

Artist Biography

Doris Salcedo was born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1958, where she continues to live and work. Selected solo exhibitions include *Fragmentos*, Bogotá; White Cube London (2018); Palacio de Cristal, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2017); Harvard Art Museums, Massachusetts; Nasher Sculpture Centre, Dallas, Texas (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, touring to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2015-16); Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2014); Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico, touring to Moderna Museet Malmö, Sweden, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Museo Nazionale delle Arti de XXI secolo, Rome; White Cube, London and Pinacoteca do Estado de Aso Paulo (2011-2013); Tate Modern, London (2007); Camden Arts Centre, London (2001); Tate Britain, London (1999) and New Museum, New York (1998).

Recent group exhibitions include Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2014); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013); Hayward Gallery, London (2010); MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Centre, New York (2008); 8th International Istanbul Biennial (2003); Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany (2002) and 24th Bienal de São Paulo (1998).

Associated Events

For details of talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition, and to book tickets visit www.imma.ie. Events include a Curator's Lunchtime Talk by IMMA curator Karen Sweeney, 22 May 2019 and a Lecture and Response by Tim Marlow, broadcaster, art historian and Artistic Director, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 10 July 2019.

IMMA Summer School: Art and Politics

10–14 June 2019

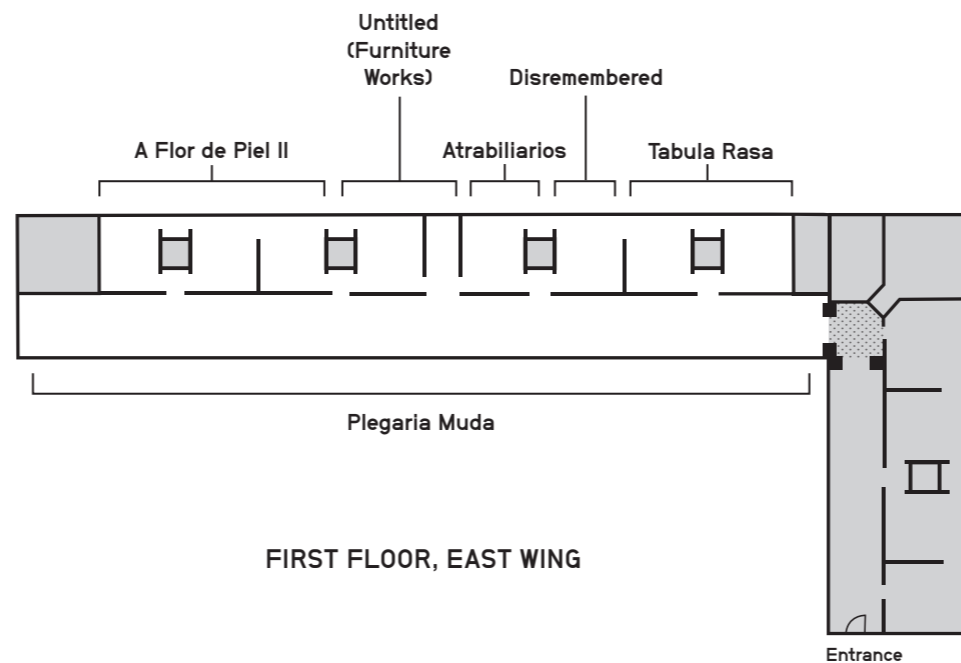
IMMA's Summer School 2019, which takes place in the context of the exhibition *Acts of Mourning*, invites students from colleges throughout Ireland to participate in a week of talks and workshops by a range of national and international artists, theorists and critics who will focus on the connections between art and politics. For details visit www.imma.ie

Front cover:
Doris Salcedo,
Plegaria Muda, 2008-2010,
Wood, mineral compound, cement
and grass,
dimensions variable,
© the artist.
Courtesy White Cube.

IMMA would like to thank our valuable Members, Patrons and Partners, all of whom have made this exhibition possible.

Doris Salcedo, *Acts of Mourning* is co-curated by Rachel Thomas, Senior Curator: Head of Exhibitions, and Claire Power, Temporary Head of Exhibitions, and assisted by Karen Sweeney, Assistant Curator: Exhibitions, Curatorial and Partnerships and Georgie Thompson, Assistant Curator: Exhibitions, Curatorial and Artist Liaison.

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask any member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable through their blue lanyards.



IMMA
MAIN GALLERIES, EAST WING
26 APRIL – 21 JULY 2019

Doris Salcedo Acts Of Mourning



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An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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IMMA presents a major exhibition by internationally acclaimed artist Doris Salcedo (b. 1958, Bogotá). Salcedo is one of the world’s leading sculptors and her work is deeply rooted in her native Colombia.

Using domestic materials already charged with significance and saturated with meaning accumulated from years of use in daily life, Salcedo’s sculptures and installations transform ordinary, household items into poignant and commanding testimonies of loss and remembrance. Salcedo takes acts of socio-political violence and the experiences of those directly affected as the starting point to make works that are an examination of mourning and materiality.

Salcedo extends the boundaries of the materials she uses. Since 2008, Salcedo has incorporated organic materials into her work, such as grass, silk, soil or rose petals in *A Flor de Piel II*, which is blurring the lines between what is permanent and ephemeral.

In recent years, Salcedo has also created large-scale, site-specific installations in various locations around the world including Turkey, Italy, the UK and her native Colombia. Perhaps one of her best-known installations is the 2007 Unilever commission at Tate Modern where Salcedo created *Shibboleth*, a chasm or fissure running the length of the Turbine Hall that represented exclusion, separation and otherness.

Since gaining wide critical-acclaim in the 1990s, Salcedo has expanded her practice to address both past and present acts of violence faced by societies around the world. These socio-political concerns are integral to everything the artist makes and her practice is founded in the personal testimonies she hears first-hand from those affected by violence. She has stated “The experience of an individual is always my point of departure. But during the process of making an artwork, I must maintain a distance in order to leave that

person intact, untouched. And from there, as soon as I begin working, everything enters into the paradoxical terrain of art”.

The work is produced in her native Colombia but the themes Salcedo addresses have a universal relevance and stem from lived experiences of political oppression and civil war and are applicable to any context where extreme violence exists. Salcedo’s work poses questions about how we remember and acknowledge the personal histories of vulnerable and anonymous survivors of violence, and how we can mourn those claimed by it.

In order to articulate such loss, in the process of making the work Salcedo performs an act of remembrance for the forgotten victims. In doing so, she carves out a space for mourning that is both poignant and insistent. As Salcedo reflects “My work is about the memory of experience, which is always vanishing, not about experiences taken from life and is intended to honour the individuality of each victim’s experience”.

Acts of Mourning focuses on key aspects of the artist’s career since the 1990s and the challenges her work poses to the traditions of sculpture. The exhibition brings together six bodies of work including two substantial installations, *A Flor de Piel II* (2013-2014) and *Plegaria Muda* (2008-2010). Alongside these, the exhibition includes works from Salcedo’s *Disremembered* (2014-2017), *Atrabillarios* (1996) and *Untitled* (furniture works) (1990-2016) series as well as her most recent *Tabula Rasa* (2018) sculptures.

The exhibition reflects Salcedo’s ongoing preoccupation with the experience of mourning and the connection between violence, anonymity and the public domain.

Plegaria Muda

The large installation in the corridor, *Plegaria Muda* (2008-2010), comprises 28 wooden sculptures that are part of a larger manifestation. The wood is from demolished houses in Bogotá. Each unit consists of two tables of different shapes and sizes and a middle section made from cement and earth through which thin blades of grass grow over time. The inspiration for this work is drawn from many sources. It speaks to recent events in Colombia where members of the army killed innocent citizens in order to retrieve Government bounties payable for the delivery of the bodies of guerrilla fighters. Each table, the approximate size of a human coffin, echoes the anonymity of the victims of violence and the mass graves of Colombia. Salcedo has worked closely with the victims’ families and in *Plegaria Muda* the individual is given a unique memorial which is reflected in the title that loosely translates into English meaning as ‘silent prayer’. The grass acts as a symbol of optimism, “I hope that, in spite of everything, life might prevail, even in difficult conditions. . . as it does in *Plegaria Muda*”, echoes Salcedo.

Salcedo is widely known for her large-scale public sculptures and interventions, and one of her most remarkable public sculpture works is *Noviembre 6 y 7* (2002) which features chairs. Salcedo used hundreds of empty chairs of different sizes and colours to powerful effect in a public artwork that unfolded over 53 hours on the 6th and 7th November on the facade of the New Palace of Justice in Bogotá. Salcedo created this piece to commemorate the anniversary of the 1985 siege of the Palace of Justice in which about 100 people died including Supreme Court justices. Her work consisted of lowering wooden chairs from the roof of the building at the particular time of day when each victim is believed to have died thereby creating ‘an act of memory’ in the space of forgetting. In 2003, chairs featured again as the principal motif in a public installation entitled *Installation for the 8th Istanbul Biennial*. In this work by Salcedo, 1,500 wooden chairs were stacked precariously in the

space between two buildings, to address the history of migration and displacement in Turkey.

Tabula Rasa

Tabula Rasa (2018), meaning ‘clean slate’, is a new body of work inspired by Salcedo’s conversations with survivors of sexual violence at the hands of armed men and the fractured sense of self often experienced as a consequence. Consisting of five worn, domestic wooden tables subjected to a sequence of forced destruction followed by reconstruction, these sculptures suggest how, after experiencing sexual violence, one is left permanently changed. After being smashed, each table is painstakingly glued back together, fragment by fragment. Although at first glance appearing whole, the tables remain a fragile composite of tiny parts, rebuilt as faithfully as possible in an impossible act of recreation.

Disremembered

In *Disremembered* (1998-2016), four delicate sculptures, based on the form of a blouse belonging to the artist, present a haunting gesture of mourning. The idea for this series developed from interviews Salcedo conducted with Chicago mothers who had lost children to gun violence. Their suffering moved her to create these poignant traces of the lost bodies, deeply mourned by their families yet frequently overlooked by society. Each sculpture is made of raw silk threads interspersed in an irregular pattern with tiny blackened needles. Painstakingly handwoven thread by thread, the shirts’ evanescent folds evoke traces of the absent body. Each garment created by Salcedo’s intensely ritualistic process imparts an emotional weight seemingly at odds with its fragile nature.

Atrabillarios

In *Atrabillarios* (1996), worn shoes, mostly women’s, are encased in niches embedded into the gallery wall which are covered by a layer of stretched and preserved animal fibre and affixed to the surface with medical sutures. In the early 1990s, Salcedo’s extensive Colombia-based research into the lasting effects of violence highlighted that female victims were treated with distinct cruelty and that shoes were often used to identify human remains. This is particularly true in relation to ‘*los desaparecidos*’ (the disappeared). The semi-translucent surfaces of the niches partially obscure their contents and perhaps allude to the ambiguous relationship between memory and time.

Untitled (Furniture Works)

Spanning nearly three decades, Salcedo’s series of monumental cement and wood furniture sculptures, *Untitled* (furniture works), (1990-2016), forms one of her largest bodies of work to date. Based on her extensive research conducted with victims of political violence, Salcedo transforms their experiences into sculptures that convey a sense of the disruption to their daily lives. Using materials that are commonly available within all homes, Salcedo fills domestic furniture such as armoires, bed frames, dressers and chairs with concrete, thereby rendering them functionless. Salcedo explains “The way that an artwork brings materials together is incredibly powerful. Sculpture is its materiality. I work with materials that are already charged with significance, with a meaning they have acquired in the practice of everyday life”.

A Flor de Piel II

The final three rooms in this exhibition contain a fragment of *A Flor de Piel II* (2013–2014) in a tapestry comprising thousands of carefully preserved red rose petals, hand-stitched together with waxed thread. This piece developed out

of Salcedo’s research into the story of a nurse in Colombia who, after overcoming great obstacles in her life, was kidnapped and tortured to death in the Colombian war. Described by the artist as a ‘shroud’, the rose petals have been treated and preserved, in effect suspending them between life and death, in a process that defies their nature by keeping them soft, pliable and flexible for a long period of time. The title of the work is derived from a Spanish saying used to describe an overt display of emotion, similar to the English expression of ‘wearing one’s heart on one’s sleeve’. The artist explains that “*A Flor de Piel II* started with a simple intention of making a flower offering to a victim of torture, in an attempt to perform the funerary ritual that was denied to her”. Salcedo worked previously with roses in her public intervention, *Untitled* (1999-2000), which was one of three public installations with flowers in the streets of Bogotá to commemorate the murder of political satirist Jaime Garzon in 1999.

Acts of Mourning pays tribute to victims lost and otherwise forgotten. Each work in the exhibition performs a gesture of mourning. Bearing witness to individual testimonies, Salcedo memorialises and commemorates otherwise voiceless victims in a striking, powerful and emblematic way. The exhibition invites the audience to connect with the work of this pioneering sculptor and to reflect on the themes of absence and presence, loss and remembrance, commemoration and memorial which are deeply resonant within recent Irish history and in a global context.