DAVID HERNANDEZ Where Is Ana Mendieta?

and cross the threshold to continue

doing what was loved

while alive, signing every second the contract made by breathing.

Over and again returning to the natural world

for materials, turning it to canvas, its shores and riverbanks.

its creeks, the cracked mosaic of parched earth,

grassy fields shuddering from gusts

from Iowa to Mexico.

What a mysterious and bountiful canvas to breathe in.

to work in, the way it lingered following a day's work,

its lush scent

rising from that content and weary body.

Here, the person known as Ana Mendieta is nameless. Here, shapeless

and pronoun-less, without a self. Here, dreaming of terrain and given one,

dreaming of body and given one so hands can excavate into the landscape

the abstract shape of a woman. In death, see, dream and given are one.

Do you understand? If there is distance between the two, that is want, and want is

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for the human heart. Want is why the sweet juice from ripe fruit
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seeps down the back of your fingers and around your wrist bone

and rivers along the slow curve of your arm. And want is why you weep.

Here, there is no here

where the making continues.

Hands shape a woman-body

and she becomes the absence

in wet sand. She fills

with ocean and reflection.

mirrors the sky as clouds

glide across her torso,

across each limb, the keyhole

of her face. When she releases

the ocean to the ocean, the clouds

dissolve, and dreaming brings

tempera powder, shower of red

to make her shape luminous as

lava and stars and blood and want.

"My art is the way I reestablish the bonds that tie me to the universe."

It continues. Is always now, always present tense. Arranging stones on the shadow side of a mountain, positioning white egg rocks that follow around a woman-body until she becomes a new letter added to the alphabet. She ignites at her center and the fire rises and snaps its bright flags. A flurry of embers leap and spiral, leap and spiral. Flames fill her shape—right to the rocks—and a voice commands *hold*. The fire listens. Folding and unfolding upon itself. The voice says *cross* and the fire crosses and is heard across the mountain, replacing shadow with conflagration. And she is heard.

and cross back over the threshold

to shuck off my clothes, cover my nude body with dark mud.

press up against a primordial tree, spine to trunk,

and close my eyes.

A photo is taken and filed under ART

to make a distinction

between it and life.

There is none.

There is only the cosmos growing and breaking

as you do. And the palpable force

to grow or break.

It is why my mud-covered body aligns with the tree, why the shutter clicks.

Camouflage, it is called. How the body disappears and is seen

only if you look carefully, as if to say the body is

one with the tree. It is. It is also one

with the mountains,

burning or green.

And one with the undulating ocean.

And one with the gauzy clouds.

It is one with the leaves shifting above you and one with the unpinned ones

that land in your path

like open, brittle hands.

The answer is simple, real as the cells whorled at your fingertip: Ana Mendieta

is everywhere.