

Ana Mendieta: Metamorphosis

Art **FREE**

Alison Jacques Gallery, Until Saturday June 24 2017



Ana Mendieta 'Birth', 1981, Copyright The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC Courtesy The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, Galerie Lelong, New York and Alison Jacques Gallery, London

Ana Mendieta died tragically in 1985, falling from a 34th floor window in Manhattan. Her husband, famed minimalist Carl Andre, was acquitted of second degree murder, but the circumstances around her death hang over her work like an inescapable shroud.

This show is mainly photos of performances and long-ago eroded landscape sculptures, plus a handful of drawings, all of which explore the idea of change. Two of the drawings are done on leaves, now turned brown and frighteningly brittle. They feel close to crumbling and blowing away.

The photographs document actions like a naked woman having grass glued to her back and Mendieta shearing a man's beard off and sticking the hair to her own face. Then there are images of her 'Siluetas': piles of earth in the shape of her body, big termite mounds set alight, or little piles of mud or flaming straw.

The change in these works always feels temporary. The beard she's glued on will drop off, that smile will turn to a frown, the mounds of earth will wash away, the fires will die. She appropriates that beard and the power it implies, but knows she won't get to keep it. The process of change in Mendieta's work is exactly that: a process. She creates something to show that it can be created, and then lets it disappear.

It's hard not to walk around this little exhibition – which is good, but doesn't go in deep enough – without feeling like she never got the chance to make change permanent.

BY: EDDY FRANKEL