

# GALERIE LELONG

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**March 24, 2016**  
**by Holland Cotter**

## Review: Ana Mendieta's Experimental Films, Still Potent, at Galerie Lelong



An installation view of "Ana Mendieta: Experimental and Interactive Films," at Galerie Lelong. Credit Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection and Galerie Lelong, New York.

Ana Mendieta, who died in 1985 at 36, didn't have time to be a late bloomer, and she wasn't. She was doing mature, adventurous work while still an art student at the University of Iowa in the early 1970s, as is evident in the 15 short works in "Experimental and Interactive Films," at Galerie Lelong.

Only one piece, from around 1971, is entirely abstract, made by scratching an emulsion-washed film surface to produce a kind of kinetic gestural painting. Almost everything else has at least a suggested narrative content. Ms. Mendieta was 12 when she arrived in Iowa, one of thousands of children sent to the United States from Cuba in Operation Pedro Pan, a program run by the Roman Catholic Church with aid from the United States government. She spent her

initial years here in a foster home and in institutions that she remembered as strict and punishing. The atmosphere of threat and enclosure in the 1973 "Door Piece" may have been inspired by those experiences.

Certainly Ms. Mendieta, the political artist and feminist, was already fully developed in "Moffitt Building Piece," also from 1973. The film documents a public installation — she poured blood onto a city sidewalk, as if it were seeping from a building — that she made in response to the rape and murder of a nursing student at the University of Iowa. Ms. Mendieta, the ritualist, who sought inspiration in Afro-Caribbean religions, is there, too, in an extraordinary three-minute film called "Sweating Blood," in which she appears to begin bleeding, spontaneously and miraculously, from the top of her head. And so was Ms. Mendieta, the poet: in the 1975 "Butterfly," she grows wings, becoming an animated version of one of her own great sculptural "Siluetas," right before our eyes.

Ana Mendieta 'Experimental and Interactive Films'  
Galerie Lelong  
528 West 26th Street, Chelsea  
Through Saturday

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[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/arts/design/review-ana-mendietas-experimental-films-still-potent-at-galerie-lelong.html?ref=design&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/arts/design/review-ana-mendietas-experimental-films-still-potent-at-galerie-lelong.html?ref=design&_r=1)