



Sylvia Palacios Whitman photographed by Richard Avedon for *Harper's Bazaar* cover in 1962

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Front Cover:
Untitled, 1985
Ballpoint pen, pencil
and collage on paper
16.9 x 14" (42.93 x 35.56 cm)

BROADWAY 1602



SYLVIA PALACIOS WHITMAN

BROADWAY 1602

EVELYNE AXELL

EXPERIMENTS IN ART AND

TECHNOLOGY (E.A.T.) ARCHIVE

SYLVIA PALACIOS WHITMAN

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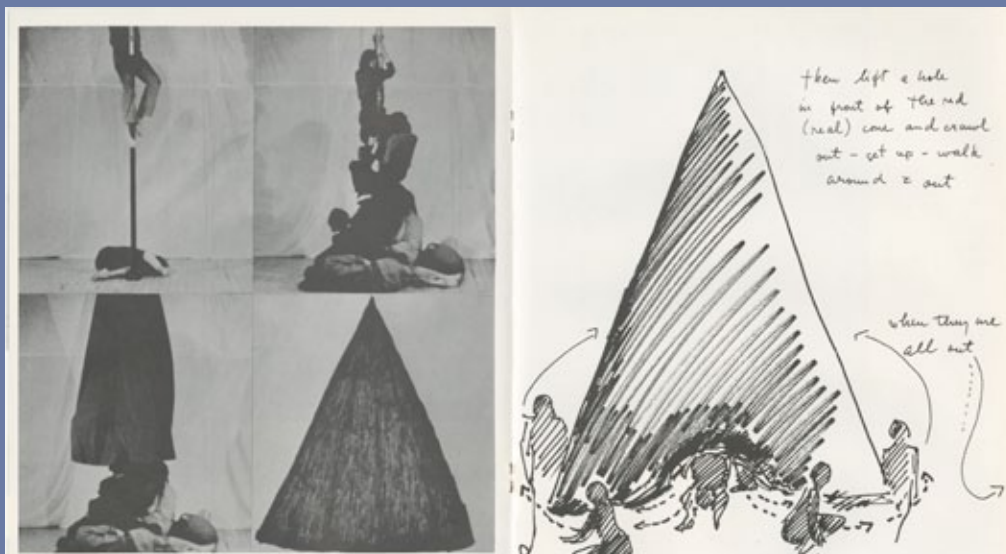
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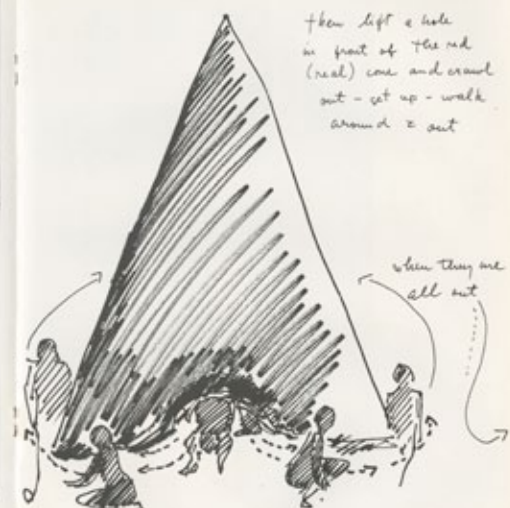
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SYLVIA PALACIOS WHITMAN

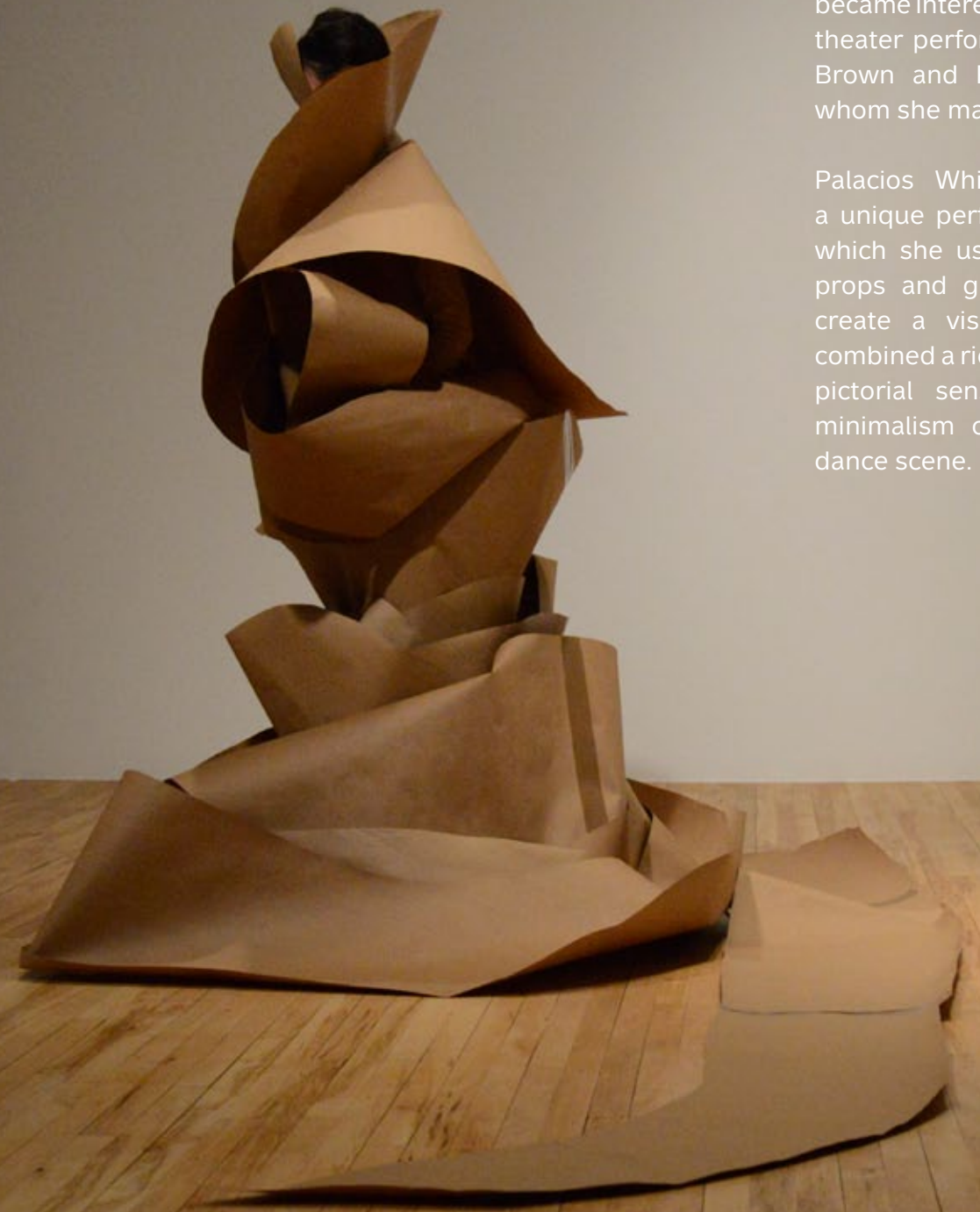


RED CONE / A FILM-PERFORMANCE



Sylvia Palacios Whitman was born 1941 in the South of Chile. She studied painting and sculpture at Santiago's School of Fine Arts. In 1961 Palacios Whitman arrived to New York where she pursued her work in drawing and painting. She became interested in dance and theater performing with Trisha Brown and Robert Whitman, whom she married in 1969.

Palacios Whitman developed a unique performance style in which she used surreal stage props and giant drawings to create a visual theater that combined a rich Latin-American pictorial sensibility with the minimalism of the New York dance scene.



From 1974 onwards Palacios Whitman staged her first pieces, such as "Going", "Soup & Tart" and "Red Cone" performed at various venues in downtown Manhattan such as artists' lofts, The Kitchen, Artist Space, Sonnabend Gallery, and the Whitney Museum Downtown Branch.

Human Paper Coil at BROADWAY 1602
December 2013



South, 1979, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Her performers were non-professionals whom she casted from her milieu or through chance encounters.

"I go to church. It's always very natural there and people spring out at you. One day there was an incredible face beside me, and instead of just wondering I said "I'll use her'."

The 'her' turned out to be Ilse Rumpler, who worked in a Madison Avenue music box store, and became one of Palacios Whitman's most compelling performers in "South", her exuberant 'concert' at the Guggenheim in 1979. "South" related in conceptual tableaux to the artist's past in Chile and was one of the most visually complex evenings the artist created at the time. Intriguingly whimsical props became the 'stars' of the performance: A giant Airmail envelope carried by a group of performers was moved through the space like a procession alluring to distanced relations and longing while a giant whale was 'swimming' up the famous Guggenheim ramp.



Neon Horse from *South*, 1979, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

"I was surprised at how small the Guggenheim is, though," Miss Whitman said a little wistfully. "As my whale grows, the museum shrinks."

*Jennifer Dunning
New York Times, 1979*



Palacios Whitman at times used taped compositions by Steve Reich to accompany the phases of her performances, happy or melancholic scenes which lined up like three dimensional animate sketches, often informed by autobiographical stories and visions, a "delicate blend of fantasy and the mundane" (S. Banes, 1979).

The artist makes central use of props, both found and made – such as cup and saucer, telephones, beds, a neon horse, mummies, needles and thread, an airplane in a cloud and most of all paper. Most of the materials are fragile and ephemeral in character and where often destroyed after the event.



Sylvia Whitman, *Passing Through, "Airplane"*, Sonnabend Gallery, 1977
Black and white photograph
8 x 10" (20.32 x 25.40 cm)
© Babette Mangolte



Sylvia Whitman, *Around the Edge, "The House that follows"*, Truck and Warehouse Theatre, 1978
Black and white photograph
8 x 10" (20.32 x 25.40 cm)
© Babette Mangolte

She was weaving phantasmagoria out of material at hand and transforming scale or time to dwell briefly in the marvelous, then moving on readily to the next thing.

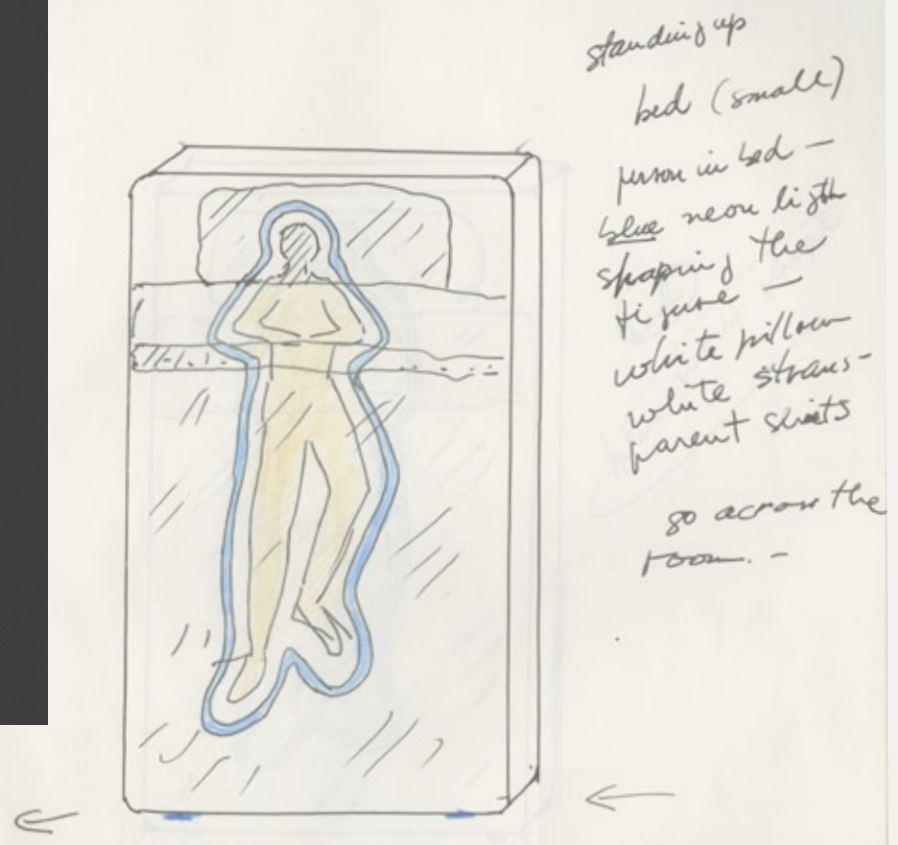
***Sally Banes
"Engineering Images,"
Soho Weekly News, 1979***

Sylvia Whitman, *Around the Edge, "Touch"*, Truck and Warehouse Theatre, 1978
Black and white photograph
8 x 10" (20.32 x 25.40 cm)
© Babette Mangolte

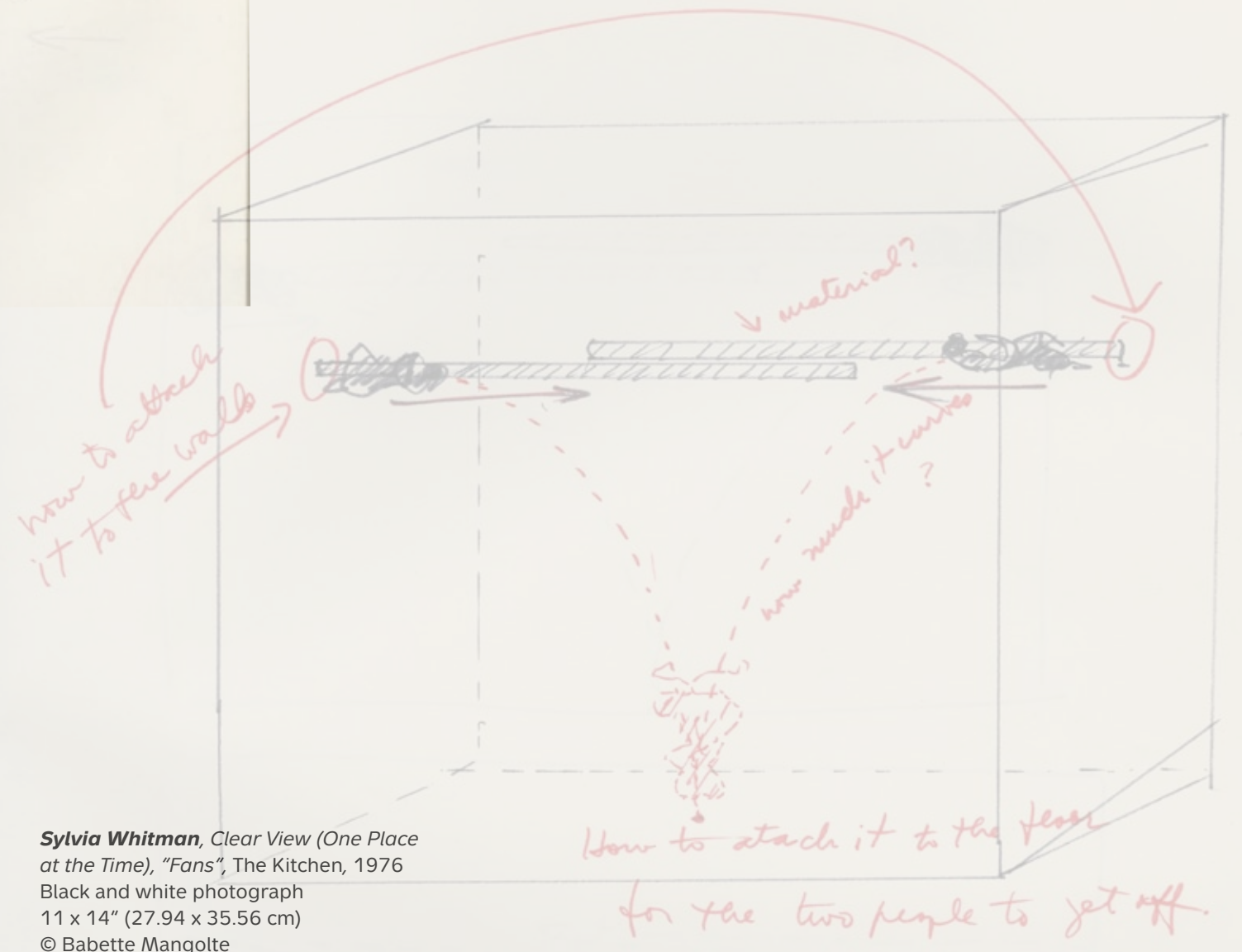
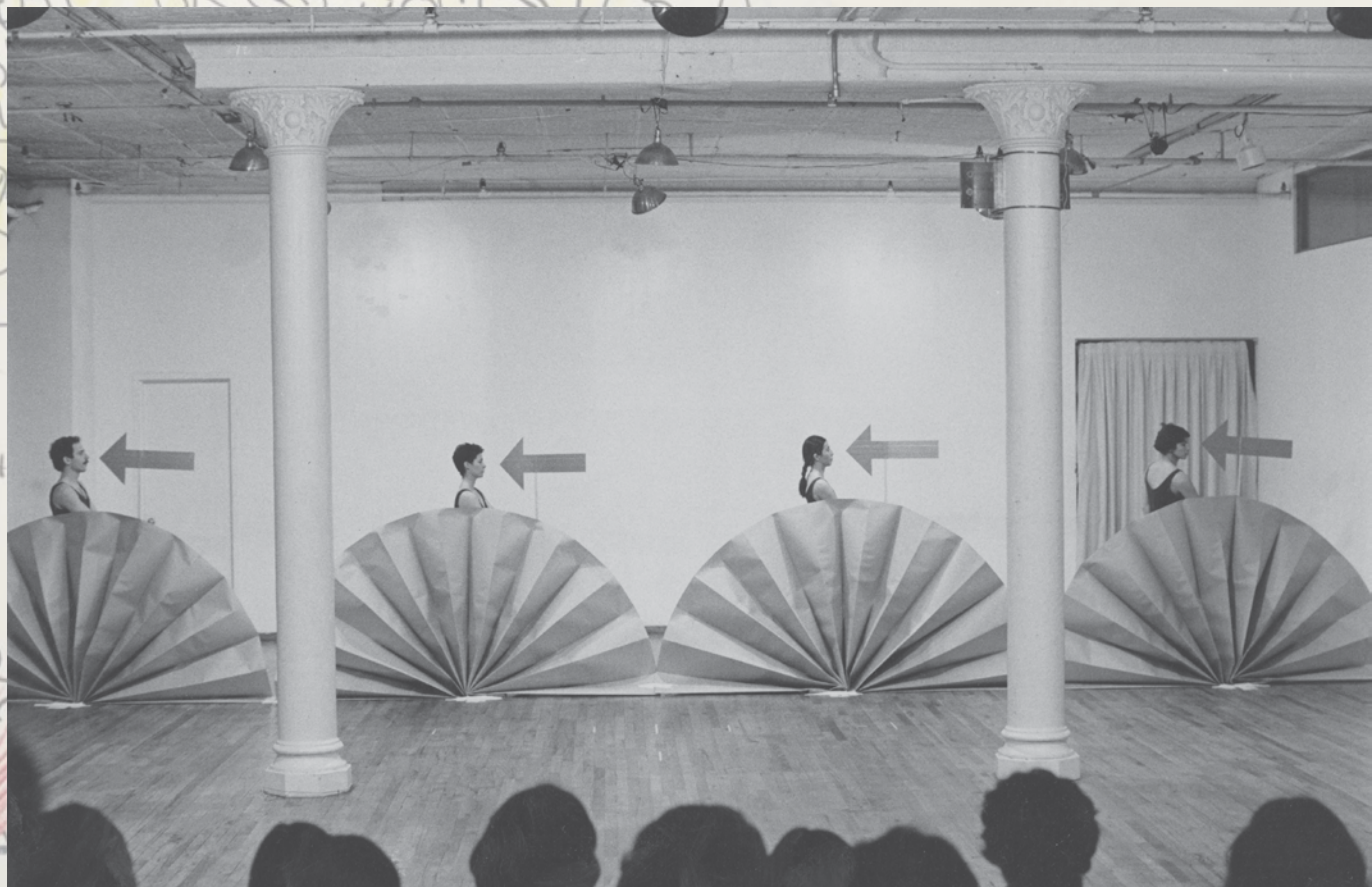




Sylvia Whitman, Around the Edge, "Silhouette",
 Truck and Warehouse Theatre, 1978
 Black and white photograph
 8 x 10" (20.32 x 25.40 cm)
 © Babette Mangolte



At the beginning of Sylvia Palacios Whitman's ideas for performances are usually drawings and sketches of a free spirited imagination. They are intimate mental initiators for scenes later staged. While some drawings advance to giant props dominating the stage.



**Sylvia Whitman, Clear View (One Place
 at the Time), "Fans", The Kitchen, 1976**
 Black and white photograph
 11 x 14" (27.94 x 35.56 cm)
 © Babette Mangolte

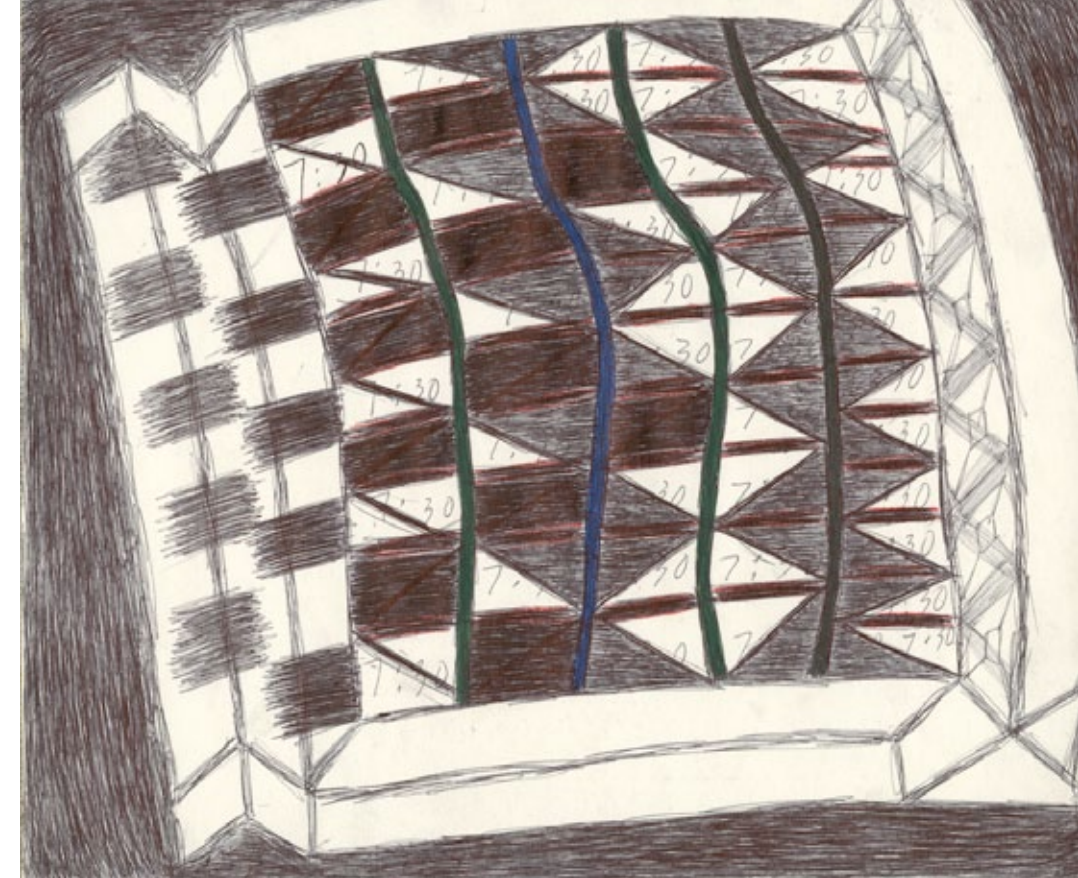


Untitled, 1986
Oil and pencil on wooden panel
28 x 23" (71.12 x 58.42 cm)

In close aesthetic tension to her performance work, Sylvia Palacios Whitman continues to make paintings and collages. These works share the surreal sensibility of the performances.

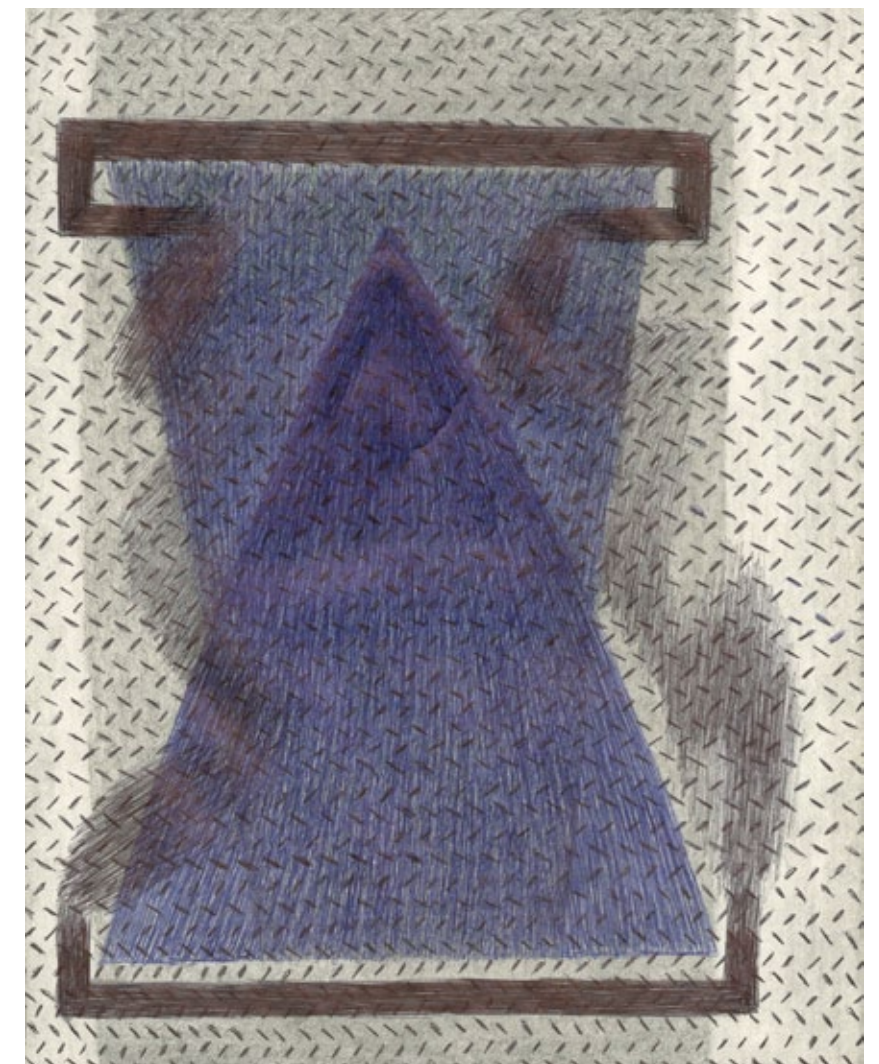
Here the artist enters a darker realm: impenetrable layers of graphite, disruptive structures, public décor growing wild, disintegrating architecture, spiraling movement, ominous figures and objects, intersected by fragments of photographic collage alluring to political content, protagonists and demographics.

Yet these images are hardly recognizable through the dense graphite engraving with which the artist treats the surfaces. We identify the political in Sylvia Palacios Whitman's paintings and collage drawings as contexts we believe to recognize while in fact the images are obscured beyond the verifiable.



Above:
Untitled, 1980
Ballpoint pen and pencil on paper
10.9 x 14" (27.69 x 35.56 cm)

Right:
Untitled, 1980
Ballpoint pen and pencil on paper
13.9 x 11" (35.31 x 27.94 cm)





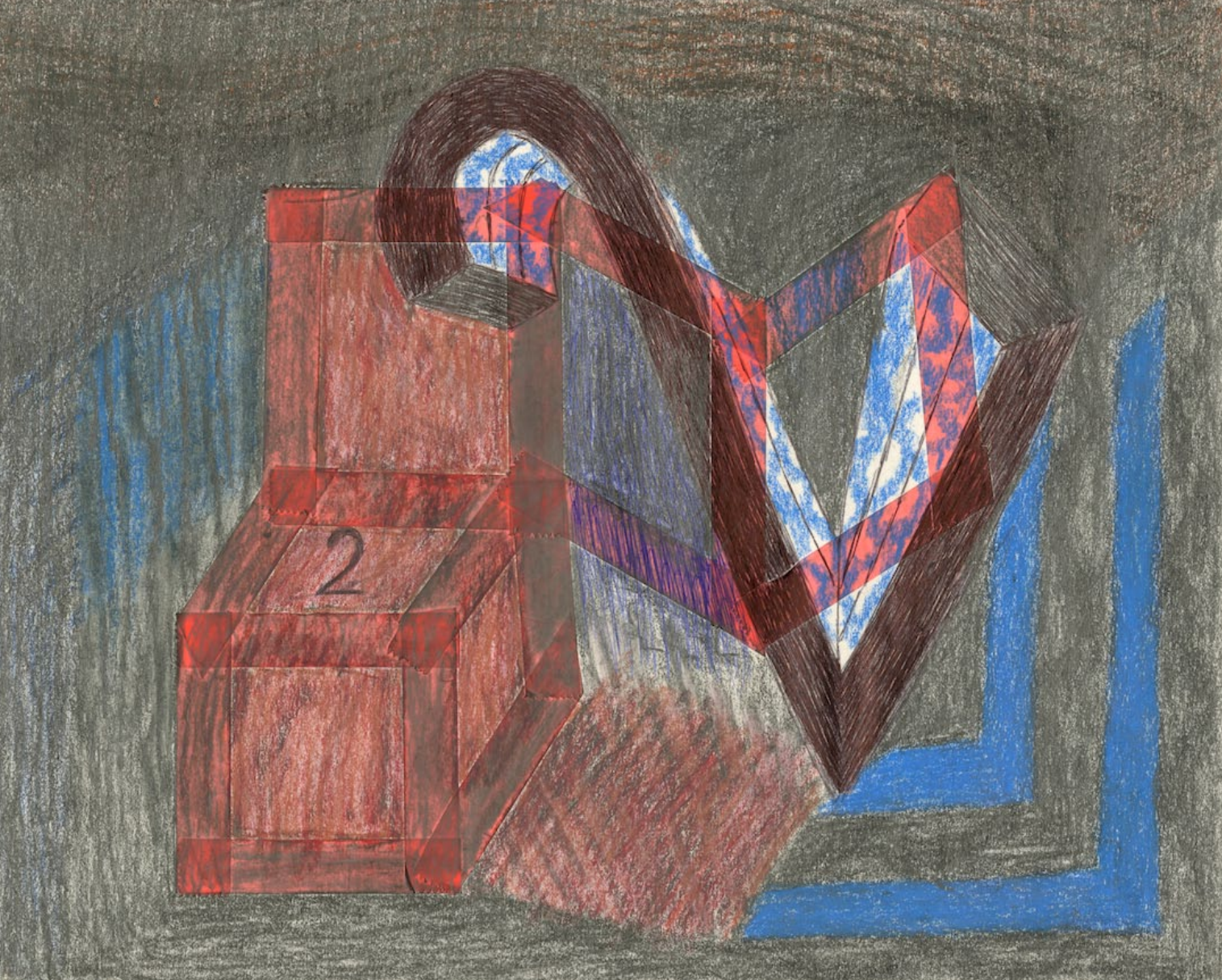
Untitled, 1978
Ballpoint pen, pencil, and collage on paper
17.9 x 24" (45.47 x 60.96 cm)

In *Untitled* (1978) a series of small frontal portrait photos looking like the lined up heads of political leaders are centrally applied on a densely drawn boxlike structure, like the bill-board of a party on a public building. Two giant anthracite cloudlike shapes grown eerily out the box, - a close look reveals that these shapes were once also photos of someone or something, but their content is lost below thick layers of graphite. Below the box-architecture an equally giant black

object features looking like a knife with its blade pointing towards the box structure. With regard to Palacios Whitman's Chilean background there is a temptation to read this work in the context of the recent military dictatorships in Latin America. In the same instant, however, Palacios Whitman created here - as in most of her works - deliberately cross-faded signifiers, as much of a time as time transcending.



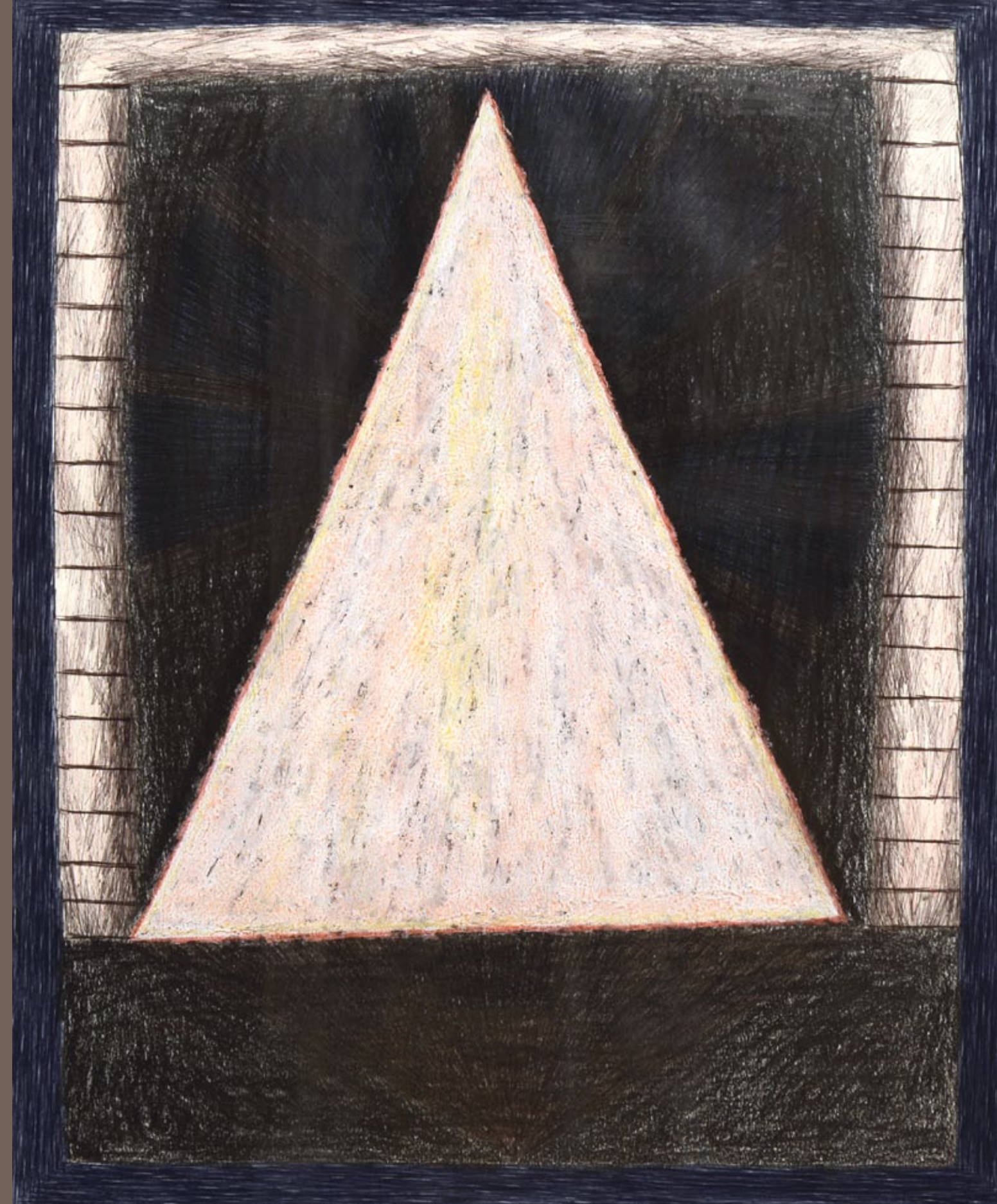
Untitled, 1986
Ball point pen, pencil and collage on paper
14 x 16.9" (35.56 x 42.93 cm)



Above:
Untitled, 1986
Ballpoint pen, pencil and collage on paper
11 x 13.6" (27.94 x 34.54 cm)



Untitled, 1980
Ballpoint pen, pencil, and collage on paper
11 x 14" (27.94 x 35.56 cm)



Untitled, 1985
Pencil and ballpoint pen on paper
16.9 x 14" (42.93 x 35.56 cm)



Untitled, 2013
Collage, pen and watercolor on paper
9 x 12" (22.86 x 30.48 cm)

Untitled, 2013
Collage, pencil, and watercolor on paper
12 x 9" (30.48 x 22.86 cm)

Below from left to right::

Hoffa, 2014
Watercolor, graphite, and collage on paper
17.75 x 24" (45.09 x 60.96 cm)

Horses, 2014
Watercolor, graphite, and collage on paper
17.75 x 24" (45.09 x 60.96 cm)

Coil, 2014
Watercolor, graphite, and collage on paper
17.75 x 24" (45.09 x 60.96 cm)





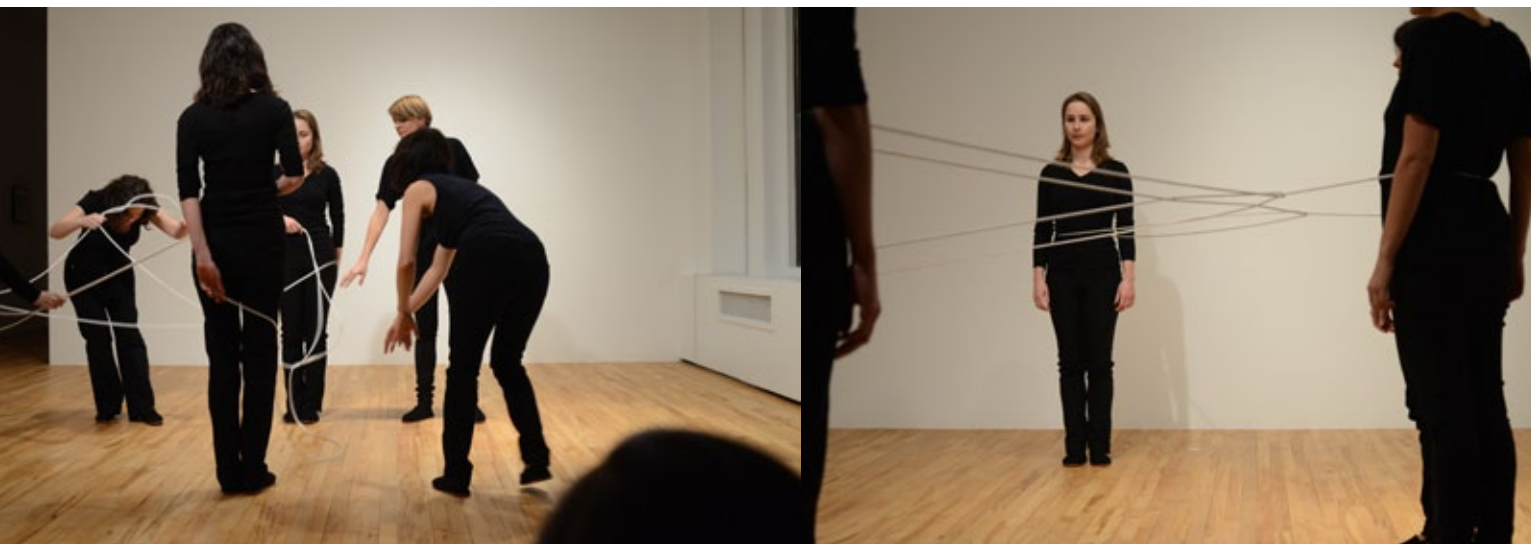
Installation view of *Rituals Of Rented Island: Object Theater, Loft Performance, And The New Psychodrama – Manhattan*, 2013
 In background: *Cup and Tail* (2013) film by Babette Mangolte
 Photo courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY



Mummies, performed at BROADWAY 1602, NY December 2013



In 2013, Sylvia Palacios Whitman's work received an in-depth reintroduction in film, photographs, original props and note books at the Whitney Museums exhibition *Rituals Of Rented Island: Object Theater, Loft Performance, And The New Psychodrama – Manhattan*, curated by Jay Sanders. In this context the artist performed again some of her signature pieces *Passing Through* (1977) and *Cup and Tail* (1978).



Cat's Cradle, performed at BROADWAY 1602, NY December 2013

This exhibition coincided with Sylvia Palacios Whitman's first show at BROADWAY 1602 presenting a program of performances, installations, works on paper and paintings by this outstanding artist whose work has not been seen in New York since the early 1980s. The artist herself performed *Mummies* (1977) in the gallery and directed *Human Paper Coil* (1974), *Elephant Trunk* (1975), *Cat's Cradle* (1975), and *Negatives* (1980). After the performance nights the props will remain in the gallery space as an ongoing and changing installation.



Flag-covered Obelisk,
1989/2014
Acrylic, pencil, and collage
on canvas
39.75 x 52 x 0.88"
(100.97 x 132.08 x 2.22 cm)

SYLVIA PALACIOS WHITMAN

Born 1941, Chile

Lives and works in Warwick, New York

- 1970 Performed with Trisha Brown at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 1973-74 Member of Trisha Brown Dance Company

PERFORMANCES

- 2014 "Human Paper Coil, Negatives, Mummies, Cat's Cradle, Elephant Trunk, Green Hands, Cup & Tail" at The Whitney Museum of American Art, January
- 2013 "Human Paper Coil, Negatives, Mummies, Cat's Cradle, Elephant Trunk" at BROADWAY 1602, New York, December 13 and 14
- 1981 "Negatives", Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, April 22-24, 1981
- 1979 "South", Guggenheim, New York, NY, June 1979
- 1978 "On Edge", Truck and Warehouse Theater, New York March 1978
- 1977 "Passing Through", Sonnabend Gallery, New York May 20-21, 1977
- 1976 "Clear View", The Kitchen, New York, NY November 19-21, 1976
- 1975 "Going" and "Slingshot", Whitney Museum of American Art, Downtown Branch, New York, NY
- 1975 "Going" and "Slingshot", Whitney Museum of American Art, Downtown Branch, New York, NY
- 1974 "Going", 541 Broadway, New York, NY
"Soup & Tart" The Kitchen, New York, NY,
"Artists as Filmmakers", Artists Space, 16mm Film/
Performance "Red Cone", December 1974

EXHIBITION

- 2013/4 "Rituals of Rented Islands: Object Theater, Loft Performance, and the New Psychodrama - Manhattan, 1970-1980", The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, curated by Jay Sanders (Catalogue)
"Elephant Trunk", BROADWAY 1602, New York
- 1976 "Two Notebooks", Sylvia Whitman and Susan Weil, Project Studios One, Queens, NY (Catalogue: United Press, Captive Island, FL, 1976)

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