



“Since the start of my career early in the 90s, I have been working on an aesthetic approach less about death than about corpses in their various phases and their socio-cultural implications.”

TERESA MARGOLLES

Teresa Margolles

Sin título/Untitled, 2010

Six cement benches cast with water used in the washing of bodies of murdered people in the Guadalajara morgue

Each 20 ½ x 78 ¾ x 31 ½ inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Museum purchase, The Friends of Art Endowment Fund

Acquired in 2013

© Teresa Margolles

Artist Teresa Margolles’s work bridges the divide between two separate worlds: art and crime. Trained as a forensic scientist in her native Mexico, Margolles explores the gritty realities of the countless murders connected to the infighting among the drug cartels of her country. Her hometown of Culiacán, Sinaloa, on the western coast, is the home of the Sinaloa Cartel, the most powerful drug-trafficking and organized crime group in the Americas. Born there in 1963, Margolles witnessed firsthand the destruction of community and morale that drug-related violence has unleashed. The artist addresses the bodies of those citizens who have met their end through violence, rescuing them from the invisibility that is so often their fate. Yet rather than make representative images of this human loss, Margolles channels her grief over the circumstances of her country into abstracted memorials of remembrance.

At first glance, the artist’s works appear to be paradigms of minimalist art. The smooth surfaces of the six cement cast benches of *Sin título/Untitled, 2010*, recall the bare concrete of the Modern’s towering walls. Arranged in a wide semicircular array on the east lawn and overlooking the reflecting pond, *Sin título/Untitled* could easily be mistaken for a well-designed resting spot with an arresting view of the Museum. Indeed, the low, horizontal benches resemble *chez* lounges and beckon the viewer to recline upon them. It is only upon reading the words engraved on one of the forms that the sinister component of its structure is revealed. In Spanish, Margolles has inscribed the details of her choice of materials—chiefly, the fluid used by the Guadalajara morgue to wash the corpses of Mexican cartel victims. With this information in mind, one’s understanding of these concrete slabs changes radically; no longer simple places of rest, each bench becomes a meditation on the cause and nature of death, resembling a tombstone or burial plot. As with all of Margolles’s work, the violence implied through her choice of materials is subtle, yet powerful.