

Doris Salcedo

Teaching Resource

2016 Nasher Prize Laureate

About Doris Salcedo

Born in Bogotá in 1958, Doris Salcedo is an acclaimed Colombian sculptor and installation artist whose work addresses important social and political issues. Employing everyday objects and domestic materials, Salcedo creates quietly poetic sculptural and installation works of art that serve as monuments to political crises and tragedies, and which speak to themes of trauma, empathy, memory, and loss.

Process and Materials

- Think about the objects in your home. If you were to choose one object to represent yourself, what would it be? What would you choose to represent the time your family spend together?

Doris Salcedo's work often begins with simple, recognizable objects chosen for their close connections to everyday life. She sometimes transforms these objects using techniques and processes that relate to the care and tending of the human body: wrapping, binding, cutting, and stitching.

Memory

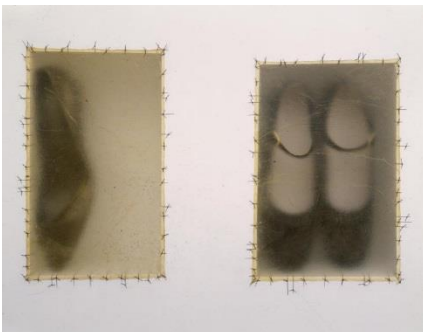
Salcedo spends long periods meeting and talking with the victims of violence and their families, and sees her art as a way to keep lives and experiences from being forgotten. She has stated, **"The only possible response I can give in the face of irreparable absence is to produce images capable of conveying incompleteness, lack, and emptiness."**

- What rituals do members of your community perform to remember and honor people who have died?
- Why might it be important for artists to draw attention to violent and tragic events?



Doris Salcedo. Photo: David Heald, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Salcedo commemorated the lives of female victims of violence using women's shoes displayed behind a stitched layer of animal hide.



Doris Salcedo, *Atrabiliarios* (detail) 1992-2004. Installation: Doris Salcedo, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, February 21 – May 24, 2015. © Doris Salcedo. Photo: Patrizia Tocci.

On the 17th anniversary of a siege on Bogotá's Palace of Justice, Salcedo lowered 280 empty chairs from the roof—one for each life lost.



Doris Salcedo, *Noviembre 6 y 7*, 2002. Two hundred eighty wooden chairs and rope, Dimensions variable. Ephemeral public project, Palace of Justice, Bogotá, 2002. © Doris Salcedo. Photo: courtesy of the artist; Alexander and Bonin, New York; and White Cube.

Salcedo stitched a shroud of rose petals to honor the life of a nurse who was killed after providing care to the wounded on both sides of Colombia's civil war.



Doris Salcedo, *A Flor de Piel*, 2012. Rose petals and thread, 257 x 42 1/4 in. (652.8 x 1070 cm). Installation: Doris Salcedo, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, June 26 – October 12, 2015.

The Nasher Prize is an annual international award presented to a living artist whose work has had an extraordinary impact on the understanding of sculpture.

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Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda*, 2008-10. Wood, mineral compound, metal, and grass. Installation: Museo nazionale delle arte delle XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome, March 15 – June 24, 2012. © Doris Salcedo. Photo: Patrizia Tocci.

Plegaria Muda (Silent Prayer)

On view at the Nasher (February 27 – April 17, 2016), *Plegaria Muda* is an installation made up of long wooden tables that have been covered with a thick layer of soil held in place by an upturned table of the same size. In places, bright green blades of grass push their way through the overturned tabletop.

- As you walk among the tables that make up this artwork, what do you notice about their size and shape?
- What do the soil and grass remind you of?

Salcedo has designed these tables to resemble the dimensions of a coffin, and the presence of the earth and grass may create the impression of being in the midst of a cemetery. *Plegaria Muda* was partly inspired by a trip Salcedo made to Los Angeles in 2004, researching reports that more than 10,000 young people had been killed on the streets of L.A. in the past two decades. The sculpture also responds to the murder of some 2,500 young people in Colombia between 2003 and 2009 by the Colombian army. Salcedo accompanied a group of mothers searching for their “disappeared” sons, who were found in unmarked mass graves. Salcedo stated, **“Colombia—the country of the unburied dead—has hundreds of unidentified mass graves where the dead remain nameless. For this very reason, I inscribed the image of the grave within this piece, creating a space for remembrance, a graveyard that opens up a space for each body.”**

- Look for other works on view at the Nasher that relate to themes of mourning and memorials.

Responding to Salcedo’s Work

Doris Salcedo uses art to bring attention to events and individuals that might otherwise be forgotten.

- As a group, discuss issues that may affect your school or community but do not receive much attention or support.
- Choose an issue that your class would like to address. Research the impact of this issue by interviewing and collecting stories from those who are affected by it.
- Create a space to share your findings. Consider how viewers might interact with your installation.

To learn more and view additional images and video, visit nashersculpturecenter.org/art/nasher-prize.