

Mini Art Lesson:

Untitled (Guanaroca [First Woman])

by Ana Mendieta

Artist Ana Mendieta (1948–1985) had a unique practice of blending photography, body art, earth art, and performance to address the emergence of feminism and her experience as a Cuban exile. Mendieta would place her body in the landscape, using materials such as crushed flowers, sculpted mud, or ignited gunpowder, to inscribe her silhouette and then document the results through photographs and films. Returning to Cuba in 1980 and 1981, she began carving fertility figures into the caves and cliffs of her native land. For this lesson, we'll look at one of Mendieta's works, titled *Untitled (Guanaroca [First Woman])* (1981/1994), and create our own carved portraits and silhouettes with kids ages 2–6 and 7 and up.



**FOR AGES 2–6:
LET'S PLAY**

For this artwork, we're going to use household or nearby materials to make our own carved portraits.

Step 1: Look at Mendieta's artwork with your child. What do you think it's made of? Who do you think the person is?

Step 2: Explore poses with your child. How might we pose our bodies when we feel mad? How might we pose when we feel happy? Sad? Sleepy? Excited? Here, Museum Educator Tamar MacKay and her mom explore different poses. (A)

Step 3: Now, choose a pose to make with your child and take a picture of them in that pose. If your child is younger, you can also ask them to observe their features in a mirror and create a self-portrait. Here, Tamar chooses an excited pose! (B)

Step 4: Ana Mendieta created this artwork with sand. Choose nearby material, or even items from your pantry, that might feel similar to make art with. For example, you can use dirt from a nearby park or flour on a baking sheet. Tamar chooses the dog park where she takes her family dog, Sadie, and her own dog, Maple Syrup, as her canvas. (C)



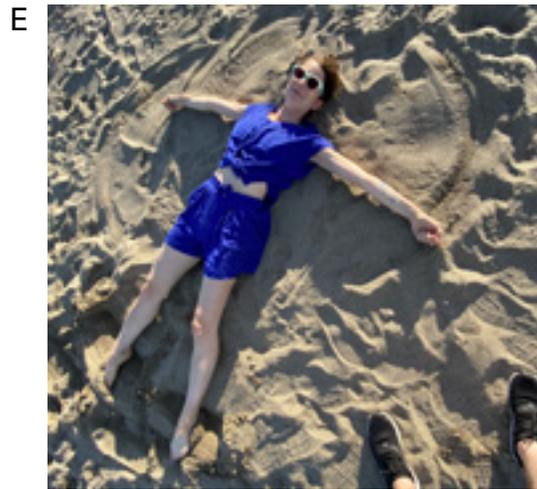
FOR AGES 2-6:
LET'S PLAY (cont.)

Step 5: Try to carve your pose into your canvas! You can use your fingers, a stick, or anything else you might find. You can also collect materials such as leaves or other items from home. (D)



FOR AGES 2-6:
LET'S PLAY
BONUS!

Ana Mendieta made her artwork at the beach. You can create one there, too! You can even explore making a full-body artwork like Tamar did! (E)



FOR AGES 7+:
LET'S CREATE

Mendieta often used silhouettes both as a technique and a theme in her work. Today, you'll learn how to make a silhouette and get creative with fun materials to take it to the next level. For this lesson, you'll need a piece of paper (the larger the better!), a lamp, a pencil, markers, glue, and any other fun materials to fill in your silhouette.

Step 1: Choose your model. Silhouettes are traditionally images of people represented as a solid shape or color, but the technique can use any subject. Here, Senior Instructor Noé Gaytán makes a silhouette of his cat, Max. (A)



FOR AGES 7+:
LET'S CREATE (cont.)

Step 2: Position your subject in between your paper and your lamp. Adjust the distance of the lamp until you have a shadow that fits on the paper. (B)

Step 3: With your subject holding still, trace the outline of their shadow. (C)

Step 4: Silhouettes are usually colored in with black to resemble shadows, but you can get creative and fill in the space any way you want. Noé uses orange so people know it's Max. (D)

Step 5: What do your materials say about your subject? Mendieta used natural materials and her own body to connect ideas of femininity and the environment.

Step 6: Try using different material to cover your surface. Here we have fluffy cotton balls that remind us of soft fur. (E)

Step 7: Can you make a silhouette of your entire body? How about your whole family? And don't forget your furry friends!

