



On View

'My Work Is a Form of Healing': Watch Artist Janine Antoni Turn Everyday Gestures Into Sculptures and Performances

As part of a collaboration with Art21, hear news-making artists describe their inspirations in their own words.

artnet News, February 28, 2019



Production still from Art21's interview with Janine Antoni. © Art21, Inc. 2014.

For the past thirty years, artist [Janine Antoni](#) has been incorporating her body and daily activities into her work. Her oeuvre, which spans from sculpture to painting to performance, blurs the lines between life and art.

In a 2013 interview with Art21 as part of its 'Extended Play' series, Antoni describes a longtime fascination with *milagros*, or miracles: small objects that are shaped to resemble body parts or organs and are used

throughout Brazil, Spain, and Portugal as talismans to soothe physical ailments.

'If you have a problem with your foot, you would go and buy one of these and you'd take it to the church,' she says. 'They hang them on the ceilings, so the entire ceiling is filled with body parts.'

To these charm-like body parts, Antoni applies her personal experiences, remembering, for example, that as a child, she was constantly reminded by an aunt to cross her legs like a lady. That memory later made it into a sculpture of two legs crossed at the knees.

'I thought it was funny to take the bone from one leg and cross it with the skin of the other leg,' Antoni says, adding: 'so in the piece, there's really no chance of uncrossing my legs.'



Production still from the Art21 'Extended Play' film, 'Janine Antoni: Milagros.' © Art21, Inc. 2014.

Antoni's object-based works are both highly specific and widely accessible: weird, sometimes unsettling, and counteracted by her interest in dance and performance art.

Right now, the final stage of her months-long exhibition '[Paper Dance](#)' is on view at Contemporary Austin, where the artist and museum handlers have been rearranging, unpacking, and discarding art objects over the course of the installation. Each new cycle is accompanied by a performance by the artist, choreographed in collaboration with the dance pioneer Anna Halprin.

'The reality,' she tells Art21, 'is that we are in contact with a lot of objects and we have no idea how they are made. My work is a form of healing that. I can somehow locate myself in relation to others and my environment.'

Watch the full segment, which originally appeared as part of the 'Art in the Twenty-First Century' television series on PBS, below. '[Janine Antoni and Anna Halprin: Paper Dance](#)' is on view at the Contemporary Austin through March 17, 2019.