



**CONFRONTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
THE ARTISTIC PRACTICES OF ADRIANA CRISTINA CORRAL
AND JUNGEUN LEE**

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry focuses on the artistic practices of two contemporary artists who research acts of violence against women in their home communities and purposefully (re)stage items from visual culture to create art that (re)members and pays homage to victims of social injustice. Artist Adriana Cristina Corral examines *feminicidios*, the murder of Latinas along the U.S./Mexico border, while artist Jungeun Lee travels back to her homeland of South Korea to unpack the story of a girl forced to service Japanese soldiers as a *comfort woman*¹ during World War II. The conceptual framework of this study references memory research and how our thoughts and actions in the present are social (re)constructions of the past. Although geographic boundaries of exploration differ in the work of each artist, as well as social and historical contexts impacting the lives of the women they research, a common thread is their dedication to reveal specific shameful secrets of the past that are still manifest in contemporary society, whether publicly acknowledged or swept under the rug.

Keywords: *Memory, Social Injustice, Contemporary Art Practices*

¹ *Comfort women* were sex slaves, usually young girls from several Asian countries, taken by force to provide sexual service to Japanese soldiers during WWII.

Shameful Secrets

In 2014, a friend brought to my attention that numerous rapes have been memorialized along the U.S. border with Mexico. Branches of trees, known as rape trees, have women's undergarments purposefully displayed to serve as visual reminders of the dominance human smugglers have over their victims (Fox, 2013; Gibson, 2014; Rosario, 2011; Salazar, 2014; Vanderpool, 2008). In 2006, Texas Congressman Ted Poe read the following statement into the Congressional Record contextualizing the symbolic meaning and violence surrounding the display of undergarments: "Each pair is a trophy from a woman that was smuggled into the United States, victims that are heard screaming in the desert. They are raped, even gang raped by illegal human smugglers, then forced into silence" (Poe, 2006, para. 2). County Sheriff Larry Dever (2006) from Arizona made a similar statement to a Senate judiciary subcommittee¹ informing government officials that rape trees often help in identifying smuggling routes used in human trafficking. As I hear more about these trees, my own personal red flags begin to emerge. I have lived in Texas all of my life, so how is it possible that I have never heard of these trees before or have knowledge of the violent acts they reference? Is it possible that I have heard of them and have unconsciously chosen to forget, preferring to silence these shameful secrets by choice? Are we the "United States of Amnesia," as Gore Vidal (2004) posited? Is it easier to forget difficult or uncomfortable memories or realities rather than research them more fully? Is selective forgetting or omission of information a form of denial or failure to understand humanity's weaknesses in favor of conveniently wanting to only acknowledge our strengths? This article seeks to understand how two female artists purposely disrupt silence regarding violence against women by examining their contemporary art practices, and it considers the educational implications of sharing their research-based practices with students in high school and beyond. Exploring their practices involves understanding how memories influence our thoughts, actions, and ability to make meaning from our lived experiences.

Memory Research

Sharing memories can be problematic. While individuals decide upon which socially acceptable forms of narrative representation will help them and others recount memories (Pillener, Descroches, & Ebanks, 1998), what individuals choose to recount

1. Specifically, the Honorable Larry A. Dever made his formal testimony to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, Citizenship, Terrorism, and Homeland Security on March 1, 2006.

and hide from others is often impacted by dominant cultural values or by other individuals (Neisser & Libby, 2005; Nelson & Fivush, 2005; Rubin, 1986, 1995, 1998). All of our memories are filtered and (re)packaged to (re)organize events (Nelson, 2003), which makes them vulnerable to reduction and distortion, as they continually evolve when memories merge with recent experiences (Cronin, 1998; Harper, 1998a, 1998b; Larsen, 1998; Pillemer, Desrochers, & Ebanks, 1998; Robinson & Taylor, 1998; Schectman, 1994; Tulving, 2005; Tulving & Schacter, 1990). When viewing and making meaning from visual culture artifacts like art, text, photos, or mementos, this process may trigger further memory associations, but results vary and are unpredictable (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Collier, 1967; Collier & Collier, 1986; Hodder, 1998; Prosser, 1998).

The process of sharing and exchanging memories influences how cultural memory is understood between participants. *Cultural memory*, also referred to as *working memory*, occurs when “we consciously or unconsciously select those things, from the totality of everything which might have been said, that are somehow relevant to the present” (Rigney, 2005, pp. 17-18). Cultural memory evolves as learners utilize and refer to the past to inform the learning that unfolds in the present (Assmann, 1995; Campbell, 2006; Rigney, 2005; Tamm, 2013). This reconstructive turn in memory research parallels social learning theories, highlighting how we learn from others during our everyday interactions addressing real-world issues and concerns (Bandura, 1977; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Chaiklin & Lave, 1993; Lave, 1988, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). This social process of sharing memories is called *socialization*, and outcomes are dependent on how and why people come together (Fentress & Wickham, 1992; Nelson & Fivush, 2005; Tendolkar, 2008).

The active process of (de)constructing and (re)constructing cultural memory when examining meanings embedded within art is an example of what memory researchers call *a site of memory* (Rigney, 2005). A site of memory is always being “reinvested with new meaning” depending on how the viewer engages with the work (p. 18). As viewers, the process of interpreting art with others can encourage multiple and varied voices to connect social issues with life experiences, resulting in deeper global and interdisciplinary learning connections (Barrett, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Gude, 2007; Mayer, 2008; Sullivan, 2002; Taylor, 2008; Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008). Sites of memory are not static. In fact, learning evolves by (re)connecting the past with the present, from one person to another, and is influenced by ever-changing situational, cultural, and historical contexts.

Regrettably, some educational curriculum materials seek to control certain cultural memories from being explored in the classroom, preferring to perpetuate dominant power structures (Brown & Au, 2014; Brown & Brown, 2010; Darder, 2011; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), so it is up to us as educators to find ways to use art as a working site of memory that can counter these omissions. Bailey and Desai (2005) offer the following suggestion to disrupt controlled narratives.

In light of the power of dominant social practices and exclusionary histories, this struggle for justice must seek to challenge and in some way transform the limitations of histories that get told. Educational practices that share these concerns require that we provide students and teachers in schools with different places to look for cultural and historical expressions of experience, different ways to look at these locations, and ways to express their own understandings of these locations in a variety of ways. (Bailey & Desai, 2005, p. 43)

Artists Adriana Cristina Corral and Jungeun Lee purposely counter silences surrounding violence against women by inviting visitors to their exhibitions to connect our memories and understandings with theirs, thus activating a site of memory reflecting multiple perspectives. Their initiatives to challenge injustices of the past in the present inspired this inquiry.

A Narrative Inquiry

In 2014, I encountered the work of Corral and Lee² and wanted to investigate their contemporary art practices, including how they use visual culture to investigate “underlying assumptions that can be revealed in the conceptual space between images and objects” (Freedman, 2003, p. 89). The artist participants were purposely selected, as they both address the social issue of violence against women from their own respective vantage points. Adriana Cristina Corral (Mexican American) is originally from El Paso, Texas and now lives in San Antonio, Texas. Jungeun Lee (Korean American) is originally from South Korea but now calls Plano, Texas home.

After meeting each artist informally,³ I decided that a narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2007) using semi-structured interview questions would allow each artist to contextualize her work in her own words. Soliciting their first-hand insights was important to me, as it honored their voice, an approach supported by Rolling (2010). The data was comprised of their interview responses obtained via e-mail correspondence, images of their work, a literature review, and recollections of engaging with the work from my

2. Jungeun Lee’s work debuted on July 10, 2014 and was on view until September 14, 2014. Adriana Cristina Corral’s work opened on September 11, 2014 and was on display until December 28, 2014. Both exhibitions took place at Artpace San Antonio. For more on the exhibitions, please see the following websites:
http://www.artpace.org/artists_and_curators/jungeun-lee
http://www.artpace.org/artists_and_curators/adriana-corrall

3. Ironically, I met Adriana on May 8, 2014, the day I was interviewing her fiancé Vincent Valdez for another article. He told me then that she was the one I should be keeping my eyes on, as she was doing tremendously important work. I followed his advice. I met Jungeun right after her opening night dialogue on July 10, 2014. I was so taken by her work and contextualization of it that I just had to start a conversation.

perspective as well as others. The data was analyzed through *data reduction*⁴ (Fontana & Frey, 1998) and reorganized into *narrative sketches*⁵ (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999). While the primary goal of research is to make meaning from data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Sullivan, 2014; Shulman, 1997), my interpretation of the data collected for this narrative inquiry will remain contestable and historically contingent (Desai, 2002; Sandall, 2009). My assumptions as a female, Hispanic art educator and contemporary art enthusiast may not ring true for others, and this is a constraint I welcome, as we all come to engage with art and the stories embedded within art from different vantage points. Here are the artists' stories constructed from interviews and (re)presented as narrative sketches.

Narrative Sketch of Adriana Cristina Corral

Growing up in El Paso, Texas, Adriana Cristina Corral spent much of her formative years going back and forth along the border with Mexico to visit family and friends and watch her brother play polo matches until a conversation with her father impacted her perceptions of traveling to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. He said that "Juárez was not a safe place for a young girl to visit by herself" (A. Corral as cited in Ford, 2013, para 2). Corral heard the story of her grandmother, who was working in this border town and was kidnapped with the intention of being killed, but managed to escape from her attackers. Corral's grandmother decided not to prosecute (Chan, 2013). Corral revealed that she, too, became the target of violence from a known attacker, but also chose not to prosecute, as she recalled:

I did not prosecute the perpetrator because of fear. Fear that he would do something worse later. Now that I look back at these events there are so many things that I would change about how I handled the situation. Now that I am working on this body of work, I see how many families and mothers who lose their daughters to violent crimes do not say anything because of fear. Their fear is that if they say too much, they, or other family members, will be killed. Most often, it is fear that keeps us silent. (A. Corral as cited in Chan, 2013, para. 4)

Corral's work connects her personal memories and experience with violence with research regarding *femicidios* (mass women murders) in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua, Mexico). Corral contextualized how her research-based installations, performances and sculptures aim to address injustice, loss, erasure and memory.

4 Data reduction is a process of selecting, focusing upon, and abstracting information into raw data from various sources (Fontana & Frey, 1998).

5 Narrative sketches are a data analysis tool that allows researchers to interweave and organize themes revealed through the research process and represent this information in a style that is personally meaningful for the researcher and their audience (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999).

The specific case of Campo Algodón (2001), where eight young women were found in a mass grave in the center of the city, motivated me to create a body of work and further investigate numerous cases of slain women. Since the 1960s, thousands of women have been killed through the same *modus operandi* of kidnap, rape, and murder in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Mexico saw an increase of murders after the NAFTA agreement in 1994.

With the intention of building a better future and creating a job market that could cater to North American companies, the arrival of maquiladoras (factories) generated an influx of migrants (primarily women) from the north and south of Mexico and Central America. With the large incursion of women at the maquiladoras, a noticeable amount of women began to disappear and murders rates increased. Young women, usually students, maquiladora workers, or both, were found in deserted areas or mass graves. Their remains are often so disfigured or decomposed that identification is nearly impossible. Many of these cases have remained unsolved for lack of prosecution, organized crime, and widespread fear throughout the surrounding area. Navigating between these two spaces of Juárez and El Paso and processing the aforementioned violence that occurs, is integral to the formation of my work. (A. Corral, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

According to Margo Sawyer, Corral's former mentor and university professor, her artistic processes involve "an intimacy with the materials and information that inform her research" as well as establishing "an interesting duality between the content and the visual representation of that content" (personal communication, July 10, 2015). What follows is an exploration of Corral's artistic practices of (re)staging visual culture to construct a new site of memory.

(Re)Staging Visual Culture as a Working Site of Memory

Corral's artistic practice (re)stages and (re)cycles images and objects from visual culture that highlight the relationship between the body, memory, and architecture, ideas discussed by Bloomer, Moore, and Yudell (1977). This relationship acknowledges the importance of orienting our bodies spatially in relation to places and spaces, and how we move and interact in those spaces informs our overall experiences. Architecture is more than just about buildings; it is about our human experience within spaces (Bloomer, Moore, and Yudell, 1977). Corral creates contemplative spaces where the message of the work is not blatantly obvious, rather it invites viewers to unpack the symbolic and metaphoric references. For example, Sawyer shared her memories and metaphoric associations when she watched Corral's ritual process of sweeping up pigments as she worked.

The pigments become symbolic of death, but then we [society] sweep it all up and it disappears—it dissipates—it's no longer visible. But then there is another death—there's another pigment and we sweep that up. This process parallels the erasures of history—The erasure of information about global atrocities against women. (M. Sawyer, July 10, 2015)

Another observer watched Corral create a site-specific installation for a group show⁶ where she methodically filtered thin layers of ash into smooth layers until they resembled the shape of a region in Mexico where the murders occurred. Corral's process, which included placing red pigment on the area where mass graves were found was a “visual type of ceremony” that helped the viewer better understand the work (A. Viera, personal communication, July 17, 2014). Fortunately, for those of us who were not able to be present during the creation process, a video⁷ documenting the rituals Corral incorporates into the creation of her work was included in the exhibition. Organizers of the group exhibition also facilitated an on-site moderated discussion, where artists including Corral, contextualized their work, and invited members of the audience to share their own memories and experiences with violence. These social interactions worked towards collectively disrupting silence regarding violence against women locally and contributed to the (co)construction of cultural memory reflecting multiple voices..

Our visual culture is saturated with text and utilized by different audiences for various purposes. Corral utilized text as material to be (de)constructed and (re) constructed when creating visual landscapes filled with metaphorical associations. Corral secured a list of names of victims of femicidios from a legal scholar and has utilized that text to create art that symbolically pays tribute to their lives. Corral described her artistic process of using text to make art.

Using acetone to transfer the text onto the wall, I transferred the revered victims' names on the wall creating a horizontal impenetrable line surrounding the space [see Figures 1 & 2] The names that extend throughout the space have moments of clarity and erasure that convey several concepts for me, in that they mimic the last breaths seen on a flat line monitor, appear as a landscape, and the division of life and death. After transferring the text to the wall, I was left with numerous sheets of paper listing the victims' names. I then decided to burn these papers (see Figure 3) in a ritualistic manner and create a cremation burial plot that lies in the center of the space (see Figure 4).

(A. Corral, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

6. *Contemporary Latino Art: El Corazón de San Antonio* was on view from May 9 until September 26, 2014 at the Educational and Cultural Arts Center at Texas A&M University- San Antonio. Alicia Viera is the Director of Cultural Programs and helped organize this group exhibition.

7. The video shown during this group exhibition was created during Corral's M.F.A. coursework at the University of Texas at Austin and was filmed by Mark and Angela Walley.

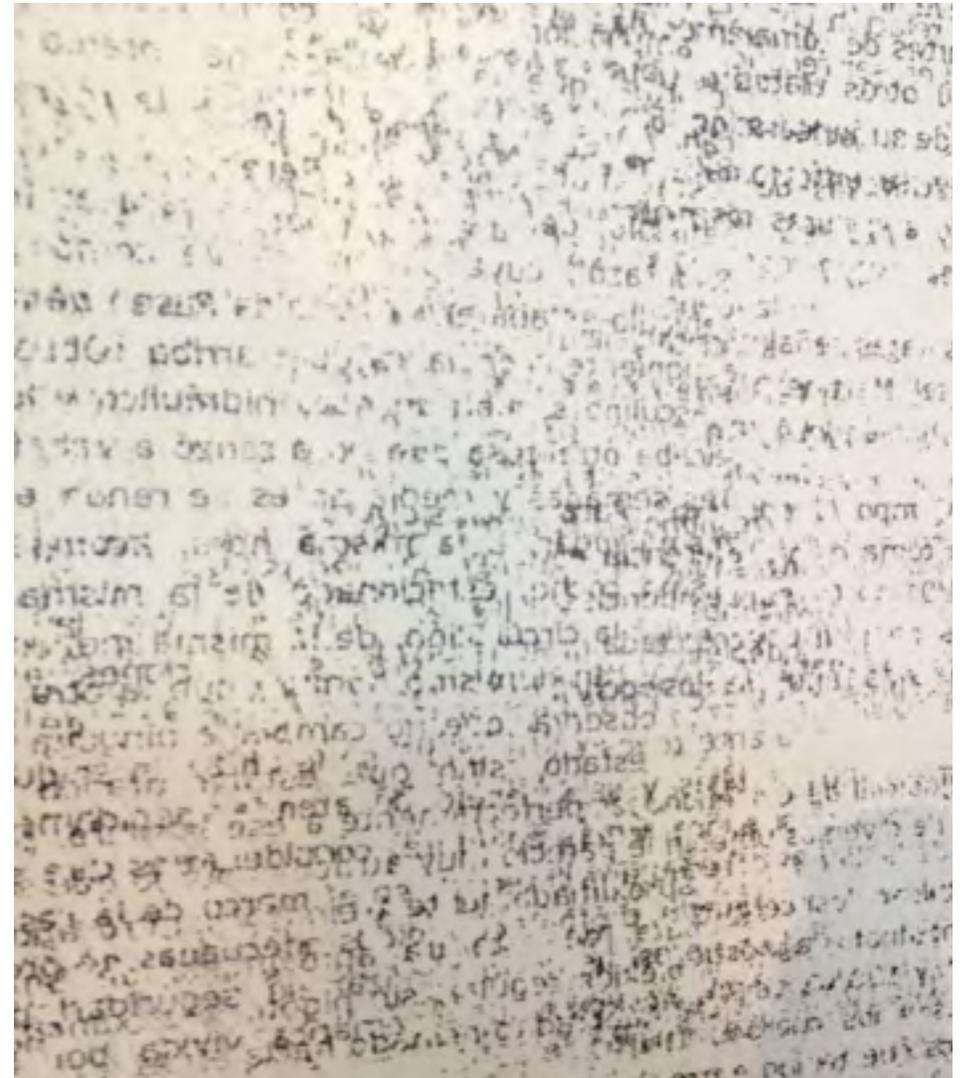


Figure 1. Adriana Cristina Corral. *Campo Algodon, Ciudad Juárez, 21 de Febrero de 2007, 2011* site-specific installation (detail). Photo courtesy of the artist.

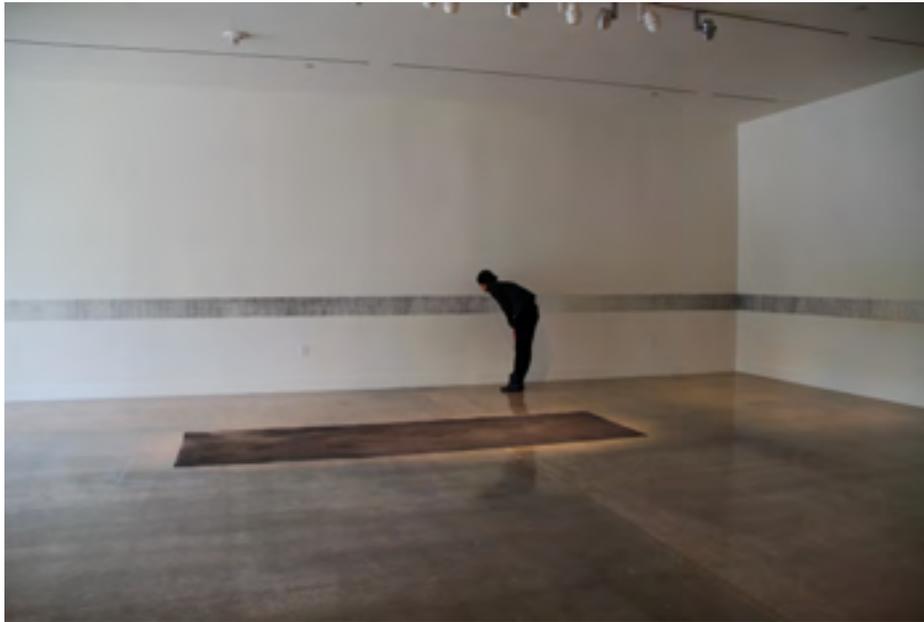


Figure 2. Adriana Cristina Corral. *Memento*, site-specific installation, 2012, victims' names transferred on wall, ashes from burned paper list. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3. Adriana Cristina Corral. *Within the Ashes*, site-specific installation/ performance, 2013. Photo courtesy of the artist.

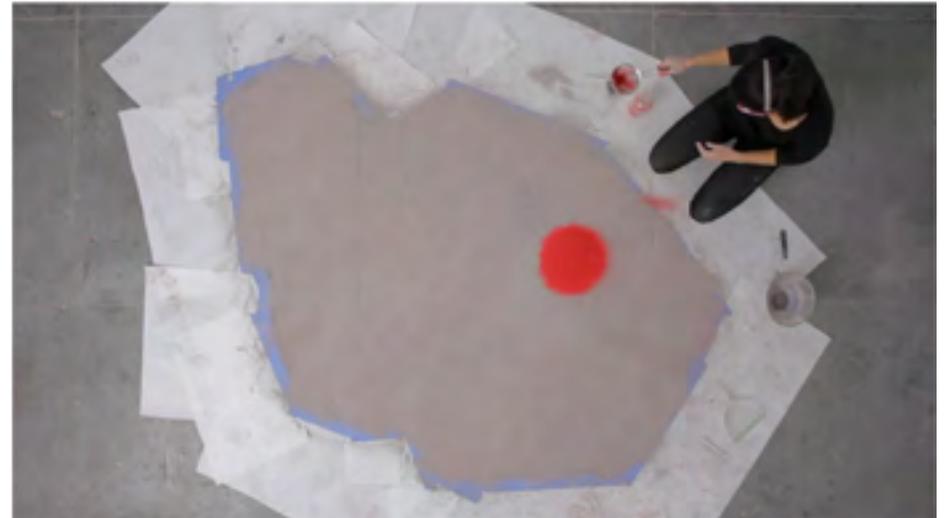


Figure 4. Adriana Cristina Corral. *Within the Ashes*, installation/ performance, 2013, aerial map of Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico with marked sites of found mass graves; ashes from burned paper of list of victims' names mixed with red powder pigment. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The act of transferring names using acetone until the ink is removed from the paper, as well as the subsequent act of tearing papers prior to burning them, parallels the brutal and recurring acts of violence referenced in her research. These implied references to violence are repeated in her work, just as they recur in real life. Corral credits Kwon's (2002) writing on dematerialization, where impermanence in the development and exhibition of art is valued as highly influential on how she creates art.

There is something to be said with each of the text pieces that I am creating in that they are ephemeral. My installations convey elements of a monument in the way of commemorating the murdered victims. However, after each installation the walls are painted over and the piece no longer exists. The ephemeral nature of the work parallels these murders in that each time they are told in the news or courts they have a moment of validity and potency and then disappear or fade out, therefore creating this vicious cycle that repeats itself over and over. In this body of work I am interested in dematerialization because it directly relates to the femicidios in Juárez. (A. Corral, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

Creating a space where viewers can learn more about shameful secrets by unpacking symbolic and metaphorical references to violence, without being blatantly obvious, may not resonate with all audiences. However, just as there are conflicts in how

international monuments are either respected or disrespected sites of cultural memory⁸, Corral acknowledges that creating temporary monuments has been a challenge.

At times, the challenge for me is how to individualize these mass murders when there is rampant impunity and eighty percent of these crimes go unpunished. Just as these women's bodies were eventually revealed in a certain landscape, in a somewhat pattern-like arrangement, my intention was to not have their memory displaced as their identities were so often done. (A. Corral, personal communication, August 21, 2014)

For me, there is an understated beauty in how the names transferred onto the wall seem to fade in and out. Yet, there was also an overwhelming sadness in acknowledging that these names symbolize real people who were victimized. Looking down at the funeral mounds and smelling the faint burning scent of the ashes that rested on the floor, also triggered memories of the many people I have seen return to the earth. As I moved through the space, my individual experience seemed to connect with a universal sense of loss, which extended my associations far beyond beyond the museum walls.

(Re)Constructing Cultural Memory

When I flew to San Antonio for the opening on September 11, 2014, I had already begun to investigate *femicidios* and began looking to see who else was addressing this topic. I (re)discovered Miles' (2006) research on the films of Lourdes Portillo addressing the murder of women along the U.S./Mexican border and how she envisions using this film to engage students in critical examinations of power and gender, which create opportunities for students to actively respond to what they have learned. I began paying attention to the U.S. government's reauthorization of the *Violence Against Women Act*⁹ (Holder, 2013; O'Rourke, 2013), but wondered if legislation was/is really making an impact. Although this topic of violence against women is somewhat new to me, I was beginning to feel more connected to the problem by learning from Corral's research-based practices.¹⁰ During the opening night moderated dialogue, Corral shared

8. This seems particularly noticeable in recent media coverage of the desecration of UNESCO world heritage sites by extremist groups. For more, please see UNESCO (2014, 2015).

9. To visit the official site of The United States Department of Justice's (2015) homepage for the Office of Violence Against Women, please see: <http://www.justice.gov/ovw>

10. Corral shared that she has been deeply inspired by Balli's (2009) dissertation research titled, *Murdered Women on the Border: Gender, Territory and Power in Ciudad Juárez*. Corral encouraged audience members who wanted to learn more about the topic to also consider exploring her research.

her research¹¹ with the audience. Audience members raised many questions during the event, suggesting that they were deeply moved by Corral's art. In this way, the art became an active site of memory where viewers were learning about violence against women from the exchange of information and stories and reinvesting new meaning into the work. Together, we (de)constructed and (re)constructed our memories and associations with Corral's exhibition to (co)construct a new cultural memory that will continue to evolve.

Narrative Sketch of Jungeun Lee

Jungeun Lee's art is described as exploring "the relationship between human experience and cultural memory" (Artpace Staff, 2014). Lee grew up in South Korea and came to live in the United States when she began graduate school, first as a student of architecture and then changing her major to art. As a graduate student, she began exploring issues related to the experiences of Korean women during World War II in a series called "Silenced Suffering: The Comfort Women Project." I was curious to know how and why this particular topic was of interest to her. Her recollections are as follows:

In June 2007, I came across the news about an active political campaign supporting the U.S. House Resolution 121. This bill was basically asking for the Japanese government to apologize to Asian women they [the Japanese military] abused back in [the] 1930s. Even though I was aware of Japanese kidnapping the [Korean] women to use as sex slaves, I never realized how offensive it was. The Japanese military's treatment of Korean women was a very uncomfortable truth to me. From that moment, I started questioning what exactly happened and why I didn't know anything about it. These many questions made me start to research about the truth. The truth I found, strongly encouraged me to explore this issue through my works. (J. Lee, personal communication, August 8, 2014)

Lee's exploration of the historical contexts informing past injustices are central to the development of her work. The conflicts between China and Japan which began in 1931 and continued until 1945, meant Japanese soldiers were stationed in China and other Asian countries for long periods of time. As Lee learned, the Japanese government used these conditions, as well as being aware of China's strict punishment for rape and sexual harassment, as a rationale for kidnapping and abusing women. Lee's research

11. For further information about the stories of comfort women, please see Argibay (2003), Lee (2000), or view a film by Dai Sil Kim-Gibson (1999) where she combines documentary footage, interviews, and dramatic reenactments to represent this period of history from multiple vantage points.

revealed that by providing sexual services to their soldiers, the Japanese government was able to circumvent punitive actions.

The sex comfort stations were established in each of the Japanese military camps in China and other Asian countries until the end of WWII. The victims were from several different Asian countries including Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, and certain parts of China. These countries were either Japanese colonies or occupied regions. The ages of the women involved were from 12 to 40 years old. The testimonies of comfort women who survived show how miserable the lives of these victims were. On average, each victim was visited by 20 to 30 Japanese soldiers daily. (J. Lee, personal communication, August 8, 2014)

In Lee's 2014 installation, she took an up-close look at the life of Seowoon Jung (1924-2004), who was only a young girl when she was taken from her home in Korea to Semarang, Indonesia. Lee obtained Seowoon's firsthand accounts of her experiences as a comfort woman from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Republic of Korea¹² and used this information to further research her story.

Because this work deals with Seowoon's life as a comfort woman, I decided to follow the route from her home in Korea to Indonesia, where the Japanese soldiers took her. She was sixteen, and the countries she visited were unknown and frightening to her. She stayed at Simonokeki, Japan, for the first few months until the soldiers placed her in Semarang, Indonesia, for six years. As I traveled through Japan by boat and actually set foot on Seowoon's route, I gained a glimpse of what her life would have been like. (J. Lee as cited in International Artist in Residence Gallery Notes, 2014)

When encountering the work that Lee created for her exhibition, there were many familiar images from visual culture that I could readily identify, but how they were altered and (re)presented sparked my curiosity about their current symbolic meaning. For example, my eyes were immediately drawn to the white dresses resting on the wooden boxes. The dresses appeared to be examples of South Korean Hanbok, a popular form of colorful clothing worn by Korean youth in the past and present, but why were they now laid out on wooden boxes? Where were the rich colors and patterns that I have come to associate with these dresses? What follows is an exploration of the symbolic meaning in Lee's work as contextualized by the artist and situated through my eyes as an attendee to the opening night of the exhibition.

12. To read testimonials of other women who were forced into the role of comfort women, please see the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family's (2015) e-museum at <http://www.hermuseum.go.kr/eng/>

(Re)Staging Visual Culture as a Working Site of Memory

During the opening of Lee's exhibition, I saw visitors walking through a long tunnel called 2114 Days (see Figure 5), and I followed along. As I walked through the tunnel, I couldn't help but notice that the surface of the floor was uneven and lumpy, but I didn't understand why. Lee explained that she created this tunnel as a representation of six years of Seowoon's life when she was forced into her role as a comfort woman. Each small piece of fabric used to construct the tunnel represents one day of Seowoon's journey.

At the bottom of the tunnel, I put a lot of women's clothes that I collected here in San Antonio. The women's clothing represents the women's bodies. The clothes represent the victims, and now you will be the abuser—stepping over their bodies in the tunnel—without knowing it. (J. Lee, personal communication, July 10, 2014)

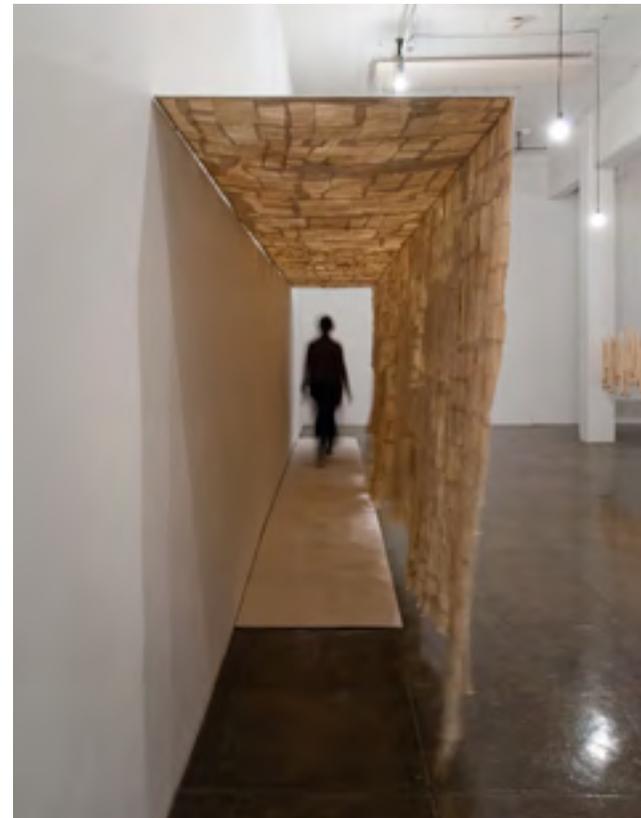


Figure 5. Jungeun Lee. *2114 Days*. Photo courtesy of Artpace San Antonio. Photo Credit: Mark Menjivar.



Figure 6. Jungeun Lee. *6330 km*. Photo courtesy of Artpace San Antonio.
Photo Credit: Mark Menjivar

Although Lee would have preferred to interview Seowoon herself, her passing only encouraged Lee to take the next course of action and seek out relatives and others who knew her. During Lee's journey to South Korea, she carried a traditional cotton fabric called Gwang-Mok and Moo-Myung with her, fabric that would become an integral part of the exhibition.

I purchased a lot of fabric for my journey. ... I carried that fabric with me and put it down on the street and I let people step on it, and then get dirt on it. I came back with all of this material. After months of travelling, I started thinking how I could make the work with this material. I put a lot of my emotions out there. When I was travelling, I never had a second where I wasn't thinking about her. I was there in the places that she once was, so wherever I stepped, I thought of her. When I came back from the travelling, every morning I kept thinking about her journey. (J. Lee, personal communication, July 10, 2014).

Another integral part of Lee's exhibition was a piece called *6330km* (see Figure 6), which was constructed by pulling threads from the fabric Jungeun carried with her and later (re)constructed for display. She suspended the thread artistically from the ceiling, creating a temporary border in the exhibition site. The total length of the thread correlates with the distance Seowoon was forced to travel during her years of captivity. These suspended forms of bounded thread also served in dividing the physical space, but the monochromatic palette of the fabric, thread, and wood also seemed to unite the space. Lee activated the space by allowing viewers to remember Seowoon, follow in her

(re)constructed journey, and see the past in the present.



Figure 7. Jungeun Lee. *You or Me*. Photo courtesy of Artpace San Antonio.
Photo Credit: Mark Menjivar.

(Re)constructing Cultural Memory

Lee had (re)constructed an uncomfortable journey for us as the viewers and participants to experience. We could and I did embed my own memories and associations with the work that I saw in front of me. As briefly mentioned earlier, I was pleasantly surprised to see the beautiful Hanbok clothing as the main focus of the installation called *You or Me* (see Figures 7 and 8) but Lee's choice to use a white color for the fabric made no sense to me. Every Hanbok I have seen in person and in books has been full of vibrant and youthful colors and designs. My memories and associations with Hanbok clothing is that only youth in Korea wear them and depending on how they wear their hair, it further articulates their age and relationship status. Lee intentionally (re)presented the Hanbok clothing void of color and stained by footprints to symbolize how these young girls had their youth stripped away from them and left motionless and silenced.

(Re)staging the Hanbok clothing upon simple wooden boxes activated my past memories and associations with this visual culture symbol through the artist's lens, which now references a more poignant symbolic association for me in the present. I was also confused by the symbolic meaning of the hanging thread, as it reminded me of meat hanging to cure; meat which often garners high prices when sold. However, my prior associations with the thread and Lee's connection with its symbolic reference to Seowoon's experience were not that far apart. The shameful secrets of human trafficking, as revealed through the (re)staging of visual culture in Lee's work allowed me to connect my own memories with the histories of others.



Figure 8. Jungeun Lee. Installation view. Photo courtesy of Artpace San Antonio. Photo Credit: Mark Menjivar.

Countering Silence in Education

Lee, like Corral, constructed a working site of memory where the past and present invite investigations of a common theme through interplays between visual culture and memories, which can help learners construct an understanding of our world (Freedman, 2003). When we learn from memories of past events, the value or significance of the original event is no longer what matters, rather how it has been (re)visited over time and represented by the artist opens up new opportunities for learning and understanding (Schacter & Addis, 2007; Tamm, 2013). Both of these women's work serves in countering silence through the creation of research-based artifacts that simultaneously (de)construct and (re)construct visual culture. For example, Lee used fabric and retracing place to record six years of Seowoon's torturous life journey as a sex slave as material for her art. Corral utilized text collected from legal documents¹³ to construct temporary monuments that memorialize the names and memories of victims of femicides. Their contemporary art practices, which include discussing their work with audiences and exchanging stories to encourage new cultural memories to evolve, can serve as exemplars to educators and students to reference when constructing our own educational initiatives to challenge social injustices.

Sadly, there are still noticeable attempts to silence select vantage points in education. In Tucson, Arizona, one district removed, then reinstated a controversially diluted version of its Mexican American Studies program from a predominantly Hispanic community (Madrigal, 2012; Narvarete, 2012; Robbins, 2013; Smith, 2011; Suarez, 2010, 2013). At a middle school on the campus of Howard University, African American teachers were given pink slips in front of their students for teaching what was deemed as "controversial" African American history (Demby, 2015; Manuel-Logan, 2015). Similarly, McGraw Hill was asked by a representative of the Japanese government to delete information regarding comfort women from a college textbook (Arudou, 2015). According to the historians who condemned this request:

[N]o government should have the right to censor history. We stand with the many historians in Japan and elsewhere who have worked to bring to light the facts about this and other atrocities of World War II.

We practice and produce history to learn from the past. We therefore oppose the efforts of states or special interests to pressure publishers or historians to alter the results of their research for political purposes. (Dudden, 2015, paras. 8 & 9)

However, people are taking deliberate measures to give voice to people

13. During my conversation with Margo Sawyer, she mentioned that there were lots of regulations and protocols in place regarding the handling of these legal documents. Working with a legal scholar, Corral had to decide how to utilize the information so that it could "manifest itself into art". (M. Sawyer, personal communication, July 10, 2015).

who have been silenced in the past. For example, the comfort women who were once considered shameful secrets, even by members of their own families (Clark, 2000), have been speaking out for the past 20 years about their experiences with the hope that history does not repeat itself (Halpin, 2014; Soh, 2003). The role and responsibility of the Japanese government to publically acknowledge and provide financial compensation to victims and their families continues to be a contentious topic amongst individuals within and beyond Japanese society.¹⁴ Countering silence in education has the potential to help our students learn to question how issues of power relations and suppression of knowledge from the past might be examined in the present. But how do we begin?

Putting theory into practice, Bastos (2006) and Knight (2006) suggest educators explore and share our own biases and assumptions with our students, and encourage them to do the same, in order to better understand ourselves and others. Encouraging students to critically reflect and explore issues of power and privilege through the construction of activities is also addressed by Keifer-Boyd, Amburgy, and Knight (2007). For example, in an activity called “race privilege”, students are asked to imagine how their daily activities would be impacted if they woke up one day and found that were someone of a different race. According to the authors, conversations between students helped to make visible some of the social benefits and privileges some students took for granted, thus encouraging students to (de)construct notions of power and privilege on a personal level. There are numerous publications¹⁵ which can serve in sparking conversations that can help our students learn to utilize information from the past to make better informed decisions in the present. Finding resources that are a good fit for the age and interest of our students might be challenging, but encouraging students to be active participants in shaping their own learning is important for people of all ages.

The contemporary art practices of Corral and Lee illustrate their commitment to make public stories of injustice that might not otherwise be told. Through their research-based practices and social interactions with diverse audiences, they create opportunities for people to not only question the past through a contemporary lens, but also work to raise awareness about shameful secrets. Corral and Lee’s (re)staging of visual culture for audiences to explore, creates a framework through which audience members can activate their art, not as static products void of emotional and real-world contexts, but as a site of memory –where memories can (re)connect the stories and experiences of the past with the present.

14. To view current discourse on this topic, please see KBS World Radio (2015a &b) at http://world.kbs.co.kr/english/news/news_In_detail.htm?No=108721&id=In and http://world.kbs.co.kr/english/news/news_In_detail.htm?No=108638&id=In

15. The following resources may be helpful to further explore how multiple vantage points regarding violence against women might inform pedagogical practice. Please see: Agosin, 1987; Auther, 2007; Bennett, 2005; Butler, 2009; Chicago, 1993; Chicago, 2014; Culbertson, 1995; Das, 1996; Di Bella & Elkins, 2013; Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010; Higgins & Silver, 1991; Jolly, 2010; Schlievert, 2009; Soh, 2008; and Wolfthal, 1999.

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