

discouraging the efforts to abolish it. As a statement to fight cowardice and the impotence of being a victim of violence in Mexico, I created *The Wound of the Malinches*, an art installation that embodies the fragments of those who have survived as a reminder of those who have perished under the rage of violence. It is an installation that also fights the passive embracing of death. The team and title of the installation is inspired by songs and literature but is primarily inspired by the author: Octavio Paz, a Mexican poet and diplomat; a folklore song, La Llorona, interpreted by the Costa Rican Mexican singer, Chavela Vargas. Additionally, I found inspiration and courage to confront the subject of violence and advocate against it from a book of an Italian Jewish chemist, gifted writer, and Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi. This installation is created to honor the memories of all the living and perished victims that have suffered or disappeared because of violence –known as hate crimes. Furthermore, The Wound of the Malinches is a cry for justice, recognition and action against violence. It is a cry from all of us, the survivors.

Violence has been a theme in my life since I was little, and I have come to understand that I became an enabler without even knowing. I say I was an enabler because I never did anything about it other than be ashamed and grew used to it. I never asked other women before; about if they'd suffered from it. I was afraid of the truth. Together we wailed in silence. We were la Llorona crying because of our past and trembling in fear of the future. We became guilty through our own inaction as Audre Lorde explains it on her understanding of guilt in her book *Sister Outsider* as such:

Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since is no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness

destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.²

For this *The Wound of The Malinches* seeks to explore the intersections of art, violence against women, femicides, and social justice. To do this I will explore women's stories, work to understand cowardice and inaction, and how art can agitate us to act in the face of violence. This thesis engages the following questions.

- How can art trigger anger to act for social justice and against cowardice?
- What role does cowardice play in the perpetuation of violence against women?
- How can art help to create a dialogue between the artwork and spectator that leads to action against violence?

The Wound of The Malinches is a response to these questions through the sculpted environment. It is reaction against cowardice and a cry to never forget those without a voice, those who never will return, those women who disappeared, and those who were murdered. Therefore, this work represents a memorial of their past, present, and a call to change our future.

2. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (The Crossing Press, 1984), 130.

Genesis

The Chingada is even more passive. Her passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides ... in her sex. This passivity, open to the outside world, causes her to lose her identity: she is the Chingada. She loses her name she is no one; she disappears into nothingness; she is Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition.

– Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.³

Somehow, we believe that what differentiates us from animals is the capacity to control our emotions and manipulate them. Although, too often I ask myself who is the real animal in this world? We enclose ourselves behind shells to protect ourselves from harsh situations, sharp words that cut deep and leave scars. Some scars never heal and bleed inside us looking for an escape, but later evolve into rage and resentment; when the rage gets loose, it can turn into a violent catastrophe or a moment of liberation – either way, we still resemble animals defending themselves or hunting prey.

In my life's journey to overcome the pain and scars left from the cruelty of others has not been easy. I have had to relearn how to be kind and overcome darkness, to smile over and over again through my difficult past. This is me:

I was born in Mexico City in 1984, in a cold hospital wrapped in the warm arms of my mother and my homeland. Mexico is a beautiful country full of contrasting traditions and schemes of colors running from the turquoise in the Caribbean to the vibrant reds that Van Gogh

3. Octavio Paz, "The sons of la Malinche," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, and Rachel Phillips Belash (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 85.

used in his paintings derived from the cochineal that feed off from the nopal. It is a place that smells of flowers and food in its infinite corners and streets, surrounded by smiles and welcomes that stand in stark contrast to the poverty. Mexico also has a tradition of misogyny and segregation. It is a culture that embraces the dismembering of a goddess and the primacy of a male god. The Aztec lore said that Cuatlicue was the earth-mother goddess, miraculously impregnated by a ball of feathers. Her daughter, Coyolxauhqui (goddess of the moon) was shamed by this episode and planned to kill Cuatlicue. However, at the time of the assassination, Huitzilopochtli (god of war and sun) leaped from the womb dismembered and decapitated Coyolxauhqui thereby creating a culture of male dominance over female deities – the sun ruling over the moon.⁴

I come from a place that gives the name La Chingada a motherly meaning manifested in the divine trinity.⁵ The trinity is divided into La Malinche, La Llorona, and The Virgin of Guadalupe. The Malinche was a mistress of a conqueror and a traitor to her indigenous roots. She was raped yet in love with her violator and foreign captor, Hernán Cortés. She chose to be a translator instead of being murdered. When she was of no use to Cortés he abandoned her and she became the hated whore: La Chingada. La Llorona, a weeping woman who reveals herself through sorrow. The Virgin of Guadalupe-or mother Tonantzin, the abnegation made flesh, a holy subjugator –an archetype of motherhood that I prefer to see as a fighter against oppression.

4. Mark Cartwright, "Coatlicue." Ancient History Encyclopedia. Last modified November 28, 2013. <https://www.ancient.eu/Coatlicue/>.

5. Octavio Paz, "The sons of la Malinche," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 86.

In juxtaposition, Mexico has also been a place open to a different narrative. In 1975 - the year that was declared international Women's year - Mexico City hosted a conference with the United Nations. At the conference women were demanding the Mexican government recognize on the violation of their rights, violence against women, inequality, and nonexistent gender dignity. Although, the language on violence was not included in the conference's final deliberations, they added an amendment: a call for the women's of the world to stand together against oppression of women human rights.

Of course, the statement did not liberate Mexican women from the full responsibility of their families, but formally recognized the issue of domestic abuse and created the family courts in Mexico. This deliberation gave my mother, my sister and I the opportunity to file a case on behalf of my mother after her separation from my stepfather. During the trial, I explained to the judges and social workers that I had to leap at my stepfather to try to stop him from hitting my mother. My mom won the case.

In 1995 in Beijing - after the first conference on women and twenty years later, women empowerment and gender equality were adopted unanimously by 189 countries. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were followed by a series of five years reviews.⁶

Amidst all this change and progress, I was born. My mother was finishing her bachelors on industrial engineering when she had me. She was one of the first ten women trailblazers in her

6. "World Conferences on Women," Un Women. Accessed October 5, 2018.
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>.

generation to graduate in this field in Mexico. My childhood was different from that of a traditional Mexican family. I grew up between two ideologies: one was that of my feminist mother struggling her way in the professional field as an engineer, trying to be independent, a first-time mother dealing with a runaway husband -similar to la Malinche. On the other hand, I was also raised by my aunt who took care of us when my mom worked. My aunt taught us that girls are prettier when they are quiet and do as they told –the subjugator.

Regardless, I consider my childhood to have been privileged and happy. I grew up tangled between different perspectives and ideologies. As a Mexican woman I chose to follow a complex path like my mother. I learned, sometimes by accident, to be courageous. It took me years to see that I was not just a victim and I stopped blaming my culture for my disgraces. I came to cherish my cultural heritage and I started to find ways to fight. After all, that was my battle and I decided to fight it. I chose to fight against stereotypes and confront the popular belief of betrayal – betrayal to my roots and my nation, I chose to become a Malinchista and leave my beloved country in search of something more.

Mexico City is a city of 20 million inhabitants surrounded by a broad range of architecture and colorful design. The streets are full of folk art, toys and skeletons, murals that cover the streets on walls and building sides. Ceramics are ubiquitous; Talavera pottery, and tiles covering houses and streets. I appreciated the contrast between in the bright colors. The smells, the joy of the street markets and their people. Mexicans smile and embrace with death, as a Mexican I am encumbered all of this heritage. My heritage makes me emotional, emotional and proud about my culture, but also emotional and guilt-ridden from our pain, and the impotence as

a woman facing violence, I am Malinchista to lean perspective from other country and try to fight against this shame of violence in Mexico.

When I arrived to United States, somehow my self-defense and alert systems started to tone down. Although, I am a survivor of violence here too, I don't feel the same inherent fear every time that I start my day outside of home. It is in here US, that I realized that I was a survivor of violence. I never considered myself a victim of violence, I thought that the real victims were victims of domestic violence, femicide, and rape. I don't believe that anymore.

After I started my master's in fine arts three years ago, I wondered what I would study. As an industrial designer, my work never focused on social issues. The only thing I knew was that I wanted to work with clay because it is a part of in my culture. However, this would not be enough to write a good thesis. I started to make sense of what I wanted to study and started doing research and had conversations with female friends about their experiences as women in Mexico. In one of those conversations I asked one of my old peers if she wanted to share her experience. I knew her struggle as a gay woman in Mexico, but in few words, she told me that I did not have the right to work on violence or to be a feminist because I was a happily married and I never experienced suffering as they do. The conversation discouraged me but also agitated me because I knew that I had also suffered. I sought advice from one of the professors and the head of the ceramics department, now my mentor, Raheleh Filsoofi. I explained that I was struggling with the conversation and also with my own demons. She told me that that through life we struggle and if we survive then we are fortunate. Therefore, we have responsibilities. So many women around the world cannot make it. Therefore, we need to become a voice for those who are voiceless. I realize that it was time to use my guilt in a proactive way and start doing something

about this thread that connects so many women around the world –violence. As a woman, especially a Mexican woman I felt compelled to use my art to bring not only awareness to such an important issue but also to use it to fight.

I found a United Nations worldwide demographic study on 2010, arguing that violence against women take different forms and they need to be categorized in different groups to have more accurate information. The measurement statistics on the survey were complicated due the lack of cooperation from the victims, police reports, or the fear from the victims to report a crime. Although, the statistics of this survey revealed that from 1995 to 2006 the percentage of Mexican women from on the age of 15 and older have been subject of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime as such; 40% are subject of physical violence, 24% are subject of physical violence by intimate partners, 44% are sexually molested, 14% are sexually molested by intimate partners.⁷ Even though, the statistics shown that violence can start at the age of 15 and older, many girls are molested before arriving to the age of 15, when they are still little girls. In my case was when I was 7 years old, at that age I didn't know what was happening, the second time was when I was 14 years old, in that occasion I ran as fast as I can in shame and in tears. I never told anything to my mother or anyone because I felt dirty and ashamed. Then I realize that I was not the only one, and as me they were millions of girls, teenagers, and mature women in the same vicious cycle of violence.

7. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Chapter 6: Violence against women," in *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, 2010) https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/worldswomen/documents/WW_full%20report_BW.pdf

Also, I researched the case of “las muertas de Juárez” (female homicides in Ciudad Juárez), a case of mass female murders that goes back 21 years, to get a better sense of some of the statistics on missing women. I realized that the numbers of disappeared women and femicide that were reported by the government institutions were not accurate. The Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB) in 2017 reported a different statistic from that of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN CEPAL). According to SEGOB there were 671 cases of femicide in Mexico; equal to 2 murders, or less, per day. Yet the UN CEPAL reported 2,289 cases, at least 7 women that are killed per day in Mexico.⁸ Contrasting this in the United States in 2012, it was estimated that there were 1,706 female homicides; of those, 179 occurred in Texas, a rate of 1.37 women per day.⁹

Even though the majority of female murders in Mexico are a reflection of hate, they are not treated accordingly as femicide. Instead they describe it as female deaths with presumed homicide. Dr. Diana Russell first used the word ‘femicide’ publicly in the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in 1976 as a substitute for the word homicide (a gender-neutral word). She defined ‘femicide’ as: “the killing of females by males because they are female.”¹⁰

8. CEPAL, “Naciones Unidas,” Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe, October 24, 2016. <https://www.cepal.org/es/infografias/feminicidio>

9. Charlotte Alter, “Someone is Finally Starting to Count ‘Femicides’,” *Time Magazine*, February 18, 2015. <http://time.com/3670126/femicides-turkey-women-murders/>

10. Russell, Diana E. H., Ph.D., “The Origin & Importance of the Term Femicide - Diana E. H. Russell, Ph.D.” Filmed Dec 1, 2011. YouTube video, 02:00 – 06:30. Posted Dec 8, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk9VNHYMOrE>

Indeed, femicide is a powerful word that cries for justice and names a hate crime. The first case labeled as femicide in Mexico City was decided by the Supreme Court of Justice, in 2015.¹¹

However, the inability to control the disappearances, murders, femicides, and the unjustified violence perpetuated against women is not only the responsibility of the authorities. The lack of interest or inaction should be treated and considered as the worst act of cowardice. As society and individuals, we justify our inaction with the naïve idea that the problem is not affecting us or those closest to us, and that everything will be fine. How can we as a society be fine when we turn a blind eye while our neighbor suffers? In a damning statement against those who do nothing, Dante Alighieri writes:

Their pride to have no prejudice,
Seeking no praise for fear of taking blame,
They were for nothing, nor were they against:
They made no waves and so they made no name.
Now their neutrality is recompensed,
For here there is no cautious holding back:

Voices once circumspect are now incensed
And raised to make each other's eardrum crack.
Thus they are joined to that self-seeking squad
Of angels fitted neither to rebel
Against, nor put their heartfelt faith in, God—
Hunted from Heaven and locked out of Hell
Because the perfect sky would brook no blur,
And in the lower depths the rebels prized
The glory won from being what they were,
Not the nonentities that despised.”

And I: “But Master, what could grieve them so,

11. Un Women. “The long road to justice, prosecuting femicide in Mexico,” Un Women. November 29, 2017. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/11/feature-prosecuting-femicide-in-mexico>

To make them not just so sad, but so loud?”
And he: “To put it briefly, they have no
Death to look forward to. They only shroud
Will be this darkness. They’re condemned to live
In envy always, even of the damned.
The world that gives fame to a fugitive
Gave none of that to them. Instead, it slammed
The door on them, and as for Him on high,
His mercy and His justice He withdraws.”¹²

Now we must ask ourselves, are we living in Hell’s antechamber, is this what it means to be human in the 21st century? As a citizen of the world and as a survivor of violence myself, I am offering this installation to aim and agitate the passive anger of the spectator to act against violence. Because, when I was hit and shamed in public none of the spectators, man or woman, intervened. I want the installation to take a bite out of cowardice. Chris Walsh in chapter 6 of his book *Cowardice*, confront two types of courage: moral and physical courage. Walsh stipulates that both forms of courage, moral and physical, experience emotional symptoms and that the individual needs to surpass barriers and fears to defend a cause, so as not to lie in cowardice. Walsh added, “The worst moral cowardice may not be failing out of fear but instead not attempting anything at all.”¹³

12. Dante Alighieri, “Canto 3,” *Inferno*, trans. Clive James (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 14-15.

13. Chris Walsh, “So Long a File: Cowardice Away from War,” in *Cowardice: a brief history*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 174-175.

CHAPTER II

ABSTRACT DEVELOPMENT

The Importance of Art Media

This installation tries to create awareness by engaging the senses through sculpted space, silence, and smells. The main objective of this installation is to stir the conscience of individuals to act against violence. Most of the forms of art that protest against violence, specifically violence against women, use the color red. In my earlier ceramic work, I unconsciously placed heavy iron charged glazes for a dirty red on my stoneware pieces and overused vivid red in my collages. I always feel like they were incomplete, that they were missing something – something that would allow them to be agents, not just victims. Finally, after a lot of research and experimentation I found the perfect media, paper clay. This media gave me the opportunity to transmute feelings onto texture, to make incarnate the fragility of the victims' fear, pain, and forgottenness. This media was able to weave together the loose ends.

Therefore, arriving the final stage of this work was not an easy task, it demanded a re-invention of ideas and creativity. Through this re-invention as an artist, you need to research and be critiqued with respect to the sources or art that you chose. I choose to go back and revisit my experience as an individual inside of installations or memorial museums as well as get a better

understanding through researching other artists whose work sets a precedent of art as social action.

In my research I found the fascinating work of Teresa Margolles, a Mexican conceptual artist. Her work is a response of the violence from drug cartels, femicide, and social injustice. In her exhibition *Mundos* [Worlds] at the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, in 2017.

Margolles, successfully broached the subject of death, victimization by society, and abandoness, among others. She is a master in the planning, design, and execution of multimedia art, in her installation *La Promesa* [The Promise]. It is a sculptural block built with ground-up remains of an abandoned house in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. She uses the interaction of volunteers to carefully take apart the block to remember the abandonment of people through the construction of walls. Moreover, the use of multimedia is reflected in her 2003 installation, *En El Aire* [In the Air]. She uses a simple bubble machine to fill the room of bubbles. However, the water she used to make the bubbles was previously used to wash the bodies of unidentified victims at the morgue. John Zeppetelli, the director and curator expresses his thoughts about the exhibition:

In a few minutes, the space will be filled with bubbles made from water which, in part, was used to clean bodies at the morgue. In other words, it's water that has "touched" death. The artist speaks about it in a very moving way. She says that every bubble that burst on your skin, is in fact a body... This paradox can be found in throughout Teresa's entire body of work. Something elegant, sublime, with a "physical" narrative, as disturbing as it is heartbreaking.¹⁴

14. John Zeppetelli and Emeren García, "Teresa Margolles, *Mundos*," Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, October 18, 2018, <https://macm.org/en/exhibitions/teresa-margolles-mundos/>



Fig. 1 Teresa Margolles, *Mundos, En el Aire* 2017, Multimedia Installation
Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, MAC

Margolles creates a poetic social engagement that confronts two different entities, life and a dialogue with death. In her exhibitions she creates narratives using the morgue as a social study of the violence in Ciudad Juarez. She explains that it is really necessary to show what is happening in Mexico and expose what Mexico is trying to hide by killing the reporters. This exhibition creates a perfect harmony between space and materials, constructing a unique sensorial experience for the viewers. They become an essential part of the installations. Margolles executes a visual and sensorial narrative incorporating all the elements –media, sound, spectator, and space. Setting a perfect example of well executed multimedia installation.

One of the main objectives of *The Wound of the Malinches* is to address the lack of justice and attention that we, as a society, grant to the victims of violence and femicide through a narrative that demands the attention and action of the individual. The installation uses forms and

textures of organic materials combined with a specific scenario, recorded media, and the spectators an interaction. All these elements combined creates a multimedia installation, due to the fact that one material cannot communicate without the other, moreover they create a whole environment.

The Wound of The Malinches weaves a narrative of women's stories that delve into ideas about cowardice and inaction through fragile objects on top of organic materials, light, and silence. For the exhibition I created a series of texturized fragile paper-clay spheres. The spheres will be the main focus of the installation, placed in the center of the gallery on top of fresh soil that functions as a visual barrier and protection for the spheres. Some spheres would be more illuminated than others, exposing the texture in a poetic call to the bystander, as Rumi expressed: "The wound is the place where the light enters you."¹⁵ Broken fragments of the spheres will be scattered on the soil as a visual metaphor of the abandonment of life. The spheres and soil will fill the center of the gallery leaving a wide-open space for individuals to walk through the installation to create a deeper connection between the pieces and the spectator. All the mediums in the installation play an important role in the narrative of the women's stories: the medium is the woman, the story, and the experience of violence that will connect with the individual. My expectation is that this installation agitates something in the spectator, something that they will always carry with them.

15. "Rumi Quotes," Goodreads Inc, accessed October 20, 2018.
<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1299504-i-said-what-about-my-eyes-he-said-keep-them>

As a spectator myself, I recalled two experiences that changed my perspectives in the way I saw and experienced life. One required involvement, and I believe every single human being needs to experience this as a reminder of the brutality and evil that human beings are capable of. Although, this experience did not contain an installation filled with media, it did include an interaction and a deeper use of the senses.

In 2016 I had the opportunity to visit the memorial and museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the infamous former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. I walked through the barracks that, 70 years after the liberation, still reeked of death. After a long walk I saw the millions of shoes, prosthetics, suitcases, and hair of the victims; belongings that the Nazi regime did not waste and sold them to fund their cause. I entered one of the gas chambers in which more than 1.1 millions of men, women, and children were killed. After this I started asking myself if the villagers never questioned what was going on? How did they not see the smoke or preferer to ignore the stench? How is that they never questioned or acted against it? How much evil has been perpetrated because people choose to do nothing? As members of a society we have a moral obligation to each other. Primo Levi confronts the sin of cowardliness of those who knew yet preferred to ignore:

No one will ever be able to establish with precision how many, in the Nazi apparatus, could not not [sic] known about the frightful atrocities being committed, how many knew something but were in a position to pretend that they did not known, and, further, how many had the possibility of knowing everything but chose the more prudent path of keeping their eyes and ears (and above all their mouths) well shut. ... it is certain that the failure to divulge the truth about the Lagers represents one of the major collective crimes

of the German people and the most obvious demonstration of the cowardice to which Hitlerian terror had reduced them...¹⁶



Fig. 2 Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2016, Permanent Collection, Memorial and Museum, Oświęcim, Poland.

16. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2017) 4-5.



Fig. 2.1 Block 5, Physical Evidence of Crime



Fig. 2.2 Sector Blla- Men's Quarantine, Inside of the space, Permanent Collection.

The second experience was the installation of Alejandro González Iñárritu's, *Carne y Arena* (Virtually present, Physically invisible). It is a VR installation that allows the individual to experience the journey of immigrants led by a coyote while crossing into the United States when they are stopped by the Border Patrol. Inside the installation, I was an immigrant and I was required to take my shoes off and walk into an icebox chamber full of left behind immigrant shoes found in the Arizona desert. After I entered the dark chamber full of dirt, rocks and red light, I wore the glasses and backpack full of dreams, the VR turned on. I stated walking with the migrants. It was so real that when I went to touch them, I passed through them and saw their heart instead. After that, I couldn't move because I was frozen and crying at my profound sense

of impotence in facing the Border Patrol cruelty them with their guns. The VR experience lasted only 7 minutes and then you pass a dark and small alley filled with the faces of Mexican and Central American refugees whose stories were the main inspiration for the installation.



Fig. 3 Alejandro G. Iñárritu, *Carne y Arena*, 2017, Virtual Reality. Los Angeles Times. From: Emmanuel Lubezki, <http://www.latimes.com> (Accessed October 20, 2018)

Carolina A. Miranda from Los Angeles Times, expressed in a few lines what it is to be an American: “History is stories — some real, some exaggerated, others invented. The story of a difficult crossing is one of our foundational myths as a nation. “*Carne y Arena*” reminds us that it didn’t end with the Pilgrims.”¹⁷ Therefore, the individual plays an important role in this

17. Carolina A. Miranda, “Inside Alejandro Iñárritu's VR border drama at LACMA: What you will see and why you might cry,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 29, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-alejandro-inarritu-carne-arena-lacma-20170629-htmstory.html>

exhibition. The spectator is key to the success of this installation –without it the VR installation means nothing. The individual becomes a part of the multimedia and the multimedia part of him.

The experiences I describe are each different in many ways; still, they share something in common – they both integrate the individual into the exhibition and moreover, one hopes the spectator left with something to think about at the end of each experience. *The Wound of The Malinches* intends to create an atmosphere of empathy between the spectator and the artwork. The main objective is that at the end of the installation the individual acknowledges the need to act against injustice.

CHAPTER III

DESIGNING AN INSTALLATION

Spheres, a Metaphor of Pain.

When I was in Mexico, when I was getting ready to go out from my home, I had the habit to think about how I would defend myself if something bad happened. I used to carry a baseball bat in my car and a pocket knife. However, violence is so quotidian that when you left home, unconsciously you knew that someone was going to disrespect you and the worst part was that you saw it as something normal and your defense mechanism was to ignore it. For the average person who has never experienced any kind of violence this pattern could sound a little contradictory, but when you are a survivor of violence this is a common thought. However, the outrage against violence is an ever-present emotion; in my case it is like a fireball in the pit of my stomach.

The emotion above described is a mixture of impotence, anger, and humiliation. However, a better description and explanation to this emotion is described in an essay by Thomas J. Slakey, *Ethics: Aristotle and Kant*:

...in his work *On The Soul* Aristotle says that anger involves not merely an appetite for revenge, but also a boiling of blood around the heart, and he says that similar account would apply to all the emotions (403a 3–33). The word “emotion” suggest that we are “moved by compassion.” (This phrase translates a remarkable word, that, so far as I know is coined in the New Testament, *splagchnizomai*.² Its root refers to the belly, the bowels. To be moved with compassion is to feel something in our belly).¹⁸

One of the original languages in the New Testament is Greek. Saint Jerome translated the version of the Septuagint from Greek to Latin in the 4th century.¹⁹ Due to the translations the meaning words can be adapted, as the word *splagchnizomai* (σπλαγχνίζω) that in English is roughly translated to compassion. However, a closer meaning of *splagchnizomai* would be to literally have your guts turn from witnessing someone else suffering and pain. I made an abstraction of the anger that I felt in the pit of my stomach and the feeling (*splagchnizomai*) that I felt seeing other women in pain, and I converted it into a sphere.

When I heard about Teresa Margolles installation, *En el aire*. I searched it and I read about the meaning of the installation. Margolles, captured the attention of the viewer by guiding them inside of a room full of soap bubbles to later surprise them, when they realize that death was bursting on their faces, hands, or their entire body. Margolles managed to conceptualize the soul of those unknown dead bodies in the morgue in Mexico and give them notoriety through fragile iridescent-colored floating spheres. Teresa Margolles, as many artist and designers,

18. Thomas J. Slakey, *Ethics: Aristotle and Kant*, The Aquinas Review, 2000. <https://thomasaquinas.edu/pdfs/aquinas-review/2000/2000-slakey.pdf> The author gives an example of the word *splagchnizomai* in the bible, Mt. 20:34, when Jesus when he cures two blind men; Mk. 1:41, of Jesus when he cures leper; Lk. 10:33, of the good Samaritan; Lk. 15:20, of the father of the prodigal son.

19: Herbert L. Kessler, “Book as Icon,” in *the Beginning*, ed. Michelle Brown (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 80.

translated their ideas into materials, and the materials speak to the spectator. As an industrial designer, I shaped thoughts and feelings into everyday objects, but now as an MFA student, I have to transfer my *splagchnizomai* onto an adequate as media materials can express frustration without words.

The first attempt to transfer the feelings into material was when I started recalling all those nights when my sister and I would hear my mom cry in the silence in her room, or when my sister and I shared our frustrations with molestation in public and private places. I tried to process these thoughts and place them in a big *stoneware* sphere.²⁰



Fig. 4 The First Stoneware Sphere

20. Luisa Taylor, "Section 1, Materials and tools," in *The Ceramics Bible: The Complete Guide to Materials and Techniques* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), 17. Stoneware is a hardy material, resistant to scratching and impenetrable to water. This makes it an excellent choice for domestic ware and outdoor sculptures. It is fired between 2192 and 2372°F (1200 and 1300°C) and is suitable for an oxidized or a reduction kiln.

After this attempt, I started asking some of my best female friends if they have experienced violence in their lives, and if they would share them with me. They did, and I transferred their stories into collages. Also, at this time I was doing deeper research on female disappearances, femicide, and the statistics on female violence. I felt underwhelmed by the collages; they were not conceptually strong. Through research, I discovered that our stories are only a scratch on the surface of violence. I did not want to diminish the value of our stories, but the truth is that we are privileged due to our cultural background and resources. Therefore, that something darker and terrible happens to countless girls and women, caused by the stigma of lower social status and cultural background.

I needed a media through which the frustration, the anger, the pain of the women and girls –those victims and survivors of violence could be reflected. I sought a material that transfers through its surface texture the frustration of having been molested on the streets, as well as the terror of women suffering under their home. I needed a form that transfers the hollow left by the disappeared women.

As it was described above, there is no better vessel than a sphere. Besides being a perfectly round geometrical object, the word ‘sphere’ has different meanings depending on the context in which it’s used. For example, in the Oxford dictionary a celestial sphere is an abstract sphere in which the viewer is the center and in which celestial objects are considered to lie. It can be an orbit, a ball, a star. Rather, for this exhibition, the sphere is a metaphor for pain, suffering, the splagchnizomai of seeing other women in pain. It is a vessel of empty innards, holding

captive the broken dreams of thousands of disappeared women, the souls of the victims of femicide, and despair of their families.

I started experimenting with clay in the first year of the MFA, using a strong type of clay, stoneware. Although, the texture of the stoneware spheres was really smooth and the spheres need not be glazed, it would lose the whole meaning, because they are not decorative pieces. It was in the book *The Ceramics Bible*, in the Materials and Tools section that I found a description for paper clay: “Paper clay is a combination of shredded paper pulp and clay. This strengthens the clay and allows it to be worked extremely thin. During the firing, the paper content is burned away, leaving the delicate ceramic behind. Good ventilation is essential during firing.”²¹ Hence, I decided to give it a try.

I bought a commercial clay, *Bone Paper Clay*, a cone 5 clay from Roadrunner Ceramics Store. At first the material was complicated to use and really sticky, and I had some problems molding. I fired the piece to test the strength and results of the material. After fire, the sphere was solid and lightweight however, I wasn’t happy with the texture until I saw the interior of the sphere; a marvelous world of texture that called for your eyes and hands to touch it. When touched, it pricked your skin. In addition, the bone color of the fired piece was shocking. I could not ask for anything more.

21. Luisa Taylor, “Section 1, Materials and tools,” 17.



Fig. 5 Molding the first paper clay sphere.



Fig. 5.1 First Paper clay sphere, after fired.

Creating the Wounds

One of the objectives of *The Wound of The Malinches* installation is to agitate the sense of justice in the viewer; making them uncomfortable when they face a massive grave. Also, I sought to create awareness in the everyday acts of violence against women. The art installation would be placed at The Visual Arts Gallery at UTRGV School of Art; the designated resting place for the wounds would be a rectangle on the floor with a measurement of 12 foot by 26 foot. Thus, to overwhelm the viewer the installation needed to have enough wounds (spheres) to fill the 312 square feet in the gallery.

The number of wounds needed for the installation was uncertain, and I started the manufacturing of wounds a semester before. After the first experiment with the bone paper clay and molding, a practical solution for the machining was needed. Also, I need different sizes of molds for the spheres, and an efficient molding and unmolding technique. I saw a technique that many ceramic artists' use, an inflated balloon covered with casting slip. However, instead of a balloon I used beach balls and I covered them with paper clay.

It took more than two or three attempts to become proficient in the application, and due to the strength of the paper clay, only a thin layer of the material was required to cover of the beach balls, hence, it took time to learn the drying process of the material. The drying process of clay can take a week or more depending on the thickness, and when it dries it loses bonded water, therefore, the clay shrinks. The beach balls were covered with clay and started drying overnight, in the morning, if some of the air was not released from the balls, the pressure would

tear the clay. Also, if you deflate or leave the valve of the ball open, the weight of the paper clay would collapses on itself.



Fig. 6 and 6.1 Molding and unmolding process.



Fig. 6.2 and 6.3 Molding and unmolding process.

The beach balls were inflated and deflated over and over again, allowing me to create as many wounds as I needed. After the unmolding of the spheres they needed to fully dry for two or three days before placing them into the kiln. The first paper clay sphere was strong and did not have any problems after firing it at the recommended temperature for bisque firing –that is cone 04, 1940 °F. Although, the results of the firing of the other spheres were totally different. Even though, I followed the same procedure as the first paper clay sphere some spheres were cracked, and others totally broken.

After trial and error with the thickness and the bisque temperature, the results shown higher strength on the paper clay fired spheres when they were bisque fired at cone 01, 2079 °F. The firing at this temperature was a success, but something different happen in every single firing. No matter how similar in thickness and weight of the wounds were, after bisque firing, each one of the wounds had a different shape. Sometimes, even if they were separate, after bisque they come out together, hugging each other, as if they were alive.



Fig. 7 Before bisque firing.



Fig. 7.1 Aster bisque firing.

I don't have an exact number for the wounds used for the installation. Many were broken during the performance. An approximate number would be 150 wounds of varying sizes. A total of 7 boxes, with 2 bags each of 25 pounds of bone paper clay were used for the creation of wounds.

De Cenizas a Rosa Mexicano.²²

México parecía un lugar muy exótico. Todo era nuevo: desde el espíritu de la gente o la variedad de las comidas, las plantas y animales; hasta el paisaje y el contacto con los Muertos.

—Leonora Carrington.²³

Mexico has a bad reputation and is considered as an unsafe place to visit. However, the bad reputation should not define us, the Mexican citizens. We are a colorful culture, a culture that has been trampled over and over and still, we rise overcoming the bad. We are a culture that has have each other's backs, helping people in need. José Emilio Pacheco with his printings teach us that it does not matter if you are rich or poor, when we die, we wear the same bones and share the same dirt. We celebrate el Día de Los Muertos, with skull candy, food, and Aztec marigolds to grief those who went before us.

Still, thousands of families, rich and poor, are searching for answers on the disappearances of their daughters, sons, or love ones. Tired of the lies of the dirty government,

22 [From Ashes to Mexican Pink].

23 Wall Text, Leonora Carrington. Cuentos Mágicos, Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM), Mexico City, April 21 to September 23, 2018. [Mexico seemed a very exotic place. Everything was new: from the spirit of the people or the variety of foods, plants and animals; until the landscape and the contact with the Dead]

they work together with their own resources to find the bodies of their loved ones. The New York Times published an article based on interviews with families in Veracruz that are looking for the bodies of their disappeared daughters and sons. According to the article, the government doesn't know how many people is missing in Mexico, a nationwide problem, "The entire state is a mass grave,' the attorney general said."²⁴ Tired of the ineptitude and lack of commitment from of the government, families resigned themselves to look on their own forming collectives. Mr. Saldaña is a member of a collective. He is still searching for the body of his daughter, Karla. He explained how they look for mass graves: "He and others scouted out suspicious plots of land, looking for signs of slightly upturned earth. When they found one, they hammered long metal crosses six feet into the ground, then wrenched them out to sniff for the smell of decay. This is how the poor search for their dead."²⁵

24. Azam Ahmed, "In Mexico, Not Dead. Not Alive. Just Gone." *The New York Times*, Nov. 20, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-dead.html?_r=1

25. See note 23 above.



Fig. 8 Members from the Colectivo Solecito, a group of women whose children are missing, found more than 250 skulls at this site near Veracruz. The New York Times. From: Daniel Berehulak, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-dead.html?_r=1 (Accessed November 20, 2017).

Although, at the beginning many people hoped to find their daughter's or son's bodies, but reality is cruel. Now they just hope to find something. When Mr. Saldaña, the family collective, and the federal authority were looking for evidence in an abandoned ranch he explained to the authorities: "I know you want to find body parts, but I have information that our kids were probably dissolved in acid or burned...I'm looking for buried clothing, and ashes."²⁶ Sadly, this is the reality that many families are facing in Mexico. They are not searching for bodies anymore, they are hoping to find ashes or even the dirty ripped cloths of their loved ones.

26. Ahmed, "In Mexico, Not Dead. Not Alive. Just Gone." *The New York Times*.

The span and how a human body decompose has many variables. Also, a series of circumstances such as weather, or if the body decomposes outdoors, or if it is buried, or if it is incinerated. All this, among other factors interferes with the decomposition process. However, regardless of the factors that affect, in the end, a human body is an organic entity and as many organisms it plays a role in the ecosystem. Even if the body was cremated, its ashes or the natural decomposition of the human body gather nutrients to create new life.

To the end of life and as organic, we come from dust and we shall come back to it. This is one of the reasons of which I chose to use dirt in *The Wound of The Malinches*. The wounds represent and are organic material, clay. Moreover, I choose dirt to emulate a mass grave, but foremost, to offer my sorrow to all the disappeared women in Mexico and their families. After this I have to give a representation to the dead of the Mexican women, that is when I choose pink.

When we think about the color pink, we relate it to many stereotypes and clichés, mostly directed related to women. However, in the 19th century, mostly in Europe, boys and girls were wearing blue, due the blueish shawl of the Virgin Mary, symbolizing eternity and human immortality.²⁷ After, the use of pink was more common with to boys and blue with girls, due to the fact that red has a stronger connotation and blue was seen as more subtle. However, the

27. Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, A Handbook on Guadalupe Mother of the Americas, Fr. Christopher Rengers, O.F.M. Cap. (The Academy of the Immaculate, 2001), 65.

gendered stereotypes vary among cultures, as the Greek culture considered color blue the color of the Gods.²⁸

In Mexico, pink is not a color that defines gender, it is a color that defines our culture and defines our national identity. In 1946 the president Miguel Alemán and a multifaceted designer, Ramón Valdiosera created a plan to promote tourism, through the dissemination of the country's heritage and culture through fashion. For this, Valdiosera, started using the color bougainvillea in his fashion designs. In 1951, for a fashion show at the prestigious Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, the press asked about the origin of the color for which Valdiosera responded: “que aquel tono, un rosa intenso, era intrínseco a la cultura mexicana: los juguetes populares, los trajes de los indígenas, los dulces mexicanos y la arquitectura popular; en México todo se pintaba de ese tono. Un periodista entonces le respondió ‘...so it is a Mexican Pink’.”²⁹

Rosa mexicano, also known as magenta or fuchsia, was a recurrent color used by the Mexican modern architects, Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legorreta. Also, Mexican pink is the color of the branding and is used for the logo of the Tourist Board in Mexico. However, magenta color is frequently used by the transnational Latin American feminist movement, *Ni una menos* [No one more female dead] that started in Argentina. It is used in their webpage, cartels, and wood crosses with the names of disappeared females. I used *rosa mexicano* in *The Wound of The*

28. J.L. Morton, “The Meanings of Colors: Pink,” Color Matters, access on April 5, 2019. <https://www.colormatters.com/the-meanings-of-colors/pink>

29. Ana Elena Mallet, “Ramón Valdiosera, inventor del rosa mexicano,” Gatopardo, April 11, 2017, <https://gatopardo.com/reportajes/ramon-valdiosera-inventor-del-rosa-mexicano/> [this tone, an intense pink, is intrinsic of the Mexican culture: popular toys, indigenous costume, Mexican candy, and popular architecture; in Mexico everything is painted in pink. Then, a journalist then replied ‘...so it is a Mexican Pink’.]

Malinches to contextualize the identity of the victims, as well as to highlight the country in which they were victims.

i. Gallery Arrangement

The dirt was placed inside of The Visual Arts Gallery. The designated area for the dirt was a rectangle and was placed on the floor. The measurement for the dirt area were 12ft wide by 26ft long, a total of 312 square feet. I could not use Mexican dirt, due problems with customs; however, the installation took place in Texas, and it used to belong to Mexico, so that would be good enough.

For *The Wound of The Malinches* installation, I bought a commercial compost in Lowes; a total of 8 bags of the brand Hapi-Gro of 2 cubic feet each.

I designed a layout for The Visual Arts Gallery. The layout for the installation was strategically planned to provide an intuitive flow to the visitor. The principal entrance has a welcoming panel to catch the eye of the visitor, painted with *rosa mexicano*. Then I guide the viewer to the west wall of the gallery where the art statement of the installation was placed, to then follow the tiny path around the bed of dirt and wounds, to finally arrive at the last panels with a video and the exit.

The welcome panels were placed in the principal entrance and were painted with 2 116 Fl Oz containers, color Rose Dust 1002-1B, brand Valspar, bought at Lowe's. The welcome walls, length were 12ft length by 8ft height, made from three panels that were 4ft wide by 8ft height each, assembled together. To give structure and balance to the panels, six wood brackets were

placed at the floor and attached to the walls with 4 1-1/2 in, black screws. Two brackets were placed in each end corner, two in the front and two in the back. On the top the panels I attached two 4-in x 0.07-in zinc-plated flat braces to bind them together.

The title of the installation *The Wound of The Malinches* and Octavio Paz's quote of La Chingada in "The Sons of la Malinche," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, were applied to the *rosa mexicano* welcome walls. The title and quotes (Spanish and English) were in white vinyl lettering. The measurements of the title were 66in wide by 48in height and the quote 36in wide by 19in height.

Video –Genesis 1'27

God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

–Genesis 1:27³⁰

The video narrates a story; a creator seated and creating paper clay wounds, emulating the creation by God in Genesis chapter 1 verse 27. However, the video has a subtle feminine twist in the narrative, with the intention to generate questions for the viewer: if we are created the same, why are women killed more often?

30. Gen. 1:27 NET, <https://my.bible.com/bible/107/GEN.1.27>

For the recording of this video I used a GoPro camera. I created a setup and placed the GoPro in front of it, then I sat in front of the camera and started creating the spheres. I performed the role of a creator, creating wounds, molding paper clay into a small plastic ball. When I finished the molding and setting aside the ball, I grabbed a knife and a paper clay ball (ready to unmold). I stabbed the ball and I destroyed the wound with my own hands —emulating the frigidity of a killer taking a women’s life and breaking her soul.

The video has no sound and no face, as with millions of women. Murder lives among us, in secrecy. Whether they kill for pleasure, routine, or if they kill women as an offering or any kind of worship is unknown. They could be anyone, a woman or a man.

i. Software and Hardware.

I made the video in iMovie, an Apple software program. The original video was in color with a full body frame. The intention of the video was to create a mystery of the creator and of the life taker —as in life, we don’t know God’s face nor do we know the killers.

I used the tool, crop to fill, to focus the frame in the hands, clay, and foot. For the last part of the video, I superimpose the last 7.7 seconds of the same video, with a wider frame, focusing on the hands and the destruction of the ball. Superimposing is a technique in which two videos share the same frame. At last I applied a clip filter, noir, to give deeper contrast to the video.

The final result is a black and white video, with a pair of hands creating a wound that in the end are the same pair of hands destroying it. The viewer is the one to give a gender to the

hands. *The Wound of The Malinches* installation and video will not have any sound, because I wanted to create a sense of solemnity among the wounds and the viewer.

The video lasts, 1:53 minutes and was projected in a Samsung 32” LED TV. The video was on loop. For this, the video was saved it in a SD card and connected to a portable Media Player, brand Micca Speck G2. The Samsung TV was mounted in left side of the exit panel and connected to the ceiling with an extension cord. The panel was placed in the east side of the gallery at the exit doors. It had the same length and specifications than the welcome wall –12ft length by 8ft height. The color was white instead of rosa mexicano and the same for the brackets. Also, the installation title had the same measurements as the welcoming panel, but in black.

Art Performance

One part of being human is the desired to be watched; another is the desire to share experiences with members of a community. We become close to each other when we watch the same things.

—Paul Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theater*.³¹

For the opening night of *The Wound of The Malinches*, an art performance was planned. The performance was carefully orchestrated, with the purpose to confront the public and focus their attention on the problem of violence against women. At the culmination point of the

31. Paul Woodruff, “Introduction,” in *The Necessity of Theater* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.

performance I agitate the audience and at the end of the performance I asked for their participation.

Through the narrative of this thesis, one of the points I lift up is the lack of action and interest about the subject of violence against women in society. Also, I make a remark about the acts of cowardice by the German people in the Nazi Era; equating these crimes to the individualistic society of the 21st century and our lack of interest in acting against violence. This is why I needed to perform, to hopefully agitate a reaction against violence from the public.

The principal intention of the performance was to create a solemn environment between the public, the Wounds, and me. I told my own story, on how I become a survivor of violence. Also, I shared my frustration about the lack of justice from the authorities; and how we, society, give no attention to the problem of violence, ignoring the barbaric 2,352 femicides per year, female disappearances, and the domestic violence cases; maybe because it does not happen in our household.

A sense of justice is a necessary in a society. I found the inspiration for the performance Paul Woodruff's book, *The Necessity of Theater*. He expresses the need to be watched –that society needs theater as a public act:

Part of being human is to practice the art, to aim at being worth watching. So theater is necessary as anything else that comes to us naturally. In this way we may begin an explanation for why we perform—for why we do what it takes to capture the attention of other people as watchers. Theater carries more than a psychological necessity. Communities depend on public events for binding and for healing. Certain kinds of human events must have the community to witness them...Justice too needs a witness. A

body of witnesses makes possible a communal healing of wounds as opposed to the sort of private revenge that leads only to a cycle of violence.³²

I needed to be watched to give a deeper meaning to the narrative of *The Wound of The Malinches*. Barefoot, I walked onto the soil singing La Llorona.³³ I became one of them –*un alma en pena*, a Banshee, a wounded Malinche. I was talking with the wounds and confronting the audience on their lack of action and interest about the deaths and disappearances of thousands of women. I finished, singing again, with splanchnizomai in my guts and heart, and I smashed the wound in my hands –as an act of freedom against violence releasing my soul from the violence I’d suffered. In the end, the wounds were a trapped for souls in pain. Walking away, I invited those in the public who were victims and survivors of violence, to confront their pain and took a wound and smashed in the floor or take it home –as a reminder that we are stronger than our perpetrators.

32. Woodruff, “*The Necessity of Theater*,” 22-23.

33. Vargas, “La Llorona,” October 22, 2002.

CHAPTER IV

ACCOMPLISHMENT

The Wound of The Malinches allowed me to go beyond my original confines in the exploration and research on violence against women. It allowed me to understand the deepness and seriousness of the problem, and how guilty my culture for the crimes against women. On the other hand, it also helped me to rediscover the wonders of my cultural traditions, to remember the warmth of its people, and why I am so proud of being Mexican.

At first, I was trying to overexplain the subject of violence, during the installation process I realize that I did not have to be reproachful to make a point. Instead, I create a narrative for the public to unfold. The installation allowed me to learn how to communicate a complex subject immersing the emotions of the spectator, with cues –from direct confrontation with the public to an oblique approach.

Subsequently, *The Wound of The Malinches* installation gave me the opportunity to learn and work with the ceramic media; a media which technique was mostly unknown to me. The installation allowed me to develop a better understanding on how clay works –technique, firing, finishes, etc. Moreover, I have the possibility to experiment with a different type of clay, paper clay. Allowing me to develop my own understanding of the material, within thickness on the molding, firing, and texture.

I am gratified of *The Wound of The Malinches* installation, thus, I had the opportunity as a professional and as an artist to designed and planed every step of the installation. I create a narrative of sorrow without been explicit –a mass grave environment filled with a non-conventional delicate and texturize clay souls. The installation gave me deeper perspective on the severity of violence against women, so the installation is my offering –a memorial to honor those who have survive and those who perished under the monster of violence.

PLATES



Fig. 9 Multimedia installation, Visual Arts Gallery, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, 2019.



Fig. 10 View from the back, inside space.



Fig. 11 View from the northeast, inside of the installation, 2019.



Fig. 12 Detail on texture on one of the Wounds.



Fig. 13 Video Genesis 1'27, detail of installation, 2019.



Fig. 14 View of the exit of the installation, 2019.



Fig. 15 Performance, detail, 2019.



Fig. 16 Performance, detail, 2019.



Fig. 17 Audience, interacting with the installation after performance, 2019.



Fig. 18 Installation after opening, detail, 2019.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Leticia Margarita Lowry-Garcilazo completed her master's in fine arts at University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley in May, 2019. She also has a certification in construction technology and green building from The University of Texas of Brownsville -Texas Southmost College. Leticia attained her BS on Industrial Design at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, in Mexico City, MX.

Leticia M. Lowry-Garcilazo has two years of industry experience working as a senior spec-designer for WoodCrafters in Weslaco, TX. She also worked one year as a draftswoman for AAE Manufacturing in Rio Hondo, TX. Additionally, Leticia worked one year as an interior designer for Marhnos Co. in Mexico City, MX.

Recently, Leticia has worked as a teacher assistant for The University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley in the following classes: Sculpture I, spring 2019; she was the main instructor of the Ceramics I class in fall 2018; Sculpture I in spring 2018; and in the ceramics studio of in Fall 2017. She served under the supervision of Raheleh T. Filsoofi, assistant professor of ceramics and Timothy Gonchoroff, lecturer.