



### In-Between States

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Presentation for the Panel, Excavating Heritage and Expanding Geographies

By,Angela Lopez

A bone in my foot has died. Often when a bone dies the rest of the body feels no symptoms. Pain only arises after the death progresses to the point that the bone is near collapsing. Sheep's horns often grow back into their skull.

The body senses and interprets information beyond what the mind is consciously aware of. The body operates beyond our will and is affected internally by what happens externally and vice versa. As a result there is a lack of physical control over our own bodies.

I don't always know the source of all of my work. When I made the animation Foot Moving In I didn't realize that I may have been thinking of my parent's feet. A bone in my mother's foot did die, and my father almost lost his foot to diabetes just before he passed away. Instead I was thinking more broadly about a lack of control over our bodies, partially in regard to health. I'm also concerned with the social political control as well.

If art is a way of addressing that which we don't understand, it's only natural that our upbringing, home, family and heritage would influence the work we create. My home was divided as much as the world I live in is divided.

My father's parents deliberately chose not to speak Spanish to him or his siblings. They wanted their children to assimilate into American culture as much as possible. Even so, they still passed along aspects of their culture that persisted in my dad and was often in strong contrast to my mother's background. Such as my father's traditional views on family and community, and in particular food. My mother's food preferences were very bland and couldn't stomach most Mexican food. My father also sustained a small community of families in our neighborhood that all took care of each other.

He was raised catholic. I remember him taking me and my brother to church when we were young. When I got home my mother caught me repeatedly jumping off of the bed. I was trying to fly. I explained to my mom that if I believed in god strongly enough I could fly or walk through

walls. My mother was furious and strongly discouraged us from going to church again. She was not raised in a religious family. (To be fair, at that time I also had recurring dreams that I could fly. So much so that my church experience heightened my imagination and I thought maybe it was possible.)

This divide has influenced the way I perceive and think about the world, playing out in my work in much the same way. There are many dualities and broken narratives that don't fully connect but still seem logical or possible. With your right hand pinch your right forearm. Possibly it pinches itself to see if it's awake. It finds itself in an impossible position, alluding to conscious and unconscious, awake and asleep, self and other.

Not learning Spanish bothered my father his whole life. It's something that that my siblings and I struggle with as well. Slowly I am learning a little bit at a time, but the separation of language makes me feel less connected to my Mexican heritage. At the same time there is no other heritage that I feel as strongly connected to.

My siblings all describe their relationship with their Mexican heritage differently. But we all agree we are living in a place where under many different circumstances - for better or worse - we are treated differently because of our name, the way we look, and also because we don't speak Spanish. We are confronted all the time to define who we are and defend how we do or do not fit into others expectations.

Through this identity crisis – with my ongoing defining and defending - I have always been interested in understanding discrimination and abuse of power. In my work I am interested in exploring the aspects of human nature that characterize things like discrimination and abuse of power.

Instead of looking specifically at race or sex I'm interested in better understanding aspects of human nature that are universal. My work is an investigation into understanding the self and others through our shared corporeal experiences and mythology addressing health, violence, affection, and death of the body.

I explore touch as a way to physically grapple with what cannot be seen or touched such as, the murky parts of ourselves that we repress or that are difficult to cope with such as the visceral, and uncanny

Touch is a way of thinking and understanding. It grounds us in our bodies and helps us relate ourselves to our surroundings. Even when not touching, through seeing, the mind calculates what a texture or curve might feel like.

Motor systems in the brain are active when performing an action, as well as when observing someone else perform that action. Subconsciously, without moving, the mind responds to the physical gestures that it sees as though it were performing the gesture itself. This is how seeing is not only a way of feeling, but also a form of empathy, as your body unconsciously feels what it sees.

Touching and seeing are a form of generating empathy and creating an understanding of the commonalities in ourselves and others.

With sight and touch it is possible to create empathy through the works and bridge the self to others, revealing types of connections that are universal to our human nature.

The works reflect the dualities I face in the world and that were part of my upbringing. They play with what is possible, they loop in on themselves and fluidly change between seemingly

oppositional states, such as violence and affection, good and bad, conscious and unconscious, dream and reality. Within these oppositional states, our personal broken and incomplete narratives are built, reflecting the larger struggles we all face as world cultures and histories become more intertwined.