

VESTIGIOS

By

CARLENE MUÑOZ

A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2014

© 2014 Carlene Muñoz

For My Loving Partner, Melissa Miller-Muñoz, and Mother, Lucia Muñoz

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Julia Morrisroe, for her guidance and for encouraging me to take chances. I would also like to thank my co-chair, Ron Janowich, for his insightful suggestions and continual support. I thank my committee member, Amy Freeman, for her kindness and for pushing me to achieve my full potential. I thank Bethany Taylor for taking interest in my work and I am grateful to all the faculty in the School of Art and Art History for their feedback throughout my graduate studies. I thank my peers, for their friendships and for always being dependable. I thank my parents for their love and unconditional acceptance. Finally, I thank my forever love and partner Melissa Miller-Muñoz for believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself, for being brave enough to spend a lifetime with an artist, and for supporting me in all I do, always.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
ABSTRACT.....	5
PROJECT REPORT.....	7
LIST OF WORKS.....	17
WORKS.....	18
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	22
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	23

Presented to the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

VESTIGIOS

By

Carlene Muñoz

May 2014

Chair: Julia Morrisroe
Co-Chair: Ron Janowich
Committee Member: Amy Freeman
Major: Drawing

Vestigios is a body of work that examines presence and spatial relationships through the process of drawing. Delicate hand drawn islands create spatial relationships by subtly emerging and dematerializing from the surface of the paper in a topographical analytical exploration of my reaction to spaces and sites. By arranging these islands as constellations on vertical sheets of delicate *Okawara* paper, the drawings become a vessel from which to confront feelings of frailty and vulnerability.

Using an intuitive drawing process, the ritual of drawing allows my unconscious thoughts to shape the imagery. Through this meditative process, altered patterns and spontaneous compositions are formed in response to the paper's surface. This series explores the concept of islands and nebulas occupying a limitless space, drifting and merging in the vastness of the paper.

Vestigios

This project report will address the drawings within *Vestigios*, my project-in-lieu of thesis exhibition and delve into the theories, philosophical ideas, and artistic influences that shaped the series. In previous work, there was an attempt to communicate similar ideas using a traditional approach to landscape drawing by depicting mindscapes of places yearned for or imagined. As the research progressed, new materials were explored. The more recent work is a response to those materials and the reaction to the surface of the paper. The outcome proved to communicate more effectively; a geographic location ceased to exist and allowed the unconscious to form the image.

This *Vestigios* Series includes five drawings, all in black colored pencil, on vertical sheets of paper addressing spatial relationships through ephemeral landscapes, free from the tropes of perspective and horizon line. Notable theories that supported the creation of these drawings include Freud's repetition-compulsion theory and Tuan and Bachelard's spatiality theories. In addition, Vija Celmins and Lee Bontecou inspired my artistic process as well as the formation of my imagery. The following presents an explanation for the choices of material, process, and the theories that provide the framework for the exhibition.

This current body of work titled, *Vestigios*, is a culmination of exploration with materials and technique coupled with a curiosity for space and spatial relations. Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* has had a significant influence on this body of work and has become an essential resource in exploring space and understanding an individual's reaction to various spaces and sites. Bachelard (1994) discusses "topoanalysis" and describes this term as a "systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate

lives." In his writing, Bachelard explains how we as individuals interact with both physical and mental spaces, suggesting that our physical world runs parallel with events and thoughts of past experiences. Bachelard's examination of the immensity of land and memory captured my interest during the research for these drawings in regards to vastness, thought, and infinity - the vastness of space and thought in an imaginary world. To paraphrase Bachelard, a memory is activated when we interact with physical space, and this memory remains a mental space. The individual drawings within the series *Vestigios*, are inspired by the concept of an imagined psychological space. I am interested in how people react to unfamiliar spaces and the ways we adapt to our surroundings. The artwork initiates a discourse through landscapes about the ways in which a person reacts psychologically with fear or anxiety to a space. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh explains, "...When taking refuge in the safe island within yourself, you feel calm - you no longer feel trapped in fear or despair, and those feelings are transformed" (Nhat Hanh). These drawings engage feelings of vulnerability and adaptation. There is a conscious effort involved to balance the appropriate amount of abstraction in order for these images to be an unrecognizable space. The drawings were created incorporating the entire body, engaging the viewer physically. Several alternate positions were assumed during the drawing process (standing, kneeling, crouching and reaching), which caused tension on my body and resulted in varied compositions and marks. Hovering over and barely touching the paper, results in delicate marks that make up these frail islands. The viewer's eye travels through areas where the hand has traversed. The size of the paper, ranging from from six and a half feet to just over seven feet long, welcomes the viewer to enter the drawing. Drawing on

different sections of the paper, above and or below eye-level, the viewer is able to experience a moment of disorientation or vulnerability.

According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), author of *Space and Place*, space becomes place at the point where we become familiar with a particular space and attempt to connect with it. Tuan suggests that within experiential perspective “experience is the overcoming of perils”. The word *experience* is connected to the root word *experiment*. The large surface of these drawings permits the images to grow limitlessly and allows me to experience an alternate landscape. By re-creating these abstract mental spaces, my feelings and thoughts become tangible. The process of creating these works resulted in confronting and expressing feelings of apprehensions towards intimidating spaces and the inevitable adaptation to vast spaces.

The process involved in creating this series is motivated by my study of the art making processes of Celmins and Bontecou. Vija Celmins’ artwork and art practice explores space, horizon, and point of reference, along with the metaphysical aspect of objects and scenes. Vija Celmins’s work predominantly consists of delicate and obsessively detailed paintings and drawings depicting elements, parts, and scenes of nature. She creates images of spider webs, seascapes, starscapes, and most recently, the surface of shells. Celmins uses a controlled and detailed process of painting and drawing, the artist admits to making intuitive decisions when working. It is noted, “Most palpable in *Untitled (Ocean)* is the evidence of time elapsed in production, and it is this intuitive sense, derived from the density of the surface, that encourages the viewer to mimic this *longue durée* in a prolonged act of looking. Celmins's drawings are first and foremost detailed records of seeing and doing, transcription and adjustment, working

and reworking, each tiny mark in graphite - made or erased - an index of a roughly equivalent abstract fraction of a source photograph. The drawings are built up in infinitesimal increments until an image emerges and sign and signified, drawing and photograph, finally relate but never so much so that one loses sight of each of the careful marks that compose the whole.” (Bedford).



Vija Celmins, *Ocean*, Lithograph on paper, 1975.

Celmins describes her idea of painting as “an act of trying to reach some physical presence beyond idea.” Although Celmins’s process may differ in her use of the photograph as reference over the experiential, there lies a similarity in the laborious mark-making and layering of marks in an Impressionistic manner; the individual marks amount to a whole. Similar to Celmins, the *Vestigios* Series evolved intuitively over time

through the drawing process. Allowing marks to flow directly on the paper, results in a finished piece greater than anything imagined or planned. Working on *Elsewhere*, intuitively allowed the composition of the image to grow and shift throughout the process, ending in a dynamic form. The undulating form consisting of various values is descending in space, drawing the viewers glance downward in motion. Areas of this ominous landscape fluctuate into dark openings, while alternate areas of the drawing are swept away back into the emptiness of the paper. This drawing, along with the other drawings in the series, are completed in a standing position, engaging the entire body, arms, and shoulders; the marks are no longer restricted to hand movements, creating a mood by becoming more varied and energetic.

In *Twice Drawn, Modern and Contemporary Drawings in Context*, Ian Berry and Jack Shear (2011) discuss how drawing is considered the most intimate of all art forms. Berry and Shear assert the following: "Tradition dictates that a drawing is the first fleshing out of a thought into form - but whether this thought represents a spontaneous gesture, an intently studied likeness, or a hallucinatory rendering of an imagined world, there remains a closeness within a drawing" (9). The process of drawing allows the artist to record their conscious and unconscious thoughts directly and immediately onto a surface and assists in gaining a better understanding of one's self and the world around us. *Vestigios* serves as a vehicle for confronting feelings of disorientation and anxiety of the unknown, while permitting the ability to explore and traverse surfaces, lands, and forms. In *Intimidades I and II*, I encounter isolation by drawing these masses and communicating ideas of alienation.

Through the use of repetition, a meditative state is achieved, thus resulting in the attainment of a meditative experience. The need to create these unknown landscapes by using a repetitive and a compulsive approach of mark making can be linked to Freud's repetition-compulsion theory and the uncanny. Although there lays a deep-rooted fear associated with unfamiliar places or "uncanny" spaces, there remains a desire to conquer and experience these situations. The drawings are vestiges of memory and experiences. In *The Uncanny*, Freud states, "...none of us has traversed it without preserving certain traces of it which can be re-activated, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfills the condition of stirring those vestiges of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them into expression." (Freud)

Jean Fisher and Stella Santacatterina, both writers and critics, suggest: "The drawing does not start from an empty space; there is no such thing as a blank page that the artist confronts as the horror of the void to be filled" (167). There are limitless spaces and places individuals encounter in their lifespan; these spaces can be in the present world or in our memories. The islands in this series describe places that have been conjured in the mind and then recorded. Barthes discusses how every individual is a space, where thoughts and images from countless sources are assembled and formed. The drawing becomes a translation of both conscious and unconscious thoughts and decisions, which are assembled and then organized. As the drawing progresses, repetitive use of marks begins to produce a rhythm, and a meditative flow is reached. The drawing process comes into focus coupled with uninterrupted experience and connection. The following quote best describes the meditative state of being through which my drawings were created: "I lose myself. More precisely "I" is no longer

there "I" have momentarily ceased to participate in the world. I am becoming paper, becoming ink, becoming brush...the drawing is becoming thought." (Fisher and Santacatterina)

The drawings in *Vestigios* were not done from observation or derived from pictures; the intent of this series is to create a completely spontaneously drawn land, directly influenced by thought and the process, and free from the laws of logic. This approach is intentional, deriving from the need and desire to depict and communicate the distortions of space and distance to the viewer that may be experienced by an anxious individual. In my works titled, *Intimidades I & II and Elsewhere*, these islands can be viewed in alternate ways: the viewer can approach the drawing as if they were looking through a window and admiring a traditional landscape, or the viewer can switch their visual perception and view the landscape from an aerial view making the drawing appear topographical in nature. This same perceptual switch can be applied to the way in which the drawing is created by applying a binary method of focusing on both the positive and negative forms within the work. The viewer may focus their attention on the mark as it builds to create images that are reminiscent to forms, textures, and patterns found in nature, or the viewer can draw their attention to the incorporated undrawn areas of the paper. These preserved areas of paper become another drawing in itself happening alongside the drawn areas of the work. This process incorporates the paper as a second medium, producing equal significance to the pencil. This approach introduces a duality to the work, which is both engaging and methodical.

The drawings in the series were all created using the same minimalist materials: black colored pencil on Okawara paper. The blacks in the drawing vary from being light,

translucent – almost disappearing in areas – to contrasting rich dark layers of detailed marks. This variation of gradients creates a deep sense of space, allowing the forms to move in and out of focus, closer and then further away from the viewer. Building marks upon marks using a slow laborious method of drawing, allows unplanned recognizable forms to surface from the drawing. At times, some of these found images are deliberately exaggerated and consciously manipulated. When working on *Vestigios*, there were several instances that orbs began to appear amidst the randomly drawn marks and intricate patterns, specifically in *Orbe* and *Elsewhere*. These orbs occupied part of the landscape adding to the atmosphere of the drawing and emerged as points or markers in space – a placeholder for areas that were explored in the drawing process and symbolically representing light, illuminating and guiding the viewer through the landscape.

In *Tethered to Time and Space*, the drawing triggers feelings of immensity and the vastness of space. The angled ellipse is made up of individual islands, symbolically representing the “infinite”. The image is composed in such a way to envelope the human body, suggesting a portal into another dimension or limitless void. To quote Bachelard: “we do not have to belong in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impression of going ‘deeper and deeper’ into a limitless world...” (Bachelard)

In *Orbe*, the english translation being *orb*, a dark circular mass, consisting of undulating patterns of vines, roots, branch like forms and orbs are positioned towards the top of the paper. This fleeting composition engages with the viewer’s body, causing the viewer to look up towards this looming form. Slowly trickling from the bottom of the form, down toward the center of the paper and closer to the viewer’s plane of sight, a

lightly drawn pattern subtly appears leaving behind a trace.



Lee Bontecou, *Untitled*, graphite on paper, 2009.

Similar to the drawings of Bontecou, areas of the drawing are meticulously handled and others remain sketchy leaving behind the evidence of the hand. In a review written of Bontecou's *Drawn Worlds*, Gregory asserts, "It should be noted that the collection of works presented here represent a variety of levels of refinement. In certain instances, the drawing is worked to the level of *inevitability*. And in other, more tender moments, we are allowed to see the artist as she constructs her forms via unfinished sketches, or paintings that mimic the moodier moments of impressionism." (Gregory). In *Orbe*, by refining particular parts of the drawing and leaving other areas unrefined, multiple layers

within the work are exposed, bringing visibility to the drawing process. Creating this visibility and detail through layered markings materializes the image and produces a sense of space. This space, which was once formless, consists of new forms that emerge from the paper, transforming into place. The abstraction allows the continuation of dialogue regarding space and place, sifting deeper through emotions and feelings of vulnerability and adaptation between the drawing and the viewer.

The drawings in this exhibition present the viewer with alternate landscapes that evoke psychological responses to spatial relationships. The drawings become both a technical and perceptual experience. The result of working with large sheets of paper and controlled mark making is similar to embarking on a meditative and explorative journey where I am confronting my greatest fears and transforming them, leaving behind vestiges.

LIST OF WORKS

- 1) Title: *Intimidades I*
Medium: colored pencil on Okawara paper
Size: 3 1/4 ft x 6 1/2 ft

- 2) Title: *Intimidades II*
Medium: colored pencil on Okawara paper
Size: 3 1/4 ft x 6 1/2 ft

- 3) Title: *Tethered to Time and Space*
Medium: colored pencil on Okawara paper
Size: 3 1/4 ft x 7 ft

- 4) Title: *Orbe*
Medium: colored pencil on Okawara paper
Size: 3 1/4 ft x 7 ft

- 5) Title: *Elsewhere*
Medium: colored pencil on Okawara paper
Size: 3 1/4 ft x 7 ft



Vestigios Series Installation, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Intimidades I, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Intimidades I, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Intimidades II, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Intimidades II, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Tethered to Time and Space, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



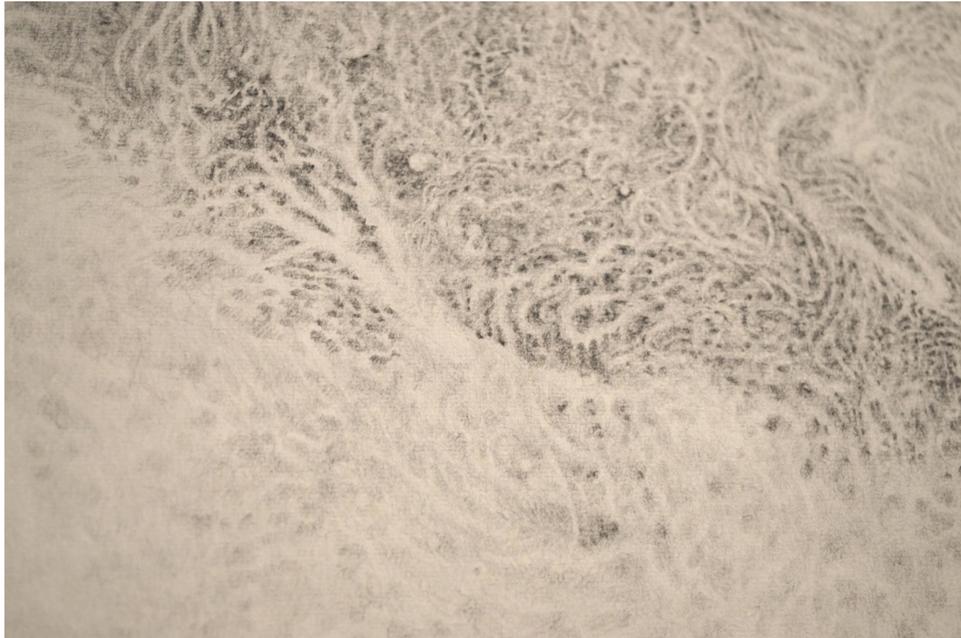
Tethered to Time and Space, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Orbe, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Orbe, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



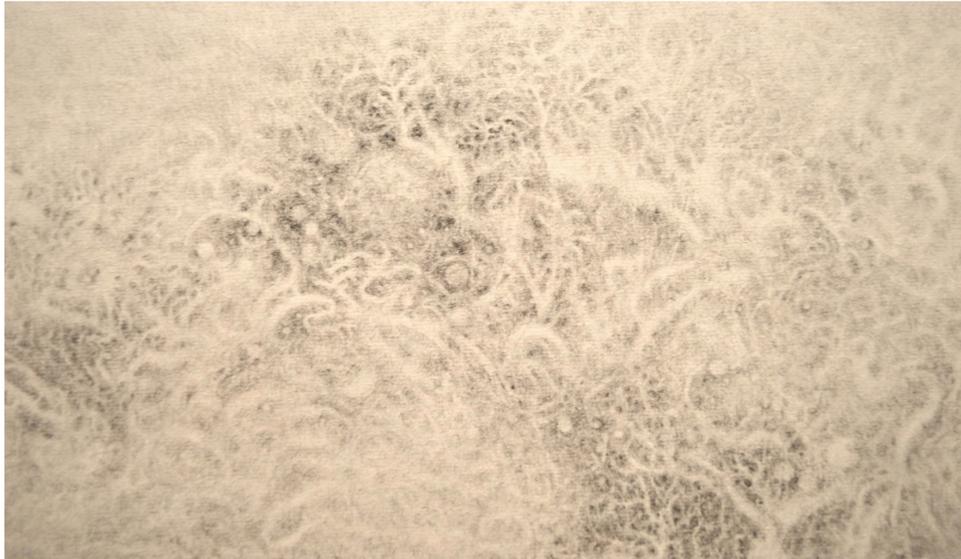
Orbe, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Elsewhere, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Elsewhere, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014



Elsewhere, detail, colored pencil on Okawara, 2014

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. Print.
- Bedford, Christopher. "Vija Celmins at the Hammer Museum." *After all*. 04 05 2007: n. page. Web.
<http://afterall.org/online/vija.celmins.at.the.hammer.museum/#.U0HuXtwwm4J>
- Berry, Ian, and Jack Shear. *Twice Drawn: Modern and Contemporary Drawings in Context*. Saratoga Springs, N.Y: Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2011. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. *The Uncanny*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.
- Green, Tyler, narr. "The Modern Art Notes Podcast: Vija Celmins." *The Modern Art Notes*. Louise Blouin Media, 07 Nov 2013. Web.
<<http://blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/2013/11/the-modern-art-notes-podcast-vija-celmins/>>.
- Gregory, Casey. "Lee Bontecou: Drawn Worlds." *Glasstire*. N.p., 07 02 2014. Web. 29 March 2014.
- Nhat Hanh, Thich . *Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting Through the Storm*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012. Print.
- Relyea, Lane, Vija Celmins, Robert Gober, and Briony Fer. *Vija Celmins*. London: Phaidon, 2004. Print.
- The Contemporary Drawing: Existence, Passage, and the Dream*. Waltham, Mass: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1991. Print
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977. Print.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Carlene Munoz was born and raised in Miami, Florida. Her parents are Cuban immigrants who fled the Castro regime and relocated to a suburb in Miami. Carlene attended New World School of the Arts, where she graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Drawing and a minor in Art History in 2006. Shortly thereafter, she began exhibiting her artwork at local galleries throughout South Florida. In 2011 she moved to Gainesville, Florida to pursue a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Drawing at the University of Florida. Carlene's experiences involving continuous relocation and adaptation are central themes in her artwork.