

Artist Statement

I am a scholar, filmmaker, artist, permaculturalist, dj, yogi, and activist. Raised all over this planet, I have created work which is informed as much by the books I have read and the movies I have seen as the people with whom I have worked and dialogued. I am a specialist in contemporary ethnography, cultural studies, cinema, postcolonial theory, and media and gender studies. I have been at professor at universities across the world where I have taught anthropology, comparative literature, performance and cultural studies, theory, philosophy of science, postmodernism, and gender studies. In addition to my academic research and pedagogy, I am also a dj, an installation and video artist and has actively been making ethnographic film and video in Latin America, the Middle East, the Maghreb, Europe and the United States since 1988. She is currently editing a film on public mourning and the life and death of Michael Jackson, *To Neverland and Back* (2012).

My academic and artistic work has focussed on the deconstruction of narrative and identity vis à vis fixed modalities of colonialism, race, sex, gender and sexuality. While my work in the past has centred upon the changes implicated within transgender performance (*La hiper mujer*, 1994), migration (*Las mujeres de Chasquipampa*, 1990), movement (*The Spaces of Tunis*, 1999) and memory (*Trovando Faenza*, 2004), my recent work reaches beyond traditional narratives of documentary style and examines specific spaces, geographies and temporalities of “passing through” any static interpretation of the subject such as can be seen in *The High Line* (2011), *The Standard Hotel* (2010) and *Hadrian’s Wall* (2011). I challenge the traditional forms of storytelling and representation taking the talking head elements of ethnographic cinema and journalistic reportage and replacing them with more abstract elements of “definition” and mimesis. My interest in the body and architecture reflect these seemingly static forms of skin and cement within a movement of the camera which attempts to fragment any clear, fixed notion of these corporeal and architectonic spaces.

Not the End (2011) reveals the architectural and corporeal spaces of lower Manhattan: traffic moving and stopping, bodies in circulation and the architecture seemingly static. This video takes the movements of people and vehicles and counterposes their fluidity with the cityscape’s fixed structures, lending a sense of fluidity to architectural form and a sense of constructedness to the human body. Similarly *La hiper mujer* (1994) is a video which demonstrates the transient nature of all gendered performances—be that of women, men, transvestites and transsexuals. My work address the performance behind all identities which is certainly not limited to that of the transvestite performer. We are always in a state of performance and change, persistently performing something other than ourselves. Taking my cue from ethnography and philosophy, I borrow Victor Turner’s liminal performance from the individual who is “neither her nor there” and I extend this liminality from the specifically human dimension to that of Giorgio Agamben’s “coming community.” For me identity is a tool that can be useful in very specific temporality and then it can become a dangerously fetishistic device for recreating extremely stagnant and conservative communities where the individual is reified as pure identity and difference is obliterated. Ideally I work in the spaces in which the individual is “freed from belonging either to the emptiness of the universal or to the ineffability of the community” and where the individual can be neither “particular nor general, neither individual nor generic.”