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In a place with no hope the only thing we can do is to celebrate.

A Thesis Presented

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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The purpose of this thesis is to explain how the artwork I produced over the last three years is related with the concepts of time and memory of Henri Bergson and why these ideas are so relevant in the context of the Latin American conceptualist movement.

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Introduction

To introduce the projects I created while at Stony Brook I will address the context I come from to explain why my background as a Latin American artist influences my work conceptually.

The so-called third world countries, also called countries in process of development, seem to be destined to exist in a perpetual condition where this progress they are supposed to pursuing is never completed. Development is understood not only in economic terms but also in the absorption of the cultural values of developed countries. Because of this the situation of third world countries is analogous to someone running a race that is already lost and that has no end. This seems more like a trap that doesn't let them focus on their real condition. It is true that life quality should be improved in very specific regions of the globe. However it is important to define what quality of life means first and to decide if it should be measured in terms of failure or success. If the race to progress is already lost, then we have to rethink where are we moving to, if we are moving at all and if we want to move.

“In a place with no hope the only thing that we can do is to celebrate” is a graffiti that a friend of mine discovered coming out of a party that was held on a gym in Celaya, a medium size city in the center of Mexico known for its artisanal candies and strip clubs. To him the graffiti seemed to be a revelation of the condition of our country and the way we as Mexicans respond to it. Since he told me about this I have appropriated the quote to try to explain some aspects of Mexican culture. The first way of analyzing this statement is to think that once that we have realized the race toward development is already lost, we don't have to worry about it. We can use that energy to do something else, something that can truly take us to happiness, which in this sense means to celebrate. But the question of *what* to celebrate remains. The answer is that the

question is irrelevant. It is not a matter of celebrating failure. Instead ideas of failure or success should be replaced by something that could be enjoyable.

This point of view might seem just like a way of avoiding the problem and this is precisely how failure sneaks into celebration. The idea that the problem is unresolved always returns and there is a constant back and forth in between celebration and failure. It is in this state that creativity happens in my culture. Creativity can be understood in terms of finding a way to solve a problem but it also could be a matter of rephrasing the problem itself. The issue is not to find the right answer but to change the question as many times as needed.

The importance of restating the problem is that after repeating it several times it loses its purpose, so that all the effort is not spent on finding the solution but on repurposing the problem in terms that can be handled better with the resources available.

The way this works is that when a problem with very low margin for success is set, failure is considered a very real possibility. Expectations towards the problem are changed so that each attempt could be turned into a different solution that might not be the right one but will let the person “fail better” each time. The ideal will not be to overcome the problem but to find a new definition of what success is, one that will let us redefine what we should celebrate so we can have more room to experience joy and creativity.

It is with this approach towards life that conceptual art practice in Latin America has developed its own particular personality:

“Latin American conceptualism includes sensorial qualities usually forbidden in the conceptualist canon of the North American and European art centers. The work, beyond the

anguish produced by social needs, is allowed to be pleasurable. The art tends to be impure and hybridized, fails to follow the rules and is thus heterodox". (Camnitzer 4)

Conceptualism in Latin America was developed more like a set of conceptual strategies that can be applied for making art. Again the idea of not a single solution but several attempts driven by the same impulse shows up as a way of avoiding seeing everything in terms of success or failure. In this sense, the idea of dematerializing the object, which was the starting point of what we now know as conceptual art, is interpreted in the opposite direction. The objective of these conceptual strategies is to make something from nothing, to materialize something that doesn't exist. Success is not determined by creating an art object but by leaving a trace of clues and documents that can represent that there were one or more attempts to materialize an idea.

With this in mind, I introduce my artwork as a process driven practice where the ideas of tracking memory and its relations to time and space are seen through a Latin American perspective.

In the same way that my art practice and my line of thought belong to a particular cultural background same thing happens with my writing style. English is my second language and therefore my sentence structure is different from what Standard English indicates but these differences are also what define my voice as an artist and writer. In order to keep my background present this thesis will present a different language structure that will remain understandable and also will remind the reader of my cultural identity.

The Self-Portrait of a Sleeping Man

As part of a series of art works related to the act of walking, I put a quarter in one of my shoes on September 9, 2010 in Brooklyn, N.Y.; since that day, I walked with the coin in my shoe waiting for it to appear in my dreams. On January 8th, 2011 in Queretaro, Mexico the object finally manifested in one of my dreams. It appeared in the following images:

It is late night at my parents' house. My mother is telling my father that my sisters and I never listen to her advice.

I approach crawling to her, she spits a metal ball over my hands and I start to knead it. After a while, the ball turns into a soft twenty-five cent coin, it is like metallic bubble gum that floats in my hands. I throw it and slide through the floor trying to catch it in the air.

I open the door of the garage, the coin keeps floating and getting bigger, I throw it again and my dead dog appears trying to catch it.



Figure 1. *The Self-Portrait of a Sleeping Man*, 2011. 4x10

The project started with the idea of finding a way to represent the relationship between psychological and physical movement. I was interested in investigating how physically moving an object could be related to the movement of the object's image in my memory.

Henri Bergson's work on possible interactions between matter and memory were crucial to defining the objectives for this work. Especially the concept that our possibilities of affecting matter are what demonstrate the influence of our soul in the physical world understanding soul as the accumulation and interrelations of our memories and experiences. With this in mind I wanted to use the mechanisms of memory and perception to make a work of art.

Memory is shaped and constantly transformed by perception, sensations, association of previous memories and emotional states. Because of this it is possible to think that we can consciously try to manipulate memory by physical and emotional actions.

The coin I used for this piece – a quarter – did not represent any special affection to me. I was not attached to it in any emotional way; therefore the challenge was how to charge with meaning an object easy to remember but insignificant in emotional terms.

I tried to make it come down from my unconscious to my consciousness by making the object relevant in my life. Whenever something interesting, annoying, exciting happened to me I tried to think also about the coin, so that if that day I was going to dream about that experience maybe the image of the coin would play certain role.

After a couple dreams I realized that this method wasn't getting me closer to my goal, but that the idea of the search for the coin was becoming relevant enough to start appearing in my dreams:

October 14th 2010:

I am at the library of the Stony Brook University looking for the exit of the building. Suddenly, in one of the windows, I see an engraving of a coin. I approach trying to see it in detail. In the middle of the coin there is a naked man with his arms extended and on top of him a sign that says XV or XVI century (I can't focus very well). The coin starts to disappear and I write down in my notebook about investigating V century coins, despite the fact that on the coin was written XV or XVI.

I thought of this as a significant step and thought that the more I searched for the object the closer I was coming to making it appear in my dreams but I was wrong again. I had three other dreams in which I was looking for a coin or a treasure and I never got to it. Finally I had a dream where a very weird character, a pig with two human heads covered by plastic cups told me in a very tough way "You've been invading". I took this as a warning from myself about how I was trying to affect and manipulate my memories and my unconscious life.

I realized that the main problem with this method was that the search had been performed by the intellect and the trouble of using the intellect is that "Whether it wants to treat the life of the body or the life of the mind, it proceeds with the rigor, the stiffness and the brutality of an instrument not designed for such use". (Bergson 92)

One thing was for sure; the idea of the coin was definitely set in my mind. Now there were not really any tasks to perform in my waking life but to wait for the coin to roll down through memory following its own trajectory instead of trying to force it into a preconceived path already set by my intellect.

At this point it was possible to say that the coin was already loaded with enough significance in my life that it could move by itself through my memory and that any attempt of myself to manipulate it would lead me into more of these false exit dreams of searching but not being able to find anything. It was a matter of trusting in the idea that “...sensations are supposed to translate into the language of soul the manifestations of matter”. (Bergson 53).

I started to look at this exercise more like a drawing than a search. Now, the quarter was drawing itself in my mind with memories and sensations as materials and time and experience as pencils.

This approach released me of the need of using my consciousness to perform the action and put me in a position where all I had to do was to wait and observe how this self-portrait was done.

This point of view had certain similarities with the ideas Jacques Derrida presented in his book “Memoirs of the blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins.”

“To be the other of the visible, absolute invisibility must neither take place elsewhere nor constitute another visible, that is, something that does not yet appear or has already disappeared – something whose spectacle of monumental ruins would call for reconstitution, regathering from memory rememberment”. (24)

The other side of a material object is its representation in our psyche. It is something produced in a state of mind and not in a physical place that always has the possibility of becoming an image or disappearing in an idea, something that because of the traces left, can constantly remerge from our soul.

In his short story called “El Zahir” Jorge Luis Borges tells the story of a man that accidentally received a coin called Zahir after paying for a beverage. The tale recalls how this coin is cursed

and that whoever has it will start thinking about it night and day until it occupies the whole of his thoughts leaving the person reduced to its basic vital functions.

The story demonstrates how this other side of an object, the psychological one, can influence the psyche, in this case with terrible consequences.

With the experiment performed my intention was to develop the immaterial side of the coin in my mind and dreaming with it would be the proof that matter become memory.

Finally, the dream happened in a moment when I wasn't expecting it. That day I was at my parent's home, it was early morning and my sister had just left for the airport. She was flying to England where she was going to stay for a year. I decided to take a nap after breakfast. The dream happened exactly in the place I was sleeping, so in a way it was like looking at myself from the outside. There are many ways of reading the dream, the complaints of my parents, the fact that my mother spit a metal ball that I turned into the quarter and that at the end my dead dog just took it away could be associated with the issues I have with my family, but what I found more relevant is the way the coin slipped into this whole scenario and the role my parent's house played as a catalyst of the whole thing.

It seems a place so loaded with memories, like my home, was powerful enough to shake my memory in a way that the self-portrait could be completed.

With this in mind it is possible to conclude considering that matter can interact with spirit. That places and objects contain a certain memory, a spiritual side with the possibility of affecting memory. In these terms we can consider the possibility of personal sacred or haunted spaces and objects according to our relationship with them and the chances of exploring these spiritual qualities through our dreams.

LIRR

Almost every week I travel from Long Island to New York. The trip takes around two and a half hours; there are approximately 15 stations, depending on the schedule specified for each day.

For this work I took one photograph per station the train stopped at. Once the train started to run I opened the shutter and didn't close it until we got to the next station. I repeated this process until the end of the journey.

The weather conditions, the time of the day and the speed of the train determined the result of the photographs on each trip.

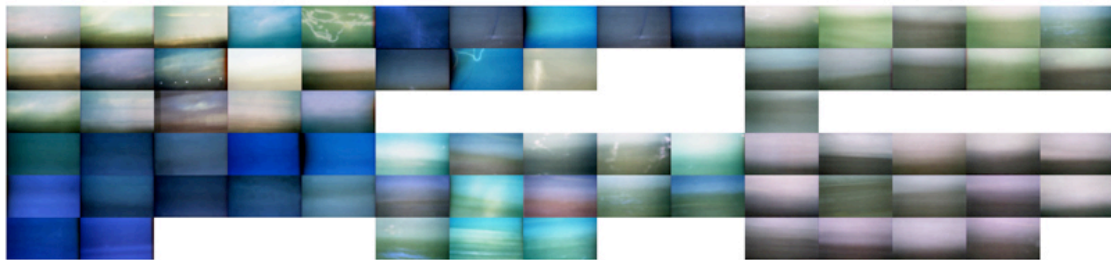


Figure 2. *LIRR*, 2011. 24x90

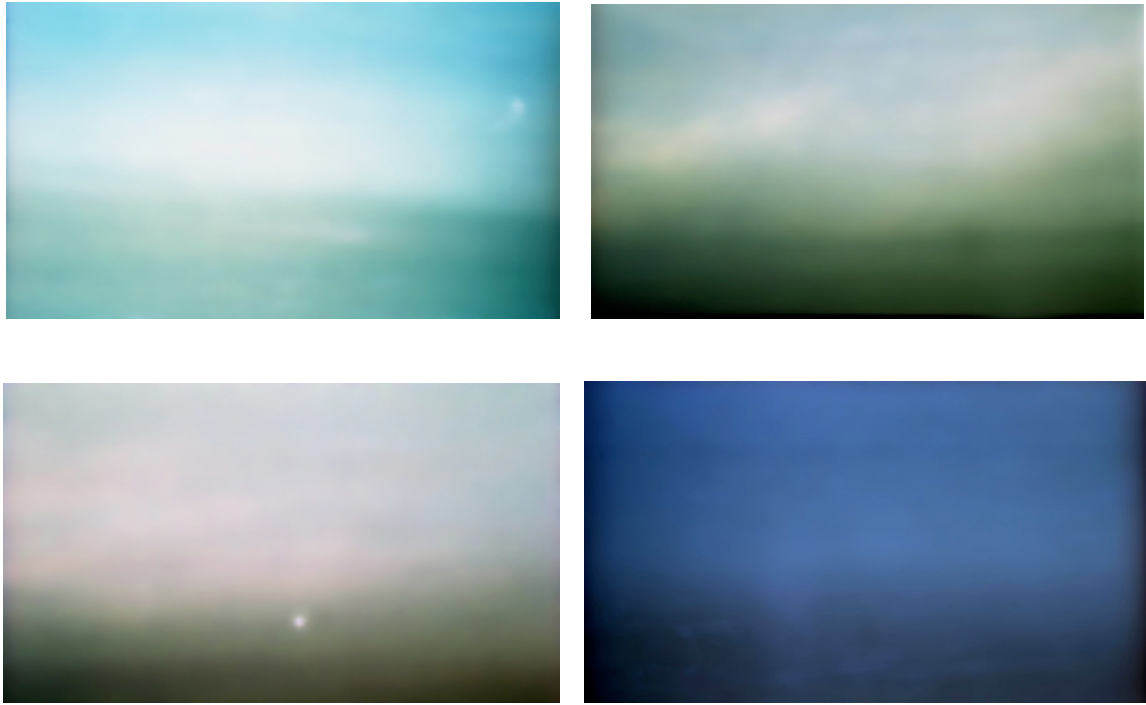


Figure 3. *LIRR, 2011*. Details

The work deals with the relationship between three main aspects: the idea of wasted time, territories of transition and the relationship between the passenger and the landscape. When we get on the train we are trying to get to a specified destination and the time that takes us to get there becomes a strange pause from our daily activities. It is time to be unproductive, even when there are people who try to work while they commute, the tendency is to take a break, introspect or just get bored. Here we find time to waste time. It is in this gap of time, in between one town and another, where consequences cannot catch us because we are on our way to meet them, and therefore we have the sensation that for this amount of time we are exempt from being productive.

While we are under these psychological circumstances, something similar happens in spatial terms. The landscape presented through the window during the trip between towns is also a pause in between spaces that are meant for something. Smaller or bigger, it is in these towns and finally at New York City where things are supposed to happen, where we are supposed to leave a record of our existence, where people work, meet, have fun, fall in love, etc. But whatever is in between these towns and cities seems to be an empty space, a space where nothing can happen, just a continuous landscape of woods, mountains, clouds and eventual traces of civilization. This raises the question of what happens with all these places that don't have any social function?

It is possible to say that they are purposeless, that they don't echo any specific meaning in our life. This open condition is not seen as what we can call a field of potential opportunities but just as a space where nothing happens in terms of leaving a mark of our existence. Because of this they can be perfectly related with the unproductive time experienced on the train.

It is here where the perception factor makes the link between time and spatial conditions. A certain state of mind is produced depending on the passengers' memories, provoking the possibility of experiencing a moment of pure and simple contemplation.

Each of the photographs taken is a synthesized version of this condition of unproductiveness that happens in-between towns expressed in temporal, spatial and perceptual terms.

The fact that this exercise has been constantly repeated makes us think of what happens when these same gaps of useless time and space are experienced several times over longer periods. The first observation to notice is the change of tones in the photographs, which are related with the weather conditions, and the time of the trip. But the most important factor to consider is the state of mind of the passenger.

Even though the exercise tells the story of a succession it is important to remark that it shouldn't be seen as an adding of elements but as a way of positioning different states of mind over the same landscape until the final destination is reached. This approach means the work should be read as a series of sensations encoded in the landscape between Long Island and New York City.

With this in mind, it is possible to say that the main objective of these photographs is to offer a detailed journal of the points where the internal and the external world meet, the contact point between subject and landscape.

At this point it is possible to say that the process of the work releases the photographer from certain creative decisions and it is the landscape that portrays itself through the movement on the train. This work gets its inspiration from Hiroshi Sugimoto's works, especially from his project "In the Praise of Shadow" where he lighted a candle, opened the shutter of his camera and closed it until the candle was consumed. Sugimoto's aim was to portray a condensed amount of time, but he also wanted to talk about the obsolete and its relation with time. A candle is now an almost obsolete object because electricity provides the light that candles used to give us. The photographs taken by Sugimoto are then portraying the life of an object that is already part of the past and it is because of this condition that they can become symbolic objects.

This is the magic of obsolescence, when things lose their function, when they are released from serving the practicality of daily life, their material qualities are not that important anymore and because of that, objects can start to develop different qualities that are beyond their original purpose. For the case of the candles, the light that they provide is now associated with the creation of specific types of ambiances related with a certain mood and not so much with the full illumination of a room.

This is the same thing that happens with the landscape and the time conditions experienced on the train: both are useless in practical terms but because of that they can become part of a spiritual experience. The emptiness of the space invites us to use our unproductive time conditions to fulfill that gap with an experience beyond functionality. This is what this project is about the compression of the moments where practicality stops and contemplation can work as a way to look for experiences that can break with an ends oriented point of view.

At this point it becomes important to explain why is it necessary to break with this point of view. To do so I will introduce the work of the Mexican artist Jose Antonio Vega Macotela. For the New Museum Triennial of 2012 Vega Macotela presented part of the series of exchanges that he made with Mexican prisoners from the Santa Martha Acatitla penitentiary. The artist asked the prisoners for a favor they wanted him to do outside the prison and then he will set an action for them to perform in exchange. Some of the things he was asked to do were to find an old love, to witness the first steps of a prisoner's son, to dance with the mother of another one, to have sex with a prostitute and to get drunk with old friends among others. In exchange for these favors the artist asked them to do things like making a map of certain part of the prison, to punch the pages of a book, count the steps they gave while dancing a certain song, make a catalogue of cigarette butts, etc. The deal was that both parties would spend the same amount of time performing the actions set. So if a prisoner spent fourteen days collecting cigarette butts Vega Macotela will spend the same amount of time looking for the old love of this person.



Figure 4. Antonio Vega Macotela. *Time Divisa*, 2012. Installation Shots. ©

With the project Vega Macotela turned the idea of functionality in terms of relationships. When two or more people know that they are connected in time through an action performed, even if they are far away from each other, the idea of functionality of the action is set apart and turns into a ritual of faith.

About the relation of his project with the idea of time the artist stated in an interview presented in *El Universal* on May 16th 2010: “Time is not objective, it is not about hours, minutes or seconds. Time is what you can do with it.”

This is an ends oriented point of view, but here, even if there is a precise goal set, the objective becomes as important as the faith that relies on the ritual, so not everything is about succeeding but also about faith and communion.

The photographs taken from the train talk about this in a different way. Vega Macotela states that time is what we do with it, and this idea can be taken to the notion that doing nothing with our time while we are on the train is actually doing something for us and that not knowing what this

is, that there is no direct relationship between an action and a reaction, is a way of broadening our range of possible experiences beyond functionality.

Even the destination of the train is already set on each trip, the face that New York might show at the arrival can be changed according to what we experienced on the train and the relationship established with the landscape in-between the point of departure and the final destination.

Days go by

On May 11th 2011 while walking along a wooded path at Stony Brook University I encountered a deer. It stared at me for about a minute. I took out my video camera and recorded the moment before it ran away. Since then, every time I pass I walk that path I record the same spot. The plan is to repeat this action for a year, hoping the encounter might happen again.



Figure 5. *Days go by*, 2012. Video Stills

The name of the project comes from a music video for the song “Days go by” by Dirty Vegas. The video tells the story of a man who stops at the same corner and dances all day long once a year as a ritual to bring back the love of his youth.

The video exemplifies, in a very simple way, the main idea of my project, which is the break of a unity in two parts and the efforts of one of the parts to reencounter with what complements it.

For this project and also in the case of the video there is not a search of one individual looking for the other one; instead there is a ritual that resembles the original circumstances of unification that is performed to bring back the missing element.

This kind of ritual, where A calls metaphorically for B instead of A going to look for B, is clearly related to ideas of faith and magic, where a person chooses to become a spiritual magnet for the object of desire.

The important question here is how to become this attractor, how to send these spiritual waves. James Frazer in his book “The Golden Bough” discusses how these rituals work:

“Both branches of magic, the homoeopathic and the contagious, may conveniently be comprehended under the general name of Sympathetic Magic, since both assume that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether.” (34)

According to Frazer’s concept of sympathetic magic, the video of Dirty Vegas, as in the art project I’m working on, the type of ritual performed belongs to the category of imitative magic where an action is repeated to provoke an effect that has happened in the past. If the action is repeated in the correct way, even if it is performed in a different place, it will produce the same result experienced previously.

There are similar art performances that have been developed under the idea of an encounter. The one that most influenced this project is the work by the Mexico based artist Francis Alÿs entitled “Duett”. The performance consisted of a collaboration between Alÿs and Honoré d’O. Alÿs

travelled to Venice by train and Honoré did it by plane. Each was carrying half of a tuba. The exercise consisted of walking randomly through the city until they meet each other completing the instrument.

Francis Alÿs project is based on the idea that something that once was separated should be reunited by letting each part attract the other with no guidance other than the faith that this will happen eventually. This exercise works as a metaphor for all sorts of things that can be reunified, such as relationships, territories, memories, etc.

Considering this art piece, it is necessary to understand that the first element necessary to develop a similar exercise is to have a unity that has been broken. In the project I'm working on the unity is the encounter that happened with the deer. When it ended, it left a bond between the deer and me, a bond that I decided to use to recall this moment. The variation that happens in this work is that I'm the only one looking for this reencounter to happen; the deer continues his life without being aware of this. There is no A and B hoping to meet, only A waiting for B to reappear, to reestablish a connection that lasted only a few seconds.

At this point it is important to mention Gabriel Orozco's work "Until you find another yellow schwalbe". When Orozco arrived to Berlin he barely knew anyone, finding himself a stranger in the city he performed a series of photographs where he rode his yellow schwalbe motorcycle until he found another one, paired them together and took a photograph. The project talks about how we need to be connected to things of our same kind and how, even in circumstances of isolation and solitude, things of the same kind can attract each other just as magnets do using invisible fields of energy.

This situation brings up the possibility of failure in the project. The deer and I belong to different species. We are not naturally connected so this takes the exercise to the fact of not having anything else to hold on but on faith, patience and the discipline of constantly walking through the same wooded path. Considering this, the project might fail and as a matter of fact it has been failing during a year but this accumulation of failures is what turns the problem into an artwork. This opens up the possibilities of reconsidering the results in terms of what can be said about the problem instead of focusing on finding a solution. What will happen if the deer doesn't show up? What does this say about the possibilities of putting back together two things that are not alike but that shared the same space for a very brief moment?

David Levi Strauss wrote an article for the edition of *The Brooklyn Rail* of September 2011 that can help to answer this question. In his article called *In Case Something Different Happens in the Future: Joseph Beuys and 9/11* he explains that Beuys visited the U.S. in 1974 for the first time. During this visit he saw the twin towers and got interested in their symbolism of world domination under the Capital. He saw them as a wound that had to be healed, to do so he took a 3D postcard of the towers and painted them in a yellow tone that resembled fat, which was one of Beuys recurrent materials. One of the reasons for using fat as a symbol for healing is that when he fought in World War Two and his plane was shot and crashed, Tatar tribesmen who lived in the area covered Beuys with fat and felt to protect his wounded body from the cold of the winter.

In another attempt to heal the injury the towers represented, he wrote the names Cosmas and Damian on the postcard. According to Levi Strauss Cosmas and Damian were twin Arab Saints

who were raised as Christians by their mother. They were also known for being itinerant healers who didn't accept any money in exchange for their services.

Beuys didn't know that several years later both towers would be destroyed and that they would represent the struggle between the Arab world and western society, he just saw them as a zone that was already dead and tried to symbolically bring it back to life, but the events of 9/11 completed the meaning of his work. It is not that he was able to predict the future but that a further event helped to enrich the point he was trying to make about the need of fixing what the towers represented.

The relation with the project Days go by is that even if the deer doesn't show up there is always the possibility that a further event, totally disconnected with the original intention will happen and complete the meaning of the art work in an unexpected way. In this case my work as an artist will be to keep a record of how two disconnected events, one coming from the past and another one coming from the future, can complete their meaning by meeting at a point in the present.

This will leave the work open but not unfinished. The lack of a conclusion leaves it open to many possible conclusions.

The History of a Straight Line

This project comes from a drawing exercise I created for myself. I begin making a straight black line at the bottom of a piece of paper, then I try to copy this line, then I try to copy the second line and so on until the whole page is filled with a certain pattern.

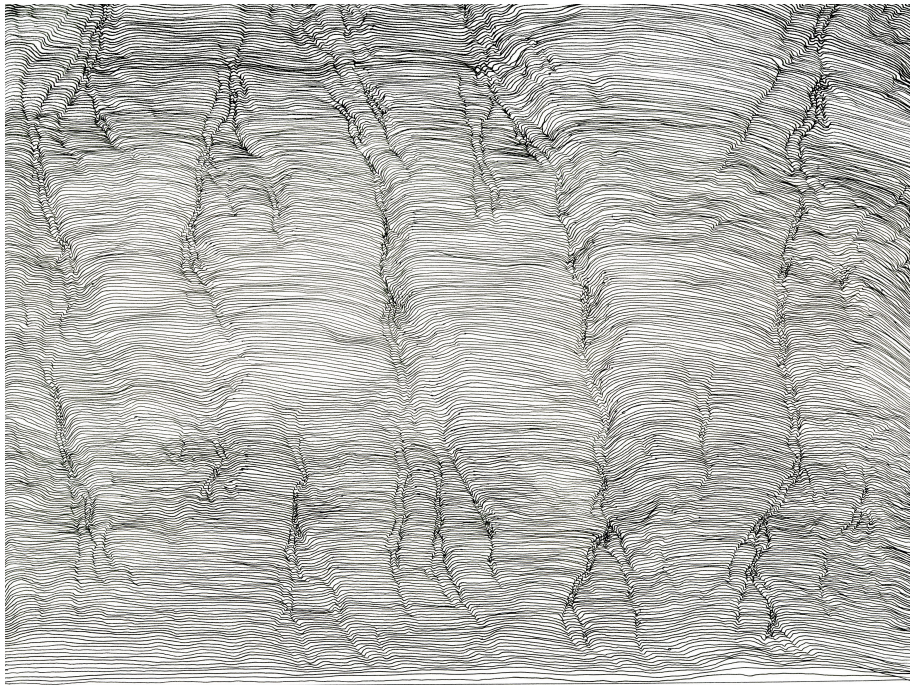


Figure 6. *Untitled*, 2011. 8x10

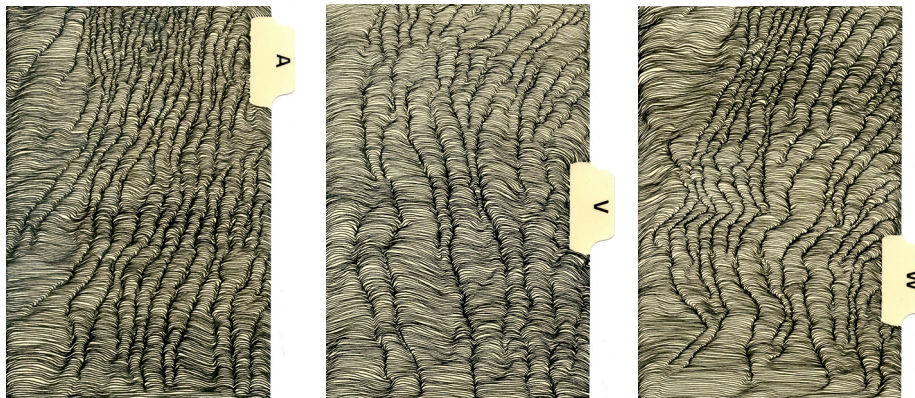


Figure 7. *A.V.W.* 2012 6x4

The project is rooted in other process-based works like Sol Lewitt's Wall Drawings or Roman Opalka's number paintings. In this sense it is really important what Lewitt stated in Artforum in June 1967 when he said, "The idea becomes a machine that makes the art". Comparing the idea to a machine, turns the artist into part of a system and detaches him from the leading position, his role is just to follow an instruction letting the idea to evolve in its own way. My main interest with this work is to use this conceptual practice to show how emotions can interact with the physical world with a minimum intervention of consciousness. This also might be seen as the manifestation of memory over matter trying to avoid the guidance of the intellect.

To demonstrate the kind of problem I'm talking about I will refer to the debate that occurred between Albert Einstein and Henri Bergson in 1922 in Paris where they discussed the effects of relativity on time.

According to the information presented in the book *A tenth of a second* by Jimena Canales, even though Bergson only disagreed with certain aspects of Einstein's theory of relativity there always existed a certain feeling of confrontation between them. "The philosopher insisted on thinking about time in relation to consciousness, individuals, and life, but Einstein disagreed. For Einstein, time and simultaneity were independent of individuals." (183)

With this separation between time in the physical world and time as an experience of the soul, Einstein questioned one of Bergson's most important statements that "... spirit can rest upon matter." (Bergson 177) For Bergson there was an overlapping between these two notions of spiritual and material time and that could be accessed through memory. He knew that both

notions of time were in different planes of existence, but he insisted that they could interact and have influence on each other.

With these series of drawings my intention is to show that this overlap of physical and psychological time can happen through a mark making process that shows the impact of a mental state in a physical space.

The exercise is rooted on conceptual practice but I'm also interested in exploring what happens with the idea of the project after it is executed, how the idea turns into a document and what we can gain from it. I'm especially concerned with the time recording qualities of these series of works and how, even though the process is the same for each of them, the results are always different.

I see these drawings as the materialization of certain moments in my life. Each of them refers to the emotional conditions I was when they were made. They can be read as time stratification in the same way we can find time recording evidences in nature like rock formations. This line repetition is a process by which I'm intending to make my personal experiences archive and classify themselves without letting my consciousness make major judgments and decisions over them.

Each drawing has its own specific rhythm so that the time represented is more related with the recording of a specific kind of internal vibration than with the mechanical time representation of a clock. Here the idea of precision to specify a certain mark in time and space that is common to everyone is substituted by the possibility of making a mark that can speak of a personal time and the emotions related with this period.

The time spent on each drawing is not related to an ideal of productivity. Sometimes a very small one can take me a week to complete and a bigger one just a couple of days. The idea is to let each of them record their own periods, let each straight-line turn into a representation of an internal vibration. This aspect is important because it breaks with the way time is measured and how it is related with certain goals and accomplishments. Time can be stratified and classified according to certain expectations already set in terms of productivity but time can also be considered an experience of the soul. That means that our soul can also be shaped by these time measurements.

To exemplify the critique to time measured in terms of productivity I will present the work of the Mexican artist Fritzia Irizar. In her work “Sobre el esfuerzo” (About effort) she measured the level of humidity in the working areas of people with different types of jobs, from a construction worker to an office employee. The piece is a series of small plastic cups filled with the amount of water that represent the humidity level of the room where her subjects of study were working during an hour. The piece records time in terms of effort and represents how a unit of time, like an hour, can be a symbol of very different experiences for every person and how this affects them in terms of their own perception of time. This work makes us think about how the standardization of job schedules and the correlations of time and effort are not always set and arranged in concordance with people’s own time.

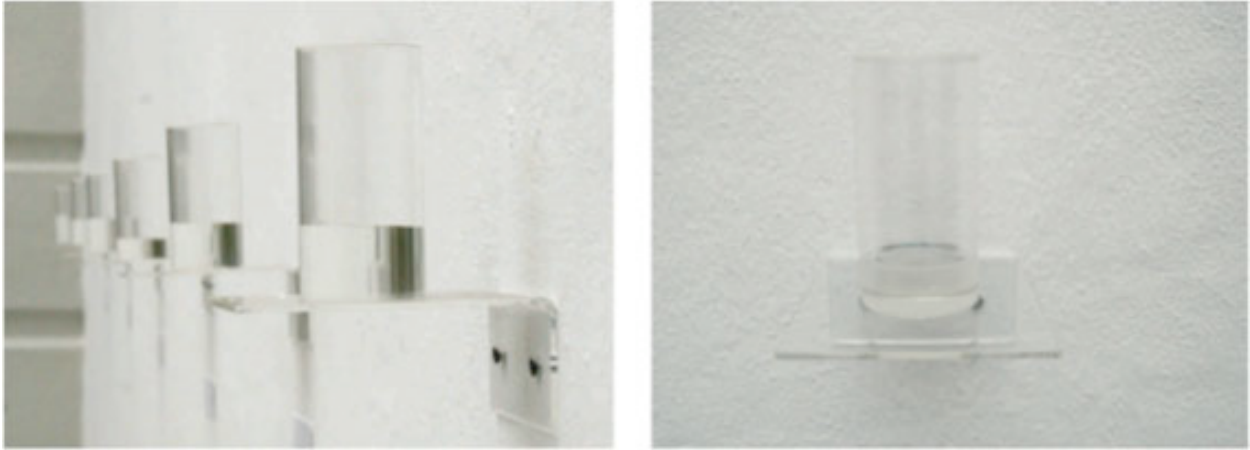


Figure 8. Fritzia Irizar. *Sobre el Esfuerzo*. Installation Shot. Arte Talcual Gallery. ©

My proposal with these series of drawings is to create a personal way of measuring experiences that can also represent their intensity and that can be developed side by side with regular notions of time, so that events can be recorded in the calendars but also portrayed in terms of understanding.

Conclusion

The works presented in this thesis deal with the ideas of futility, memory transformation and time recording methods. These three aspects are crucial to understanding the relationship of my artwork with my background as a Latin-American artist. As I stated before, my practice might be identified as Latin American not because of its content but because of the processes involved in making it. My work is a Latin-American approach to universal questions about time; it is the way of addressing these questions, not the results themselves, which can be identified with the way of thought of this specific region.

I have also compared my work with that of other Latin American artists who are dealing with similar issues to show the need that third world countries have of developing their own ideas and concepts of time in order to recognize history in their own terms and be able to overcome the condition of underdevelopment. I'm referring specifically to the work of Fritizia Irizar and Antonio Vega Macotella where contemporary problems of Mexico like poverty and massive imprisonment are brought up to be rethought with different notions of time.

Going back to Bergson's criticism to Einstein's relativity theory, we can say that his main complain was the division between physical and psychological time and that time should be studied in a broader way considering also the psychological, sociological and political aspects of it.

In order to relate these ideas to my artwork as a proposal to investigate different time explorations under a Latin American perspective I will refer to what Bergson thought about cinema as a tool for understanding movement.

Cinema presents a set of still images running one after the other creating the illusion of movement but it is unable to recreate true movement because there is always a gap in-between frames: this brings up the danger of confusing the illusion created with reality itself and this is why it is important to study the gaps in between to understand movement as a whole. What happens between A and B is as important as A and B, this means that we should not see the world in terms of action and reaction discarding whatever happens in between. If we consider this time breaking in longer periods we can follow the same logic applied to the way history is told: we get some information of what happened in a certain date and then what happened a certain amount of years later disregarding what was in between. This way of thinking can also be seen in the standardization of procedures where if a person executes all the steps set a certain result is granted. Because what really matters is the starting point and the final result, the steps in between are disregarded and we end up with the same illusion of movement that we find in cinema, we get a result but we lose the nuance and intricacy of experience. We break time to find certain practicality but sometimes this detaches us from experiencing reality.

“Just as real movement could not be obtained with static images that succeeded each other rapidly, so dynamic morality could not be reached through fulfillment of static obligations.”

(Canales 201)

At this point it is important to recognize that breaking movement into steps is unavoidable. As humans it is impossible to understand everything as a whole and we need to achieve a certain

degree of practicality to fulfill basic survival needs. However, the proposal of the art works presented is to reformulate these time measurements in ways that don't standardize human experience under the same circumstances.

If we have to live under the illusion of movement at least we can try to create an illusion that is closer to reality. We can be aware that this illusion can always be modified, that the journey is as relevant as the destination.

If we apply this same line of thought to History and especially to the historical stories of Latin-America this will mean reading our past with time concepts that can get us closer to the idea of a myth than to the regular notions of history that are linked with the ideas of underdevelopment. The goal will be to become free from the trap of always hoping to turn into developed countries. Instead, we might approach the idea of celebration presented at the beginning of this thesis, where the objective is not to succeed but to find a more intense and broader way of understanding life.

Developing our own time measurements means creating our own notion of history where "... the spiritual is mixed within the mechanical, the nonhuman with the human, the personal with the impersonal, the individual with the social, the natural with the political and the primitive with the modern." (Canales 221)

By letting physical time be influenced by psychological, sociological and political notions of it there will be a better chance to re state problems in a different way. In Latin America this will result in more options for celebration. This means that there is a need to build new rituals where time can be practical and playful at the same time, where faith and mechanics can interact, where

procedures can become purposeless and where movement is not understood by distance traveled but by the change of a state of mind experienced.

The role of the artist in this refusal of time is to discover in his culture the elements that can be used to develop these new rituals and to create something with them. It is not a matter of changing the world with art but to make a work of art from something in the world that needs to be changed.

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