

Interior Cartography #35 (1995-1996),

Gina Bechelany Fajer*

There and Back

Interview with Tatiana Parceró

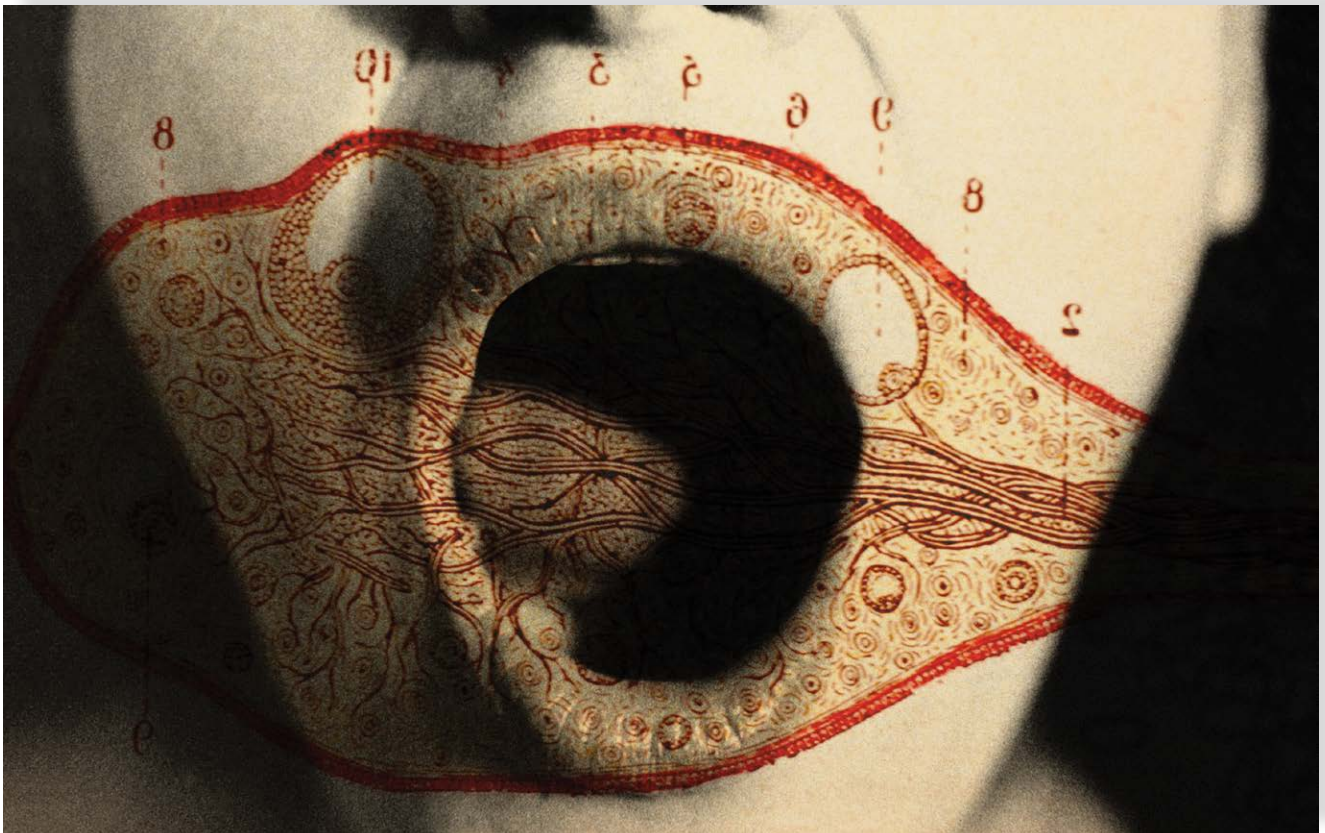
The geographical proximity between Mexico and the United States has strengthened their ties in the weaving together of geopolitical commitments and integration, mutual migratory flows, and a wealth of cultural exchange that has impacted every aspect of life for the area's dwellers.

Throughout history, Mexico has influenced the United States, and vice versa, in a plethora of ways. This cultural flux, which especially took off in the early twentieth

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All photos courtesy of the artist.

century with muralists like Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco encountering U.S. American painters, for instance, has involved the creation of binational art. It is worth noting that the artistic expressions emanating from the city of Los Angeles, California, made an impact in New York, Mexico, and many other places in the postwar period.

This relationship has also been marked by great tension and contradiction, especially over the last few decades, due to Mexican migration to the United States. The latter has sparked a variety of creative expressions according to each artist's specific themes. The artistic production of the more or less homogenous Chicano com-



Interior Cartography #21, 1995.

munity has demonstrated how art can make history and memory visible and how everyday life can become a fundamental element with which one might allude to context and time.

With a career spanning more than three decades dedicated to photography, Tatiana Parceró, a Mexican woman living in Argentina, has explored concepts such as identity, memory, territory, time, and most recently, the migration-immigration phenomenon.

The evolution of her work has been marked by experimentation with both technique and discourse, which she has incorporated in a way that appears loaded with

social content yet preserves her own perspective — one she has enriched through collective work with feminist groups, especially in Mexico and Argentina.

Parceró's work is an expression of her gaze, bringing together the places where she has lived and worked for more than 35 years: Mexico, the United States, and Argentina. Tatiana studied a bachelor's in psychology in Mexico and a master's in art and photography in New York, where she later worked, though she eventually moved to Argentina. "Every place, moment, and sociopolitical context has given me a diversity of experiences that influence the work I make and the topics I study. Every country has



Ossis #1, 2016.



Interior Cartography #1, 1995.

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its own specificities, but certain situations unfold in all three: the battle for women’s rights over their own bodies and the fights against gender violence, discrimination, and the environment, among others,” Tatiana stated for this interview.

Her work has consistently established an intimate vision, exploring historical transpositions and the new possibilities of the digital image, as in *Interior Cartography* (1995–1996), where we may observe certain recurring elements that are specific to her career: the human body (usually her own) and the use of graphic representations juxtaposed against these bodily registers.

“Exploring the external body was not enough, which is why I started exploring through different techniques.

Based on trial and error, I arrived at the two-layer technique with acetate and color photography. This technique allows the eye to become an x-ray so that one can gaze into the interior. I have kept using this technique ever since. The ideas of investigating the physical and emotional spaces intermingle within the piece. I strive for personal experience to become universal through my work, so that the viewer can connect with what she sees,” Parcero explains.

Parcero based the process of creating *Interior Cartography* on New York University’s ancient anatomy archives. The images she produced incorporated and alluded to fragments of pre-Hispanic codices and other documents from Mexico’s indigenous past.

"Interior Cartography #35" was selected for the exhibition *Our Selves: Photographs by Women Artists from Helen Kornblum*, on view from April 16 to October 2 of this year at room 5 of New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). The exhibition aims to demonstrate that feminism and photography have been intertwined throughout their histories. Tatiana Parceró shares the space with photographers as renowned as Lola Álvarez Bravo, Gertrud Arndt, Lotte Jacobi, Lucía Moholy, Graciela Iturbide, Rosemarie Trockel, and Lorie Novak, among others.

On the occasion of this exhibition, we have interviewed the Mexican photographer Tatiana Parceró in order to understand her perspective on the cultural-transfer processes that Mexico and the United States share, in both directions.

Gina Bechelany: On the binational Mexico-U.S. plane, how would you describe the process of cultural transfer, specifically in those border spaces where integration, migration, and culture are constantly discussed?

Tatiana Parceró: Cultural-transfer processes are complex and unequal. This is a very broad topic that can be addressed from many areas — economically, socially, culturally, or tourism- or education-relatedly, to name a few. There is no single vision of the border. All I can say is that migration is a serious issue for which no solution has been found,

and which continues to risk the lives of people who have decided to leave their countries of origin out of necessity.

As an artist, I can use my work to convey certain issues that we, as a society, need to address. I cannot be indifferent, which is why, through my work, I either directly talk about or subtly reference what it is that worries and occupies me the most, such as climate change, nature and our relationship to it, or the gender violence I am documenting through photographic registers of the women's marches in Mexico and Argentina.

GB: Do you see the exhibition of Interior Cartography #35 at the MoMA as contributing to a certain understanding? That is, as an element of shared culture creating new references in both the Hispanic and U.S. American spheres?

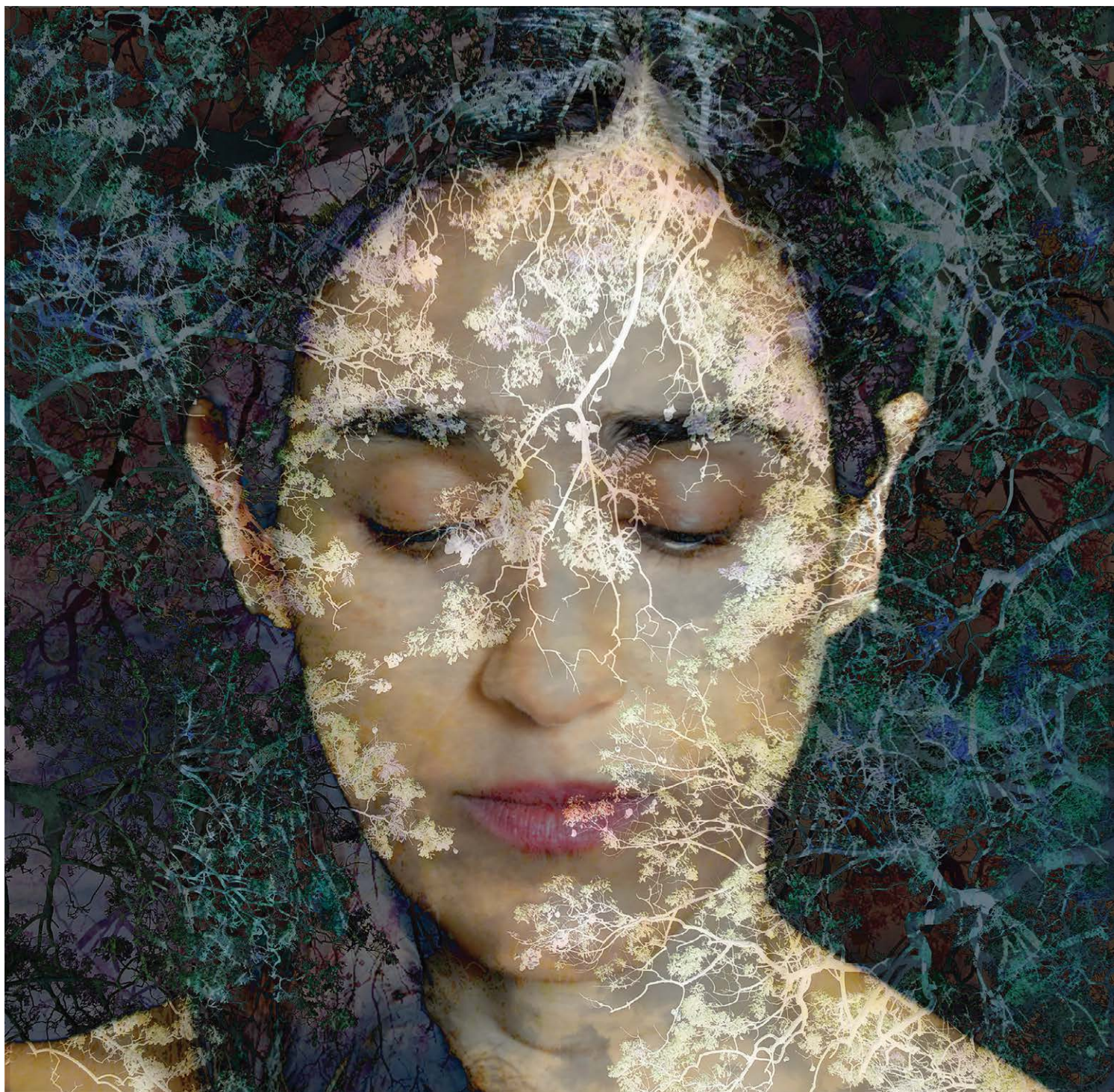
TP: This exhibition is a response to an opening in terms of different nationalities and preferences as well as freedom of expression. Citing the MoMA, "the exhibition takes as a starting point the idea that the histories of feminism and photography have been intertwined."

I made Interior Cartography #35 when I lived in New York. It's part of a larger series that's also called Interior Cartography. The idea emerged as a way of visually narrating the process of change that I experienced upon my arrival to a new country, when I had to build a new life. The idea of working with the concept of the map was born of my need to define my space and locate my new environment — both internal and external — while redefining my interior as a process of self knowledge and as the possibility of showing that which cannot be seen with the naked eye. The title alludes to the idea of the map and cartography more broadly as a geopolitical reading. Its association with the body implies travelling through it as a territory that can be analyzed, inspected, recognized, and recovered.

The series has two parts. For the first, I worked with ancient anatomy diagrams in reference to the interior universe. For the second, I started observing the links between the inner body and the cosmogony of Mexico's pre-Columbian cultures, in which body and nature constitute a single terrain. I was thus able to make more diverse connections with aspects of identity, memory, history, and time. I also like how Roxana Marcoci, the exhibition's curator, describes how my "overlay of Indigenous knowledge on the female body creates a map of self-governance linked to animist, anticolonial and natural histories — a feminist reclamation of land and a mobilization of cultural identity as resistance against colonialism's legacy."



Ossis #18, 2016.



Consciousness Terra #4, 2020.

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Leaps of faith #2, 2003.

Both art and the human body are vehicles of expression for feelings and emotions that transcend borders, obstacles, and even eras.

As a woman and as a Mexican artist, being a part of this exhibition stands as recognition of my many years of work. Participating in *Ourselves: Photographs by Women Artists from Helen Kornblum* is a great achievement and a triumph for womanhood. Throughout history, we have trodden a difficult path, and we've been fighting against a world in which men remain the main characters and occupy positions of power. This exhibition implies the conquering of a space that belongs to us, too, and the possibility of being recognized in different spaces.

GB: You said that your stay in the United States influenced you to create a series that narrates what happens to women who are far from their countries and their rights. What was your experience in this respect?

TP: One aspect that has defined my art ever since I started to work with photography is that I have lived in several countries where I wasn't born, as well as my desire to reconstruct my own history using a range of iconographies and references such as maps, pre-Columbian codices, and images of flora and fauna. Yet, my quest has continued thanks to the exchange between diverse cultures and customs. I want people to draw their own conclusions, to analyze and reflect upon what they see in every detail, to discover something beyond what can be seen at first glance and make their own interpretations.

I created the Portraits of Women (Retratos de Mujeres) series soon after moving to Argentina. Most of the women were residents. I wanted to do a bit of research on the reasons why they had left their countries. I was interested in knowing more about their feelings and desires, learning a thing or two about their pasts, their presents, and their dreams, anxieties, and emotions around being away from their countries of birth. Being a foreigner implies an entire process in terms of learning the codes and languages specific to each place. I am still working on this series, as I'm still adding new faces and stories to it.

GB: Interior Cartography has been widely recognized given the way that you express and explore the body, its interior, and its relationship to the outer world. It's a very



Consciousness Terra #10, 2020.

intimate and personal piece. How have you managed to insert it in a more global environment, with this exploration transforming other human beings in turn?

TP: This piece has already come a long way. It's been shown at several exhibitions and publications around the world, and its influence is tied to what you see in it and what it transmits, what moves you and what connects with your own story. I work with ideas related to personal and global processes in which the body and nature function as metaphors of the public and the private, as mirrors of the individual and collective memory. To me, the body is a container of memory where the "interior" holds history: my ancestral culture. My body is my own territory, and I have control over it. I can decide how to use it, how to preserve it, and how to show it.

Both art and the human body are vehicles of expression for feelings and emotions that transcend borders, obstacles, and even eras. Thus, the cultural exchange between Mexico and the United States can be redefined as a two-way street that condenses the seriousness of the migratory experience, loss, the quest for identity, and encounters with the other. There's an existential dimension, a voyage of different moments, a journey of memories, feelings, life, and states of being. **NMM**