

THE SHADOW OF YOUR OWN NAME

by

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The Shadow of Your Own Name

“For only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the Earth’s body—stone, sky, liquid, soil. This work, these images, piercing tongue or earlobes with cactus needle, are my offerings, are my Aztecan blood sacrifices.”

—Gloria Anzaldua, *The Path of the Red and Black Ink, Boderlands/La Frontera*

“I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices.”

—Audre Lorde, *The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House*

This body of work moves between shadow and light. I use light—and its absence—as a tool for seeing. The jewelry I make depends upon this force, shaping pools of light across glassy surfaces to reflect what we most desire or fear. I position glass and silver jewelry as vibrant, relational matter that reflects and fractures identity. Much of this inquiry emerges from my lived experience as a feminine queer Chicax person with deep sacred wounds and a determination to discover an understanding of my own identity.

This tension between visibility and obscurity forms the impetus for my research into the phenomenology of Chicax experiences, ancient Aztec cosmology, and vital materialism as adornment. Across three sections, I examine shadow, myth, material process, fragility, and trickster methodologies to situate adornment as a site of embodied theory.

Part One : The Rupture

This work is my rupture—my breaking point, my
s h a t t e r i n g .

I began metalsmithing as an urgent need for agency and control. I've always needed a companion in this way—something to be close to, to commune with. Somewhere deep in my body, I must have known that metalsmithing could serve this purpose with reliability: this need to form, to shape, to alchemize matter. Craft-based work has always kept my mind at ease and my fingers moving at the pace of my heartbeat, sustaining a grounded and focused mind.

My interest in glass came after I'd been exploring metalsmithing for years. The direct hand-to-material sculpting process of frameworking was something I was very interested in, hoping to find a material that moved more like raw emotion than metal could translate alone. I have found this in glass, a fluid, energetic material, whose vitreous surface bends and reflects the light. Glass is my collaborator, but also a fickle friend. She shatters when I want her to stay, fractures when put under too much stress, ruptures under pressure, yet will last millenia, never fully breaking down into anything other than fractals of itself; pieces of sand.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004) was an active queer Chicana theorist, writer, poet, spiritual activist, and scholar who wrote about integrating and acknowledging the shadow self, a Jungian concept describing the parts of the self that are repressed, unwanted, or shameful. Her teachings are mediations rooted in body-memory, Indigenous cosmology, spirit-knowing, and political refusal. Her writings deeply inform my practice and provide a lens through which I make my work. Anzaldúa describes a process that encourages a new consciousness and understanding of the human experience through *conocimiento*, or sacred knowledge. The first

stage of acquiring *conocimiento* is identified in her posthumously published *Light in the Dark = Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality as arrebató*—the rupture. Those who carry this *conocimiento* “refuse to accept spirituality as a devalued form of knowledge and instead elevate it to the same level occupied by science and rationality” (Anzaldúa, 119). She describes this knowledge as a “form of spiritual inquiry” reached through creative acts—writing, art making, dancing, healing, teaching, meditation, and spiritual activism—both mental and somatic. Through *conocimiento*, an individual begins to heal sacred wounds, traumas, inherited colonial histories, and participates in an ongoing collective survival strategy to resist fragmentation of identity and reclaim wholeness as a spiritual and political right.

There are seven stages of *conocimiento*; The first four representing the four directions, North South, East, West. The next two are Above and Below. The last is the Center, with the whole symbolizing the seven “ojos de luz” or the seven chakras of the body. In all seven spaces an individual may struggle with their shadow and shame, oscillating between stages. Internal shifts create external change.

The first and most profound stage is the rupture. Every *arrebató* causes a major break, or shattering; A violent attack, a death of a loved one, a major life altering shift. You are no longer the same, no longer who you once were. You move away from former positions of place and belonging and try to reorient yourself toward something else. This manifests in deep confusion, uncertainty, and internal conflict. Sara Ahmed, author of *Queer Phenomenology*, describes, “Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one’s sense of confidence in the ground or one’s belief that the

ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable”. (157) From an indigenous latinx perspective, one suffers from *un “susto,”* (Anzaldua, 70) a shock that knocks one of your souls out of the body, out of alignment. Whatever the breakage, it causes one to reassess the fragments of what is left. You begin to honor what has ended, and begin to reconstruct.

The wisdom of *conocimiento* conjures itself within the fragile body, urging us to create, to make, to mend. As Anzaldua describes, “My soul makes itself through the creative act. It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body.”(95) There is power in the creative act: it is how we heal, how we grow, how we reclaim wholeness through our fragmentation. Metalsmithing is my creative act. It is how I move through the stages of *conocimiento*, and how I have come to understand creation as a meditation and ritual that demands attention, care, and reciprocity. It is a moment of listening—to my environment, to the material, to my ancestors guiding my creative impulses.

The Shadow of Your Own Name is a representation of spiritual inquiry that moves beyond adornment. The collection of talismanic necklaces operate as vessels for meditation and mirrors for witnessing. They tell intimate stories of Aztec mythology, and their mirrored forms reflect the soft ache of longing, the burning waves of shame, the deepest secrets left untold—all the aches, bruises, and vulnerabilities we carry as shadow.

Obsidian and the Smoking Mirror



“the eros of survival in spite of,
the obsidian drenched
proclamation
of a bit lip on sure footing.”

—Ellie Swenson

In pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, the world was filled with an animated essence of life, and cosmic forces determined fate. Mythology, cosmology, and landscape coalesced, creating a “transformational and multi-sensorial place” (Saunders, 220) where shared reality linked objects to land, deities, myth, and everyday life. Obsidian (*itztli* in Nahuatl) is one of the most significant cultural materials in Mesoamerican culture, positioning itself boldly between symbolic and physical realities.

Central Mexico sits on a tectonically active volcanic cordillera called the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt, formed over millions of years. Ancient lava flows produced volcanic glass in abundance, and obsidian became a major part of social, economic, and metaphysical relationships with the world. The Aztec made many objects and adornments like ear and lip spools, and blades from this volcanic glass, and interestingly, flat mirror surfaces for gazing into the black surface until they saw “clouds of smoke” (Anzaldúa, 64), which would part to reveal visions concerning the collective future and the will of the gods.

This vital material inspires the use of glass in my adornment and appears as oozing, voluptuous forms and in the cherry red glow of hot glass. My work not only serves as an adornment for the contemporary wearer, but as a relational tool serving as a teacher and guide. The mirrored glass forms echo the polished surface of pre-hispanic obsidian, connecting my work to a lineage of glass adornment. Objects scaffold our memories, encouraging us to slow down and

look, recall, reflect. My work asks this—to be aware. To notice. Christine Albu, art historian and contemporary art critic believes, “that a significant number of contemporary artworks with mirroring properties enable us to perceive ourselves and others as if from a third distance, intertwined in a complex social fabric that alerts us to the critical need for reconsidering who we are, how we act, and what consequences our choices have on others”. (2)

Early gemologist George Frederick Kunz describes the neuroscience which occurs when we encounter seductive glossy surfaces, gems and reflective surfaces, “attract the attention of the gazer [and] to fix the eye until, gradually, the optic nerve becomes so fatigued that it finally ceases to transmit to the sensorium the impression made from without and begins to respond to the reflex action proceeding from the brain of the gazer.”(177) In other words- the impression is externally projected onto the glassy object from an internal association, affirming the old-world belief that alluring gems might transfix one, bringing good fortune simply by believing so.

My work operates under both of these functions- as a place to project oneself, an active vessel, and as a space to reconsider who we are, a mediator. This understanding that objects might have animating essences is not new, and was a fundamental way of life for the original Mexica people. Taking our time to look, to see, to notice, is an ancient ritual we participate in, one that might just provide mental clarity, identity integration, and bring us closer to ourselves.



The Aztecs' ancestors originated as a nomadic tribe from the plains of what is now the Southwestern United States, traveling south into Central Mexico to form the Aztec Empire, which lasted from around 1300 to 1521 AD. An ancient and supreme deity, Tezcatlipoca, whose name means "Lord of the Smoking Mirror" (Saunders, 222), was known for rulership, mastery of fate, and as a trickster archetype mediating materiality and invisibility with an all-knowing, all-seeing power. He wielded a magical black obsidian mirror that granted access "to the intangible world of reflections, where souls, spirits, and the immanent forces of the cosmos dwell" (Saunders, 2). Through this mirror, Tezcatlipoca persuaded one to see their own reflection and ultimately face their shadow or double.

My work wrestles with the unknown by way of the shadow. The unknown is often depicted as the darkness within a person in both art and literature. This imagery of darkness reinforces myths that tell us what is dark and what is feminine, both unknown and evil. These messages silently coerce our mind, body and spirits, to believe—to internalize—this oppressive imagery. Cherrie Moraga, co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back*, has succinctly brought to light the issues with darkness equating to "badness", stating that oppressors succeed in externalizing these fears onto others. To close the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed, one must understand that there is little difference. The oppressor is scared of what he may find in his shadow. "He fears he will have to change his life once he has seen himself in the bodies of the people he has called different. He fears the hatred, anger, and vengeance of those he has hurt". (32) This is not exclusive to the oppressor. Many oppressed people struggle with the internalization of hatred and fear of the self. We are afraid that we have taken the words of the oppressor and turned them against ourselves and our loved ones, we are afraid of how deeply these feelings of inadequacy and self hate have dug themselves into our hearts. As a queer, feminine

person with one foot standing in whiteness and the other with my ancestors of Mexico, I feel this too deeply. On a broader social and cultural scale, we are also dealing with profound transformation and shifting perspectives due to organized hierarchies of commerce and power. We each experience our own version of reality, disintegrating any sense of a fixed identity, and how could we? As Anzaldúa writes, "we are collectively conditioned not to know that every comfort of our lives is acquired with the blood of conquered, subjugated, enslaved, or exterminated people, an exploitation that continues today." (27)

We are collectively standing at a threshold of consciousness, facing our shadows together. Barriers and boundaries are blurring, what once was is becoming something else, on its way to something new.

In my practice, the shadow does not signify danger but instead is fertile terrain for transformation and discovery of the self. Through silversmithing and blown glass, I excavate what lies beneath the shadowy polished surfaces of selfhood. Objects externalize the unconscious, becoming mirrors and mediators, prompting jewelry to ask: what happens when we adorn ourselves with what we fear, when we hold close what is meant to stay hidden?

Mischief

As Sacred

M e t h o d

To explore the vastness of one's shadow, the trickster is called upon, disrupting outward. I draw from Tezcatlipoca, the smoking mirror deity, a figure of chaos, reflection, and moral ambiguity. His obsidian mirror reveals hidden truths and forces confrontation with the self.

In my practice, the trickster becomes methodology: mischief as sacred practice. Mirrored and distorted adornment seduces and unsettles. Queer tricksters blur binaries and reclaim chaos as generative. Glass teaches surrender to instability; accidents and imperfections speak. Mischief is subversion and renewal. The mirror reveals through distortion. In the studio, chaos, shadow, and reflection intertwine as transformation.

Together, the shadow and trickster form the architecture of my practice: excavation and eruption, concealment and revelation, rupture and repair. The smoking mirror becomes their meeting ground, where self-knowledge flickers and transformation takes material form.

Mirrors contain and absorb. They force the act of seeing. Subject and object become intrinsically tied to one another, under scrutiny and possession. A mirror can also be a separation—a barrier against the world, immobilizing the viewer. Yet in looking, we also find knowledge and awareness. These contradictory activities are illuminated through the myth of Coatlicue.



The Coatlicue S t a t e

She has this fear that she has no names that she
Has many names that she doesn't know her names She has
This fear that she's an image that comes and goes
Clearing and darkening the fear that she's the dreamwork
Inside someone else's skull She has this fear that if
She takes off her clothes she shoves her brain aside
Peels off her skin That if she drains the blood
Vessels strips the flesh from the bone flushes out
The marrow She has this fear that when she does
Reach herself turns around to embrace herself a
Lion's or witch's or serpent's head will turn around
Swallow her and grin She has this fear that if she digs
Into herself she won't find anyone that when she gets
"There" She won't find her notches on the trees the
Birds will have eaten all the crumbs She has this fear
That she won't find the way back

—Gloria Anzaldúa, The Coatlicue State, Borderlands/La Frontera

Coatlícue embodies contradiction. Like Medusa, she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent, life and death, mobility and immobility, heaven and the underworld. In Nahuatl, *cue* means skirt to describe a woman, while *coatl* translates to serpent and also means twin; Coatlícue becomes serpent-skirt-woman, a convergence of multiplicities.

This great goddess, like the serpent, slows us down, asking us to disrupt the flow of our lives in order to process, make meaning, and integrate our body-minds. If one does not allow Coatlícue to gently slither into the tight corners of the soul, she will make her way in on her own—causing illness, frightening the soul out of the body, withdrawing into the underworld.

This is not meant to cause harm and suffering, but

often does. Coatlícue is asking us to see ourselves, to see our shadow doubles, the parts of ourselves soaked in shame and too terrifying to face. There will be resistance, exposure, and painful awareness. But this awareness—this knowing—enables connection, expanded consciousness, and altered perception of the world. The Coatlícue state requires a crossing of a threshold, a border crossing, a rupture. One of the necklaces in the body of work, titled *She Has No Name, She Has Many Names*, after Anzaldúa's poem *Coatlícue State*, captures a dissected mirrored vessel in two halves, and asks for this crossing. It asks the wearer to pause, to see, to sit in the smoke, and to recognize the shadow not as an enemy, but as a guide toward integration of the whole self. This necklace reflects the disoriented embodied experience of duality, splitting a single glass vessel into two parts.





Part Two:

Materiality and Process

Metalsmithing as Ritual Practice

Each time I light my torch, I feel as though I am entering a ceremony. To fabricate a piece of jewelry is not only to shape metal but to test endurance, patience, and humility; to find a rhythm in making. The hammer's strike becomes percussion, a heartbeat keeping time with my own. Filing, sanding, and polishing accumulate into a rhythm of grounding. These actions are repetitive but never mechanical; they are ritual acts, small invocations of transformation.

Silver is both stubborn and generous. It resists the hammer's force, yet remembers each strike. Its durability feels ancestral—an earthly register of time, weight, and continuity. When I think of silver, I think of Taxco, the Mexican mountain town where silver veins shaped a lineage of craft. My practice is tethered to that history, mediated by distance and time. To hold silver is to touch the earth's interior and the hands of those who came before, who knew how to coax light out of metal.

Recently, in grad school, I learned that an uncle I never really knew was a well-established jeweler in Chicago with a business on Jeweler's Row. My mother can remember visiting his shop in the 90's and melting down a gold wedding band, said to be from his failed marriage. I think about how we are connected and I wonder if my fascination and need to transform material into objects was passed down, if it runs deep in the silvery veins of my ancestors.

In fabrication, sheet metal is cut, shaped, and soldered. Each solder seam carries an echo of rupture and repair. What looks like destruction, the melting of metal, allows union. To solder is to witness transformation, to see how parts become whole without erasing histories of separation. The seam is not invisible; it is a scar that holds. As Anzaldúa writes of *nepantla*, the awkward threshold between identities, my work too exists in-between: between raw metal and adornment, fracture and form, resistance and becoming.

Metalsmithing teaches me that process itself is meaning. Hammering, annealing, soldering, polishing—these are technical steps and queer metaphors of survival, repair, and resilience. The piece, *Into the Serpent*, is formed from seven undulating metal forms, pillowed out with pressure to create a slick black serpent-like chain. Others involve silver chain, soldered, oxidized and burnished, all tediously handmade, testaments of the laborious sacrifice and bodily involvement with this craft.

B l o w n G l a s s :

Reflection and

F r a c t u r e

Blowing glass is a body-centered act. To shape borosilicate glass, work in front of an open torch, spinning constantly so gravity does not claim my bubble. I heat the glass until it moves like honey, then exhale into the tubing. The glass expands with my breath, capturing it inside itself, cooled into form. A humble material made of sand and fire preserves the trace of my lungs i n d e f i n i t e l y .

In ancient Mexico, the Nahua understood breath as life-force—tonalli—and as yolia, the heart-soul. When I blow into glass, I feel these forces: heat passing into the molten bubble and spirit stirring as the form takes shape. Each vessel becomes an artifact of breath, a container of s p i r i t .

Glass is intimate and fragile. It fractures easily, shattering days of labor in an instant. Fragility unsettles me, but it also teaches. Glass mirrors the body: it carries trauma, lineage, vulnerability, and memory. When I hold a finished blown object, the surface multiplies and distorts me. Identity becomes prismatic, fractured, reconstituted. Glass insists on multiplicity. To work with glass is to dwell in nepantla, the space between transformation and fracture, between breath and shatter. The molten bubble is neither liquid nor solid, suspended by breath and turning. Beauty and breakage are inseparable. When I set this glass into metal frames, I bind endurance and ephemerality, earth and breath. Their tension mirrors my experience of identity: fractured, reflected, multiplied, held together by care and p e r s i s t e n c e .



The Fragility

of

I d e n t i t y

“It is how we live with fragility. Sometimes we need a wall to protect ourselves. Sometimes we need to retreat when the world is intrusive. Sometimes we need to shatter that wall; a bruise can be a break. When a stone breaks, a stone becomes stones. A fragment: what breaks off is on the way to becoming something else. Feminism: on the way to becoming something else. Shattering: scattering. What is shattered so often is scattered, strewn all over the place. A history that is down, heavy, is also messy, strewn.

The fragments: an assembly. In pieces. Becoming army.”

—Sara Ahmed, *Fragile Connections*

Glass does not let me forget that identity itself is fragile. Its surfaces multiply and fracture the self, reminding me that identity is unstable and relational. Metal remembers the hammer strike; glass fractures under stress. Fragility troubles fixedness. Nothing is stable—not materials, not bodies, not selves.

Fragility, as Sara Ahmed writes, is a condition of relation. To be fragile is to risk breaking and connection. Fragility demands care; it is a form of love. Living in *nepantla* means living with this vulnerability—between lineages, identities, and worlds. Half Mexican, queer, shaped by Indigenous knowledge and Western institutions, I inhabit thresholds.

The necklaces I craft carries multiple inheritances that clash and coexist. I engage in a dialogue with the materials, always searching for a “hard and soft” to balance the duality and find the magical threshold which allows the work to speak. In the piece, *Needle Sharp*, I emphasize the harshness with black glass, forming a barbed chain, and giving way to softer, corporeal forms and rounded beads. The integration of both elements creates a piece that is both a precious power object and a form of protection. In another piece, *Obsidian Dream*, slick black glass sits at the neck, with an oxidized silver chain forming a tight choker, ripe with the potential of snapping at one of its delicate points with any sudden turn of the neck. Fragility and *nepantla* are not obstacles but conditions of making. The question is not how to prevent breakage, but how to move with it, how to solder what is split, how to hold what could shatter. The fragility is inevitable.

Each piece is provisional, a pause rather than a conclusion. The work invites others to carry in-betweenness on their skin as objects of resilience and adornment.





Exhibition installation view

P a r t T h r e e :

Adornment as Intimate Knowledge

Jewelry is an epistemological site. It is knowledge worn against skin, carried through gesture, and activated through proximity. Unlike sculpture that remains at a distance, jewelry insists on intimacy. It touches pulse points, moves with breath, warms with the body, and accumulates the traces of daily life. In this way, adornment becomes a method of knowing—an embodied practice that resists disembodied, rationalist models of knowledge production. Jewelry witnesses, and holds intimate forms of knowledge held close to the skin.

Historically, jewelry has been understood as decorative, marginal, feminized, and domestic, belonging to the body and soul—inferior to the mind. These categorizations mirror the ways that knowledge associated with women, queer people, Indigenous people, and people of color has been dismissed as minor, excessive, irrational and frivolous. To work in jewelry is therefore to work in a field already marked by hierarchies of value, intimacy, and care. My practice embraces this positioning, understanding jewelry as active participants, as a site where relationality, vulnerability, and care become material and visible.

My glass and metal objects operate as talismans, mirrors, and thresholds. They are designed to be worn close to the body, where they can mediate between interior and exterior states. The convex and mirrored glass surfaces of the bodily forms distort and multiply the wearer's image, producing a visual encounter that is both seductive and unsettling. In this distortion, the wearer is invited into a *Coatlicue state*—a threshold

where identity is fragmented and reassembled, where shadow and light coexist.

The act of wearing fragile objects requires attentiveness and responsibility. Glass demands care; it can shatter, scratch, or break. This fragility mirrors the precariousness of queer, Chicana, and diasporic subjectivities, which exist within systems that are both sustaining and violent. To wear these objects is to enter into a reciprocal relationship with material, to acknowledge vulnerability as a condition of being and as a political stance. Jewelry's scale and proximity allow it to function as a portable ritual. These objects are not inert; they are activated by breath, movement, and touch. They accumulate oils, scratches, and histories. They are carried through daily life as companions, witnesses, and archives of embodied experience. In this sense, my work participates in a lineage of adornment that extends beyond Western art histories, aligning instead with Indigenous practices where objects are animate, relational, spiritually charged, and deeply meaningful.

Through jewelry, I propose an alternative epistemology grounded in intimacy, care, and relationality. These objects do not offer transparent reflection or fixed identity. Instead, they offer distortion, opacity, and multiplicity—ways of seeing that resist colonial demands for coherence, legibility, and mastery. Jewelry then becomes a method of *conocimiento*, a daily practice through which knowledge is felt, worn, and lived.



On the Body; Of the Body

“Like the ancient Olmecs, I know Earth is a coiled Serpent. Forty years it’s taken me to enter into the Serpent, to acknowledge that I have a body, that I am a body and to assimilate the animal body, the animal s o u l . ”

—Gloria Anzaldua, *Entering Into the S e r p e n t*

Jewelry, in my practice, is not just ornament or accessory but a site of inquiry—a threshold where body, matter, and spirit meet. These objects are not passive carriers of meaning. They are active collaborators. Glass and metal speak back, resist, fracture, and glow. They exceed what I intend for them, and in that excess, they teach me how to see.

Gloria Anzaldua’s framework of *conocimiento* offers a way to understand jewelry as spiritual and embodied knowledge. *Conocimiento* is born in rupture, in *nepantla*—the in-between space where identity is unsettled and reconfigured. Jewelry too, exists in this threshold. It rests on the skin yet gestures outward; it belongs to the self yet remains other. Wearing a mirrored glass object becomes a ritual of *nepantla*, a moment of seeing oneself through matter, through distortion, through shimmer and shadow.

Jane Bennett’s concept of thing-power further unsettles the hierarchy between human and material. Bennett writes of vibrant matter—of objects as lively, agentic, capable of affecting and being affected. In the studio, I experience this vitality viscerally. Molten glass swells and collapses, gravity pulls it downward, breath

expands it, heat renders it unstable. Metal oxidizes, darkens, and remembers touch. These materials are not inert; they participate in the making. They shape the form, the failure, and the surprise.

Indigenous new materialist scholarship complicates and grounds this vitality within relational ontologies. Matter is not simply lively—it is kin, ancestor, land, responsibility. Knowledge is situated, embodied, and accountable. Glass and metal are entangled with colonial extraction, industrial modernity, and dispossession. To work with these materials is to touch histories of volcanic landscapes, mining, trade, and violence. My practice moves within this tension, acknowledging adornment as both intimate and implicated, personal and planetary.

I understand jewelry as a relational threshold object, a Coatlicue-state artifact that holds contradiction—light and shadow, reflection and opacity, desire and fear. The convex and mirrored glass surfaces of the bodily forms distort and multiply the wearer’s image, producing a visual encounter that is both seductive and unsettling. These objects mediate between body and world, between self and matter. They are mirrors and vessels, surfaces and depths. They ask the wearer to slow down, to notice how matter notices back.

Glassblowing becomes a form of embodied *conocimiento*. Breath becomes structure. Gravity becomes a collaborator. Chance becomes a teacher. The glass sags, twists, collapses, holds. Each piece carries the trace of a moment when control loosened and something else intervened. In this way, making becomes ritual, meditation, and listening. The studio becomes a site of negotiation with more-than-human forces.

Adornment continues this inquiry on the body. When worn, the mirrored surface fractures the self-image. The reflection is partial, warped, and luminous. The wearer encounters themselves as multiplicity, as shimmer, as shadow. This jewelry becomes a tool for witnessing—a small, intimate technology for transformation. It is a way of carrying *nepantla* on the skin, of holding the tension between who we are and who we are b e c o m i n g .

A New Consciousness

“Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—la mestiza creates a new consciousness.”

-Gloria Anzaldua, Towards a New Consciousness

Anzaldua proposed “a tolerance [and intolerance] for ambiguity.” (104) She suggested a way of being that draws upon Jose Vasconcelos’, Mexican philosopher, idea of the “New Mestiza.” The new mestiza is a theory of inclusivity—accepting and celebrating the mixture of races and cultures to create a new hybrid, malleable species, one that wavers in a constant state of nepantla. This is very much part of the cultural understanding of identity in the borderlands and beyond. Anzaldua created this Borderlands Theory to apply to specifically people living in the borderlands of the South Texas and Mexico border, but emphasizes that the theory also applies to any and all kinds of social, economic, sexual and political dislocations. “Within

Borderlands Theory, oppressions are not ranked nor are they conceptualized as static; rather they are recognized as fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on the context.” (Anzaldua, 7) This tolerance for fluidity grows through pluralistic modes. The New Mestiza is thrown into uncharted waters, away from set patterns and toward sustaining contradiction. She is jarred out of ambivalence through rupture or breakage. She takes inventory of all that remains after the rupture, transforming the pieces into something generative and new. The destruction of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective is the beginning of a long, tumultuous struggle, but one so worth the effort.



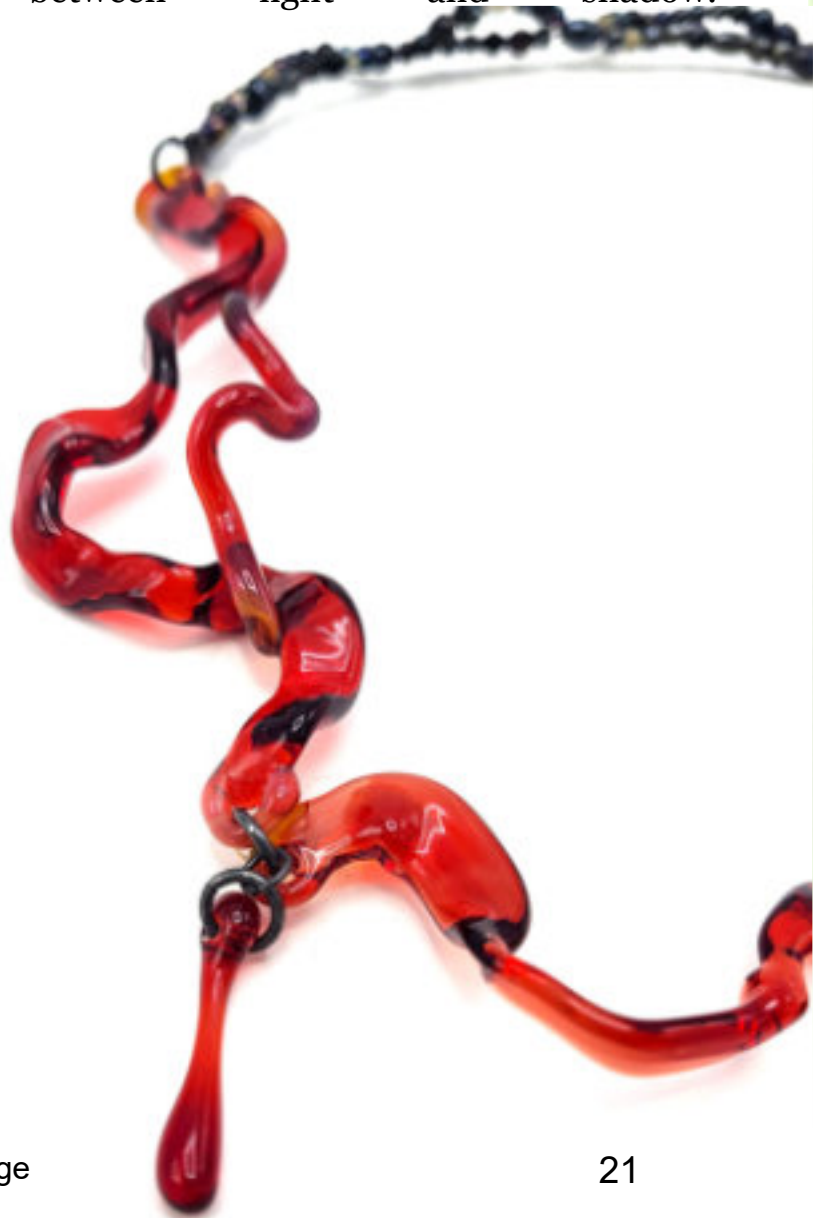


Desde la Oscuridad O u t O f T h e D a r k n e s s

Desde la oscuridad, (out of the darkness), knowledge emerges. Darkness is not absence, but a generative field—a space of incubation, ancestry, and potential. I have traced a path through shadow, reflection, material practice, and spiritual inquiry, positioning jewelry as a site where epistemology becomes intimate and embodied. My engagement with Anzaldúa's *conocimiento*, Indigenous cosmologies, and feminist and queer material practices has shaped this body of work as both research and ritual. Glass and metal function as collaborators in this process, carrying breath, heat, lineage, and memory. Through blowing, soldering, mirroring, and oxidation, I enact a practice of listening—to materials, to ancestors, to the body, to the thresholds of nepantla. The mirrored and convex surfaces of these objects refuse stable self-recognition. They multiply, distort, and obscure. In doing so, they enact a politics of opacity, resisting colonial desires for transparency and fixed identity. Shadow becomes a space of agency rather than deficiency, a site where fragments of self are held, transformed, and reconfigured. This body of work does not seek resolution. Instead, it embraces rupture, fragmentation, and becoming. Jewelry here is not merely adornment, but a living methodology—an ongoing practice of spiritual inquiry, care, and relationality. To wear these objects is to enter into a conversation with shadow, to accept

distortion as a form of truth, and to participate in the continual process of *c o n o c i m i e n t o*.

Desde la oscuridad, I continue to make, to mend, to mirror, and to mischief. These works mark a beginning rather than an ending—a commitment to crafting objects that hold multiplicity, that honor ancestral knowledge, and that invite wearers into the transformative space between light and shadow.



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