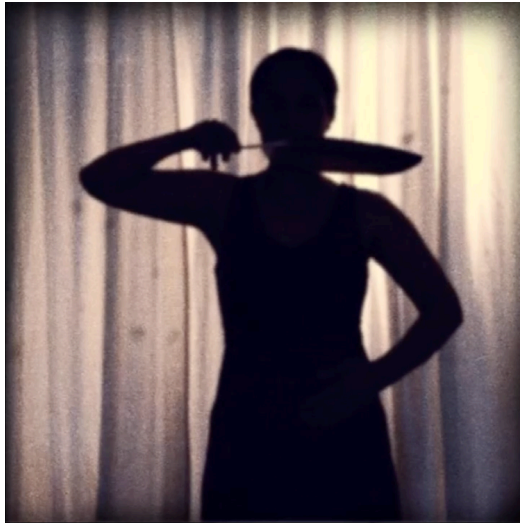




THE EARTH IS MY ELDER

KRISTA ARIAS

THE EARTH IS MY ELDER is presented on the unceded, ancestral territory of the Lekwungen people. The complexities of guest and host flow between artists, audiences, communities, contributors and territories on which exchange takes place. As uninvited guests of these lands, we, the artist and the curator, acknowledge our position and responsibility to act accordingly, to learn the histories where our exchanges occur, and to honour these territories through our continuous learning and actions.



THE EARTH IS MY ELDER is centred around the film, poetry and installation-based work of artist, poet and earth alchemist Krista Arias. Her work explores the complexities of reconnecting, as a woman and mother, to ancestral homelands, while living as an uninvited guest in Indigenous territories in the USA and Canada. As a member of the Xicana diaspora, Arias' direct connection to Indigenous land, language and culture has been broken over generations of migration arising as necessity from colonial structures. She explains: "My greatest resource in cultural recovery and transmission as a mother, of finding belonging even in the liminal space of home-not-home without traditional Eldership, has been my own body-as-earth connection and awakening."

KRISTA ARIAS (New Mexico) has focused much of her attention over the last 20 years on grassroots food justice, security and sovereignty through permaculture and sustainability praxis and

education via the Tierra Soul Village Farm and the Folklore Foods & Farming permaculture and traditional foods educational program. During this time, she has also been involved in community arts and collaborative media publishing through the work of La Palabra Café-Press—now Tlatolli Café-Press, as well as the restoration of Indigenous birth and mothering practices through her training in traditional midwifery and The Indígena Project, a four-day residency for Indigenous girls, women and mothers. Her commitment to interdisciplinary research ceremony is rooted in the deep intersection of arts-based and Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies, social justice, poetic imagination, creative praxis, phenomenology, depth and liberation psychologies. Her current research centers on the re-indigenization and rematriation of Indigenous birth and mothering practices through community land-based performative ceremonial activism that encourages restoration of natural identity through trauma resolution.



EATING OUR ANCESTORS

2017, video-poem, 4m33s

In my travels tracing family migration stories, being an uninvited guest on my own ancestral homelands in traditional P'urhépecha territory, I took great pause to process and integrate the liminal space of home-not-home through my presence during traditional Juriatikua Uariri (Day of the Dead) ceremonies. As a member of the Xicana diaspora my connection to Indigenous land, language and culture has been broken over generations of migration arising as necessity from colonial structures. My greatest resource in cultural recovery, of finding belonging even in the liminal space of home-not-home, has been my own body-as-earth connection and awakening. Finding home in my own brown body and listening to ancestral-earth intuitions allows me to participate at the site of my flesh as a we rather than an I. Juriatikua Uariri, an Indigenous ceremony of the P'urhépecha people, honors the recently deceased ancestors and calls on

them to visit our table, our altar, our home in an intimate gesture of ingesting the dead. The altar bread, now imbued with the threshold wisdom of the dead, visits our bodies and beings as we ingest it and it becomes a part of us. I offer a multi-media performance of my respectful embodied interpretation of this sacred tradition of my ancestors. I ask them to bless and assist me, and us all, in my gesture, as I offer and imbibe, the bread and tequila and tobacco from my first Day of the Dead ceremony on ancestral lands in Patzcuaro, Mexico.

This video-poem was premiered at the Canadian Indigenous Studies Association conference in Puebla Mexico, June 2017 and is a core contemplative element in the current collaborative performance "potluck," Bread, Flesh & Ink.



SUSTO & LIMPIA

2018, video-poem, 3m38s

Drawing on the rich legacy of curanderismo, Meso-american folk medicine, and other Indigenous healing practices in my diasporic Xicana and Split Feather communities combined with the restoring and restorying of an Indigenous paradigm of relational, personal, fluid, circular, process-based, affective, poetic, embodied and holistic methodologies, I offer an interpretation of the Mesoamerican concept susto and limpia. The soul loss of susto may correspond to the concept of trauma as currently held in trauma theory; limpias are nothing like contemporary treatments for trauma. Drawing on the recent work

of Indigenous scholars who critique trauma, I assert the need for a grassroots re-membling and re-imagining of the effects of, and response to, colonial violence across generations of Indigenous people. The temazcalli, itself a ceremonial limpia, is at once preventative, restorative and re-generative. I consider susto and limpia, and the temazcalli, to be living practices of trauma healing that protect and integrate fright (trauma) and the consequent soul loss.



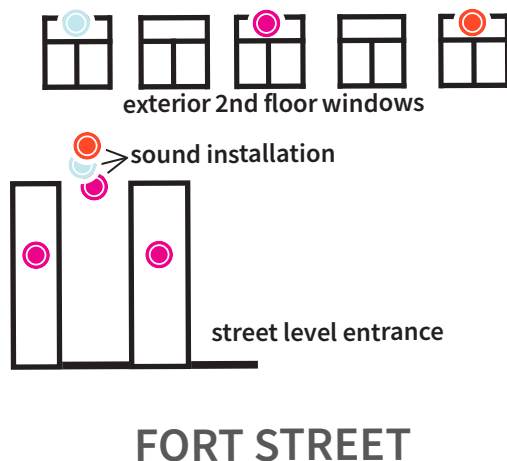
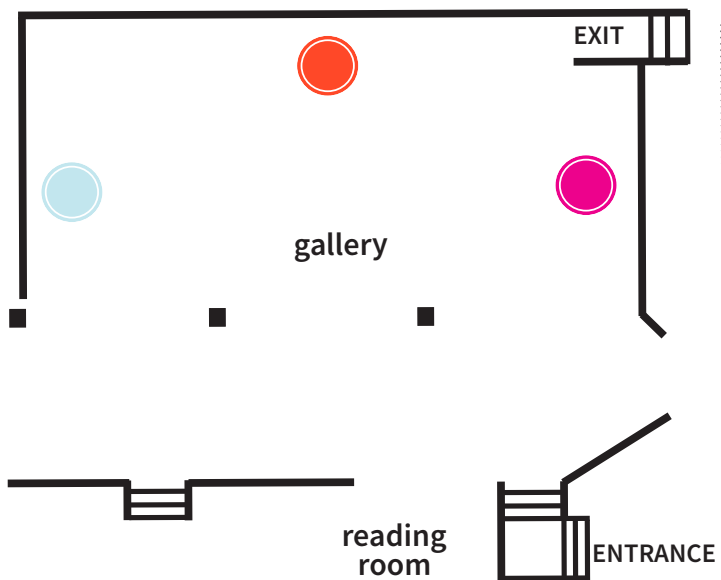
XOCHIQUETZAL'S BED

2016, video-poem, 4m15s

Xochiquetzal's Bed is the video-poem created out of my extended performance ceremony of listening to earth as Indiginist methodology for rematriation. I lay on the earth as a decolonial/Indiginist act of restoration at the generative edge of lineage repair and remembrance of stories emergent in body-earth relationality. The video-poem honors the primal gestures of Xochiquetzal, goddess of birth, mothering and female sexuality, and my life story of diasporic identity as a mother. Created as an exploration of Xochiquetzal's push-pull gesture in her pose in the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer. In it she stands before the tree of life one hand outstretched before it and the other pulling her child to her breast. Xochi's push-pull relates intimately to the push pull of my own identity in the face of motherhood and echoes the balance

necessary in the practice of XochiCuicatl and Ometeotl, poetic-prayer and dynamic-duality. I position my story in relation to my interpretation of Xochiquetzal's push-pull gesture of holistic dualism as it relates to the dual-process of decolonizing and Indigenizing birth and mothering as we recover from the traumatic age of colonialism and genocide.

This video-poem was explored further and installed in relationship to the temazcalli at the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art's Intermission series in May 2016, as well as part of the first Indigena Project performance Protest in August 2016.



PHENOMENOLOGY OF GESTURE

KRISTA ARIAS

The identity of the thing through perception experience is only another aspect of the identity of one's own body throughout exploratory movements; thus, they are the same in kind as each other.
(Merleau-Ponty)

Gestures are the ordinary way in which we carry on meaning, as the etymology of the word (from gero = I bear, I carry on) implies. Complete gestures are those in which new meaning is synthetically acquired.
(Maddalena)

I am interested in gesture, in particular human gesture as enactment of the world both responsively (is only another aspect of... one's own body) and generatively (new meaning is synthetically acquired) with the non-human world. For Merleau-Ponty, things themselves, and their being perceived, are the same in kind. Gestures, or exploratory movements, are the ordinary way we carry on meaning. This phenomenology of gesture is resonant with my experience of Xicana-Nahua traditional ceremony. In Nahua cosmology the human body exists as an interface with el cielo and la tierra and the epistemological reality and requirement of in xochitl in cuicatl.

According to Nahua logic, Noble speech, Flower and Song or walking in xochitl, in cuicatl, in poetry and prayer, is a methodology of emergence, a methodology of the heart. "In xochitl, in cuicatl was an epistemological practice embedded in a Nahuatl ontology conceived of philosophical, religious, and social practices that were interwoven in the cultural habitus of Nahua warriors (Farias)."

A prerequisite for this station is that one must be related to Tlalticpac (that which is on earth). In Xochitl In Cuicatl emerges as an expression of truth out of the earth embodied heart. When you go deep inside yourself to your most authentic, connected and emergent knowing and you give rise to that expression, when teotl discloses itself to you—then you are expressing something into reality. You are making it so.

Truth is created as we express flower and song—constructive, connected and in balance between the rhythmic oscillating dualities of the world. This resembles Merleau-Ponty's human gestures and our deep inhabitation of the place world, our gestures' intimate association with the 'flesh of the world.' We move primordially and elementally embedded and embodied. Our bodies, as they move, express and create waterways, windy respirations, fiery inspirations and earthly formations. For Stephen J. Smith, Flesh speaks to our bodily relations with the elements of a more-than-human world...the felt imperative to these relations where, as Merleau-Ponty put it, 'all

distance is traversed' and wherein movement arises not specifically in the body, but in the nexus and intertwining of bodily engagement with the world.

There is a primacy to movement that registers in the living body in its carnal ties to the elements of the world's flesh. The 'radical reflection' on the 'flesh of the world' to which this analysis aspires in turn bears upon the general field of gestural reciprocities and connections, providing the insight that intimate gestures of the flesh, such as the embrace, are primordial attunements, motions of rhythm and reciprocity, that emanate from the world in identification with it. The embrace is fundamentally, elementally, a gesture of landscape dwelling.

A phenomenology of elemental motions provides the textual reminder that to be at home in various landscapes means to know what it is to be embraced corporeally, sensually, within the human and especially the more-than-human folds of the world (Smith). As a way of exploring gestural potential in ceremonial cultural restoration, I have embarked on three phenomenological, poetic audio-visual presentations that reflect and generate my understanding of phenomenological gesture as ceremony, ritual that "enacts the world" (Appfel-Marglin). In a similar vein as Smith's look at the embrace, I take a visual, kinesthetic and an in xochitl in cuicatl, look at the gestures of three aspects of constructing the memory of being Xicana Indígena.

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The Earth is my Elder :: Krista Arias

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curated by Toby Lawrence

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