

CROSSING BOUNDARIES:
GALLERY, BORDERS, AND TRADITION
THE WORKS OF TERESA MARGOLLES

By

Rafael Rene Barrientos Martinez

Bachelor of Arts, 2011
The University of Dallas
Dallas, Texas

Submitted to the Faculty
Graduate Division
College of Fine Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May, 2013

CROSSING BOUNDARIES:
GALLERY, BORDERS, AND TRADITION
THE WORKS OF TERESA MARGOLLES

Thesis Approved:

Committee Chair, Dr. Lori Diel, Associate Professor of Art History

Dr. Frances Colpitt, Deedie Potter Rose Chair of Art History

Andrea Karnes, Curator, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

Joseph Butler, Associate Dean for the College of Fine Arts

Copyright © 2013 by Rafael Barrientos Martinez
All rights reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis committee—from Texas Christian University, Committee Chair Dr. Lori Diel, Associate Professor of Art History; Dr. Frances Colpitt, Professor of Art History; and from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Curator Andrea Karnes- for the time they devoted to guiding me in researching and writing this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Thistlethwaite, Dr. Babette Bohn, Dr. Amy Freund, Dr. Christa Robbins, Edie Peinado-Riley, and Shari Gowens for supporting my academic pursuits. A thanks also goes to the Texas Christian University Sunkel Grant Committee for funding my travel to Mexico City to experience Teresa Margolles's work first hand. I would also like to thank Dr. Cathy Caesar from the University of Dallas for her guidance and support throughout my academic career.

Thanks go to my friends and fellow Master of Arts and Master of Fine Arts students—Kristin DiGioia, Claire Ptaschinski, Amanda Weininger, Gibson Banta, Alexi Riggins, Deborah Reed, Tammy Bui, Lucia Arbery Simek, Bradly Brown, Erick Rodolfo Figueroa, and Hiroko Kubo—for supporting me throughout my research and writing of this thesis.

Lastly, a special thanks goes to my mother, Gloria E. Martinez, for her lifelong love and support, without which this paper would not be possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Illustrations.....	vi
Crossing Boundaries: Gallery, Borders, and Tradition. The Works of Teresa Margolles	
Introduction.....	1
The Work.....	4
Margolles's Early Years	10
Mexican Non-Sites.....	16
Alternate Perceptions.....	25
A Global Issue.....	30
Conclusion.....	39
Figures.....	42
Bibliography.....	61
Vita	64
Abstract.....	65

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1. Gabriel Orozco, *Chair with Cane*, 1990.
- Figure 2. Francis Alÿs, *Paradoxy of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997.
- Figure 3. Teresa Margolles, *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, 2009.
- Figure 4. Map of Mexico.
- Figure 5. Teresa Margolles, *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, 2009 (detail).
- Figure 6. Teresa Margolles, *What Else Could We Talk About? Public intervention with Flag*, 2009.
- Figure 7. Teresa Margolles, *What Else Could We Talk About? Cleaning*, 2009.
- Figure 8. Teresa Margolles, *Cubo*, 2010.
- Figure 9. Teresa Margolles, *PM 2010*, 2012.
- Figure 10. Teresa Margolles, *La Promesa*, 2012.
- Figure 11. Teresa Margolles, *La Promesa*, 2012 (detail).
- Figure 12. SEMEFEO, *Lavatio corporis*, installation view.
- Figure 13. Aztec culture, *Coatlicue*, late 15th Century.
- Figure 14. Teresa Margolles, *Cards for Cutting Cocaine*, 1997-1999.
- Figure 15. Teresa Margolles, *Dermis*, 1995.
- Figure 16. Diego Rivera, *Protest*, 1928.
- Figure 17. Robert Smithson, *Non-site (Franklin, New Jersey)*, 1968.
- Figure 18. Teresa Margolles, *PM 2010*, 2012 (detail).
- Figure 19. Teresa Margolles, *Tela bordada*, 2012.

Crossing Boundaries: Gallery, Borders, and Tradition The Works of Teresa Margolles

Introduction

Teresa Margolles's *What Else Could We Talk About?* was chosen to represent Mexico in the 53rd International Venice Biennale in 2009. The installation was located off the beaten path in a sixteenth-century Venetian palace, Palazzo Rota Ivancich, a historic setting that is a part of the Italian national patrimony. Margolles placed works inside and outside the Italian structure. These works transported viewers metaphorically out of this picturesque setting and into the harsh realities of Mexico by bringing attention to the brutality and violence that is a part of contemporary Mexican experience.

A country's entry in the Venice Biennale typically represents the current artistic direction of that nation. Therefore, we can see Margolles's conceptually oriented installation work as representative of contemporary art in Mexico. The foundations for this art can be traced to the 1990s, a decade marked by political and economic turbulence. At this time, many Mexican artists created works that reflected the realities of urban living in Mexico City. For example, artists like Gabriel Orozco and Francis Alÿs created experimental works of art that according to Jamie Ratliff "emphasize the often overwhelming size and chaos of Latin America's largest megalopolis."¹ Orozco's works explore relationships between mundane objects in the real world and the realm of art, merging reality with art. For example, *Chair with Cane* (Figure 1) from 1990, an ephemeral sculpture that took place in Mexico City, was an intervention Orozco created

¹ Jamie L. Ratliff, "Visualizing Female Agency: Space and Gender in Contemporary Women's Art in Mexico" (PhD diss., University of Louisville, 2012), 194.

in the street with help from a street vendor who repaired chair caning.² By replacing a broken chair's seat with the vendor's raw caning, Orozco's installation existed in the real world instead of the artist's studio space or art gallery. Alÿs's works, often ambulatory explorations, examine social and economic realities that are specific to the locations in which they are carried out. His *Paradoxy of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997 (Figure 2), for example, is a performance in which he pushed a large block of ice through the Mexico City streets on a warm day reflecting the economic realities of the Mexican laborer. Like Orozco and Alÿs, Margolles also draws on her experiences of living and working in this chaotic, constantly moving, twenty-four seven environment. However, whereas Orozco turns the streets of Mexico into his studio and Alÿs focuses on Mexico's poor, Margolles focuses her work on the brutalities surrounding the Mexican drug war, in which violence between rival cartels and between these cartels and the government plagues the nation.

Concerned with exploring the effects the narco trade has had on her homeland, Margolles brings remnants of this grisly reality of death into the institutional space of a gallery, challenging viewers to relate to it.³ In the artist's own words, "I'm merely bearing witness to a retelling of the facts: thousands of dead, and hundreds of children killed in the crossfire."⁴ Margolles's installations document and memorialize the growing number of those who have died due to the Mexican drug war. Margolles's works

² Ann Temkin, *Gabriel Orozco* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 13.

³ Narco or "el narco" is an all-inclusive term used to refer to the criminal network of drug smugglers, from the highest leaders of the drug cartels to the lower level drug mules. Among these drugs are marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. For a thorough understanding of Mexico's drug trade see Ioan Grillo *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

⁴ Taiyana Pimentel, Teresa Margolles, and Cuauhtémoc Medina, "Conversation," in *Teresa Margolles: What Else Could We Talk About?*, ed. Cuauhtémoc Medina (Barcelona: RM Verlag, S.L., 2009), 89.

particularly resonate with me as a Mexican American, having grown up in the 1990s alongside friends and family who have been affected by the violent reality that she documents. In this thesis, I apply Robert Smithson's ideas of the non-site to some of Margolles's most recent and evocative works, created from 2009 to the present. Smithson's non-sites, displayed in galleries, include maps and bins containing material (usually rocks) collected from remote sites in the landscape. I argue that by bringing materials from Mexico's violent reality into the gallery space, Margolles creates "Mexican non-sites," transforming viewers' perceptions, taking them metaphorically to Mexican soil. When shown internationally, Margolles's works confront a global audience by tapping into the universality of mortality, implicating all in the global issue that is the drug trade.

The Works

Margolles's *Muro baleado (Culiacán)/Gunned Wall (Culiacán)*, 2009 (Figure 3) connects the gallery space with a particular site and instance of violence in the Mexican city of Culiacán in the northern state of Sinaloa where she was born and raised (Figure 4). A simple cinderblock wall riddled with bullet holes, this structure once stood in Culiacán, and now stands in a gallery like a minimalist sculpture.⁵ One does not need to approach this work or read explanatory text written by curators to recognize the seriousness of its subject matter. A wall is a part of man's everyday existence. Walls serve as markers of space, surrounding our homes and dividing our borders. Walls act as protective barriers between worlds. This wall, however, has lost its defensive strength. With every shadowy bullet hole, viewers can sense the breakdown of protection within Mexican society. Nevertheless, knowledge of the wall's history, which is given to viewers by wall text, adds further layers of meaning to it. When it is re-assembled in the gallery space the wall is transformed according to Rein Wolfs into a "museified witness to a capital crime."⁶ According to explanatory text, a battle took place in front of this wall ending with the death of two police officers. Viewers can see the more than fifty bullet holes that punctured the obdurate concrete surface. These have been numbered and documented by police investigators (Figure 5). In its original location, this wall would not have been considered a work of art. Bystanders would walk by it and perhaps consider who could have been gunned down at this site. In Culiacán the wall, a relic of

⁵ For an overview of minimalism see Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990).

⁶ Rein Wolfs, "Over the Border," in *Frontera: Teresa Margolles*, ed. Rein Wolfs (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011), 104.

violence, would have eventually succumbed to the entropic process, becoming submerged in the drug culture that plagues this city, a part of its citizens' daily lives.

Based upon the success of works like *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, in 2009 Margolles was selected to represent Mexico in the Venice Biennale. Margolles transformed the entire Mexican pavilion, Palazzo Rota Ivancich, into a non-site, filling its rooms with installations that transported visitors to Mexican realities. Hanging above the entry to the pavilion were three flags: those that usually mark structures as venue sites, that of the European Union and of the city of Venice, and a third hung directly above the entry, between these icons of both historic and contemporary power, was Margolles's own *Flag* (Figure 6). Representing a power even greater than the other two flags, *Flag* is the standard of mortality. Its fabric is impregnated with blood collected from northern Mexican execution sites along the United States border. Unless visitors were already aware of this work's meaning, they probably would pass it without even knowing. The experience of *Flag* can be likened to outsiders' indirect experience of the violence going on in Mexico. One can be aware of it, without fully perceiving the extent to which the violence affects the Mexican nation. Visitors were made aware of the flag's significance by wall texts in Margolles's installation. Viewers were informed that the sheet that makes up this work, was used to clean up blood that was left behind at crime scenes after the police and coroners had collected the remains and evidence. Just as in a car collision, shards of glass are usually left behind littering the streets. These broken bits of glass become enmeshed into everyday life. In the case of the blood and bodily fluids that are left behind, where do they go? Like the broken glass, it soaks into the streets and

becomes a part of the location in which it is left. For *Flag*, however, Margolles has interfered with this process and brought these grisly remnants into the exhibition space.

Margolles's *Cleaning*, 2009 (Figure 7) was located inside the pavilion. An installation that resulted from a performance, *Cleaning* was enacted by members of victims' families who mopped the floors of the palazzo with bloodied sheets similar to the one in *Flag*. A stipulation of the Venice Biennale is that artists cannot alter the Venetian historic venues in any fashion. Walking through *Cleaning*, visitors may have thought they were simply entering empty rooms, lacking works that they could discriminately see. Via explanatory texts in the gallery written by the pavilion's curator Cuauhtémoc Medina, however, viewers were made aware that underneath their feet lay part of the installation. Every day a volunteer would enact the performative component of this installation, mopping the wood and marble floors with the bloodied sheets. When mixed with Venetian water, residue from the Mexican crime scenes would soak into the floors, altering them forever, imperceptibly breaking the rules of the biennale.

Cubo/Cube, 2010 (Figure 8) is a part of a series of works concerning the realities of Ciudad Juárez (see map, Figure 4), a border town marred by the violence surrounding the drug war and whose name is synonymous with this reality. *Cubo* is a one ton steel cube made from melted-down reclaimed scrap rebar, collected by day laborers from Ciudad Juárez. On this minimalist steel cube is inscribed, "1 TONELADA DE ESCOMBRO DE VARILLA. CALLE MARISCAL. CIUDAD JUAREZ. 2010." This text tells the visitor that this work references a specific site outside of the institution in which it is shown. The text tells us that the rebar for *Cubo* was collected from razed buildings that once stood on the Calle Mariscal, a historic district in Ciudad Juárez. These

buildings and nightclubs were a part of the history of this border town, once a tourist spot that attracted foreign visitors from the United States and hosted performances by entertainers such as Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, and Nat King Cole.⁷ But much time has passed since these greats performed on this district's stages. The tourist industry dried up in Ciudad Juárez long ago, and the possibility of its resurgence died with the enduring violence that occupies the city's streets thanks to the drug war. According to Judith Torrea, in Ciudad Juárez "the dead are the only ones who are safe. This is a city at war, with burned out, abandoned buildings, houses for sale, extortion, kidnappings. It is a militarized city with constant roadblocks. A city that is disappearing."⁸ In this installation Calle Mariscal becomes an emblem for this disappearing city. Along with these historic structures, countless homes and businesses have vanished as well. Within Ciudad Juárez more than 116,000 homes have been abandoned.⁹ Economically the city has been decimated by this war with some 10,000 business closed down.¹⁰ These are the facts that seem to be communicated to the visitors of Margolles's non-sites.

In 2012, Margolles created *PM 2010* (Figure 9) an installation that compiles 313 cover pages of the Mexican newspaper *PM* from the year 2010, displayed sequentially on the gallery wall.¹¹ This local newspaper is published in Ciudad Juárez Monday through Saturday, 313 days of the year.¹² There is no digital archive of this newspaper, and every three months past issues are recycled. Deaths covered in this newspaper are but temporarily documented by it with no existing records. The documentation of the lives

⁷ Margolles and Wolfs, *Frontera: Teresa Margolles*, 54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹ This work was also produced in a print edition, with reproductions book-bound in a slipcase.

¹² Ciudad Juárez is also infamous for a mysterious string of murders of young women, a crime that has yet to be solved.

lost in the violence that has occurred in the streets of Ciudad Juárez in one year's time is destroyed with the past issues of the newspaper. By collecting the covers of this periodical Margolles saves this documentation, and by displaying it in the gallery space, she creates a memorial to the dead.

La Promesa/The Promise from 2012 (Figure 10), an installation and performance piece created by Margolles for the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporaneo (MUAC) housed within the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City, further explores the devastation caused by drug cartels in Ciudad Juárez. As in all of these installations, Margolles has created a non-site that allows the viewer to step into a reality that to outsiders is seemingly different than his or her own. In addition to being a tourist destination, Ciudad Juárez was also considered a place of opportunity due to a once thriving *maquiladora* industry that provided the region with thousands of jobs. *Maquiladoras*, or *maquilas*, are factories that assemble tax-free components for export at low costs thanks to the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, which eliminated tariffs on a large percent of Mexican and U.S. exports.¹³ This industry not only takes advantage of cheap Mexican labor but due to poor governmental supervision, is known for horrible working conditions that lead to the deaths of countless workers. Desperate for work, migrants from throughout Mexico moved to the city that promised a better future, a development that caused a construction boom of home building. Already a troubled city, drug trafficking has worsened the living conditions of Ciudad Juárez, creating a war zone out of a once ordinary city. Violence

¹³ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)," accessed April 28, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418784/North-American-Free-Trade-Agreement-NAFTA/>.

and the current economic crisis have driven these residents from their homes, causing a wave of migration in the opposite direction, creating a landscape of vacancy.

La Promesa draws the viewers' attention to these facts. In a yearlong performance, Margolles purchased one of Juárez's vacated homes, broke it apart, and transported it to Mexico City, re-enacting a similar migratory pattern away from Ciudad Juárez. These parts were then shredded into tiny pieces (Figure 11) and placed in the center of one of MUAC's galleries, forming a low wall of rubble. Every day museum volunteers went into the installation to pick away at the wall with their hands, spreading the bits out on the floor, eventually covering the floor of the cavernous space, leaving little room for visitors to walk. This installation and performance piece creates a non-site that documents the ordeal that the war on drugs has caused. Being forced to flee their homes and leave behind their very livelihoods, citizens of Ciudad Juárez are directly affected by the turmoil of the drug war. Their lives have been transformed by this bitter reality.

Margolles's Early Years

Born in Culiacán, Teresa Margolles now lives and works in the Mexican capital, Juárez, and Spain. Since the early 1990s, with firsthand knowledge and experience of the narco trade's transformation of Mexico, Margolles has been creating works representative of the violence in Mexican streets. She first began creating works as a founding member of the artist collective SEMEFEO, an acronym for the Servicio Médico Forense, the Mexico City morgue.¹⁴ Brought together in 1990, SEMEFEO was a death-metal rock band as well as an experimental performance art group that was part of a wave of underground artistic groups that formed in the 1990s. Their works brought together performance and installation, and reflected the chaos of the Mexican capital.¹⁵

In 1993, while still a member of the collective, Margolles enrolled in medical classes, studying the posthumous body and the cycle of decomposition that a corpse undergoes.¹⁶ In this program she had the opportunity to learn how to perform autopsies, giving her hands-on access to a reality from which most would recoil. The artist went on to receive a degree in the science of communication and forensic medicine from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM), which allowed her to enter and work in the Mexico City morgue, a place that would become the symbolic center of her later works.¹⁷

It was in 1994 that SEMEFEO had their first high profile exhibition featured at the Museo Carrillo Gil in Mexico City, a well-respected museum dedicated to nurturing research and experimentation by young artists. In this installation, entitled *Lavatio*

¹⁴ The members of SEMEFEO also included Arturo Angulo, Carlos López, and Mónica Salcido.

¹⁵ Rubén Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 117.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

Corporis, the group presented a grim carousel that was made up of dissected formaldehyde-preserved horses (Figure 12). According to SEMEFEO, the subject matter for this installation was concerned with “the life of corpses,” or the transformation bodies go through once death occurs.¹⁸ Their fascination with death and the evolution of the corpse is reflective of the Mexican experience, with constant reminders of the violence surrounding the drug war occupying the nation’s streets and news headlines. Undoubtedly linked to her own experience in the morgue, this installation foreshadowed her work as an independent artist using similar mediums and subject matter,¹⁹ following the official disbanding of SEMEFEO in 1999.

The Mexico City morgue reflects the role violence has played in this city. Standing outside the structure is a replica of the famous Coatlicue, a monolithic statue of the mother earth goddess who was associated with death by the ancient Aztecs.²⁰ The original work (Figure 13) likely stood in the sacred center of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, now modern day Mexico City. Many Aztec artworks concerned life and death, and countless lives were sacrificed to the gods in order to ensure the continuance of life and time.²¹ Coatlicue, represented with a necklace of severed hands and hearts, was among the many deities to whom human sacrifices were made for these reasons.²² With a replica of this sculpture standing at its doors, the Mexico City morgue can be seen as a temple of death. However, this structure is not located in the religious center and is little visited. Located in the Colonia Doctores, one of the most dangerous areas of Mexico

¹⁸ Olivier Debroyse, *La Era de la Discrepancia = The Age of Discrepancies: Arte y Cultura Visual En México = Art and Visual Culture in Mexico: 1968-1997* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México, 2006), 421.

¹⁹ Debroyse, *La Era de la Discrepancia = The Age of Discrepancies: Arte y Cultura Visual En México = Art and Visual Culture in Mexico: 1968-1997*, 421.

²⁰ Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*, 117.

²¹ Esther Pasztory, *Aztec Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 2000), 159-160.

²² *Ibid.*, 159-160.

City, the morgue, as in most cities, is an unobtrusive place, with the dead more than the living passing through its doors.²³

With the importance of death in the Mexican pre-conquest era in mind, Margolles's works take evidence of violent deaths associated with the drug industry out of the morgue and into the space of the gallery. For example in works like *Cards for Cutting Cocaine* (1997-1999), consisting of laminated cards that are blank on one side and, on the other, show photographs of deceased drug mules (Figure 14). These cards were originally passed out at parties in Mexico City for drug users to cut their cocaine to remind users/viewers of the human sacrifice involved in the drug trade. Another work, *Dermis* (1995), consists of sheets that bear the mark of dead bodies that once lay beneath them (Figure 15) in order to remind those viewers who are oblivious of the current Mexican realities of violence and death due to the narco trade.²⁴ These works draw the attention of the viewer, who may be unaware of his or her connection with this violence, to the missing.²⁵ Focusing upon deaths that have resulted from the drug war, Margolles commemorates the forgotten victims of this war by bringing these grisly reminders into the gallery space, making them a part of all viewers' realities.

Why is it so vital for Margolles to document the brutality and violence that occurs in the Mexican streets? With the sheer number of violent crimes associated with the drug war, death has sadly become a part of Mexican citizens' everyday existence. In 2010, the Mexican periodical *Reforma* documented some 11,000 plus deaths associated with the

²³ Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*, 117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

drug war.²⁶ From early 2007 to late 2010, of the 45,000 homicides that occurred in Mexico, those that were drug-related numbered 32,000.²⁷ To put this into context, in 2010, in the city of Ciudad Juárez which is today considered to be among the deadliest places in the world, more than 2,700 homicides occurred, “more than the combined annual totals for New York (532), Chicago (435), Los Angeles (297), Washington, DC (131), and Miami-Dade (84).”²⁸ Internationally publicized in various media outlets, the sheer amount of violence, which was largely focused in the northern region bordering the United States, has tarnished the image of the Mexican culture.

With the number of bodies entering the Mexico City morgue growing each day, Rubén Gallo argues that the missing bodies within Margolles’s work represent the thousands of bodies that remain unidentified or unclaimed.²⁹ With the increasing amount of deaths that occur in Mexico, the loss of life has become a faceless fact, illustrated by the growing number of nameless corpses that lie unclaimed in the morgue. The countless dead are just numbers that grow higher as the years pass. Being subjected to and bombarded by death in the streets and bloody images in the news, the expected revulsion to such imagery is subverted and nullified. As Cuauhtémoc Medina, a well-respected curator and scholar of Mexican contemporary art, writes in the catalogue that accompanied Margolles’s Venice Biennale presentation,

the homicides among rival gangs were viewed by the public as an occupational hazard, the effect of immanent justice. It’s not so much the consumption of illegal substances as the murderous economy surrounding this commerce that produces

²⁶ David A. Shirk, *The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Prevention Action, 2011), 8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹ Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*, 121.

the moralism spiked with ethical indifference which is also the standard reaction to the slaying of a prostitute.³⁰

The growing mortality rate associated with the drug war has reached a level of acceptance that not only alters Mexican citizens' perceptions but also those of outsiders, who typically experience it in the mediated forms of newspaper, television, or the internet. Death has sadly become associated with the Mexican culture, stigmatizing the image of the country for outsiders almost as it had been in the pre-Columbian era by the European invaders.

Of course today sacrificial death is no longer celebrated as it had been in the pre-Columbian era. The violence between competing cartels and a corrupt government has marked the image of the Mexican culture in outsiders' perceptions.³¹ This violence, unlike that of centuries before, is not one to be celebrated; it comes with no greater good. More than likely viewers will never again see it distinguished in larger-than-life representations like those historical images of the Mexican mural movement. For example, Diego Rivera's *The Protest* from 1928 (Figure 16) celebrates armed revolutionaries standing up for their rights as Mexican citizens.³² However, Margolles's works ensure that the contemporary brutality surrounding the narco industry will be remembered. The violence that has occurred in this war fought in the name of and against drugs marks this contemporary period. It is a part of the Mexican culture. Margolles's installations cause the viewer to reflect on this culture of terror. By contemplating the

³⁰ Cuauhtémoc Medina, "Materialist Spectrality," in *Teresa Margolles: What Else Could We Talk About?*, ed. Cuauhtémoc Medina (Barcelona: RM Verlag, S.L., 2009), 21.

³¹ J. N. Mattis, United States Joint Forces Command. *Joint Operating Environment 2008* (Norfolk: USJFCOM Public Affairs, 2008), 34.

³² Desmond Rochefort, *Mexican Muralists* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998), 66.

connections made within the gallery to actual occurrences and places, the viewer is forced to encounter this harsh reality.

Mexican Non-Sites

With the Duchampian introduction of the found object or readymade as fine art in the early twentieth century, which itself questions the definition of art, attention began to be paid to the role the gallery plays in establishing the artistic status of an art object. A gallery itself is a special sanitized space that seems to be separate from the world beyond its walls. It is a ritualistic space concerned with “contemplation and learning that art museums are supposed to foster.”³³ When entering a gallery, visitors enter a mode of consciousness different from their norm, a state of liminality that enables an “isolation of objects for visual contemplation.”³⁴ In the 1960s, many artists questioned the role the gallery plays in the display and comprehension of their works. Artists like Hans Haacke, Richard Long, Denis Oppenheim, Michael Asher, and Robert Smithson began to push the boundaries of the gallery space to not only question the fine-art institution’s role but the very commerciality of the gallery and art market. This drive can also be seen in the Mexican counter-culture of the 1960s when artists critiqued institutional spaces and experimented with alternative spaces. Artists attempted to break the boundaries of the gallery space by incorporating the outside world.

Robert Smithson particularly stands out in this regard. As Simon Dell writes in his analysis of Smithson, “the challenge was somehow the result of an incompatibility between painting, sculpture and the experience of the modern world. ... the challenge to painting and sculpture was the result of an incompatibility between different spaces.”³⁵ The traditional mediums of artistic creation were no longer adequate for the expression of

³³ Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁵ Simon Dell, “The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism” in *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and His Contemporaries*, ed. Simon Dell (London: Black Dog, 2008), 12.

real-world issues. In response to this, artists of the 1960s began to create works that fall today under the category of earthworks, bringing the outside inside. Smithson in particular tried to bridge the gap between the two disparate spaces that are inside and outside the gallery or museum, by bringing documentation as well as actual elements of the real world into the gallery, a process that has bearing on Margolles's process today.

Robert Smithson's non-sites, begun in the 1960s, draw the gallery visitor beyond the stark white walls of the display space. His works analyze the relationships between the present and the absent, the perception of the museum interior or gallery and that of the outside world. His non-sites bring some of the most distant forgotten spaces of the world into the gallery. Smithson did this by bringing documents of and substances, usually rocks, from these places into the gallery. What is shown in the gallery are his non-sites that visually connect the present space with absent locations via material from the latter.

Smithson first started working with his non-sites, or earth projects, when he collaborated with an architectural firm in 1966 that was planning to develop an airport in the Dallas-Fort Worth region.³⁶ He was contracted to work for the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport Co. to help them integrate sculpture into their airport complex, a project that in the end would not come to fruition. As Smithson explained, "As a result I found myself surrounded by all this material that I didn't know anything about—like aerial photographs, maps, large-scale systems, etc."³⁷ With all of these materials Smithson began to view this vast track of land as a complex. From this understanding "came a proposal that would involve low-level ground systems that would be placed at fringes of

³⁶ Robert Smithson and Jack D. Flam, *Robert Smithson: the Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 234.

³⁷ Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 177.

the airport, sculpture that you would see from the air.”³⁸ In his plans his works, by live video feeds, would connect the occupied spaces of the airport complex with the outlying areas of the plot where few ever find themselves. “I was sort of interested in the dialogue between the indoor and the outdoor and on my own, after getting involved in it this way, I developed a method or a dialectic that involved what I called site and non-site.”³⁹ It is from this beginning that the concept of connecting these separate spaces was born.

Smithson recognized that there was a potential dialogue between the realms of the inside and the outside. He strove to literalize this dialogue by creating his non-sites, works that were subsequently created for the gallery and referred to realities beyond the institution’s walls. As seen in *Non-site (Franklin, New Jersey)* from 1968, Smithson directs the attention of the viewer away from the gallery toward existences outside that were seemingly separate from his own (Figure 17). For this work Smithson travelled to Franklin, New Jersey, where he located a specific plot of land that he would reference via a non-site in a gallery. Within the non-site, Smithson presented a map on the wall that, in trapezoid details, highlighted this location. Beside it on the floor were five boxes, whose shapes mimicked these details, filled with rocks from this location. By bringing in materials from specific locations in the outer world like Franklin, New Jersey, a place that was separate from New York City where he lived and worked, the viewer is directed to consider those places. “The non-sites have a physical presence but also suggest a scale which exceeds that of the gallery space.”⁴⁰ They are not recreations of sites nor are they just displaying found objects from them. Smithson’s non-sites, by bringing sites from the

³⁸ Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 177.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁰ Dell, “The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism,” 14.

outside to the inside of the institution, can be recognized as sites in and of themselves that beckon the viewer to recognize realities outside the pristine display space.

Margolles's installations can be compared to these non-sites in their connection with realities outside of the gallery or museum. Margolles's installations are not representational recreations of Mexican locations, as seen in a landscape or cityscape painting for instance, but are non-sites that are connected to Mexican sites by the incorporation of materials from those places. By bringing in actual matter from the space and time where violence occurs in the streets of Mexico, Margolles makes critical connections with these sites and occurrences, virtually taking the viewer to those places and times.

When discussing viewers' perceptions of Smithson's non-sites, Dell compares the experience with the correlation between viewing an actual work of art and a photographic reproduction of a work of art. When we consider the latter, we realize that the photograph exists in its own space, one that encompasses what it documents. As Dell writes, "the viewer and the reproduction exist in the same physical space and yet the reproduction, when viewed as an image, establishes a second space ... one capable of containing a relatively large work of art ... a correlation of two spaces."⁴¹ Objects or spaces can be made present by documentation as in Smithson's non-sites and as seen in Margolles's installations. Dell goes on, "making present does not necessarily require any shaping or making; it simply requires that objects are set in space in such a way that they may be perceived as substitutes."⁴² By bringing land matter from specific locations and documentation of those specific locations into a gallery, those places are made present

⁴¹ Dell, "The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism," 14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14.

through their parts. Margolles's artworks bring attention to the forgotten and absent by bringing materials from the streets of Mexico into the gallery space, creating Mexican non-sites of her own. In her own words, Margolles's installations are "bearing witness to a retelling of the facts."⁴³ Via documentation her works make the viewer aware of realities that would probably go unknown without them. By referencing specific places such as Culiacán, Ciudad Juárez, and the Mexico City morgue, Margolles creates sites within the gallery that allow visitors to metaphorically enter a reality with which they may be unfamiliar. Unlike the remote locations of Robert Smithson's non-sites, the realities that Margolles references are located in urban settings and charged with harsh truths.

Teresa Margolles's works incorporate materials, such as remnants of crime scenes that she encounters as a forensic pathologist both inside and outside the Mexico City morgue. She creates artworks that are reflections of the daily struggle and violence that occur in the streets of Mexican cities across the country. Margolles's artworks document the social upheaval rampant in Mexican cities throughout the nation. Her works, according to Medina, have "operated like a kind of unconscious historiography of the brutality of Mexican social experience."⁴⁴ Singular instances of violence in Mexico with time succumb to the entropic nature of reality, becoming part of the larger metanarrative of the drug war. Margolles's works commemorate these instances and the countless lives that have been lost in the battle against drugs that has become synonymous with Mexican society. Creating works representative of the violence of Mexico, Margolles uses recognizable imagery that can become universal archetypes of human brutality.

⁴³ Pimentel, Margolles, and Medina, "Conversation," 30.

⁴⁴ Medina, "Materialist Spectrality," 16.

Margolles's works, which range from installations of bullet hole-ridden walls and doors, to bloodstained sheets with silhouettes of forgotten corpses, to rooms filled with vaporized water used to clean bodies from the morgue, connect the two diverse realities of gallery space and the streets of Mexico.⁴⁵ By connecting these disparate spaces, Margolles makes viewers aware of realities outside of their own everyday experiences. Margolles goes beyond the display of found objects, creating sites within the gallery connected to actual places and moments in time in the outside world, bringing attention to the larger social issue of violence that plagues her native Mexico.

Smithson's works can be likened to documentations of outside existence. In an interview with Allan Kaprow, Smithson discussed these existences that he normally would not ever consider himself. He is intrigued by places that exist outside of his own space, his New York City home. In regards to suburban regions, Smithson states:

I'm so remote from that world that it seems uncanny to me when I go out there; so not being directly involved in the life there, it fascinates me, because I'm sure of a distance from it, and I'm all for fabricating as much as possible. It seems that I like to think and look at those suburbs and those fringes, but at the same time, I'm not interested in living there. ... By distance, I mean a consciousness devoid of self-projection.⁴⁶

Referring to the suburbs, himself having been born in suburban New Jersey, Smithson was intrigued by this place where he cannot imagine himself. Smithson was fascinated

⁴⁵ For the Museum of Modern Art's 2002 exhibition *Mexico City: An Exhibition about the Exchange Rates of Bodies and Values*, Margolles filled the gallery space with vaporized disinfected water that had been used to clean corpses at the Mexico City morgue.

⁴⁶ Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 45.

with the removal one can feel from the places his works are connected to and the distance between the viewer and these outposts of existence.

Margolles's and Smithson's works are akin in this way. Outsiders try to withdraw themselves from harsh realities like those of contemporary Mexico. Margolles is drawn to these forgotten places of violence that people try to distance themselves from and inevitably forget. Margolles's own experiences, however, like Smithson's are connected to these places that she references in her work. Being from Culiacán, a hot bed of drug-related violence, Margolles draws the attention of the viewer to what she knows. Working in Mexico City, her works highlight the distance of this capital from those northern towns that are marred by violence. Cultivating awareness, Margolles's works actively bridge viewers' understanding with the Mexican experience by immersing them in it, whether they may understand their personal connection to it or not.

A crucial aspect of Smithson's non-sites and their documentary quality concerns the entropic process and the role it plays in these works. Entropy is a scientific term defined as "a measure of the molecular disorder, or randomness, of a system. The concept of entropy provides deep insight into the direction of spontaneous change for many everyday phenomena."⁴⁷ In layman's terms, entropy involves the degradation of materials in a given system, generally towards a point of homogeneity. Everything on earth is undergoing a constant state of degradation as the planet's surface constantly changes. Smithson himself states, "On the whole I would say entropy contradicts the usual notion of a mechanistic world view. In other words it's a condition that's

⁴⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "entropy," accessed April 14, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/189035/entropy>.

irreversible, it's a condition that's moving towards a gradual equilibrium."⁴⁸ Smithson's non-sites draw attention to this entropic process by not only altering the sites they reference by incorporating matter from them, but by documenting them at a singular moment in time, they act as a freeze frame of this degradation. "As an artist it is sort of interesting to take on the persona of a geologic agent where man actually becomes part of that process."⁴⁹ In transporting sites to the gallery space, Smithson's non-sites allow viewers to take part in this process of entropy by acting as mediator, a role which itself causes a loss of communicated information between the original site and viewers.

This natural process plays a similar role in Margolles's non-sites. Within the culture of violence that surrounds Mexico, singular instances of death and destruction become lost within the metanarrative of the drug war as seen in the destruction of Calle Mariscal in Ciudad Juárez. The non-site is a useful language that Margolles employs to document these realities by bringing objects that hold significant meaning in terms of this violence into the gallery space before they are consumed by this similar entropic degradation, where meaning would be eventually lost. Margolles's non-sites stay this entropic progression by documenting the violence of the drug war before the proof of its existence is lost to time. Yet with the Mexican non-site acting as mediator, a portion of this reality is lost in the process.

When considering the specific audience Margolles's works reach, one begins to question how perceptions of the sites change when viewed by people of different cultural backgrounds. Those who live in Mexico cannot be completely oblivious to the drug wars. Whether they acknowledge the bitter realities of their embroiled nation or not, Mexicans

⁴⁸ Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 301.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

recognize death and the connection it has with their everyday experience. For these viewers, Margolles's works stand as a testament of remembrance to this moment in time. Her works can be likened to documentation of this contemporary period. Just as the murals of the Mexican mural movement tell the history of the Mexican Revolution, Margolles's sites will tell the history of this drug war to future generations. Despite the singularity of the Mexican experience in Margolles's sites, these memento mori-like works are linked with the universality of death, making them accessible to all by an awareness of the inevitability of mortality. This awareness is reached in Margolles's work by her employment of universal archetypes of violence and destruction, such as blood, bullet holes, and broken glass.

When viewed by an international audience her installations provoke the same dread of this inevitability, yet at the same time distinct from the Mexican experience. So when considered from an outsider perspective, non-Mexican viewers quickly identify themselves as such, looking into this reality as separate from their own. They recognize the aspect of fear that is a part of the Mexican experience, which through the non-site is communicated within the gallery, but as mediator separates the outsider's perception from the Mexican's. This then begs the question: As outsiders, how do alternate cultural backgrounds affect the perception of Margolles's Mexican non-sites?

Alternate Perceptions

The violent realities to which Margolles exposes her viewers are distinctly Mexican ones. Her sites are connected directly to a Mexican condition that causes all viewers to enter into a critical dialogue with the atrocities that occur regularly in contemporary Mexican society. Yet according to Luis Camnitzer,

we have all taken in the hegemonic tradition of seeing an object of art as a closed container instead of understanding that it works like a sound designed to reverberate within a very specific sound box. If this box is changed (in this case the cultural context), the sound also changes.⁵⁰

As seen in Margolles's *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, when an object is removed from its natural setting and placed into an institutional space like an art gallery, this object's purpose is transformed. When a bullet-riddled wall is moved into a gallery space, it not only becomes a remembrance to Mexican violence and death that it is connected to, but also evokes the site from which it came, creating a non-site. However, one must recognize that for non-Mexican viewers with alternate cultural backgrounds, specific Mexican references soon become altered, reflective of outsiders' experiences. Margolles's non-Mexican viewership will forever be outsiders due to their pre-existing understandings of reality. Nonetheless the outsider perspective is one that should be considered.

Margolles's installations bring the international audience to Mexican soil. One is metaphorically transported once one enters her Mexican non-sites. The question, however, is what role do outsiders step into when they enter said sites? If outsiders

⁵⁰ Luis Camnitzer, "The Archaeological View," in *It's Not Neutral = Ez Da Neutral = No Es Neutral*, ed. Joxean Muñoz (Donostia-San Sebastián: Tabakalera, 2008), 30.

cannot completely grasp what it is to live in a society so dominated by violence and fear, then they are merely sympathizing with the Mexican experience. Yet, as outsiders, the viewer can still be implicated. One is still connected to realities in the world that may appear to be out of one's personal existence, in this case the violence surrounding drug smuggling, inter-cartel battles, and between these cartels and the Mexican government.

For instance, viewers from the United States are connected to the atrocities going on in Mexico. Even if Americans do not buy or partake in the consumption of illegal drugs, they are indirectly linked as Americans to the drug trade. According to David Shirk,

As the world's largest consumer of drugs and its largest supplier of firearms, the United States is a direct contributor to Mexico's drug violence. According to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, roughly 8.7 percent of U.S. residents over the age of twelve—some 21.8 million people—had used drugs within the previous month. Moreover, over the past three decades, a growing number of U.S. adults, including nearly half of individuals over the age of thirty-five, admit to some drug use during their lifetime. Because of the size of the U. S. black market for drugs and the inflationary effect of prohibition on prices, Mexican suppliers enjoy enormous gross revenues, estimated at \$6 billion to \$7 billion annually, at least 70 percent coming from hard drugs like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and other synthetics.⁵¹

Drug violence in Mexico is largely centered around towns along the border of the United States like Ciudad Juárez. These places have become underground shipping centers for cartels to reach their largest clients, American consumers. For an American, exposure to

⁵¹ Shirk, *The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat*, 13.

the violence of the drug cartels and the drug war is unavoidable due to its widespread media coverage. As consumers of illegal Mexican products, and being aware of the violence that surrounds such products, United States consumers are implicated in the Mexican culture of violence, or what Cuauhtémoc Medina refers to as the “economy of violence.”⁵² With this in mind, what role do outsiders play when they enter one of Margolles’s sites? If they do not enter as the victim, are they the perpetrator?

One needs to consider this question when examining Margolles’s *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, a work that has been shown internationally. How do outsiders enter this site? What perspective do outside visitors relate to, that of the victim or the villain, if they relate at all? These are questions I believe that Margolles would hope viewers would consider when interacting with her works, questioning one’s connection to the violent Mexican reality that seemingly is unconnected to one’s own. The United States is a co-conspirator in the violent Mexican drug trade. As primary consumers Americans not only create the demand that drug cartels attempt to meet, but provide funds for the endurance of this war.⁵³ If this is not bad enough, the very weapons that are used by cartels in this war have been provided to them indirectly by American suppliers. According to Hilary Rodham Clinton, “our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade” and “our inability to prevent weapons from being illegally smuggled across the border to arm these criminals causes the deaths of police, of soldiers and civilians.”⁵⁴ Clinton, the former

⁵² “Teresa Margolles: PM 2010, 2012,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, date accessed April 15, 2013, http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/availableworks/++/name/teresamargolles/id/17/media/margo17773_a_mail.jpg/.

⁵³ Shirk, *The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat*, 13.

⁵⁴ Mary Beth Sheridan, “Clinton: U.S. Drug Policies Failed, Fueled Mexico's Drug War.” *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034.html>.

Secretary of State, acknowledges that Mexican blood is on America's hands. Not only do Americans provide cartels with money to continue fighting in the war on drugs but we give them the weapons to do so. Considering Margolles's non-sites, non-Mexican viewers who believe themselves to be free of connections to the illegal drug industry can occupy the role of mere passerby. They can stop, reflect on the work, and continue on oblivious of their naiveté. As the primary consumers of Mexican illegal narcotics, Americans are implicated in the deaths that occur daily on the streets of Mexico. By creating a marketplace for illegal drugs, Americans guarantee that the drug war will endure.

It would be naive to say, though, that the United States is the only nation involved in the hostility going on within the border of Mexico. Drug trafficking occurs throughout the world. The narco industry is a global issue that involves all nations. With the global dominance and demand for drugs, all nations may be implicated in the violence in Mexico. Margolles's works, shown internationally, draw attention to this fact. Margolles does not try to lay judgment or indict certain nations, but by causing viewers to question their connections to these realities, Margolles reveals this Mexican issue as an international problem. Margolles's installations involve all viewers in the violence of Mexico by allowing them to be taken there metaphorically. According to Medina, Margolles investigates "both materially and symbolically, the ways in which the 'base globalization' of the drugs business steeps the public arena in death."⁵⁵ The drug industry has found its place in the international public marketplace, making it an issue all should be privy to and made aware of. Margolles's installations inculcate the oblivious viewer

⁵⁵ Medina, "Materialist Spectrality," 22.

that their human existence is connected to the battle over drugs in the Mexican streets. By exhibiting her works internationally, Margolles amplifies the Mexican narco problem into a global issue that, like it or not, all visitors are a part of by merely living in a global economy.

A Global Issue

For Mexico's entry to the 2009 Venice Biennale, Margolles pulled back the curtain revealing the global interconnectedness to the Mexican drug war and the violence that stems from it. In the opening days of the Biennale, Margolles revived her earlier *Cards for Cutting Cocaine* by passing out 10,000 similarly laminated cards to the general public in the streets of Venice, implying the global audience's connection to the Mexican drug war. By creating her own Mexican non-sites on this international stage, Margolles created a dialogue with the viewer that acknowledged the drug trade as a global issue. It has never been nor will it ever be a singularly Mexican problem. By creating Mexican non-sites linked to specific Mexican realities, Margolles pulls viewers into her sites, allowing them to comprehend both the violence that surrounds the drug trade and their interconnectedness to it. By incorporating materials in her installations that are laden with the seriousness of mortality, these Mexican non-sites affect viewers' emotional and physical relations to these sites and their realities. In so doing, she creates connections that go far beyond those fostered by photographic representations of this reality in the worldwide media. However, for outsiders who have not lived with such violence on a day-to-day basis, this stay within a Mexican state of mind offers just a partial glimpse into this reality. One cannot completely connect with the world that Margolles brings into the gallery. Her world is one of an intense trauma that can only be likened to war zones. By bringing these gruesome installations into the glamorous Venice Biennale, Margolles compels the global art community to acknowledge what is going on within the Mexican border and consider its role in it.

In the case of *Flag*, Margolles directly links the international community to the bloodshed within the Mexican border by hanging the work, a haunting symbol of mortality, between the already present symbols of power that mark the entrances of the biennale structures, those of the European Union and the city of Venice. Margolles intended for her *Flag* to endure the Venetian weather in an entropic manner over the six-month biennale. When it rained, water diluted the remains that had been soaked into the flag, falling into the canal beneath it. As in Mexico, the blood here became part of the place in which it is left. And just like the bloody sacrifices in the name of the Mexica mother goddess Coatlicue in the pre-Columbian era, this remnant of life soaks into the earth becoming one with it.⁵⁶ In pre-Columbian practices bloodletters were used to puncture one's body in order to make personal sacrifices to Coatlicue. These bloodletters would then be jabbed into a grass ball representative of the earth goddess, enabling the blood to be soaked into the earth as sacrifice, becoming one with it. The runoff from *Flag*, diluted Mexican blood, became a part of the city of Venice, making a Mexican non-site of the famous canals reminiscent of this Aztec tradition.

How is the Italian nation connected to the violence of the Mexican drug war? How can this city, an emblem of Italian trade success, which is identified today by its romantic gondolas and charm, be connected to the carnage that is a part of the Mexican experience? It is this naiveté that Margolles wishes to erase. According to Medina, “artists like Teresa seek to produce friction between unequal social sectors and with this they respond to evidence of the false distance that elite sectors maintain from the rest of society.”⁵⁷ Margolles wishes to squash false understandings that there is a distance

⁵⁶ Pasztory, *Aztec Art*, 150-51.

⁵⁷ Pimentel, Margolles, and Medina, “Conversation,” 99.

between outside viewers from this economy of death. Venice was a shipping capital that owes its grandeur to its access to the East. Thus, it is connected and indebted to international trade. It is this involvement in globalization to which Margolles draws the viewers' attention. Venice may appear to be disconnected from the violence surrounding the drug industry, but this supposition is far from accurate. *Flag* speaks to the international problem that is the narco industry, a reality to which even this posh Italian city is sadly connected. According to Medina, who curated the installation, "This is not a strictly Mexican story, but rather is also evidence of social fluidities, cultural cataclysms and political dramas involved in globalization. The idea was to build a pavilion that would be a space of friction."⁵⁸ Margolles's sites dissolve cultural borders, making her visitors a part of the economy of death that is the drug war. By bringing blood, "the medium of what's left of someone's life" to Venice, Margolles exports Mexican realities and creates non-sites in other ports and cities.⁵⁹

The idea behind soaking up blood and remains with sheets stemmed from the question, "who washes the streets?"⁶⁰ Who cleans up the blood that is left at a crime scene? There is always residue left behind that marks a place as a crime scene. Whether it is glass, blood, or other bodily fluids, something stays behind that through the entropic process will eventually become a part of the earth. But when these marks fade away, so do the memories of that crime or that lost life. Margolles commemorates these places and lives. Using media documentation, she locates murder scenes and, with the help of assistants, soaks up what remained at those places with sheets.⁶¹ In border towns such as

⁵⁸ Pimentel, Margolles, and Medina, "Conversation," 83.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

Ciudad Juárez, where the streets in part are still dirt roads, the mud that is created when the earth mixes with this residue of death marks the sheets. This enables Margolles to transport these outside places into the gallery, creating Mexican non-sites. According to Medina, “the scene of the crime gets moved, via the mud ... what it’s moving is the place where the death occurred.”⁶² By transporting these sites across the Mexican border to international venues, Margolles implicates the global population in the atrocities that are committed in the streets of Mexico. As equals, all viewers share in a common human condition, and entering Margolles’s non-sites, visitors are made aware of this co-existence and their connection to this violence.

Margolles’s *Cleaning* similarly transformed the Palazzo Rota Ivancich into a non-site that will forever be marked by the brutality of the Mexican drug war, very much like the Mexico City morgue. According to Margolles:

If people show up and there’s nothing on display, it’s because we can’t say anything more other than simply mopping up with these victim’s bodies, and it has to be silent, without any parties, without anything else. A mop-up every day using those cadavers and we have to do it without judgment: I don’t care if we’re mopping with the good or the bad guys. I’m merely bearing witness to a retelling of the facts: thousands of dead, and hundreds of children killed in the crossfire.

The big danger is fear, which can create more fear. Fear is the worst thing that can happen to a society.⁶³

Attached to the palace now is the grisly reminder of human mortality. As Margolles states, she does not differentiate between good and bad, drug lord and police officer.

⁶² Pimental, Margolles, and Medina, “Conversation,” 91.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 89.

Margolles does not blame non-Mexican viewers for the violence in Mexico, but wants them to acknowledge their connection to it. Her works concern mortality in its entirety, not playing devil's advocate nor champion for the good. Margolles highlights all of the needless deaths that have occurred due to the drug war, documenting all the Mexican lives that have been taken by it. By Margolles allowing visitors to tread upon bodily fluids, they begin to relate to the Mexican experience that deals with violence on a daily basis. Viewers perhaps then can feel the fear that Mexican citizens must endure having to live with reminders of their own mortality constantly. This palace will forever be a Mexican non-site, made that way by leftover residue connecting those aware of it to the crime scenes of Mexico and the thousands of lives that have been lost due to the narcotics industry.

In *Cubo*, Margolles has created a work that not only metaphorically transports the viewer to a distant location, but by bringing in materials from the outside world, documents a reality that teeters on the brink of oblivion. *Cubo* references a specific site that no longer exists. The historic Calle Mariscal, once home to a vibrant social nightlife, has been wiped away from existence. By referring to this place that is not only a distant location from viewers but has been physically lost, Margolles ensures the continuity of its memory, be it a partial one. With an awareness that the steel used in the construction of this cube came from the Calle Mariscal in Ciudad Juárez, viewers are made aware that such a place existed and is now lost, a reality caused by the narco industry. Besides the history that is associated with this lost section of Ciudad Juárez, one has to consider the toll the violence associated with the drug war has had on its citizens. According to explanatory text, “the photographers, dancers, taxi drivers, musicians, cooks, restaurant

owners, prostitutes, shopkeepers, transvestites and street vendors who were driven out constitute the symbolic weight of this cube.”⁶⁴ Viewing this steel cube and the inscription on it, one begins to feel the immense weight that has been placed on this city by the brutal underground industry of drug trafficking that goes on there. Viewers can sense the toll it has had and perhaps the migration it has caused.⁶⁵ Visitors to this site can momentarily sympathize with the citizens of Ciudad Juárez, seeing the destruction that has been caused by the drug world. This message is magnified when witnessed by American viewers in particular since this documented reality is literally footsteps away from United States soil, a fact that once provided this city with a successful tourism trade and that now threatens to destroy it.

In *PM 2010*, not only does Margolles create a non-site with actual material from Ciudad Juárez by displaying all of the cover pages from a single year from the *PM* periodical, but she also connects the gallery space to all of the murder scenes depicted in the photographs that grace them (Figure 18). This Mexican non-site is connected to crime scenes located throughout Ciudad Juárez, portraying to a greater extent the daily brutality of this Mexican reality in the viewer’s mind. According to Medina, Margolles created this work, “as a record for this moment in history, as witness [of] the collapse of the social fabric and the resilience of the community of that border city.”⁶⁶ He goes on to say:

This document delves into the absence in order to highlight Ciudad Juárez's role as laboratory and omen of the reality of Mexico. It provides some sort of an anthology of the daily suffering caused by the so called ‘war on drugs,’ the

⁶⁴ Margolles and Wolfs, *Frontera: Teresa Margolles*, 54.

⁶⁵ Damien Cave. “A Mexican City’s Troubles Reshape Its Families,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2011.

⁶⁶ Galerie Peter Kilchmann. “Teresa Margolles: PM 2010, 2012.”

impunity of the feminicided [sic], the traffic of weapons, people and substances, extended corruption and the annihilation of the young. This work shows the end result of an economy of violence.⁶⁷

Medina discusses this work as a historic documentation of the realities of this city.

Margolles stays the entropic process that is caused when this periodical's archive is thrown out. By displaying these covers with graphic images on them, this work depicts in an anthological manner the daily violence that occurs in this dusty border town.

Viewers are given a sense of this struggle and are forced to relate to Ciudad Juárez as they glance at the 313 covers depicting this daily trauma. Through the bloody images in this installation, the viewer is forced to metaphorically travel to this border town and look down at the corpses that lie in its streets. Yet only the cover pages are preserved here; the stories in the newspaper's pages are lost. The viewer is not privy to who the dead are nor the exact details that caused these deaths. Margolles's audience is metaphorically treated like a shopper in a grocery line, who glances at the magazine covers in front of them not bothering to open them. Viewers are left in permanent suspension, given only a snapshot of life's brutality. Yet these snapshots, when collected together, allow the audience to step into the shoes of a Mexican citizen, being bombarded with such imagery. Slowly, one image after another begin to blend together as they do in the outside world.

La Promesa, a Mexican non-site that I visited, not only highlights the destruction and death caused in Ciudad Juárez by the narco industry but also draws attention to the effects it has had on the living in this border town. According to the explanatory wall text provided by MUAC outside of the installation,

⁶⁷ Galerie Peter Kilchmann. "Teresa Margolles: PM 2010, 2012."

Teresa Margolles's work is marked by her interest in the social and political context of Mexico and the way it determines the individual ... This work brings visibility to the impossibility of settling down in a place that, as a border, has historically been a city of passage and that became with the advent of large assembly plants, a place of opportunities and promises of its own.

Those who have been able to flee this violence-ridden city most likely already have done so. They have migrated away from the border, the hot bed of crime surrounding the drug trade, toward safer cities in the south. Others have sought refuge in the United States either paying their way there or by gambling their lives by entering the country by illegal means. *La Promesa* allows viewers to step into the lives of these "internal displaced persons" who leave their homes seeking safety away from the violent drug war going on at their doorsteps.

Viewers' perceptions are immediately disoriented when entering *La Promesa*. What little information is given in the explanatory wall text does not prepare those who enter this gallery for what they are about to encounter, a work using the post-minimalist language of "scatter art" but attached to a metanarrative of suffering and loss. One is greeted when entering the cavernous room in which this work was installed by a sea of rubble. One is told that these are remnants of a home, yet there is barely any identifiable form, leaving the viewer wanting to seek out what they can recognize. One can make out pieces of tile and dry wall here and there, but there is no sense of a home in this gallery space. When encountering this rubble viewers' preconceived understandings of their own homes are metaphorically torn apart like those of the former residents of Ciudad Juárez. Visitors recognize that this rubble was once a place that was a safe zone for a family from

the outside world. This installation as a non-site becomes a solemn place that takes the viewer from the pristine gallery into the fragmentation of the everyday Mexican experience.

Conclusion

Margolles's *Muro baleado (Culiacán)*, *Flag*, *Cleaning*, *Cubo*, *PM 2010*, and *La Promesa* created from 2009-2012 are a part of an artistic moment that strives to document the realities of Mexican life. Stemming from her experience as a forensic pathologist in the Mexico City morgue, Margolles's works are created out of the abject. By transporting materials that are a part of the drug war into the gallery space, she not only acknowledges the missing and the dead but creates public discourse concerning the role violence and death play in Mexican society. This is evident by the international popularity of her works, which have been presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Belgium, France, Austria, Spain, Canada, the United States, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Colombia, and China.

Margolles brings the Mexican reality of violence surrounding the drug war into the gallery space and projects it to a global audience. In time the singular realities that Margolles references in her work would have been consumed into the metanarrative of violence that plagues this nation, if not for her intervention. The bullet holes in the wall comprising *Muro baleado (Culiacán)* would have been patched; the blood incorporated into *Flag* and *Cleaning* would have soaked into the earth; the rebar melted down to create *Cubo* would have been incorporated into new structures or taken to a landfill; the newspaper covers of *PM 2010* would have been thrown out or recycled; and the home of *La Promesa* would have been left in disrepair, only to be torn down in time. For Margolles, "something key for me is building structures to retell what's happening in

Mexico, in my hometown, or what I'm seeing in the morgue."⁶⁸ She saves these objects that have important meaning attached to them, bringing them into the gallery space, building non-sites in this seemingly neutral space. These Mexican non-sites confront the viewers that enter them, metaphorically transporting their perceptions to Mexican soil. By doing this, viewers are able to momentarily sense the fear that this violent reality causes in the hearts of Mexicans, having to live with constant reminders of their own mortality in the carnage that they see on the front pages of their newspapers and in the streets of the cities where they live.

This glimpse into a Mexican citizen's consciousness is only a limited one that viewers are able to step out of thanks to the non-site's partial ability to transport ideas and perceptions. However, this momentary visit to Mexican soil provides the opportunity for non-Mexican viewers to become aware of their connection to this singularly Mexican reality. Invisible borders and expansive oceans do not contain the violence surrounding the Mexican drug war. The smuggling of narcotics is a global issue that plagues all nations. We are all connected to this harsh reality. By violating the implied distance traditional aesthetics allows for, viewers' minds are transported by Margolles to a Mexican sensibility that bridges insider and outsider awareness.⁶⁹ Margolles's installations pertain to distinctly Mexican struggles yet hold non-Mexican viewers accountable in the role they play in the global economy of the narcotics industry.

Today, Margolles continues to create works documenting the fall-out caused by the narco industry. Margolles, however, has expanded her attention from violence in Mexico to violence in other Latin American countries. Still incorporating materials from

⁶⁸ Pimentel, Margolles, and Medina, "Conversation," 84-85.

⁶⁹ Medina, "Materialist Spectrality," 19.

the morgue and crime scenes associated with the narco industry, she now integrates the help of those affected by this reality as seen in *Tela bordada/Embroidered Fabric* (Figure 19), in which Margolles commissioned Mayan weavers to embroider a sheet stained by fluids from a woman murdered in Guatemala City. The craftswomen, who themselves are activists against violence against women in Guatemala, covered this gruesome reminder of mortality with vibrantly colored symbols from the Mayan tradition that speak to “hope and power, such as the sun, birds and flowers.”⁷⁰ This work, then, still focuses on violence and mortality but now references life as well.

⁷⁰ Galerie Peter Kilchmann. "Teresa Margolles: Tela bordada (Embroidered fabric), 2012."



Figure 1.

Gabriel Orozco

Chair with Cane, 1990

Silver dye bleach print, 20 in. x 16 in.

Ann Temkin, *Gabriel Orozco* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 12.



Figure 2.

Francis Alÿs

Paradoxy of Praxis I (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing), 1997

Documentation of an action, Mexico City

Video, 5 min., color, sound

“Francis Alÿs: *Paradoxy of Praxis I (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013,

<http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/francis-al%25C3%25BFs/id/37/media/alys16118.jpg/>.



Figure 3.

Teresa Margolles

Muro baleado (Culiacán), 2009

Courtesy of Colección Museo Tamayo

“Teresa Margolles: Muro Baleado, 2009,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013, http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/teresa_margolles_8f_web.jpg/.



Figure 4.
 Map of Mexico
 “Administrative Map of Mexico,” *One World – Nations Online*, Date accessed April 15, 2013, <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/mexico-administrative-map.htm>.



Figure 5.
Teresa Margolles
Detail of *Muro baleado* (Culiacán), 2009
Photo: Daniela Uribe
“Teresa Margolles: Muro Baleado (Shot Wall), 2009,” *Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros*,
Date accessed April 15, 2013, <http://www.saps-latallera.org/saps/teresa/>.



Figure 6.

Teresa Margolles

What Else Could We Talk About? Public intervention with *Flag*, 2009

Venice Biennale, Mexican Pavilion, 2009

Photo: Teresa Margolles

“What Else Could We Talk About? Public intervention with *Flag*,” *Galerie Peter*

Kilchmann, Date accessed April 15, 2013,

<http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/17-bandera.jpg/>.



Figure 7.

Teresa Margolles

What Else Could We Talk About? Cleaning, 2009

Venice Biennale, Mexican Pavilion, 2009

Photo: Teresa Margolles

“What Else Could We Talk About? Cleaning, 2009,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013,

<http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/margolles09k.jpg/>.



Figure 8.

Teresa Margolles

Cubo, 2010

Frontera, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, 2010

Photo: Nils Klinger

“Cubo (Cube), 2010,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013,

http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/teresa_margolles_____nils_klinger__13__small.jpg/.



Figure 9.

Teresa Margolles

PM 2010, 2012

Installation view of 313 covers of the newspaper *PM* from Ciudad Juárez published in 2010

118 1/8 in. x 511 3/4 in.

7th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, Germany, 2012

Photo: Marta Gornicka

“PM 2010, 2012,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013,

http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/available-works/+/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/tm12_bb7_kw___martagornicka_01_k_1.jpg/.



Figure 10.

Teresa Margolles

La Promesa, 2012

La Promesa, MUAC, Mexico City, Oct. 6, 2012 - Jan. 06, 2013

Photo: MUAC

“La Promesa, 2012,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013,
http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/overview/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/tm12_muacpromesa_08_web.jpg/.



Figure 11.
Teresa Margolles
Detail of *La Promesa*, 2012
La Promesa, MUAC, Mexico City, Oct. 6, 2012 - Jan. 06, 2013
Photo: Rafael Barrientos Martinez



Figure 12.

SEMEFEO

Lavatio Corporis

Exhibition view, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Alvar y Carmen T. de Carillo Gil

Mexico City, June 1994

Olivier Debroise, *La Era De La Discrepancia = The Age of Discrepancies: Arte Y Cultura Visual En México = Art and Visual Culture in Mexico: 1968-1997* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México, 2006), 420.



Figure 13.

Aztec culture

Goddess Coatlicue, late 15th Century

8 ft. 3 1/4 in.

Museo Nacional de Anthropologia, Mexico City

“Mexica Curadora: Arqloga. Bertina Olmedo Vera,” *Museo Nacional de Anthropologia*,

Date accessed April 29, 2013, <http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/index.php/salas-de-exhibicion/permanentes/arqueologia/mexica.html>.



Figure 14.
Teresa Margolles
Cards for Cutting Cocaine, 1997-1999
2 color photographs, 12 cards 36.42 in. x 46.26 in.
Courtesy of LABOR

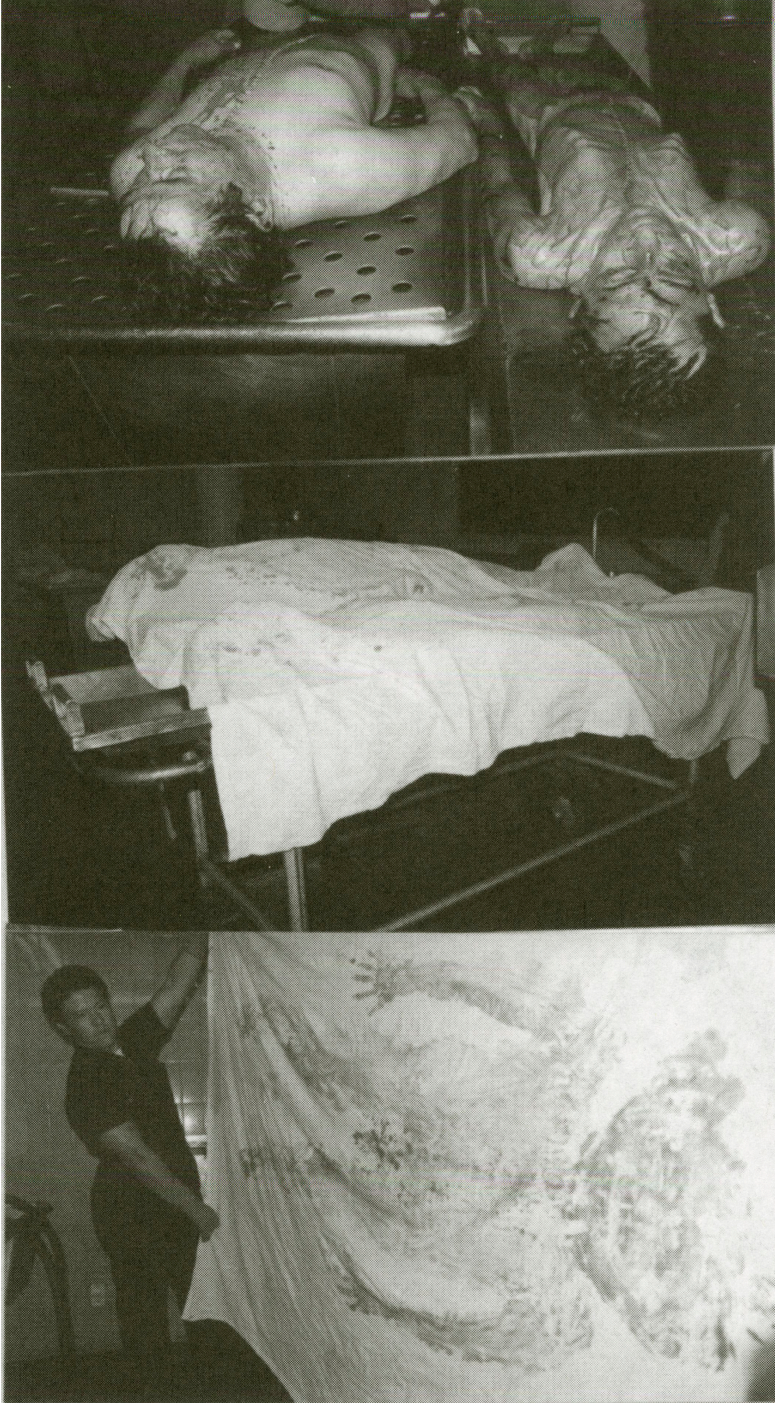


Figure 15.

Teresa Margolles

Dermis, 1995

Photo: Teresa Margolles

Rubén Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 124.



Figure 16.
Diego Rivera
Protest, 1928
Fresco
West wall, Courtyard of the Fiestas, Ministry of Education, Mexico City
Desmond Rochefort, *Mexican Muralists* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998), 67.



Figure 17.

Robert Smithson

Non-site (Franklin, New Jersey), 1968

Painted wooden bins, limestone, photographs, and typescript on paper with graphite and transferred letters, mounted on matt board

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

Simon Dell, "The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism" in *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and His Contemporaries*, ed Simon Dell (London: Black Dog, 2008), 13.



Figure 18.

Teresa Margolles

PM, 2010, 2012 (detail)

Printed book on paper, compiling 313 images of covers of the newspaper *PM* from Ciudad Juárez published in 2010.

Book: 11 13/16 in. x 14 11/64 in.

“*PM*, 2010, 2012,” *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 15, 2013, http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/available-works/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/margo17773_a_mail.jpg/.



Figure 19.

Teresa Margolles

Tela bordada, 2012

Traditional Maya embroidery made by indigenous activist women from Guatemala on a fabric soaked in fluids of a woman's body who was murdered in Guatemala City

78 3/4 in. x 78 3/4 in.

"Teresa Margolles," *Galerie Peter Kilchmann*, Date accessed April 28, 2013,

<http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/profile/+/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bray, Rebecca Scott. "Teresa Margolles's Crime Scene Aesthetics." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Fall 2011, 110, no. 4, 933-948.
- Camnitzer, Luis. "The Archaeological View." in *It's Not Neutral = Ez Da Neutrala = No Es Neutral*. Ed. by Joxean Muñoz, 26-32. Donostia-San Sebastián: Tabakalera, 2008.
- Camnitzer, Luis, and Rachel Weiss. *On Art, Artists, Latin America, and Other Utopias*. Austin: University of Texas, 2009.
- Cave, Damien. "A Mexican City's Troubles Reshape Its Families." *The New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2011.
- Colpitt, Frances. *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1990.
- Debroise, Olivier. *La Era de la Discrepancia = The Age of Discrepancies: Arte y Cultura Visual En México = Art and Visual Culture in México: 1968-1997*. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México, 2006.
- Dell, Simon. "The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism." in *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and His Contemporaries*. Ed by Simon Dell. 12-69, London: Black Dog, 2008.
- Dickerman, Leah and Anna Indych-Lopez. *Diego Rivera: Murals for the Museum of Modern Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011.
- Du Pont, Diana. *Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2007.
- Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Eugenie Tsai, Cornelia H. Butler, Thomas E. Crow, Alexander Alberro, and Moira Roth. *Robert Smithson*. Berkeley: University of California, 2004.
- Galerie Peter Kilchmann. "Teresa Margolles: PM 2010, 2012." Date accessed April 15, 2013. http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/available-works/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/media/margo17773_a_mail.jpg/.
- Galerie Peter Kilchmann. "Teresa Margolles: Tela bordada (Embroidered fabric), 2012." Date accessed April 28, 2013. <http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/profile/++/name/teresa-margolles/id/17/>.

- Gallo, Rubén. *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Goldman, Shifra M. *Contemporary Mexican Painting In A Time of Change*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977.
- Grillo, Ioan. *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011.
- Hernandez, Daniel. "Empty Promises." *Art in America*, Dec 2012, 100, no. 11, 47-48.
- Margolles, Teresa and Rein Wolfs. *Frontera: Teresa Margolles*. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011.
- Mattis, J. N. United States of America. United States Joint Forces Command. *Joint Operating Environment 2008*. Norfolk: USJFCOM Public Affairs, 2008. <http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2008/JOE2008.pdf>.
- Medina, Cuauhtémoc. "Materialist Spectrality." in *Teresa Margolles: What Else Could We Talk About?*. Ed. by Cuauhtémoc Medina, 15-30. Barcelona: RM Verlag, S.L., 2009.
- Pasztory, Esther. *Aztec Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000.
- Pimentel, Taiyana, Teresa Margolles, and Cuauhtémoc Medina. "Conversation." In *Teresa Margolles: What Else Could We Talk About?*. Ed. by Cuauhtémoc Medina, 83-99. Barcelona: RM Verlag, S.L., 2009.
- Pohl, Frances K. *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*. second edition. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002.
- Ratliff, Jamie L. "Visualizing Female Agency: Space and Gender in Contemporary Women's Art in Mexico." PhD diss., University of Louisville, 2012.
- Reuter, Laurel, and Lawrence Weschler. *Los Desaparecidos = The Disappeared*. Milano: Edizioni Charta, 2006.
- Rochefort, Desmond. *Mexican Muralists*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998.
- Sheridan, Mary Beth. "Clinton: U.S. Drug Policies Failed, Fueled Mexico's Drug War." *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/25/AR2009032501034.html>.
- Shirk, David A. *The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Prevention Action, 2011.

Smithson, Robert, and Jack D. Flam. *Robert Smithson, the Collected Writings*. Berkeley: University of California, 1996.

Temkin, Ann. *Gabriel Orozco*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009.

Wolfs, Rein. "Over the Border." in *Frontera: Teresa Margolles*. Ed. Rein Wolfs, 100-105. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011.

VITA

Personal Background	Rafael Rene Barrientos Martinez Born in San Antonio, Texas March 2, 1989 Son of Gloria E. Martinez and Rene R. Barrientos
Education	Bachelor of Arts, focusing in Art History, University of Dallas, Irving, 2011 Master of Arts, Art History, Texas Christian University, 2013
Fellowships and Awards	Tuition Fellowship Award, Texas Christian University, 2011-2013 Mary Jane and Robert Sunkel Travel and Research Grant, Texas Christian University, December 2012
Internships	Curatorial Department, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Summer 2012

ABSTRACT

Teresa Margolles's artworks act as documentations of the social upheaval rampant in Mexican cities throughout the nation. Margolles's work gives remembrance to the countless lives that have been lost in the battles between cartels, drug smuggling, and between these cartels and the Mexican government that have become synonymous with the perceivably troubled Mexican society. Creating works representative of the violence within the border of Mexico, Margolles transports these sites into the gallery space, creating Mexican non-sites that take non-Mexican viewers' perceptions to realities that may appear foreign to their own. Margolles's installations, which range from bullet hole riddled walls and doors, to bloodstained sheets, fragments of abandoned homes, and rooms filled with vaporized water used to clean bodies from the Mexico City morgue, connect the two diverse realities of gallery space and outside world. By connecting these disparate spaces, Margolles draws the attention of the viewer to forgotten and ignored areas of reality, creating an awareness in her viewers of the toll the narco industry has had on her native Mexico. This thesis will evaluate this connection between the inside and the outside in these installations, discussing how the artist goes beyond the display of found objects, creating Mexican non-sites in the gallery space connected to actual places and moments in time in the outside world, suggesting larger social issues that plague Mexico. Via Robert Smithson's ideas of the non-site, I argue that Margolles's works connect viewers from beyond the Mexican border to these violent realities affectively confronting foreign audiences to realize their own connection to the Mexican drug war. Margolles reveals the interconnectedness of all nations to these realities.