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Collective Memory and Performative Reconquista:
Action and Inaction in the Performance Art of Regina Jose Galindo

A Thesis Presented

by

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The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

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(Concentration – Modern and Contemporary)

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Abstract of the Thesis

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Using Coco Fusco's notion of the Reconquista to read *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* of 2003 and *Reconocimiento de un cuerpo* of 2008, this paper investigates performance artist Regina José Galindo's conceptual approaches of action and inaction. Grappling with very specific histories of violence and repression in attempts to deal with the unresolved, Regina José Galindo's performances here concern themselves with permanence and impermanence, confronting and reactivating the bodies of her viewers by restaging collective memory and trauma. Focusing on pieces conceived and staged in the Latin American context, this paper contextualizes Galindo's performance in Guatemala and Argentina as attempts to make sense of these histories of erasure.

Dedication Page

To the most understanding, generous, and hilarious people I know: my Father Eldy, my Mother Marlene, my sister Jadlelyn, and my brother Eldy. Thank you for keeping me sane.

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Collective Memory and Performative Reconquista: Action and Inaction in the Performance Art of Regina Jose Galindo

Introduction

Contextualizing Galindo's Guatemala

Born in 1974, Regina José Galindo came into her own as an artist just as her native Guatemala was struggling to pick up the pieces in the aftermath of a bloody and protracted civil war. Guatemala, of course, has a particularly complicated history of aggression and repression: it faced colonization under the Spanish and subsequently Mexican empires before various democratic movements, agrarian revolts, and dictatorships gave way in the second half of the 20th Century to a civil war that resulted in large part from intervention and continued backing on the part of a Cold-War era United States.¹ At a time when the political landscape hailed the End of History, the discourse of neoliberalism provided a semblance of hope for countries which, like Guatemala, found themselves reeling well after the Cold War's end. The passing of the Peace Accords of 1996, which officially drew the 36 year conflict came to an end, would understandably become a defining moment, on the one hand signaling that all was well again while also, crucially, promising a path towards stability and development.²

Today, the document appears not only a record of failed attempts to change dynamics within the country, but a written account of unfulfilled promises of accountability for

¹ Given the scope of this project, this is summary history. For more information on the U.S. and United Fruit Company involvement in Guatemala leading up to the civil war (as well as a larger history of the region) see: Teresa A. Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 224-227.

² This was certainly the language of the Security Council and was reflected in the resulting documents. U.N. General Assembly, 51st Session. "Agenda Item 40: The Situation in Central America: Procedures for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace and Progress in Fashioning a Region of Peace, Freedom, Democracy and Development," *Annexes*, Official Record. New York, 1997.

government-led programs which killed and forcibly disappeared as many as 200,000 victims during the war.³ Nearly two decades after the Peace Accords, Guatemalans continue to experience alarming levels of violence on a daily basis. Located in Central America and tied into drug-trafficking routes, the country is often listed as having one of the highest crime rates in the region.⁴ The nation's capital, the city in which Galindo grew up, has in recent years consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous cities in Latin America despite a decreasing murder rate in recent years.⁵ Rather than paint a stereotypical, third-world image of Guatemala City, it is important here to address the reality of urbanization and criminality in Guatemala as a means of grasping Galindo's specificity. When in 2005's *Golpes*, or *Strikes*, Galindo contributed to the Venice Biennale by whipping herself behind a cubicle, she was reacting to the levels of impunity which in 2004 had resulted in only one conviction for 500 murders.⁶ The performance involved exactly 279 strikes to represent the amount of female corpses which had already been discovered that year, which it should be noted was not even halfway through by the time the Venice

³ Guatemalan truth commission publications will be discussed in a later section, but it should be noted that the CEH was a U.N. sponsored truth commission that fits into a larger model of transitional justice and was thus written into the Peace Accords and the U.N. timeline (see Note 2). Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), *Guatemala Memory of Silence Tz'nil na'tab'al: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification Conclusions and Recommendations*, 1999. Science and Human Rights Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. <http://shr.aas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/toc.html>; Rosa-Linda Fregoso, "Witnessing and the Poetics of Corporality," *Kalfou* 1(2009), 12.

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2011: Trends, Contexts, Data* (Vienna: UNODC, 2011); The Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Guatemala: Country Specific Information," *Travel.State.Gov*, April 30, 2012. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1129.html.

⁵ Notably, the Bureau of Consular Affairs states that, "tourists seem to be largely shielded from the worst of the violence." The Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Guatemala: Country Specific Information;" José A. Ortega, "Cd. Juárez, por segundo año consecutivo, la ciudad más violenta del mundo," Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal, Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, January, 11, 2010, <http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/58-cd-juarez-por-segundo-ano-consecutivo-la-ciudad-mas-violenta-del-mundo>; Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal, "San Pedro Sula, la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Juárez, la segunda," Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal. Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, January 11, 2012, <http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/541-san-pedro-sula-la-ciudad-mas-violenta-del-mundo-juarez-la-segunda>.

⁶ Adam Blenford, "Guatemala's Epidemic of Killing," *BBC News*, June 9, 2005, Accessed May 11, 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4074880.stm>.

Biennale opened.⁷ The context and therefore baggage with which Galindo approaches her performance work is one wrapped up not only with the daily reality of Guatemala but with a larger legacy of aggression that can be traced back to occupiers and, as we shall see, elements of the Guatemalan government itself.

Latin American Performance

Performance Art as it is understood today is a narrative largely rooted in the New York and Greenwich Village tradition of the 1960s and 1970s. Developing out of theatrical experimentations and into the art of happenings, events, pieces and actions, Performance Art has historically served as a means of conceptual staging. If this new form and practice had since its inception maintained an emphasis on the audience and the artist's relationship to it, the advent of Body Art would in turn ground the body of the artist-performer as a medium and vehicle for expression.⁸ It was this conception of the body as site and location of action that by extension enabled performers to speak of potentiality, agency, and charge. For artists working in Latin America, the artist's body, here newly defined as inherently political, proved immeasurable in value. Here, however, the specificity and immediacy of performance constituted an entirely different social relevance.

In the opening of *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*, Cuban artist and writer Coco Fusco noted the layered implications of performance born in countries plagued with

⁷ Regina José Galindo, "(279) Golpes," Accessed May 11, 2013, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>.

⁸ Often these are related to the interdisciplinary impulses of early 20th Century avant gardes, yet the canon of performance relies heavily on a New York-centric roster of artists and movements. Ian Chilvers, ed. "Body Art," in *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 70; Roselee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

histories of colonization, protracted conflicts, and state-sponsored atrocities.⁹ In nations, regions, and cities where the reality of authoritarian regimes and their repressive tactics cast a shadow over generations of artists, Performance Art served as a site of possibility, of confrontation and intervention. To this effect, Marta Minujin famously staged numerous critical happenings in Buenos Aires, while elsewhere in her native 1960s Argentina “Tucumán Arde,” or “Tucumán Is Burning,” specifically questioned the dictatorial cycles of abuse, injustice, and repression that had resulted in impoverished provinces like Tucumán.¹⁰ In Chile, Avanzada artist-writers such as Raúl Zurita and Diamela Eltit confronted violence and oppression under Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship by turning aggression inward, towards their own bodies.¹¹ Hoping to expose marginalized spaces, Eltit’s *Zonas de Dolor*, or *Zones of Pain* (1979-1980) attempted to give voice to the disenfranchised—the lumpen—as she burned and self-mutilated her limbs, read passages of her novel *Lumperica* at a brothel, and then washed its entrance.¹²

Much has been written on Latin American performance being a means of reclamation. In *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, Luis Camnitzer investigates the idea of conceptual art functioning as political tool of resistance and catalogues how art and politics melded in varied environments. Coco Fusco similarly historicizes performance, identifying what she sees as a

⁹ Coco Fusco, "Introduction: Latin American Performance and the Reconquista of Civil Space," in *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*, edited by Coco Fusco (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1-19.

¹⁰ Luis Camnitzer, “Tucumán Arde: Politics in Art,” in *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 60-72.

¹¹ Coco Fusco, ed. Notes in *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 217n10. “My concern is to expose these places, to become on with them by my physical presence. My wish is not to morally change them, but only to show that they actually exist... It is a form of individual pain confronting the collective pain.”

¹² Nelly Richard. "Margins and Institutions: Performances of the Chilean Avanzada," in *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*, edited by Coco Fusco, translated by Paul Foss and Juan Davila (New York: Routledge, 2000), 209; The term "lumpenproletariat" refers very specifically to Marx and Engel's writings. It was first used in Friedrich Engels, "The Model Republic," MECW, vol. 9, 42.

tendency of many Latin American performance artists to infuse avant-garde strategies with social and political orientations, to address state institutions, and to envision the deployment of art in public space as symbolic confrontation with the state.¹³

With a fantastically turned phrase, she calls this a "Reconquista of Civil Space," digging up and dragging in all the baggage of colonialism to shed new light on what has invariably been explained as a Contemporary issue.¹⁴ If this language of liberation and confrontation employed by Fusco and Camnitzer seems overly charged, it does so in response to a complicated relationship between public spaces and political interaction in the Americas. Looking closely at the intersection of art and public spaces through Body Art, Rosina Cazili reads performance as a form ripe with possibility;

[t]he long Latin American tradition of treating public squares as places of public confluence and the body—a space traditionally veiled by moral considerations—has a new presence with political undertones.¹⁵

Cazili discusses the performer's body in terms of the shared, public space of the Spanish plaza. When Camnitzer, Fusco, and Cazili employ the language of space and presence, then, they do so with a perceptive understanding of artists' preoccupation with invisibility and erasure.

Performance Art's role in Latin America has always been a form and tactic, which begins to explain why the approach has been continually embraced in Latin America not as belated practice by the Periphery but as a means of engaging with a legacy of conceptualism which responds to pressing circumstances. Attempts to retrofit artists into established narratives of Performance Art only hinders efforts to contextualize and historicize their work. Tokenistic

¹³ Fusco, "Introduction: Latin American Performance and the Reconquista of Civil Space," 9.

¹⁴ See Note 9. Fusco uses this phrase as the title for the book's introduction.

¹⁵ Rosina Cazali, "Mobility as Promise of Freedom," in *Regina José Galindo* (Milan: Prometeogallery Ida Pisani, 2006), 150.

approaches, for example, have done little justice to the complexities of "performatividad" in Latin America, much less accommodate for either the interdisciplinary experimentations of Estridentismo in 1920s post-revolution Mexico or, as Claudia Calirman has recently argued, the very existence of Antonio Manuel's 1970 *The Body Is the Work* as a critique of Brazilian repression and censorship in the midst of an era which has been characterized by a *vazio cultural*.¹⁶ Work on hybridity and syncretism in the Americas resists anything as universalizing as a shared aesthetic or sensibility; but a look at the various incarnations of performance and actionism in the Americas does underscore an affinity through medium and circumstances. In the case of artists like Regina José Galindo, this legacy of performance reveals itself as so tied up in the stakes that actions and pieces become markedly, and arguably necessarily, political and confrontational.

The catalog for a 2012 exhibition of Regina José Galindo's work, "Móvil," at the National Autonomous University of Mexico is especially helpful in understanding the continued relevance of Body Art in making sense of complicated histories. Pointing to Michel Foucault's notion of the body and utopia, writer José Luis Barrios differentiates between the firmly situated, pure location and place of the body against the unreal, non-place that is utopia.¹⁷ As will be discussed in this thesis, the body for performance artists like Galindo serves as a means of staging the extreme heterotopias, and even dystopias, of the reality witnessed around her. Galindo has made is a point to protest violence against women and in numerous instances dealt with issues as serious and disturbing as femicide and rape. These subjects form a crucial part of her oeuvre, yet this project makes a case that something more deeply rooted plays out in the artist's

¹⁶ Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 34.

¹⁷ José Luis Barrios, "El Fantasma de la Libertad. La Libertad Como Fantasma," in *Móvil* (Mexico, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010), 11.

unquestionably visceral and evocative work. Readings of her work in terms of performance artists like Ana Mendieta or Marina Abramović are as myopic and they are telling.¹⁸ Structured around works which were conceived for and staged within the Latin American context, then, this project purposefully moves away from characterizations of Regina José Galindo's work as concerned solely with women's issues or imperial aggression. Speaking to very specific histories of violence and repression in attempts to deal with the unresolved, Galindo's performances and situations concern themselves with permanence and impermanence, confronting and reactivating the bodies of her viewers by restaging collective memory and trauma.

Quien Puede Borrar Las Huellas?

In 2003 Regina José Galindo performed what would arguably become her best known work, *Quién puede borrar las huellas?* The piece, commonly translated as *Who can erase the traces?*, is a 45 minute performance in which the artist walked barefoot from the Guatemalan Constitutional Court to the National Palace with a basin of human blood in her hands.¹⁹ Dipping and re-dipping her feet into the basin, the artist left a "trail of bloody footprints" as she slowly made her way through the streets of Guatemala City.²⁰

¹⁸ This comparison is common, but the original draft of this thesis was specifically inspired by Claire Bishop's critique of the Venice Biennale for *Art Forum* so I will summarize the opinion here; "Indeed, with a veteran feminist agenda to boot, much of the work was well past its sell-by date of 1989. The fact that 'best newcomer' prize was given to young Guatemalan body artist Regina José Galindo says it all: She shaves herself naked in public, creates a trail of bloody footprints in the streets, and videotapes her own hymenoplasty. Did Abramovic and Mendieta achieve nothing? As Tino Seghal's ironic prancing invigilators in the German Pavilion would say, 'This is so contemporary!'" Claire Bishop, "Fairer Fare," *Art Forum*, June 15, 2005, Accessed May 11, 2012. <http://artforum.com/diary/id=9128>.

¹⁹ Clare Carolin, "After the Digital We Rematerialise: Distance and Violence in the Work of Regina Jose Galindo," *Third Text* 25 (2011), 212.

²⁰ Bishop, "Fairer Fare."



Fig. 1-2, Regina José Galindo, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* 2003. Performed in Guatemala City, Guatemala. (Photographed by Víctor Pérez. Courtesy prometeogallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca, Italy).

The work was a clear indictment against former dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt and the possibility of his presidential candidacy.²¹ At the time, the Courts had legally cleared General Montt for presidential elections, despite the constitution's explicit stance in Article 186 section A;²²

ARTICLE 186- Prohibitions Against Running for the Positions of President or Vice President of the Republic. The following cannot run for the positions of President or Vice President of the Republic:

²¹ Regina José Galindo, “¿Quién Puede Borrar las Huellas?” <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>; When I began this project in the Spring of 2012, José Efraín Ríos Montt had not yet faced trial. Nearly a decade after Galindo's piece and thirty years after he was in power, Ríos Montt's was found guilty on genocidal charges. At the time of writing, however, the Constitutional Court annulled his conviction. Mike McDonald, "Guatemala's top court annuls Rios Montt genocide conviction," Reuters, May 21, 2013, Last Accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/21/us-guatemala-riosmontt-idUSBRE94K04I20130521>.

²² Fregoso, “Witnessing and the Poetics of Corporality,” 12. Though there is also a good deal of information in *Going Staying: Movement, Body, Space in Contemporary Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2007), 192.

A) The leader or the chiefs of a coup d'état, armed revolution or similar movement, who have altered the constitutional order, or those who as a consequence of such events have assumed the leadership of the government.²³

The clause would have unquestionably included Ríos Montt who, during the civil war, had acted as military dictator and led a bloody campaign against indigenous communities in the Guatemalan countryside. Activists such as Rigoberta Menchú Tum, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, had for years been attempting to bring attention to genocidal policies employed against Mayan communities; and, by 2003, at least two major publications had addressed military repression and state-sponsored atrocities in Guatemala.²⁴ According to the findings of the Guatemalan version of the transitional justice, post-conflict truth commission, the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) found that "half of the massacres and scorched earth policies" conducted against indigenous communities during the decades-long war occurred between the years 1981 and 1983.²⁵ The dates correspond specifically to Montt's de facto regime in the early 1980s and indicate a peak in the conflict's human rights violations.²⁶

Rising out of clear indignation, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* was Galindo's angered response to what she perceived as blatant corruption.²⁷ Charged with protecting the national constitution, the Court of Constitutionality functions as the supreme court in Guatemala, while the National Palace, though now a museum and cultural institution, served since its construction

²³ National Constituent Assembly, Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, 1993. From ConstitutionNet.org, <http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/Guatemala%20Constitution.pdf> (accessed April 23, 2012).

²⁴ Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present*, 295-297. Meade also discusses Clinton's apology to Guatemala for U.S. involvement with the regime as well as addressing the controversy around the accuracy of Menchú's accounts.

²⁵ CEH, *Guatemala Memory of Silence*.

²⁶ CEH, "Principal Violations by year and by department, Guatemala (1962-1996)," *Guatemala Memory of Silence Tz'nil na'tab'al: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification Conclusions and Recommendations*, 1999. Science and Human Rights Program AAAS, <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/graphics/charts/page85.gif>

²⁷ Carolin, "After the Digital We Rematerialise," 214.

in the 1940s under the Ubico regime as the official residence for presidents and dictators.²⁸ At its most basic, Galindo's performance physically routes the trajectory of complicity between seats of power, a deceptively simple action which falls in line with the artist's interest in charged performances. In an interview for *La Verdad* in the Spanish city of Murcia, Galindo outlines what appears to be an approach based in the language of binaries:

All human emotions play an important role in my work. All human experiences enrich my perspectives. When I talk of death, I'm not just talking about death but also about life, because once does not exist without the other. Because fear doesn't exist without peace, because pain doesn't exist without well-being.²⁹

In *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo's steps serve as visible indictments, restaging the questionable movement of interests and implied capital between the Guatemalan Constitutional Court and the National Palace. Reading between absence and presence, the work calls attention to the similarly hidden, indeed insidiously erased, movements of bodies and their disappearances.

In fact, looking more closely at the title's English translation, *Who can erase the traces?* fails to fully convey the charge behind the original Spanish title. More than a trace, "huella" is an imprint in the sense that a crime scene has huellas, or evidentiary clues, while a fingerprint in Spanish is referred to as a "huella dactilar." These are traces, of course, but they serve also as

²⁸ The writers of the Lonely Planet guidebook to Guatemala question the legacy of the Palacio Nacional here: Lucas Vidgen and Daniel C. Schechter, "Zona 1," in *Guatemala* (Oakland, Ca: Lonely Planet, 2010), 69-70.

²⁹ The quote comes from an interview with Gontzal Díez which was later reprinted and translated into English for the Prometeogallery monograph; "Toda emoción humana tiene un papel importante dentro de mi trabajo. Toda experiencia humana enriquece mis puntos de vista. Cuando hablo de la muerte no hablo sólo de la muerte, hablo también de la vida, porque una cosa no existe sin la otra. Porque el miedo no existe sin la paz, porque el dolor no existe sin el bienestar." Gontzal Díez, "Artista Guatemalteca presente en el Pabellón de Murcia 'No soporto el llanto de mi hija, el llanto de mi madre, el llanto del otro,'" *La Verdad- Murcia*, June 04, 2009, Accessed May 12, 2013, <http://www.laverdad.es/murcia/20090604/cultura/soporto-llanto-hija-llanto-20090604.html>; Gontzal Díez, "A Guatemalan Artist in the Murcia Pavillion," *Regina José Galindo* (Milan: Prometeogallery Ida Pisani, 2006), 154.

hidden signs of individuals who have gone missing or been erased, markers of what has been washed away.³⁰ Questioning how the government can turn a blind eye, Galindo's footprints serve as stand-ins for memories. While not read immediately as art, the action was indeed legible to the average passerby. When asked about the public's interpretation of the piece, Galindo explains,

My long walk of the bloody footprints was not initially understood as a performance, but every step was indeed understood as memory and death. As Guatemalans we know how to decipher any image of pain, because we have all seen it up close.³¹

Galindo's performance, then, expressed a form of memory that read at once familiar and immediate.

Barefoot and dressed in black, the artist's repetitive dipping and re-dipping strongly references rituals of loss. Galindo's decision to carry out her action "de luto" is particularly interesting, as it underscores *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* as an exercise in trauma and mourning. Through repetitive task and rerouting, in fact, Galindo's performance recalls what is perhaps the most readily understood form of ritualistic movement and routing: the procession. With the National Palace of Culture, or the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura, as her destination, the artist passed in front of the one of the city's main cathedrals, la Catedral de la Ciudad de Guatemala. Known more colloquially as the Metropolitan Cathedral, the church sits adjacent to the National Palace and similarly faces the large, central Plaza de la Constitución or Plaza Mayor. It is a layout which is mirrored in the vast majority of Latin American cities established under a heavily Catholic Spanish Empire, yet the site has through the years has come to possess

³⁰ The blood speaks to a guilt which cannot be washed away, a notion which is made clearer in the humble and almost ubiquitous basin. A charged symbol unto itself, however, it vaguely references Pontius Pilate as well as labor and class dynamics in Guatemala. Mat. 27: 24 KJV; Regina José Galindo, "Angelina," Performance, 2001, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>.

³¹ Francisco Goldman, "Regina José Galindo (Interview)," translated by Ezra Fitz and Francisco Goldman, in *Bomb* 94 (2006), <http://bombsite.com/issues/94/articles/2780>.

layers of significance in the country not merely for its architectural landmarks but as the location of various historical events.³² Both the Metropolitan Cathedral and the Constitutional Plaza were constructed under a Neoclassical building program and predate the National Palace as part of the initial plans for Guatemala City.³³ The National Palace was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style well after the Capital was moved from Santiago de Guatemala, or Antigua Guatemala, to the new Guatemala City.³⁴ Conceived more than a century after official independence, the National Palace is quintessentially 20th Century building. On the one hand, it has a complicated history as the residence of authoritarian leaders while, on the other, the Palacio Nacional was the location in which the Peace Accords were signed and has housed a bronze sculpture by artist Luis Fernando Carlos León since 1997 as a monument to peace in Guatemala.³⁵ The Metropolitan Cathedral, of course, also houses a memorial, but its twelve stone columns tellingly remember the victims of the war. As Matthew J. Taylor and Michael K. Steinberg have attempted to elucidate, collective trauma in Guatemala has for the most part been internalized, yet memorialization has on occasion occurred within the relatively public space of

³² Michel Foucault interestingly discusses this ordering of the plaza, specifically in Paraguay. Michel Foucault, "Michel Foucault. Des espaces autres." Foucault.info, Accessed May 11, 2012, <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html>, Originally published in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (October 1984), 46-49; Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 27.

³³ Ernesto Chincilla Aguilar, *Historia del Arte en Guatemala: Arquitectura, Pintura, y Escultura* (Guatemala: Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, 2002), 178. "La plaza mayor de la nueva Guatemala se diseñó de la siguiente manera: al oriente, la Catedral, el palacio arzobispal y el colegio de San José de los Infantes, todos constructos bajos los cañones del estilo neoclásico."

³⁴ Jorge Luján-Muñoz, et al. "Guatemala." Grove Art Online. *Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 24, 2013, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.libproxy.cc.stonybrook.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T035317>; Chincilla Aguilar, *Historia del Arte en Guatemala*, 209. According to Aguilar, this style was also used for the Edificio de Correos, which for Galindo's generation would become an important space for experimentation.

³⁵ The official website for the Municipality of Guatemala City offers a brief history of the monument: Freida Liliana Morales Barco, "Monumento a la Paz en Guatemala," MuniGuate.com, July 2011, Last accessed April 24, 2013, <http://cultura.muniguate.com/index.php/component/content/article/94-monumentopaz/582-monumentopaz>.

the church.³⁶ This relationship is tied to a well-documented tension between repressive regimes and what they read as the leftist inclinations of liberation theology in Latin America.³⁷

Recalling impunity, trauma, and injustice, Galindo effectively brings memories to the surface and in the process implicates the normal passersby navigating the streets of Guatemala City as well as the uniformed guard who wearily stare down from the stairs of the National Palace. In this sense, though *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* challenged the actions of officials, the walk simultaneously created footprints located within the city that functioned as visible traces which crucially gave voice to an increasingly silenced collective memory.

Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo

If in *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo's actions visually inscribed a space for simultaneous questioning and reflection, she would take a purposefully less active approach to investigating collective trauma in 2008's *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo*. The piece, which can be roughly translated as *Recognition of a Body* or *Identification of a Body*, required viewers to lift a sheet in order to see and identify the body of the artist as though in a morgue.³⁸ For the length of the performance, Galindo remained anesthetized on a stretcher as the audience shuffled around the dimly lit, carpeted space.

³⁶ Matthew J. Taylor and Michael K. Steinberg, "Forty Years of Conflict: State, Church, and Spontaneous Representation of Massacres and Murder in Guatemala," in *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, Edited by Jack Santino (New York: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2006), 305-331. Useful in understanding this silence and the internalization of trauma is: Mieke Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

³⁷Taylor and Steinberg, "Forty Years of Conflict," 311. As will be discussed a bit further on, this tension was laid bare in the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi following the 1998 release of REMHI's findings.

³⁸ Regina José Galindo, "Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo," Performance, 2008, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>.

In Cordoba, Argentina, where the piece was performed, the work hit close to home for some of the viewers.³⁹ In a country where mothers continue to protest their government for information, whereabouts, and transparency on disappeared bodies at the Plaza de Mayo, Galindo demanded viewers not only to identify her body but to recognize the familiarity of the situation. As with English, the Spanish word for a corpse doubles as "body."⁴⁰ While visitors may have questioned the performance's place within the context of art, the work was again easily understood as a sobering and tragic comment on death. Writer Emmanuel Rodriguez described the crowds of gallery goers much in the same way visitors would approach an actual morgue, hesitant and murmuring as they slowly built up courage to move towards the artist's body. In the same article, Regina José Galindo reasons, "It is a very simple action, highly passive. In Latin America, people, once they have seen a shrouded body, know immediately what they have to do."⁴¹

While this hushed treatment of the departed is not unique to Latin America, the artist seems to find it characteristic of her experiences in Guatemala and Argentina. Reviewing the piece for the Argentinean newspaper *La Voz*, Demián Orosz recognized in *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo* a restaging of the numerous casualties inflicted by the Argentine dictaduras of the 1970s and 1980s as well as a reminder of the current cycles of violence plaguing Latin America.⁴² In an interview with *Infobae*, Galindo spoke more explicitly about these different contexts, drawing connections to her present-day, native Guatemala. "In my country," explained Galindo, "the

³⁹ Carolin, 213. As Carolin notes, "some of the older audience members (those who might have been presumed to be of an age to have experience the events of the 1970s and 1980s) approach the task of 'identifying' Galindo's 'corpse' with an air of gravitas and contained emotion so acute as to give the impression that for them the task either has real ritual significance or a cathartic function."

⁴⁰ Both, in short, function interchangeably as the word for body, cadaver, and corpse.

⁴¹ Emmanuel Rodriguez, "Una Obra de Arte que consiste de 'morir; y ser reconocida,'" *Clairin.com*, August 5, 2008, Accessed April 14, 2013, <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2008/08/05/sociedad/s-01730300.htm>.

⁴² Demian Orosz, "Un Arte en Carne Propia," *La Voz*, December 5, 2008, Last Accessed May 12, 2013, http://archivo.lavoz.com.ar/herramientas/imprimir_notas.asp?nota_id=227802.

work shows an unavoidable reality. What Guatemalan family has not had to identify bodies?
There are 30 dead a day.’’⁴³



Fig. 3, Regina José Galindo, *Reconocimiento de un cuerpo* 2008. Performed at the Centro Cultural España-Córdoba in Córdoba, Argentina. (Photographed by Paulo Jurgelenas. Courtesy prometeogallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca, Italy).

Galindo's tone suggests an urgency in bringing attention to past and present legacies of violence, making her approach to *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo* a curious one. More than an action, the artist places her audience in a situation. Anaesthetized on a stretcher, Galindo's body is left completely inert and vulnerable as viewers circulate around the room for a chance to gaze

⁴³ Infobae.com, "¿Cuál es el límite entre el arte y la provocación?" *Infobae America*, August 6, 2008, Last accessed May 12, 2013, <http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/395943-0-0-Cu%C3%A1l-es-el-l%C3%ADmite-el-arte-y-la-provocaci%C3%B3n>; "En mi país la obra muestra una realidad ineludible. ¿Qué familia guatemalteca no ha tenido que reconocer cuerpos? Si hay 30 muertos al día', dijo, y luego aclaró que en la Argentina la obra adopta un color más político que social."

upon her body. The situation at once embodies and defies Body Art, basing itself more on the notion of passivity than of action. *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo*, with its suffusing quiet and lack of interaction, reads frustratingly inactive compared to the self-propulsion of a performance like *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*

To deconstruct the relationship between the viewer and the established in the piece, it is here useful to revisit Regina José Galindo's interest in absence and presence. Galindo had for years been attempting to remove herself from action to investigate erasures of knowledge and experience. The administration of anesthesia in *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo*, for example, recalls her 2000 *Valim 10ml*, in which the artist injected herself repeatedly with Valium as a comment on the harsh realities of living in Guatemala.⁴⁴ This use of sedation as a means of escape, as a means of removing oneself from consciousness, is not a novel concept in art but it begins to shed light on how the artist slowly moved away from experiencing her performances. An untitled work from 2002, *Sin Título (Hasta Ver)*, already played with the removal and inaccessibility of memory and experience when a blindfolded Galindo flew to the Lima Biennial in Peru and back.⁴⁵ Though the action required the artist to remain blindfolded for five days and thus denied both interaction and confrontation, the artist still participated in the performance through sensory experiences. At Cordoba, however, she neither moves nor acts nor listens nor feels time moving, lying instead in suspended state of consciousness.

If, as Roland Barthes reasoned in 1967, suppressing the author served to restore the place of the reader, Galindo's decision to deny her experiential role as a performance artist in turn

⁴⁴ Regina José Galindo, "Valium 10ml," Performance, 2000, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>.

⁴⁵ Regina José Galindo, "Hasta Ver," Performance, 2002, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>.

places emphasis on the experience of the audience.⁴⁶ Stripped of the ability to act or move, the artist's body is left objectified to an almost sculptural degree. As Fernando Castro Floréz argues;

Regina José Galindo abstains from the post-modern strategy of seduction and adopts submission: this is a form of subjectivisation built on the basis of discredit (*descalificación*).⁴⁷

Galindo's preferred brand of submission has at times involved a more confrontational tone. Eight months pregnant and strapped to a cruciform apparatus, the artist in 2007's *Mientras, Ellos Siguen Libres* or *Meanwhile, they are still free* referenced the brutal acts of sexual violence inflicted upon indigenous women during the war.⁴⁸ There, Galindo's immobile and nude body had served to restage discomfiting memories as reminder of continued impunity in Guatemala but it did not reach the level of inaction seen in *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo*. Rather than implicating her viewers in the violence, *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo* in fact casts her audience more sympathetically as family members or relatives which in identifying the body experience the performance in a more immediate and affective way. What Galindo creates in the piece, then, is a situation which restages the space of a morgue to politicize and privilege the actions of its viewers.

Documentation and the spaces of memory

Attempting to grapple with the performative body and its audience, José Luis Barrios and Coco Fusco notably turn to Michel Foucault and the concept of heterotopia in order to discuss

⁴⁶ Roland Barthes "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 143. "Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader)"

⁴⁷ Fernando Castro Flóres, "The Atrocious Incarcerations of Regina Jose Galindo," in *Regina José Galindo* (Milan: Prometeogallery Ida Pisani, 2006), 116.

⁴⁸ Regina José Galindo, "Mientras, ellos siguen libres," Performance, 2007, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>. Works such as *Esperando al príncipe azul* of 2001 and *Isla* of 2006 have also used the passive nude body.

the body and public spaces.⁴⁹ Published in 1984, Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" was based on an earlier 1967 lecture which questioned the arrangement of social spaces. Localizable yet existing "outside of all places," heterotopias are in the simplest terms spaces of otherness.⁵⁰ Kevin Hetherington's *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*, arrives at a similarly open definition, understanding them "not as sites of resistance, sites of transgression, or as marginal spaces but precisely as spaces of alternate ordering."⁵¹ Identifying menstrual huts, brothels, psychiatric hospitals, and cemeteries as heterotopic, Foucault presents these spaces as diverse yet culturally universal.⁵² *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo* and its restaging of a morgue at the Centro Cultural España-Cordoba would under this conception of the term certainly have functioned as an extreme space of alternate ordering, yet the performance was unquestionably more fraught than the pieces like Coco Fusco's *Better Yet When Dead* at Medellin in 1997 or even Regina José Galindo's own *Móvil* at the MUAC. Fusco, after all, cast her viewers as visitors to her Catholic wake while Galindo's 2010 work invited the audience to equally reflect on death and movement by allowing visitors to move a metal casket around the gallery space. In *Móvil* viewers slowly took to pushing then hurling the sculptural object, a casket normally used in the transportation of cadavers, before enthusiastically rolling it outside of the museum.⁵³ In her account of *Better Yet When Dead*, Fusco remembers various attempts by members of the audience and the press to make the artist "break character."⁵⁴ Whereas Coco Fusco was forced to

⁴⁹ Barrios, "El Fantasma de la Libertad, La Libertad Como Fantasma," 11; Fusco, "Introduction," 10.

⁵⁰ Foucault, "Michel Foucault. Des espaces autres;" Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," 24.

⁵¹ Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (New York: Routledge, 1997, 9.

⁵² Heterotopias are for him fall into different categories, which he differentiations as those of crisis and deviation. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," 24-25.

⁵³ Regina José Galindo, "Móvil," Performance, 2010, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/es/index.htm>; "Movil Regina José Galindo MuAC 2010 2/3," YouTube video, 3:26, posted by "gabryelous88," January 25, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbPJ_FJBTaU.

⁵⁴ Coco Fusco, "Better Yet When Dead," in *The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings* (New York:

monitor and slow down her breathing throughout the performance, Galindo withheld action and traditional performance altogether. Denying the audience any interaction, *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo* instead requires viewers to approach the passive, vulnerable body of Galindo with a spectral directive.

Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo, it should be noted, came approximately 40 years after “Tucumán Arde” and El Cordobazo. The former, we know, aimed to reveal and refute through intervention and action.⁵⁵ The latter, which would have been more specific to the city in which Galindo staged her piece, marks the moment in which students and workers faced off against authorities.⁵⁶ Though Onganía's regime followed El Cordobazo with governmental crackdowns and censorship, the event is a testament to action and protest in the plaza as well as a fruitful comparison through which to analyze Galindo's passive approach.

If Galindo's performances utilized the tactics of action and inaction to protest histories of violence and repression while activating the viewer, her attempts at restaging collective memory and trauma through inscription demands a discussion of her documentation. While Galindo's performances ideally remain dispersed in the experiences, recollections, and accounts of her audience, they also crucially live on in the form of photographic and video documentation. From performances such as *Punto Ciego* and *Object* in 2010 to sculptural work such as *Tonel* and *Compartimiento* in 2011, Galindo's recent interest in objects requires analysis. Could this recent shift be explained, for example, by a desire or pressure to produce more physically sellable work in a market which has capitalized on the ephemeral nature of performance by converting fragments into tangible art objects? Rather than shy away from the question of profit, Galindo

Routledge, 2001), 22-25.

⁵⁵ For more information on Tucumán Arde see Camnitzer, “Tucumán Arde: Politics in Art,” 60-72; Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde": vanguardia artística y política en el '68 argentino* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000).

⁵⁶ Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde,"* 37.

bluntly explains her experimentations with objectification and sculpture as part of the global art market's dynamics of use and abuse;

I never make a performance without documenting it because I am interested in inserting myself into the first world through the creation of an economic object. That's the way I earn money and get something in return from you in the same the same way you have obtained something from us.⁵⁷

Citing Santiago Serra and Teresa Margoles as major influences in her work, Galindo's statements are intentionally provocative and, moreover, refer to projects which, taking the form of institutional critique, have connected colonial exploitation and extraction to neoliberalism and the art world.⁵⁸ Though the artist's award at the 2005 Venice Biennale solidified her position as part of a small group of Central American artists steadily receiving commissions around the globe, to take Galindo's comment at face value would require misreading all of her documentation in terms of exchange value when in reality the artist has kept records of her actions since the beginning of her artistic career when in reality the artist has kept records of her actions since the beginning of her career.⁵⁹

Given her controversial subject matter and approach, Galindo's documentation has always functioned as subversive residue to the cause. As Clare Carolin has previously noted, Galindo's generation shared a close relationship with members of the local press that facilitated

⁵⁷ Carolin, 218.

⁵⁸ Jane Lavery and Sarah Bowskill, "Representation of the Female Body in the Multimedia Works of Regina Jose Galindo," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 31 (2012), 53. "In Galindo's oeuvre, violence against the female body is presented as a legacy of the experiences of colonisation [sic], the Guatemalan Civil War and, more recently, neoliberalism." Galindo's institutional critique was my original project.

⁵⁹ Arguably, in fact, before she thought of herself as a performance artist. There is photographic documentation as early as 1999's *Lo Voy A Gritar al Viento*, or *I'm Going to Scream it into the Wind*, which marks a transition for Galindo between poetry and actionism. For more information on Galindo as a poet see: Goldman, "Regina José Galindo (Interview);" Regina José Galindo, "Regina José Galindo," in *Mujer, Desnudez y Palabras*, Edited by Luz Méndez de la Vega (Guatemala City: Artemis Edinter, 2002), 261.

the dissemination of their work.⁶⁰ In the case of *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* it was the circulation of documentation, through media coverage and video sharing sites, that initially garnered interest for the piece.⁶¹ A strong and direct performance, the work and its documentation cemented the perception of Galindo as a young yet fearless artist. The now iconic images of the performance, taken by photographer Victor Pérez, present the image a silent, yet heroic Galindo. The photographs are dramatic: blood pops against the stark white basin while the artist's long black skirt, somewhat tattered, billows strikingly against gray cement. The artist appears wholly concentrated on her task in one image and in another, with a look of intense determination, she turns her back to walk away from the National Palace. In a conversation with Francisco Goldman for *Bomb*, the artist recalled her frame of mind during the performance and seems to corroborate the account played out in the photographs;

The process of this performance was a bit cold, clinical. [...] I suppose my mind fell completely silent during that time. I was focused on the image of dipping my feet and leaving my footprints at every step along the way. But when I got to the Palacio Nacional and saw the line of police officers guarding it, I ignited. I walked more firmly, I reached the main doors, I saw the eyes looking back at me, and I left two final footprints side by side. I left the basin holding the blood there too. Nobody followed me, nobody said anything. I quickly walked across the street, washed my feet off in the park fountain, got something to eat, and then went back to my job that afternoon.⁶²

Notably, Galindo returns to the Constitutional Plaza emboldened and defiant yet her insistence that no one followed, said, or did anything to her following the performance suggests the artist half-expected and perhaps even half-feared repercussions.

Discussing avant garde adoption of conceptual tactics, Jacqueline Barnitz grounds Fusco and Camnitzer's language of resistance and liberation, pointing out that for artists working in

⁶⁰ Clare Carolin, "After the Digital We Rematerialize: Distance and Violence in the Work of Regina José Galindo," in *Regina José Galindo* (Milan: Prometeogallery Ida Pisani, 2006), 137.

⁶¹ Carolin, "After the Digital We Rematerialize," 132.

⁶² Goldman, "Regina José Galindo (Interview)."

politically charged modes at the height of dictatorial rule "conceptual art proved especially useful as a cryptic form of communication when a direct statement in a painting would have been imprudent."⁶³ Barnitz's discussion of caution and indirection speaks to the dangers of operating in a mode that was either openly critical or perceived as dissident. Though the body held the potential to carry expressive immediacy and embodied memory, it had also proven precarious.⁶⁴



Fig. 4, Regina José Galindo, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* 2003. Performed in Guatemala City, Guatemala. (Photographed by Victor Pérez. Courtesy prometeogallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca, Italy).

⁶³ Jacqueline Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 276. In this chapter, Barnitz was referring to political art in South America.

⁶⁴ Diana Taylor, "DNA of Performance: Political Hauntology," in *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, edited by Doris Sommer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 55. "the repertoire, testimonial transfers, and performance protest [...] stores embodied memory--the traumatic shudder, gestures, orature, movement, dance, singing --in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge;" For more information on methods of disappearance and erasure see: Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present*, 266.

In her essay on performance and political hauntology, Diana Taylor discusses how the disappearance of the actual body was in various cases only part of larger efforts to completely erase identity;

witnesses have testified that they say officials destroy the photo IDs and other photographic images of prisoner's in their control. Families of the disappeared also testified that members of the military and paramilitary task forces raided their homes and stole photographs of their victims even after they had disappeared the victims themselves.⁶⁵

In what Daniella Wittern has labeled an authoritarian impulse to eradicate memory in the 1970s and 1980s, the Argentine government's various attempts to confiscate and obliterate traces of its victims was echoed in the repressive regimes of Operation Condor and through the implementation of "scorched earth" policies in the Guatemala.⁶⁶

Failure to bring accountability to prominent officials and known supporters of such operations even after the release of the United Nations sponsored CEH's findings, the Church-led Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) report, and the ensuing controversy over the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi, reveals an unwillingness on the part of the Guatemalan government which mirrors a hesitation in other countries to release information on the incarceration, torture, and disappearance of its citizens despite continued protests led by groups such as H.I.J.O.S. and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.⁶⁷ H.I.J.O.S., which has been translated into English as Sons

⁶⁵Taylor, "DNA of Performance: Political Hauntology," 63. In N14, Taylor interestingly points to Roland Barthes and the credibility of the photograph.

⁶⁶ Daniella Wittern, "Performing to Survive: A Theatre of Memory in Diamela Eltit's *Por La Patria*," *Inti* 69/70 (2009): 311. Wittern here writes about *desmemoria*, and the Spanish phrase she utilizes, "busco erradicar," is particularly strong.

⁶⁷Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, "Guatemala: Nunca Más (Versión Resumida)," *Informe REHMI*, Guatemala, 1998; Taylor and Steinberg, 305-11. Gerardi, who was one of the voices behind the REHMI report, was murdered two days after it was published. The Informe REHMI, for context, was released prior

and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Oblivion and Silence, has over the years attempted to protest impunity in both Guatemala and Argentina by largely combating not the shadowy place of oblivion but rather *olvido*, a Spanish word which simultaneously recalls its spatial English equivalent and the phenomenon of forgetting. In her discussion of performance and contestation, Wittern relates oblivion to the condition of *desmemoria*, a term which is perhaps given the most nuanced treatment by Nelly Richard in the opening of *Insubordinacion de los Signos*.⁶⁸ Describing the thin and unstable line between what is remembered and its opposite, the writer describes an "unresolved tension between memory and oblivion (*el olvido*) between latency and death."⁶⁹ This precarious state, a slippery relationship between death and the space of oblivion, underlies Galindo's interest in funeral rites.⁷⁰ The artist's investment in the collective power of mourning rituals and her outrage at systemic erasure speaks, then, less to a morbid fascination with death than a preoccupation with the binary of permanence and impermanence.

The fact that groups like H.I.J.O.S. and the Mother of the Plaza de Mayo have consistently utilized photography as a form of contesting the very existence of disappeared relatives is telling.⁷¹ Nelly Richard and Diana Taylor have respectively discussed photography's dually charged nature, on the one hand inextricably bound to state control through the reality of

to the CEH's report. Goldman, who is cited in this thesis as an interviewer, wrote a book investigating the events around Bishop Gerardi's murder: Francisco Goldman, *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?* (New York: Grove Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ Wittern, "Performing to Survive," 311.

⁶⁹ Nelly Richard, "Roturas, memoria y discontinuidades (En homenaje a W. Benjamin)," in *Insubordinación de los Signos: Cambio Político, Transformaciones Culturales y Poéticas de la Crisis* (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1994), 13. She describes a "tension irresuelta entre el recuerdo y el olvido entre latencia y muerte."

⁷⁰ Leonel Juracán, "Funeral Rites," in *Regina José Galindo* (Milan: Prometeogallery Ida Pisani, 2006), 144.

⁷¹ Taylor, 61.

identification, confiscation, and disappearances but also to resistance through the reclaimed or recovered document as linchpin, evidence, and ammunition.⁷²

In the context of state-sponsored violence in Guatemala and Argentina, Galindo's approach is inextricably tied to a belief in the destabilizing power of artistic intervention. On the subject of protest, she clarifies "I don't believe in moral discourses, nor in art that can save the world, But I do believe in the possibility that images can shake the silence."⁷³ Galindo is here referring to the face-to-face, or physical, encounter with the work as well as the resulting documents, or images, which circulate and confront viewers well after the artistic performance. The idea of witnessing, for example, is made evident in the video documentation of *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* The video, shot by Danilo Montenegro, makes no pretense at eliminating the presence of the camera as it shakily follows Galindo through her performance. The video stops at times to jerkily zoom in on footprints, but does so paying little attention to the shadows and figures which enter the frame.⁷⁴ Photographer Victor Pérez, for example, appears repeatedly in the video, craning and crouching around the artist for a better shot. What would be considered low-production values instead give the illusion of a document in the simplest sense, while the textural footage of dirt and grime of Zona 1 pavements, the honking and sputtering of

⁷² Richard, *Insubordinacion de los Signos*, 20; Taylor, 76. See Note 64. This in part explains why a Guatemalan artist like Aníbal López would make himself at once vulnerable and anonymous by choosing to work under his governmental identification number of A-1 53167.

⁷³ Angela Molina, "Las imágenes pueden hacer tambalear el silencio. Entrevista: Regina Jose Galindo," *El Pais*, February 4, 2012, Last Accessed May 13, 2013, http://elpais.com/diario/2012/02/04/babelia/1328317975_850215.html. "No creo en los discursos morales, ni que el arte pueda salvar el mundo. Pero sí en la posibilidad de que las imágenes puedan hacer tambalear el silencio."

⁷⁴ Regina José Galindo, e-mail message to author, April 24, 2013.

city traffic, and the rings of increasingly coagulated blood all speak to the notion of residue and therefore presence.⁷⁵

If, as Foucault argues in his text on the utopian body, masks, make-up, and tattoos serve to project the body into other spaces, Galindo's use of black as shorthand for mourning could be read in similar terms.⁷⁶ It is the captured moment of spontaneous interaction, after all, which fill in the blanks of the performance with instants of hesitation and navigation in the city. At moments, Galindo shifts her walk to accommodate street vendors, stalls, and pedestrians in her path. By the time she reaches the stairs of the National Palace, the tension between the artist and her viewers becomes more pronounced. The curiosity of pedestrians and uneasiness of the guards makes it clear that the performance was understood not only as "an image of memory and death" but as a statement. As a lone clap breaks out and Galindo completes her performance, the camera's role of as both document and witness is laid bare. The camera was a document, yes, but it was also insurance in the event that someone had followed, said, or done something.

⁷⁵ Goldman, "Regina José Galindo (Interview)." Galindo here offers a different and more useful reasoning behind documentation, "To present it on video is simply to show a document. In this case, whoever sees this document can come to know the history behind it."

⁷⁶ Here, I am of course taking into account that Michel Foucault's understanding of the corpse is specific and tied to both the mirror and the utopic body. He notes, for example, that in Homer the Greek word for "body" only appears until he speaks of the body as "corpse." Michel Foucault, "Utopian Body," in *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, Translated by Lucia Allais, Edited by Caroline A. Jones (MIT Press, 2006), 233.



Fig. 5, Regina José Galindo, Still from *Reconocimiento de un cuerpo*, 2008. Performed at the Centro Cultural España-Córdoba in Córdoba, Argentina. (Video by Danilo Montenegro. Courtesy prometeogallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca, Italy).

A work as forcefully passive as *Reconocimiento de un Cuerpo*, on the other hand, has perhaps fittingly been defined by the atmospheric, inky photographs of Paulo Jurgelenas. Forced to circulate the dislocating space of the morgue and, in turn, made aware of its movements, hesitations, and accommodations, perhaps the public and the audience's experience is again privileged with images that present a space marked by stillness. Does this form of documentation render the harrowing histories of the occupied plaza more affecting or perhaps more legible? The fact that the video has uncharacteristically remained unavailable indicates that Regina José Galindo's questioning of memory, silence, and erasure have shown the liminal space between memory and desmemoria is perhaps best destabilized through subversive arrest.

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