



**The Sixth Annual
Symposium of Latin
American Art**

Vistas

Vistas 8

**The Sixth Annual Symposium
of Latin American Art**

**Movement and Presence:
The Visual Culture of the Americas**

Edited by

Kerry Doran, Cathryn Jijón, and Mónica Ramírez

**INSTITUTE FOR
STUDIES ON
LATIN AMERICAN ART**

Established in 2016, the Annual Symposium of Latin American Art is an international flagship event supported by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) and independently organized by graduate students at The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, and Columbia University. The symposia feature graduate students, scholars, and artists presenting original research and discourse on Latin American and Latinx art and visual culture.

Initially proposed to ISLAA by Institute of Fine Arts graduate students, the annual symposium provides a vital space for scholars to convene, share research that runs the gamut of art historical periods and traditions, and engage in ongoing critical dialogues. ISLAA has the privilege of supporting graduate students in their professional development and in building lasting networks of intellectual exchange.

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Preface

Kerry Doran, Cathryn Jijón, and Mónica Ramírez

As we began planning the Sixth Annual Symposium of Latin American Art in the fall of 2021, we wanted to both address how movement has shaped the visual culture of the Americas and explore the ways that presence constitutes an embodied way of attesting to continuity and resisting ongoing coloniality. Alongside co-organizers Chloë Courtney, Sophia Gebara, and Shannah Rose, we imagined the symposium as a space of collaboration that would foreground these issues but also put them into practice—reflected by the invited speakers and participants and their research methodologies as well as practice-based workshops.

Diana Taylor's book *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence* (2020) offers a point of entry into the symposium's themes. Taylor meditates on the ways in which walking, and thus movement, constitutes an embodied way of knowing and understanding the world. Through Taylor's framework, we began to consider how Latin America and latinidad have been shaped and mythologized by, through, and against the movement of people, objects, and ideas as well as the ways that artists, activists, and performers have utilized movement as a form of resistance against ongoing processes of coloniality. Being present, or *¡presente!*, as Taylor writes, constitutes a decisive act of resistance—and solidarity—within a global system that continually seeks to rupture communal, ancestral, ecological, and territorial ties. In her symposium keynote address, "The Politics of Presence," Taylor presented a Spanish-English bilingual reflection on translation, learning through unlearning, and the imperative of decolonial praxis when working in a historically extractive field or institution.

Meanwhile, Denise Ferreira da Silva's academic-artistic research opens up ways for us to consider how artists and artistic practice engage and intervene with global space and systems of power that have been shaped by racial difference and exclusion. In *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), Ferreira da Silva addresses the

necessity of questioning modern rules of representation and the epistemological determinations to which these were foundational. In her symposium keynote address on contemporary performance practices, “After It’s All Said . . . : Reading Art as Confrontation,” she asked: “How do we assess, or appreciate, works that address the racial, colonial, cisheteropatriarchal matrix while also moving beyond it?”

For the first time in the symposium’s history, the call for papers solicited contributions from artists and activists as well as art historians. Our goal was to honor epistemologies and methodologies that center ancestry, the body, collectivity, and survivance while also acknowledging that embodied knowing has not historically been included or privileged within art history as a discipline. For these reasons, we also organized two workshops for panelists: Andrew Suseno’s “Moving into and beyond Contexts of Our Gender Identities (Moving Rasa)” and Tao Leigh Goffe’s “Decolonial Love Letter: A Workshop on Chinese and African Aesthetics in Latin American and Caribbean Art.”

The symposium’s four panels—“Contando histórias, narrando lembranças,” “Emplazar el lugar,” “(Re)enactments: Performance and Public Space,” and “Unfixed Identities”—ranged from the ancient to the contemporary and addressed themes including storytelling, placemaking, territoriality, memory, the production and reclamation of space, and the queering of physical and temporal borders. Though we could only select three essays for this issue of *Vistas*, we want to thank all the panelists for sharing their exciting and necessary research with us. We feel the following essays are representative of the ideas discussed by symposium participants.

Alejandra R. Bolaños’s contribution to this issue is an artistic piece that transcends the rigid definition of an academic paper. During the symposium, Bolaños delivered her talk from a recording booth in Coatepec (Veracruz, Mexico). By including audio files and making explicit the contributions of her colleagues Paola and Luis Enrique, Bolaños attempts to transport the reader into her movable recording booth across the Golfo de México. Bolaños recognizes the colonial structures that have prevented her Indigenous and Afrodescendant ancestors’ pasts from being

known today and offers an alternative method for recovering their voices. It is necessary to recognize the myriad voices that are participating in her project. Oral testimonies of local legends, *sones huastecos*, and a *manifiesta* written by the imagined broadcaster of the show *La Sirena* come together in this piece and offer a creative approach that brings the past—once thought lost—into the present.

Monica Espinel's contribution is a deeply moving and critically necessary consideration of one of María Evelia Marmolejo's early performances. Departing from feminist readings of the work, Espinel's paper frames *Anónimo 4* within the sociopolitical and cultural conditions of its production—the early 1980s in Cali, Colombia—a perspective she brings as a Colombian/Latinx art historian. In the wake of colonization and plantation slavery, guerrilla warfare, and drug trafficking engendered by the Dirty War, as well as President Julio César Turbay Ayala's Estatuto de Seguridad, which led to a period of endemic violence and human rights violations, Marmolejo performed *Anónimo 4* at the edge of the Cauca River (later dubbed “the river of death”). Espinel poignantly theorizes the psychological and physical brutality of the performance (and its recording) as an embodiment of abjection as described by Julia Kristeva. As Espinel writes, Marmolejo's performance “constitutes her own territory.” Her body bears the traces of racial/colonial/imperial violence and witnesses trauma through corporeality. However, she also goes beyond legacies of extractivism by establishing *herself* as boundless territory.

Finally, Juan Carlos G. Mantilla's presentation investigates the ways that early modern Andean artists intervened within Western debates surrounding the representation of the “origin” of the world as a real but distant place that could be represented in maps and manuscripts. Analyzing two watercolors by an anonymous artist in Martín de Murúa's 1590 manuscript *Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Piru* and his 1616 manuscript *Historia general del Piru*, Mantilla argues that the artist intentionally chose to locate the origin of the world in the Antisuyo, the eastern lowlands of Tahuantinsuyu, or what we now know today as the Andean piedmont. The decision to render the world's origin in the Antisuyo was based on understandings

of the Antisuyo as a space of deep historical time within Inca cosmology. Most importantly, Mantilla understands this intervention as an explicit engagement with global debates, positioning the Antisuyo as a place of origin not only for the Inca but for the world at large. In his updated essay for *Vistas 9*, Mantilla offers a deeper look into the methodology he used to analyze the new iconographies that arise through the colonial encounters of the sixteenth century. This essay contains an urgent reminder to resist mapping contemporary frameworks onto the complex social and cultural relations that existed during this period and were made visible through objects, underscoring the limitations of art historical study with respect to early modern art.

Mundo Sabana

Alejandra R. Bolaños

Capítulo 1

Las Sirenas Tentonas: Tres episodios radiofónicos sobre peteneras, huapango y la desobediencia femenina en la Huasteca

En 2018, la cabina apareció en sueños. No recuerdo muy bien cómo, pero sí sé que primero llegó la imagen de un muro construido de corales que bloqueaba la mitad de una habitación. El piso estaba lleno de bultos y charcos que se notaban al pisar. Del techo caían gotas de agua desde unas estalactitas. Oscuridad. Como la de una cueva en el fondo del mar. En el sueño, el muro tenía unos pequeños orificios a través de los cuales se podía observar la parte trasera de la habitación. En esta había un ventilador, una mesa y tres micrófonos. Frente a ellos, tres personas dialogando, haciendo radiodifusión.

Al despertar, había una certeza, como una especie de mandato. La habitación debía existir, debía materializarse como una cabina radiofónica y debía servir como una barca; una vasija; una estructura; un artefacto para el encuentro, el diálogo, la manifestación, la escucha, la magia y el deseo. Lo que suscitaría la pregunta: ¿De qué sería el programa que se estaba transmitiendo desde esta cabina submarina?

Todo lo que se narrara aquí seguro tendría que estar habitando el mundo de los sueños. Recodos del inconsciente que emergen a nuestro mundo a través de los cuentos, las leyendas, las historias maravillosas. Aquellas que son trasladadas de pueblo en pueblo a través de viajeros y recontadas a través de la memoria, del habla, de la música, de los rumores. Repetición, transformación, variación, comunicación, transmisión. Formas no predecibles, donde el inconsciente se manifiesta a través del lenguaje y la cultura de quien lo transmite.

De esta manera, la imagen de la cabina ya advertía su mutabilidad. Así como sucede en los sueños, donde una cosa parece firme y al segundo siguiente ya es otra cosa que va cambiando de formas que no podemos controlar racionalmente. Solo podemos dejarnos llevar, dejar que sean los estímulos quienes nos vayan conduciendo tras los deseos y miedos censurados durante la vigilia. Por lo que, de acuerdo al mandato, había que emprender, pues, algo en movimiento —como un viaje—, buscando escuchar cuentos, encontrar locutores para la cabina y encontrar posibilidades de transmisión radiofónica.

Por otro lado, desde hace un tiempo vivo estudiando los puertos, historias orales y visualidades en el Golfo de México a través de la noción de viaje. Un poco porque me intriga, un poco porque creo que lo del viaje lo traigo ancestralmente. Mi abuelo fue marino-telegrafista de un barco petrolero y mi padre llevó las telecomunicaciones satelitales de los barcos petroleros mexicanos. Las mujeres por su parte han habitado los puertos, cuidando a las familias, cocinando y preservando la memoria a través del habla y el chisme. Mi familia se ha trasladado a lo largo de generaciones por los puertos y los mares. Del Pacífico al Golfo de México y viceversa: Tampico, Pánuco, Coatzacoalcos, Villa Hermosa, Veracruz, Salina Cruz, Manzanillo. No hay mucha información más allá de les bisabuelos, porque fue bien borrada a través de procesos coloniales y modernos.

En este lugar que es Veracruz, en muchos casos (que no en todos), si tus antepasados son indígenas o afrodescendientes no hay mucha forma de saber qué pasó en sus vidas, más allá de lo que podemos heredar psíquicamente a través de nuestra comida, lenguaje, cuentos y sueños. Y es este intersticio psíquico el que permite comunicarse con más personas que nacimos y habitamos en este lugar del mundo.

Por lo que, regresando a la cabina, si había que emprender un viaje y buscar interlocutores, no tenía otro deseo más que hacerlo desde acá: recorriendo el Golfo de México.

Años después de estas reflexiones se manifestó Paola, no a través de un sueño, pero sí de algo parecido, desbordante e inabarcable. Se apareció pandémicamente a través de Instagram a Rodolfo Sousa y Rodrigo González, quienes estaban platicando conmigo sobre cómo sacar a la cabina de mi sueño a través de su proyecto Ensayo en Sitio: una serie de exposiciones, propuestas y apuestas para hablar del territorio veracruzano.

Cuando conocí a Paola, quedó claro que tenía que ser una compañera, colega, parte de. Cayó la certeza, esta certeza que cae una y otra vez, de que el viaje no va en solitario sino que va conversando. Y para ello, nada mejor que una artista que se enuncia a sí misma como “más que artista, conversadora”. Paola hace muchos mapas mentales, baja las ideas, escucha, lee atenta, genera artefactos y situaciones para que les demás se expresen. Arma la vasija y permite que les otros se viertan. También habla y busca entender-teorizar-codificar su cotidiano, su madre, sus viajes, su lengua, sus amores, el clima, cómo se va encontrando con les otros de a poco. Aprecia lo que se queda en el tiempo, pero también lo efímero.

Después apareció Luis Enrique: cronista, fotógrafo y artista que ha trabajado desde hace años con la historia, la visualidad y la cultura de Pánuco en la Huasteca, su lugar de origen. Luis es una especie de narrador y encarna varias versiones de sí mismo que se van combinando a la hora de contar, como cuando te platica sus chismes de cronista con cosas que pasaron en el 1800, de cómo se instauraron las cafeterías chinas, del sazón del mejor zacahuil del mercado, o del tío marinero que tuvo una amante argentina. En otra versión, como gestor cultural de su municipio, y una más, como fotógrafo y artista, trabajando imágenes, archivos y textiles locales, pero también familiares y personales, para poner en conversación narrativas coloniales y viajes de ultramar entre Europa, África y América, así como su devenir en nuestros presentes.

Así fue que empecé a dialogar con Luis Enrique y Paola con la tarea de encontrar un cuento y narrarlo radiofónicamente. Luis nos fue compartiendo sus investigaciones a través de archivos sonoros y visuales: entrevistas a señoras de Pánuco sobre la comida y el son huasteco, así como sus textos sobre la herencia colonial. Paola fue escuchando y leyendo atentamente, buscando de qué manera ir hilando lo que Luis compartía.

En un principio la idea era lograr conectar en la distancia, como la radio, con la que no se necesita estar en el mismo lugar para entablar una conversación. Y desde esa postura y a través de muchas videollamadas, finalmente Luis nos compartió un cuento que su abuela le contaba cuando era niño, que narraba la historia de la aparición de la sirena: En la Huasteca, hay una leyenda en la que una joven desobedece a su madre cuando esta le indica que no debe bañarse durante los días sagrados de la

Semana Santa, pues son días de guardar. La joven decide bañarse, haciendo caso omiso a la tradición, y en el acto desobediente es convertida en sirena. Por ello, es castigada y relegada de su comunidad, destinada por siempre a vivir en el río Pánuco y las playas cercanas:



Audio: «El mito de la sirena». Testimonio oral de la señora Eula Esther Pecero del Ángel, del ejido Las Chacas. Leído por Luis Enrique, Paola y Alejandra

Naturalmente Luis vinculó este cuento a la figura de La Petenera en el son huasteco. La Petenera habla de una sirena que se muestra tal y como ha sido traída a través de los relatos de marineros, conquistadores, pescadores y piratas desde Europa y África a las costas americanas.

Con esto en mano, la conversación fue demandando un encuentro físico, renunciando a la idea de comunicación a distancia. Por lo que Paola y yo decidimos emprender un viaje desde Xalapa a Pánuco para encontrarnos en casa de Luis Enrique.



Audio: Fragmento de «La Petenera», por Trío Huasteco de Pánuco

Del viaje y las referencias lanzadas por Luis, a Paola le interesó la idea de la desobediencia. La insumisión como fuerza, así conlleve un castigo. La figura de la sirena como mujer-monstruo y al mismo tiempo objeto de deseo. Desarrolló los siguientes mapas en donde plasma sus preguntas después de escuchar algunos versos de «La Petenera».

Este análisis llevó a conversar sobre las posibilidades de desobediencia femenina no solo en la sirena sino en otras materialidades de este cuento en el contexto de la Huasteca. Luis sugirió hablar de mujeres cantoras de son huasteco que a mediados del siglo XX empezaron a apropiarse del arte de la verseada y las topadas —una especie de pelea de versos— denunciando el machismo de cualquier lugar. Mujeres que en un principio fueron, como la sirena, catalogadas como demasiado libres pero que finalmente lograron abrirse un espacio en la tradición y ocuparlo hasta hoy en día. También la sugerencia de entrevistar a María Luisa, cronista de noventa años que actualmente vive en Tampico, Tamaulipas, al otro lado del río Pánuco, especialista en afrodescendencia en la Huasteca y también mujer pionera en involucrarse en la historiografía y narrativa local. La idea era entonces hablar de desobediencia en tres formas o niveles que se entrelazaban entre sí. Aquí algunas preguntas y comentarios, tal y como los anotó Paola:

I. LA SIRENA

La sirena como personaje introductorio de la desobediencia

La desobediencia en su tono: lúdico, tentón, temperamental, arrojado, libre, desafiante, la desobediencia de la que hace su santa voluntad, que imagina y se arriesga, que está dispuesta a transformarse y ser rechazada por eso (algunas palabras tomadas del diagrama de Luis).

PREGUNTAS: ¿Qué posibilidades y fugas poéticas y políticas surgen de este tipo de desobediencia y no de otra?, ¿qué estrategias y formas de vida alegres y dignas se pueden dar desde esta postura?

La monstruosidad como potencia: ser monstruo es ser libre, es ser autónome y por ello es tan castigado.

PREGUNTAS: ¿Se ama a La Petenera justo porque es libre?, ¿cómo es que la sirena pone en jaque la lógica de nuestros deseos y afectos?

La sirena como advertencia

Una historia más que busca regular el comportamiento no-masculino/heterosexual/normativo.

PREGUNTAS: ¿Qué otras historias conocemos que tengan el mismo objetivo?, ¿por qué son comúnmente mujeres castigadas las que sirven de advertencia?, ¿qué impacto tuvieron en nosotres, nuestras familias, madres y abuelas estas historias?

La Petenera en la música

El género musical de La Petenera.

PREGUNTAS: ¿Cómo es que llega este género musical a Pánuco?, ¿cuáles son las lógicas coloniales que permitieron este intercambio?, ¿cómo es su estructura, sus formas, sus poesías, y cuáles son sus características?, ¿qué historias cuentan?, ¿quiénes las cantan?

II. LA CANTORA

La cantora como otra sirena desobediente

La desobediencia de las cantoras: ocupar sitios típicamente masculinos, apropiarse del rechazo para obtener la libertad; cuándo, cómo y por qué lo hicieron; recuperar el archivo y generar archivo nuevo. ¡Las topadas!

PREGUNTAS: ¿Cuáles son las particularidades de sus historias de vida desobediente?, ¿cómo es que ellas entienden y nombran (o no) esa desobediencia?, ¿cómo podríamos hacer nuestras propias topadas?, ¿qué podemos aprender?, ¿cómo ellas (y nosotres) entendemos este brinco de ser «la musa» (como lo son las sirenas) a ser «las artistas» (como lo son las cantoras)?, ¿qué nuevas posibilidades se generan al cantar en vez de ser cantada?

III. LA HISTORIADORA

La investigación desobediente de María Luisa

La historiadora que descubre su responsabilidad para historiar contra la invisibilización, el olvido y el racismo.

PREGUNTAS: ¿Cuáles son las particularidades de sus historias de vida desobediente?, ¿cómo es que ella entiende y nombra (o no) esa desobediencia?, ¿qué podemos aprender?, ¿cómo es que ella entendería un «historiar» o un «investigar» o «archivar» desobediente?¹

De manera que en estas tres capas se fue vislumbrando poco a poco la estructura de nuestro involucramiento (otra capa) con el contar, a través de nuestra conversación radiofónica de tres capítulos que se titularon tal cual: «La Sirena», «Las Cantoras» y «La Historiadora».

Decidimos jugar, hacer del viaje una aventura épica en nuestras cabezas, tanto en la manera en que hablábamos como en lo que nos íbamos contando. ¿Qué nos hacía a nosotres tres emprender un encuentro en plena plandemia, cuando el viaje era sinónimo de miedo?

Aún no lo sé del todo, y ahí reside el meollo del asunto. La importancia no estaba en lo que íbamos a lograr hacer, sino en lo que nos iba pasando mientras abordábamos el camión, en lo que Luis podía compartirnos de sus imágenes, lo que Paola llegaba a apuntar y lo que yo podía mediar. Nos prestamos a un juego donde los roles fueron cambiando dependiendo de lo que estábamos haciendo. A momentos Luis era el gestor, Paola la productora y yo la curadora. En otros momentos éramos tres artistas y luego solo éramos tres personas compartiendo sus vidas, preocupaciones, aspiraciones, deseos y chismes.

Mientras estuvimos allá salimos en la televisión y la radio, paseamos por Tampico y entrevistamos a María Luisa, comimos jaiba a la frank y zacahuil. Leímos el I Ching y tomamos algo en el café chino.²

Después del viaje nos volcamos a la escritura, edición y presentación de los tres programas, en donde había un poco de todo. Decidimos que La Sirena sería la locutora que guiara los programas. Aunque a mí me tocó diseñar y hacer la voz de La Sirena, estoy segura que en el proceso de escritura y creación nos poseyó a les tres:



Audio: Voz de La Sirena

Estaban las investigaciones previas de Luis Enrique como cronista, el contexto histórico de La Petenera, el huapango, la cantora y la selección musical. Aquí un fragmento sobre lo que Luis aportó a los guiones:



Audio: Fragmento de texto e investigación por Luis Enrique Pérez

A partir de sus notas del viaje y las conversaciones, Paola desarrolló una manifiesta de Las Sirenas Tentonas, donde presentaba una serie de pautas a seguir para vivir libres, descaradas y alegres, a pesar de los castigos que las sociedades puedan hacer. Aquí un ejemplo de lo que Paola escribió:



Audio: Fragmento de la manifiesta de Las Sirenas Tentonas, por Paola Medina

Los tres programas fueron editados por Sebastián Agulló y se transmitieron por Radio Teocelo, que fue sintonizada desde la concha acústica de Jaco Jazzy Café en el centro de Xalapa. Pueden ser escuchados en la siguiente página web, que más que como resultado, funciona como un archivo de todo el proceso: <http://www.ensayoensitio.com/sirenastentonas/sirenastentonas.html>

Uno de los retos de *Mundo Sabana* es escapar de una trampa en la que actualmente nos encontramos las artistas de mi generación, que hemos sido educadas en las universidades, los talleres libres, independientes, diplomados o laboratorios, y que estamos condicionadas por una serie de reglas para sobrevivir.

El hacer actual del arte contemporáneo se ha vuelto sumamente académico (debido también a la redacción de

proyectos para convocatorias). En ese caso primero hay que conceptualizar y planear. Después de proyectar, se hace la obra.

En el caso de *Mundo Sabana*, es un intento por hacer la operación inversa, por disfrutar o sufrir como nos dé la gana, tomarse el tiempo necesario. No sabemos cómo va a resultar la conversación, qué vamos a encontrar. El chiste es ir en búsqueda de lo inesperado.

Hace unos días, Luis subrayaba en unos audios de WhatsApp que «dentro de los hallazgos, estaba la importancia del vínculo afectivo como motor o detonante de un proceso de colaboración e investigación artística que retoma la oralidad como fuente de conocimiento para reposicionar y/o poner en circulación saberes locales en otros campos del conocimiento como el arte». Más allá de buscar revertir algo, se trata de abrir una posibilidad de estado de fuga, «donde se puedan dismantelar esas estructuras colonizadoras que han normado ciertas maneras de ver, mirar, producir, hacer nuestro mundo o el sentido que le damos al mundo».

Luis continúa, sin embargo, advirtiendo que en la fuga habrá que tener cuidado de la siguiente trampa, en donde podríamos pensar que ya estamos en un estado anticolonial: «hubo un colonialismo y ese colonialismo se sigue reproduciendo, así como distintas fuerzas hegemónicas, viejas conocidas». Para él, el estado anticolonial sería en todo caso un motor, un recorrido, un movimiento. De manera que aparece la relevancia del vínculo con el otro para generar una experiencia, donde lo más importante es el proceso y no tanto el producto final.

Así pues, el cuento no dependerá del arte, y nada que suceda en *Mundo Sabana* hará que el cuento deje de existir en su forma dispersa, variada, fractal. Será siempre un coqueteo, un intercambio de vestidos, una chela al atardecer espantando mosquitos. Y si entra al arte, será a través de una tarde amena, un cóctel, una publicación, una presentación de simposio, que nada afectará al otro ni viceversa. El cuento no afectará al arte ni el arte afectará al cuento. Sino que se besarán un rato y luego cada quien irá pa' su lado. Tal vez un rato se sorprendan de que existen uno y otro, pero luego recordarán que ya se conocían y que ya existían encontrados y separados. Y que su razón de ser no será otra más que encontrarse, disfrutarse, odiarse, macanearse, peerse, cotorrearse.

¡A ver qué nos espera en el siguiente punto de la ruta!

Mundo Sabana

Temas: Migración, diáspora, dibujo de mapas, redes de intercambio transpacíficas y transatlánticas

Palabras clave: radio, storytelling, leyendas, viaje, tradición oral, música folklórica, colonialidad, feminismo, desobediencia.

Mundo Sabana: Una radio itinerante que viaja a lo largo del Golfo de México buscando historias de piratas y leyendas locales. El plan final es recorrer toda la línea costera del golfo, desde la península de Yucatán hasta la de Florida. Echando mano del storytelling, esta investigación artística de largo aliento presenta —a través de múltiples colaboraciones y programas radiofónicos— a la sabana que crece en este territorio, con sus reservas naturales, campos de cultivo y centros comerciales, así como a las lagunas y los manglares cerca de los puertos petroleros y los malecones turísticos.

Todo esto conversando con artistas, narradores y cronistas locales que se saben de memoria aquellos cuentos donde aparecen criaturas míticas acechando selvas, bosques, ríos, playas y poblados.

Para el primer programa se ha convocado a les artistas veracruzanes Luis Enrique Pérez y Paola Medina, con quienes he desarrollado tres episodios radiofónicos sobre peteneras, huapango y desobediencia femenina en la Huasteca. A través de la voz de una sirena se abre un universo de posibilidades para desobedecer: se nos cuenta cómo ha seducido a marinos, pescadores, piratas y viajeros a lo largo de los siglos (con sus procesos coloniales) y cómo esta seducción la ha traído en forma de cantos y leyendas hasta las costas mexicanas.

Actualmente me encuentro desarrollando los capítulos dos y tres, que se socializarán al público próximamente. El capítulo dos se titula «La voz del monte» y está hecho en colaboración con les artistas Inari Reséndiz, Fernando Velázquez y Andrés González. El capítulo tres se titula «Las fauces de la boca del infierno» y está realizado en colaboración con la curadora Catalina Pérez. Todos los programas han sido editados por Sebastián Agulló.

1. Notas de Paola Medina durante el proceso de trabajo de Las Sirenas Tentonas, Xalapa, Veracruz, 2021.
2. A finales del siglo XIX y durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, hubo una importante migración china a México. En el caso de la Huasteca, se asentó una comunidad cuya presencia no es menor en la zona. A través de cafés, restaurantes y tiendas, así como manifestaciones culturales (como el Carnaval) se sumaron a las dinámicas económicas y sociales de ciudades como Pánuco y Tampico para formar parte de la diversidad de pueblos que conviven en la región. Se puede leer más sobre las migraciones chinas a México en la siguiente publicación: Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882–1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

Figures



Sesión de escucha de Radio Teocelo en la concha acústica de Jaco Jazzy Café en el centro de Xalapa, Veracruz, 2021
Foto: Paola Medina



Cabina de radio en casa de Alejandra Bolaños en Coatepec, Veracruz, 2021
Foto: Alejandra R. Bolaños

LA PETENERA MAL NOMBRADA:

*quien te puso petenera, no la supo bautizar
le hubieran puesto, siquiera
la musa de mí cantar*

//

*quien te puso petenera, no supo ponerte nombre
que te debía de haber puesto*

la perdición de los hombres



LA PETENERA: MUSA (VS) ANIMAL

*yo la quisiera encontrar y besarle su boquita
pero como es animal
no se puede naditita*

Cantoras/académica:

figura de la artista

Petenera/sirena:

figura de la musa

((La desobediencia sirenil está en desacatar el protocolo; las otras dos desobediencias están en ocupar un lugar que no les corresponde. Las tres son desobedientes por llevarle la contraria a la tradición.))

¿Es la desobediencia animal?
¿Es la musa la tentona?

¿De la cintura para arriba se es musa, de la cintura para abajo se es bestia (y no se puede naditita)?



"La sirena" de la Lotería Huasteca de Alec Dempster.

Las sirenas me regresan la mirada y me hacen pensar en mis propias obediencias y desobediencias que ejerzo como artista. ¿Cómo hacer esas desobediencias lúdicas y alegres para hacer la vida vivible, la "resistencia" habitable?



La estructura de las peteneras es un mar que va y viene y va y viene.
¿Un río?



Paola y Luis Enrique grabando desde la cabina de *Mundo Sabana*, 2021
Foto: Alejandra R. Bolaños



Sirena a la orilla del río Pánuco, Veracruz, 2021
Foto: Paola Medina

Embodying the Abject: María Evelia Marmolejo's *Anónimo 4* (1982)¹

Monica Espinel

A pioneer of performance art in Colombia since the late 1970s, María Evelia Marmolejo has produced a body of work that confronts taboos surrounding violence, the body, gender, sexuality, colonialism, and ecology. Even though her work is conceptually layered and politically confrontational, it has primarily been examined through a feminist lens by critics and scholars such as José Hernán Aguilar, Carmen María Jaramillo, and Piedad Natalia Arrieta Rodríguez, albeit with some exceptions, like Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Emilio Tarazona.² My aim here is not to discount Marmolejo's contributions to feminist production. Rather, I would like to propose an alternate framing of her work that examines the sociopolitical and cultural conditions of its production by focusing on *Anónimo 4* (Anonymous 4), a haunting performance she presented on the banks of the Cauca River in 1982, which in her study of the artist's critical reception historian Sonia Vargas Martínez has singled out as needing further consideration (fig. 1).³ I argue that *Anónimo 4*, created at the height of political turmoil and cultural effervescence in Cali, Colombia, is the embodiment of abjection—as theorized by philosopher Julia Kristeva—and assert that members of the Grupo de Cali, including cult author Andrés Caicedo and filmmakers Carlos Mayolo and Luis Ospina, also employed the aesthetics of abjection as a means to raise social awareness.

To set the groundwork for this claim, I must situate *Anónimo 4* in the context in which it was conceived. Marmolejo was born in 1958 in Pradera, a town near Cali, Colombia's third-largest city, which grew out of the colonial era's sugar and cotton plantation economy. Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the city became more cosmopolitan due primarily to the US embargo on Cuban sugar. In 1971, Cali hosted the Pan American Games, which brought speedy urbanization and international attention to the city. However, since the 1950s, Colombia's internal conflicts have claimed the lives of nearly three hundred thousand people and displaced more than eight million people. The eighties saw a rise

in violence related to guerrillas and drug trafficking and witnessed the violence associated with the Dirty War, a period when approximately four thousand left-wing politicians, union leaders, grassroots organizers, and human rights monitors were killed, kidnapped, or disappeared by paramilitary groups, members of drug cartels, and the national armed forces.⁴ There were also innumerable excesses and human rights violations committed by the military to exact political oppression under the auspices of President Julio César Turbay Ayala's Security Statute. Art historian María Iovino has characterized this period as one of "material, moral, and emotional collapse."⁵

Marmolejo's work was born of her disgust for the social and political conditions surrounding her. *Anónimo 4* was a private performance presented at the edges of the Cauca River, on the outskirts of Cali. There, Marmolejo dug a pit in the shape of an equilateral triangle with five-foot-long sides—whose length corresponded to the artist's height—which she then subdivided into four triangles of equal size, as seen in a preparatory sketch (fig. 2). The center triangle was filled with human placentas she had gathered from maternity clinics and hospitals—the unwanted remains of childbirths that had taken place in Cali that day. The three triangles adjacent to it were filled with sewage water. Marmolejo's choice to include wastewater stemmed from her visits to Cali's impoverished Aguablanca neighborhood, where she saw children playing in murky water due to the district's lack of adequate water supply and wastewater systems. Marmolejo had her body tightly wrapped with strips of polyethylene film, the kind of plastic used to wrap food for protection and preservation but that may also cause suffocation if placed over someone's nose and mouth. The double metaphor points to the germ of the work: a newspaper article about child mortality from malnutrition in Latin America, alluded to in the work's full title.⁶

The action was offered to a small audience composed mostly of her collaborators. There were no rehearsals; its liveness was pivotal for the artist. Therein lies the importance of the physical traces left by this ephemeral performance—her preparatory sketches and the photographic and filmic documentation—that, in retrospect, help us understand its significance. Forty years after the action took place, the surviving video footage, which is marred by white horizontal lines that interrupt the image and mirror the bandage-like strips of plastic film wrapped around the artist's

body, shows Marmolejo inside the ditch. The surrounding soil reaches her knees, and strips of plastic film cut into her flesh as she stands in the central triangle, mummy-like, attempting to squeeze placentas into the tight space between her body and the plastic while also struggling to unwrap herself. After our eyes become accustomed to the muted colors of the landscape at dusk, the camera pans across her body and gives us a close-up of her face, after which the image shifts and we see a stream of vomit dripping from her mouth, inducing a gag reflex in the viewer that reproduces the artist's jolt in repugnance. Her contorted body and distorted face make her agony clear, pointing sharply to the raw pain, both physical and psychological, she is experiencing. The camera zooms in to present an uncomfortably close view of Marmolejo as she bends over and gags repeatedly (fig. 3). And just when we think the artist has succumbed to her self-inflicted pain, she begins to slowly liberate herself from the plastic strips wrapped around her head, releasing tension for herself as well as for the viewer.

The four-minute video of the performance, filmed by José Antonio Dorado and Juan Carlos Velásquez, Marmolejo's fellow students at Universidad del Valle, provides a visualization of the work that I argue embodies what Kristeva describes in her book *Powers of Horror* (1980) as abjection. According to Kristeva, the abject marks the moment in our individual psychosexual development when we separate from the mother—when we begin to recognize a boundary between *me* and *other*. And though Kristeva asserts that this violent psychic expulsion of the maternal is necessary to constitute a subject, for the philosopher this expulsion is never seamless. Thus, the abject also refers to the human reaction, manifested in vomit or expressions of horror, to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. Kristeva claims that the primary example of something that causes such reactions is the corpse because it traumatically reminds us of our own materiality, although other elements, such as open wounds, shit, or sewage, may elicit similar reactions. As Kristeva writes, "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself*. . . . [The sickly, acrid smell]⁷ turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that *they* see that 'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which 'I' become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit."⁸

Marmolejo's mise-en-scène of the intolerable is a manifestation, in her own words, "of the fear of coming into the world in a society in which survival is not guaranteed, especially for those born into poverty."⁹ Kristeva claims that the phobic has no other object than the abject. Thus, within this framework, abjection is Marmolejo's way of disclosing her fears, fulfilling Kristeva's definition of the abject as that which "is radically excluded and draws [one] toward the place where meaning collapses."¹⁰ The soundtrack of gurgling noises that seem to be toilets flushing repeatedly signals this collapse; not a word is pronounced. The abject eludes speech. When the human body feels threatened, meaning collapses; there is no use for words. Instead of employing language, Marmolejo turns to her own body in order to speak, because "significance is indeed inherent in the human body."¹¹ In this manner, Marmolejo's response to the loss of loved ones to systemic violence also functions as abjection.

In *Anónimo 4*, Marmolejo constitutes her own territory, enclosed by the abject—placentas and wastewater—to speak about how the Colombian landscape bears the traces of war. By holding the action on the banks of the Cauca River—later dubbed "the river of death"—and digging and inserting her body into a pit, she equates herself with the landscape, both witnesses of inescapable torture and violence, through a scene that evokes toxicity, environmental damage, and personal trauma.¹² This is a dual allusion to mass graves and rivers as repositories of bodies; rivers constitute some of the largest cemeteries in Colombia. Former paramilitaries have stated that the number of bodies discarded in rivers is higher than the number of bodies buried in mass graves. As stated in a 2007 article in the magazine *Semana*, "Rivers ensure total disappearance. They leave no trace or evidence, as practices like opening the victim's thorax 'like a purse' so the body would sink swiftly, and other times removing the intestines to fill the body with stones, ensured that the bodies sank forever. Without a body there is no crime. Just panic and impunity."¹³ The disappeared anonymous bodies of victims found scattered across the Colombian landscape are alluded to in the very title of the performance, the fourth in Marmolejo's *Anónimo* series, which began with *Anónimo 1 (Homenaje a los desaparecidos y torturados dentro de los hechos violentos)* (Anonymous 1 [Homage to Those Disappeared and Tortured in Violent Incidents]) in 1981 (figs. 4a and 4b).

This violent context explains the abject character of *Anónimo 4*. The work is Marmolejo's attempt to comprehend a profoundly destabilized world. Thus, her use of placentas is a disturbing yet poignant choice that can, again, be linked to Kristeva's definition of abjection as the psychic expulsion of the maternal, necessary for the individuation of any human subject. In order to obtain the placentas, Marmolejo requested them in advance from authorities in hospitals and maternity clinics. On the designated day, she drove around Cali picking up the organs that, rather than being discarded, were to be repurposed for the performance. The enveloping environment of the amniotic sac provides the earliest spatial experience for humans; therein, the placenta protects the fetus from infection, provides oxygen and nutrients, and filters out carbon dioxide and other waste products. Marmolejo's appropriation and use of placentas is an apt metaphor for the extreme violence and disregard for life in Colombia, especially with respect to children. Furthermore, by wrapping herself in strips of polyethylene film, Marmolejo expresses her desire for protection, echoing the role of the membranes protecting a fetus and thus drawing parallels between a fetus's vulnerability and her own.

When Marmolejo was coming of age in the mid-1970s, despite the hostile sociopolitical environment of the Colombian conflict, an important art, theater, and film scene had developed in Cali. It emanated from Enrique Buenaventura's Teatro Experimental de Cali and Museo La Tertulia, founded in 1955 and 1956, respectively, during the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, and the iconic artist-run space Ciudad Solar, active between 1971 and 1978, which was a gathering place for the city's young filmmakers, literati, and photographers.¹⁴ Marmolejo recalls the city's cultural agitation during the late seventies.¹⁵ Looking back at Ciudad Solar's legacy and its connection to the Cine Club de Cali—led by author Andrés Caicedo—and the club's magazine, *Ojo al cine*, it is imperative to recognize Caicedo's influence on the development of Colombian cinema through his works of fiction and film criticism as well as his belief in film as a means of resistance and sociocultural mobilization. Despite the brevity of his life, his legacy was immense.¹⁶ Many of his short stories, such as "Calibanismo" (1971), "Destinitos fatales" (1971), and "En las garras del crimen" (1975), contain a Gothic dimension, dealing with themes common to the genre, such as cannibalism, extreme violence, the uncanny, and the presence of doubles.

Here, I must return to Kristeva, as Caicedo was not the only one who deployed Gothic strategies to denounce the unspeakable experiences associated with the violence in Colombia. As Kristeva explains, the psychic expulsion of the maternal is necessary for individuation, but it is never smooth. In her book *The Art of Cruelty*, Maggie Nelson ponders the meaning of Kristeva's concept of abjection, stating, "The abjected maternal returns, via horror, repulsion, the uncanny, haunting, melancholia, depression, guilt, the inchoate but harrowing sense that one has lost, left, or killed something critical."¹⁷ Like Caicedo, many members of the group of filmmakers known as the Grupo de Cali also explored historical trauma and national identity through Gothic tropes. The group's most prominent figures were Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo, who codirected the seminal mockumentary *The Vampires of Poverty/ Agarrando pueblo* (1977), in which a group of filmmakers exploits images of poverty in Latin America under the guise of social realism. The film is a harsh critique of "pornomiseria," a term coined by Ospina and Mayolo to describe so-called poverty porn—films that objectify people in poverty for the sake of entertaining privileged audiences.¹⁸

In 1982, Ospina directed *Pura sangre* (Pure Blood), a cult movie in which he cast Mayolo as one of the main characters. The ghastly film tells the twisted story of a trio of criminals who systematically kidnap, drug, rape, and kill teenage boys to fulfill the medical needs of the unsuspecting sugar magnate Don Roberto by feeding him their blood. Ospina's "vampire" turns out to be a complex bloodsucker: unlike Dracula, he cannot draw blood from his victims himself and is unaware of the methods employed to feed him. The extreme violence deployed by the bloodthirsty trio is a cruel escalation of the methods employed by European vampires. In *Pura sangre*—like in Marmolejo's use of a mummy-like figure in *Anónimo 4*—the Gothic and the abject blend to speak of the collective fear for children's well-being. When Don Roberto learns of the crimes committed to keep him alive, he spews blood from his mouth in disgust. As Kristeva notes, "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable."¹⁹

That same year, Mayolo published an article in the journal *Caligari* about the role that Colombian provinces needed to play in the development of a local aesthetic. Mayolo emphasized the need

to “search for our stories, our memories, our nostalgia, our legends, and even [do] socio-anthropological research . . . [in order] to portray an aesthetic that is neither chauvinistic nor folklorist but that can transform a supposed provincialism into something universal, just as La Mancha, Macondo, and Comala are now universal.”²⁰ Mayolo answered his own call four years later, when he adapted Álvaro Mutis’s *La mansión de Araucaíma* (1986), a novella written in response to Luis Buñuel’s disbelief that anyone could ever write a Gothic novel set in the tropics. With the book’s subtitle, Mutis coined the term “tropical Gothic.” This became a regional aesthetic employed by artists, filmmakers, and authors who tropicalized Gothic tropes like monsters, vampires, zombies, cannibalism, and incest to critique local horrors, marginality, violence, and insidious forms of class warfare. Mutis justified his embrace of the Gothic genre in the tropics by stating that “for me, evil exists everywhere, and what the Gothic novel proposes is the transit of characters through absolute evil.”²¹ This is yet another example of the synchronicities between Marmolejo’s work and that of authors and film directors also active in Cali at the time who produced socially critical works of art, proffering a vision that critiqued the entrenched forms and structures of Colombian society.

Why the fascination with abjection among Cali’s cultural practitioners? Kristeva associates the aesthetic experience of the abject with poetic catharsis, a process that allows artists to protect themselves from the abject only by further immersing themselves within it. I thus posit that Marmolejo’s *Anónimo 4*—which delivers a condemnation of the beginning of life under the threat of violence—as the embodiment of abjection. By providing a broader contextual and theoretical framework for understanding the significance of *Anónimo 4*, I argue that Marmolejo’s response to particular historical circumstances embodies Kristeva’s notion of the abject to make viewers confront the powers of horror and the horrors of war head-on. Perhaps that, then, is the value of *Anónimo 4*. It is a viscerally terrifying portrait of abjection that speaks to the institutional violence that remains in the region. Violence still has a grip on Cali, which was the epicenter of last year’s nationwide protests, when an egregious and indiscriminate use of force by the national police against civilians marching during the *Paro Nacional* (national strike) led to unthinkable human rights abuses that left a death toll of forty-four civilians.²² Forty years later, *anónimos* keep showing up in the murky waters of the Cauca River.

1. A version of this paper was presented at the Sixth Annual Symposium of Latin American Art, co-organized by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University; the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY); Columbia University; and the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) on April 1, 2022. I would like to thank Anna Indych-López and my peers in her seminar *Arte de Acción: Performativity in the Americas*, whose suggestions helped formulate the ideas presented in this essay. All translations are my own.
2. See José Hernán Aguilar, "Menores de 31," *Semana*, January 3, 1983, <http://www.semana.com/cultura/articulo/menores-de-31-aos/1339-3>; Piedad Natalia Arrieta Rodríguez, "María Evelia Marmolejo y el performance *¿Una apuesta feminista?*" (master's thesis, Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 2015), <https://expeditiorepositorio.utadeo.edu.co/handle/20.500.12010/4152>; María Iovino, "María Teresa Hincapié: Action, Corporeality, and the Realm of the Feminine in Colombia," in *Arte [no es] Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas, 1960–2000* (New York: El Museo del Barrio, 2008), 216; and Carmen María Jaramillo, "In the First Person: Poetics of Subjectivity in the Work of Colombian Women Artists, 1960–1980," in *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, eds. Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, Andrea Giunta, and Rodrigo Alonso (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum; New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 263.
3. Sonia Vargas Martínez, "María Evelia Marmolejo: Rescate, discurso y representación" (master's thesis, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 2015), 8.
4. Diana Jean Schemo, "Colombia's Death-Strewn Democracy," *New York Times*, July 24, 1997, World.
5. Iovino, "María Teresa Hincapié," 214.
6. The work's full title is *Anónimo 4 (Cuestiona que venir al mundo donde no hay beneficios ni tranquilidad para el recién nacido en una sociedad donde cada año, mueren 11 mil niños por hambre en América latina)* (Anonymous 4 [I Question Coming into a World Where There Are No Benefits or Peace for Newborns in a Society Where Eleven Thousand Children Starve to Death in Latin America Every Year]). See Fajardo-Hill, Giunta, and Alonso. *Radical Women*, 361. Elsewhere, Sandra Patricia Bautista Santos states that the artist "sought to create an allegory about the overwhelming feeling of helplessness and paranoia caused by being born in a country where danger is a constant, where violence is legitimized and enacted by the oppressive forces of the government in power." Sandra Patricia Bautista Santos, "El Cuerpo como símbolo de emancipación política: dos casos relevantes en el arte contemporáneo colombiano María Evelia Marmolejo y Nadia Granados," *Atrio. Revista de Historia del Arte* 22 (2016): 208, <https://www.upo.es/revistas/index.php/atRIO/issue/view/186/81>.
7. Fajardo-Hill claims that "the pungent smell of the decaying placentas was overwhelming [for Marmolejo], and this, combined with her reflections, produced strong reactions of vomiting and crying." Fajardo-Hill, "María Evelia Marmolejo's Political Body," *ArtNexus* (June–August 2012): 7.
8. Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.
9. "Anónimo 4," *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, Digital Archive, Hammer Museum, 2019, <https://hammer.ucla.edu/radical-women/art/art/anonimo-4>.

10. Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," 2.
11. Kristeva, 10.
12. For further insight into how Colombia's armed conflict has shaped the country's landscape, see María Luisa Moreno Rodríguez and Javier Rodrigo Díaz Melo's longitudinal study "Narrativas de la guerra a través del paisaje" (Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018), <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/recorridos-por-paisajes-de-la-violencia/narrativas-guerra.pdf>.
13. "Cementerios de agua y piedra," *Semana*, December 10, 2007, 96, https://www.archivodelosdhh.gov.co/saia_release1/almacenamiento/APROBADO/2016-07-06/102383/anexos/1_1476120571.pdf.
14. For a focused study of the cultural developments that took place in Cali during the 1970s, please see Katia González Martínez, *Cali, ciudad abierta: Arte y cinefilia en los años setenta* (Cali: Ministerio de Cultura, 2014), <https://issuu.com/artesvisualesmincultura/docs/cali-final-web>.
15. Arrieta Rodríguez, "María Evelia Marmolejo y el performance," 74.
16. Caicedo died by suicide in 1977 at the age of twenty-five, on the day his first novel, *¡Que viva la música!*, was published.
17. Maggie Nelson, "Who We Are," in *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 169.
18. Felipe Gómez, "Caníbales por Cali van: Andrés Caicedo y el gótico tropical," *Íkala, revista de lenguaje y cultura* 12, no. 18 (2007): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1184/R1/6490283.v1>.
19. Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," 1.
20. Carlos Mayolo, "Universo de provincia o provincia universal," *Caligari: cine y fotografía* 1 (June 1982): 14. The digitized item can be accessed via the ICAA Documents of Latin American and Latino Art, <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/es/item/1092443#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-419%2C-1%2C3037%2C1700>.
21. Álvaro Mutis, quoted in Marc Berdet, "Gótico tropical y surrealismo. La novela negra de Caliwood," *Acta poética* 37, no. 2 (2016): 42, http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-30822016000200035.
22. Associated Press, "ONU registra 46 muertes durante protestas en Colombia," *AP News*, December 15, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/f6fc6d1d2d3654adac9e82151746ad7>.

Figures



Figure 1

María Evelia Marmolejo, stills from *Anónimo 4 (Cuestiono que venir al mundo donde no hay beneficios ni tranquilidad para el recién nacido en una sociedad donde cada año, mueren 11 mil niños por hambre en América latina)*, performed on the banks of the Cauca River, 1982

Single-channel video, 4 min.

Videography by José Antonio Dorado and Juan Carlos Velásquez
Courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani

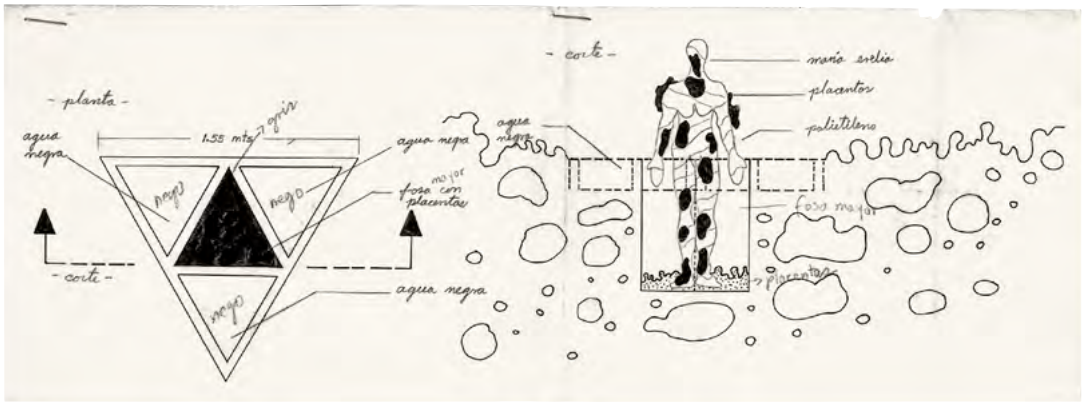


Figure 2

María Evelia Marmolejo, preparatory sketch for *Anónimo 4*, 1982
Courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani



Figure 3

María Evelia Marmolejo, *Anónimo 4*, 1982
Photograph by Nelson Villegas
Courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani



Figure 4a

María Evelia Marmolejo, *Anónimo 1 (Homenaje a los desaparecidos y torturados dentro de los hechos violentos)*, performed in Cali, Colombia, 1981

Photograph by Fabio Arango

Courtesy the artist



Figure 4b

María Evelia Marmolejo, *Anónimo 1 (Homenaje a los desaparecidos y torturados dentro de los hechos violentos)*, performed in Cali, Colombia, 1981

Photograph by Fabio Arango

Courtesy the artist

Entangled Archaeologies of Manuscript Arts and Artists in the Early Modern Andes

Juan Carlos G. Mantilla

Two Watercolors¹

Between the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, the Basque Mercedarian friar Martín de Murúa created two manuscripts that narrated and illustrated the ancient history of Perú. He did so with the aid of at least one Indigenous assistant and drew historical information from circulating oral histories as well as manuscripts and other written accounts. His manuscripts not only reveal the complex processes of acquiring, conceptualizing, and creating historical knowledge about the Americas in the early modern period but also show the artistic efforts involved in imagining this historical past using Western visual formats. The two manuscripts are now referred to by the names of the collections in which they are held: *Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Piru*, dated 1590, from the private collection of Séan Galvin (hereafter called the Galvin Murúa), and the Ms. Ludwig XIII 16 *Historia general del Piru*, dated 1616, held at the J. Paul Getty Museum (referred to from here on as the Getty Murúa).

According to the most recent analyses of the manuscripts,² Murúa did not work alone in their making but, rather, hired and trained more than one assistant for this purpose. One of those aides was the now renowned Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala,³ an Indigenous scholar from Huamanga, Perú, who later created his own historical manuscript, the *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615), which includes many images and sections of text that also appear in the Murúa manuscripts.⁴ The creation of these manuscripts and the relationship between Poma de Ayala and Murúa has been studied by Thomas B. F. Cummins and Juan Ossio, and the drawings and watercolors have been the subject of many studies, with interpretations ranging from philological to historical to postcolonial.⁵

I approached Murúa's manuscripts for the first time as part of a research project on the creation of cosmographical and historical knowledge in the early modern Andes, rather than with

a more traditional art historical focus on the manuscript's watercolors. Because my objective in studying the visual pieces in Murúa's manuscripts was slightly different from that of most scholarship available, I determined that my analysis required a different methodology. This essay provides a brief explanation of the methodological principles I tested in my analysis of two of the manuscripts' images.

With this focus, I will explore the possibilities of understanding two of the manuscripts' visual pieces as innovative imaginings of two pre-Columbian Andean myths that were transformed into representations of historical landscapes in the early modern Andes under Spanish colonial rule. The pieces I will focus on are folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa (fig. 1), which shows a lonely Inca hunting in a sub-Andean landscape amid the flora and fauna of the Andean piedmont, and folio 19r of the Getty Murúa (fig. 2), which is set in the highland and depicts, in addition to many Incas, the apotheosis of their mythical founder, Manco Capac, and the Pacaritambo cave, from which, according to myth, the Inca emerged.

I argue that it is possible to identify the creation of new iconographies that are not purely Indigenous or Western but are instead creative and experimental entanglements that arose from the cross-cultural interactions that took place in the sixteenth century. To this end, I will analyze these two images as part of the questions and problems within the historical and cosmographical debates that were taking place in the early modern Andes at the time of their creation, which included reflections on narrative principles and mythological objects and figures in historical narratives of the ancient Andes.

In doing so, I don't seek to extract positive data about artistic expressions of pre-Columbian cultures in the way that a modern archaeologist would. Instead, I draw from the Foucauldian understanding of archaeology to try to highlight a moment when new iconographies and conceptual principles were being crafted in experimental ways.⁶ I also argue that these two images from Murúa's manuscripts are fundamental to understanding how and why a novel historical and cosmographical iconography for the Yunga and the Pacaritambo cave was being created in the early modern Andes.

Two Methods

In considering how best to analyze these images, I evaluated two of the canonical methods of art historical analysis that have guided the study of the visual culture of the early modern Americas: on the one hand, identifying the European sources the images were based on and exploring how those engravings reached the Americas and how they were used in the creation of art in colonial Iberian cities and, on the other, studying their author's history as part of colonial societies, using legal archives to find information about the author's life and career.

The first approach has helped provide a great deal of information on the circulation of visual models and tropes and their reception in the colonial Americas.⁷ An example of this is the digital initiative PESSCA (Project on the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art), which places colonial pieces of visual art alongside their corresponding European engraved sources.⁸ The same approach has revealed the European engravings that Poma de Ayala used as visual sources in the creation of his *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. Thanks to these works, we can confirm that there was a profound knowledge and widespread use of European models in the early modern Americas.⁹ In a recent book, Aaron M. Hyman analyzes the reception of Peter Paul Rubens's engravings, proposing that while engraved sources from Europe were used in the early modern Americas, this did not entail the consolidation of a unilateral imposition of European visual culture in the Americas.¹⁰

The second approach, the examination of the social history of artists working in the colonial cities of the Americas, is based not on art historical sources but on an archive made up of written sources such as contracts, trial testimonies, and testaments.¹¹ Scholarship on these archives has revealed a wealth of information about the lives and trajectories of artists of that time and has allowed for a better understanding of the social, labor, and economic contexts in which these pieces of art were created and how art itself was understood in colonial Iberian locales.¹² Both Murúa and Poma de Ayala have been the subject of sociohistorical explorations that have provided meaningful insights into their life histories, their legal involvements in land disputes, and their intellectual practices.¹³

Looking at these two images, and with these frameworks and scholarship at hand, I considered searching for the European

engraving on which the unknown artist based the two watercolors. For example, folio 1v has similarities to an engraving of Earthly Paradise found in the *Nuremberg Chronicle*,¹⁴ and the sleeping lion it depicts probably comes from the same engraved source as the lion in Rubens's painting *Daniel in the Lions' Den*.¹⁵ Another possible approach for this analysis was to, starting from where other historians had left off, attempt to identify the creator of these two images: was it Murúa, Poma de Ayala, or—more likely—a third person who has not yet been identified?

However, I feared that neither one of these approaches would help clarify the creative, historical, and cosmographical principles and practices involved in the production of these images as part of historical treatises about the Andes's ancient history. I wanted to understand why a sixteenth-century artist would create these two images: what was this individual trying to make visible?

Entangled Archaeologies

Exploring the intellectual and artistic processes of creating these two images and the decision to include them as part of a historiographical project required me to go beyond the main existing research paths on Murúa's watercolors and instead try a comparative approach that would establish a dialogue between the images and the written historical and cosmographical corpus of the period.

By simply observing the images, it is clear to anyone who has studied the early modern Andes that folio 19r of the Getty Murúa is a representation of the Inca narrative of the Pacaritambo cave. It is, therefore, a creative effort to depict a mythological Inca narrative in a two-dimensional European style. This is not the case for folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa, which has been framed as a kind of utopian landscape in the little scholarship that exists on it.¹⁶ This interpretation is not only completely unfounded, as the idea of utopia, with its own early modern intellectual history and polemics, is in no way present in the manuscript, but it also impedes a deeper analysis of the meanings and creative practices involved in the creation of the watercolors.

Understanding the watercolors as meaningful interventions in the development of a historiographical project, I framed them within the very same conceptual principles that Murúa used: *historia*, *origen*, and *genealogía* (history, origin, and genealogy).

I began, and only as a departure point, not as a critical intervention, by defining each of these terms: history as an exploration of the events of the past, origin as a term related to the first moment in biblical history—Earthly Paradise—and genealogy as the sequence of historical figures within a particular lineage, mostly related to kingship and kingly histories.

I then analyze how the different visual pieces that compose the manuscript are related, like the text, to the development of a historiographical project based on the connections between history, origin, and genealogy.

I ultimately decided on an experimental approach in which I connected each of the images to one of these critical terms and explored the possibilities of interpreting folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa and folio 19r of the Getty Murúa as innovative historical and cosmographical visual treatises that advanced, from an early modern Andean perspective, the understanding of historical origins and historical genealogy.

Arts and Artists in the Andes

But what about the artist? What could I learn about this unnamed individual? Given the complete lack of information about the person who created these pieces, it would be irresponsible to assume that Murúa and Poma de Ayala, whose role in the making of these manuscripts has already been studied, are the authors of these pieces. With this in mind, observing the two images side by side, I considered what could be learned about the creator of these works by simply examining the objects themselves.

From a technical standpoint, it is clear that the author of these illustrations had learned the technique of watercolor painting and knew how to reuse and repurpose engravings. It is also evident that the anonymous artist not only had great technical skills but was also knowledgeable about the themes represented in the images and the ideas and narratives they were supposed to communicate. For this reason, I could only conclude that the landscape depicted in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa is not that of a highland Andean location. In this watercolor, we can see a bluish mountain range in the distance that contrasts in color and perspective with the green tones in the foreground. The perspective shows a wide distance between the landscape in the foreground, where the lonely Inca man hunts, and the highland. This is not an indeterminate Andean landscape—the artist wanted

to make sure that the piece conveyed this. At the same time, the artist also knew that, in contrast to this, folio 19r of the Getty Murúa had to be a purely Andean highland landscape and worked in a similar way to depict a mountain range, juxtaposing different types of geographical elevations.

Given that the author knew that the two landscapes depicted were to be very distinct, as they represented two different types of geography, the author probably also knew—better than anyone could nowadays—about the historical narratives of pre-Columbian Indigenous traditions involved in the development of early modern Andean historiographical projects. Being part of Murúa's artistic-historical workshop, and of the intellectual circles of the early modern Andes, this unknown author's knowledge of the ongoing historical debates, controversies, circulating contested knowledge, myths, and fictions of the time could have been parallel to that of the artist's coauthors, Murúa and Poma de Ayala.¹⁷

With this in mind, I focused on only one of the elements visible in each watercolor: the feline figure in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa—partially destroyed in the original and which I have termed *otorongo* (jaguar)—and the Pacaritambo cave in folio 19r of the Getty Murúa. Just as the author decided to locate the episode depicted in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa *away from* the highland and that of folio 19r of Getty Murúa *in* the highland, the artist also decided to include the *otorongo* and the Pacaritambo cave. I believe, then, that these efforts could have contributed to the development of the author's ideas about historical origins and historical genealogy, due to the temporal and spatial meaning the *otorongo* and the Pacaritambo cave held in the early modern Andes.

Origins in the Yunga

According to Alessandro Scafi, early modern Christians did not consider Earthly Paradise a mythological or supernatural location; rather, it was a distant place in the world—unreachable but emphatically real. It was an object of cosmographical reflection that could be described and studied through biblical sources. In other words, Paradise was understood as an earthly place.¹⁸

For early modern Christians, Earthly Paradise was the place where humanity originated and human earthly history was set in motion. However, in the early modern period, and seen from the

Americas, a place not charted in cartographies of biblical and Greek tradition, the idea of the world's "origin" was the subject of new reflections: where in the expanded world map was the place of origin, Earthly Paradise, located? How do origin narratives relate to the ancient history of the Americas? And how does this relate to the otorongo in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa?

In the early seventeenth century, the Spanish missionary Francisco de Ávila, working to extirpate Indigenous ritual practices from and impose Christianity in the central Andes, compiled a series of mythological and historical narratives from Indigenous informers with the help of a Quichua scribe in a document now known as the *Manuscrito de Huarochirí*.¹⁹ The first chapter, according to Ávila's own translation, titled *Tratado y relación de los errores, falsos dioses y otras supersticiones* (1608), mentions that in time immemorial, all landscape was a warm land called Yunga, or Andes. In early modern Quichua dictionaries, the term *Yunga* is used to refer to the people or the ecology of the Andean piedmont. According to myth, this prehistoric Yunga was moved to the Anti region of Cuzco by a supernatural entity, or *huaca*, called Pariacaca.²⁰

In the heraldic images of Murúa's and Poma de Ayala's manuscripts, the Antisuyo region, east of Cuzco, is represented by the pairing of an otorongo and a tree (fig. 3). The appearance of the otorongo in relation to the Antisuyo is repeated in many other written and visual entries of Poma de Ayala's *Nueva corónica*, such as in the history of the Inca warlord Achachi, who, according to myth, transformed himself into an otorongo in order to conquer the Anti region.²¹

The information contained within these visual and written accounts of pre-Columbian Inca history clearly relate the otorongo as a historical figure to the Antisuyo as a cosmographical location. How can we understand the appearance of the otorongo in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa? I suggest that this image represents the Yunga—indicated by the presence of the otorongo-tree pairing—and that it relates to the understanding of the Yunga as a prehistoric landscape and, thus, as a place related to the same historical ideas about Earthly Paradise in Christian thought: a land where history has its origin, and the place where history was set in motion.

With this information, I can argue that the otorongo in folio 1v of the Galvin Murúa is an iconographical element created in

the early modern Andes that relates to the historical-cosmographical meanings of the pre-Columbian myths about the Antisuyo region.

The Kings of the Cave

The myth of the Pacaritambo cave, very different from the stories related to the Yunga and the Anti, is very well known and studied in Andean tradition. According to the story, the Inca forebears—four brothers and sisters with the family name Ayar—emerged from the Pacaritambo cave, near Cuzco.²² The precise succession of events from the siblings' emergence from the cave to the foundation of Cuzco varies from version to version of the narrative. This story is so prevalent in early modern Andean written records that it has been transmitted as an uncontested overarching Inca origin myth. But it was as contested in the pre-Columbian period and the early modern period as any other narrative about a group of people gaining dominion over a territory.²³

While the Pacaritambo cave narrative has been studied as a pre-Columbian remnant of Inca mythology, I want to frame this element of the watercolor as an early modern reinvention of the myth, related not to pre-Columbian tradition but to the recent parallels that have been drawn between the Incas and kings. In debating the sovereignty of the Inca through the political theoretical framework of Western traditions, certain scholars have argued that in the early modern period Incas were essentially lords and thus deserve to be regarded as royalty. Others have rejected this notion, arguing that the Incas were tyrants and that the Spanish conquest was a just war.²⁴

The interpretation of Incas as kings was followed by the creation of a series of portraits that imagined them as ruling figures.²⁵ These portraits depicted each Inca ruler through a modern Western kingly portrayal to which certain elements of Inca culture were added: crowns, earrings, chest plates, tunics, and belts. In the early modern period, a visual genealogy of Inca kings appeared as a pictorial genre, circulating until the nineteenth century in Inca effigies, engravings, and paintings that connected them to Iberian monarchs.²⁶

The Pacaritambo cave story is a powerful mythological narrative, transmitted and settled as positive historical data and as a way to conceptualize the Incas' pre-Columbian past. Thinking

through this transmission, I would argue that the Pacaritambo cave that appears in folio 19r of the Getty Murúa also reflects the creation of a new iconographical element of this mythological narrative—one that had not been noted before in a two-dimensional Western visual disposition of elements. In this way, with the creation of this watercolor, the artist was inventing an icon for a myth, similar to those of classical and biblical traditions transmitted by engravings. Maybe more important, its presence in the watercolor reminds us that the idea of an Inca sequence of rulers is, more than anything, a myth.

Where to Go from Here?

In the paper I presented at the Sixth Annual Symposium of Latin American Art in 2021, I explored how and why a novel iconography for the Yunga and the Pacaritambo cave was being created in the early modern Andes. I argued that it was produced out of a need to create new cosmographical and historical interpretations of the world in the early modern period, when any attempt to create a global understanding of the world needed to include the Americas. Here, novel local historiographical and cosmographical experimental regimes, and their visual imaginings, appeared.

In light of this exploration, my main argument is that such novel imaginings of the world, including the creation of iconographies, brought together Western and Indigenous cultures through creative entanglements.

The next steps in this project will involve bringing together critical theory and expanding the written and visual corpus studied to see how highlighting pre-Columbian sources and creating new entangled iconographies can advance our understanding of art and historiographical creative practices in the early modern Americas. I understand that moving the field forward requires studying both visual and written sources from Indigenous and Western traditions. This scholarship must be conducted without imposing contemporary disciplinary and ethnic divides onto the studied objects, underscoring instead the richness of the cross-cultural and multimedia cultural production of the early modern Americas.

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Figures

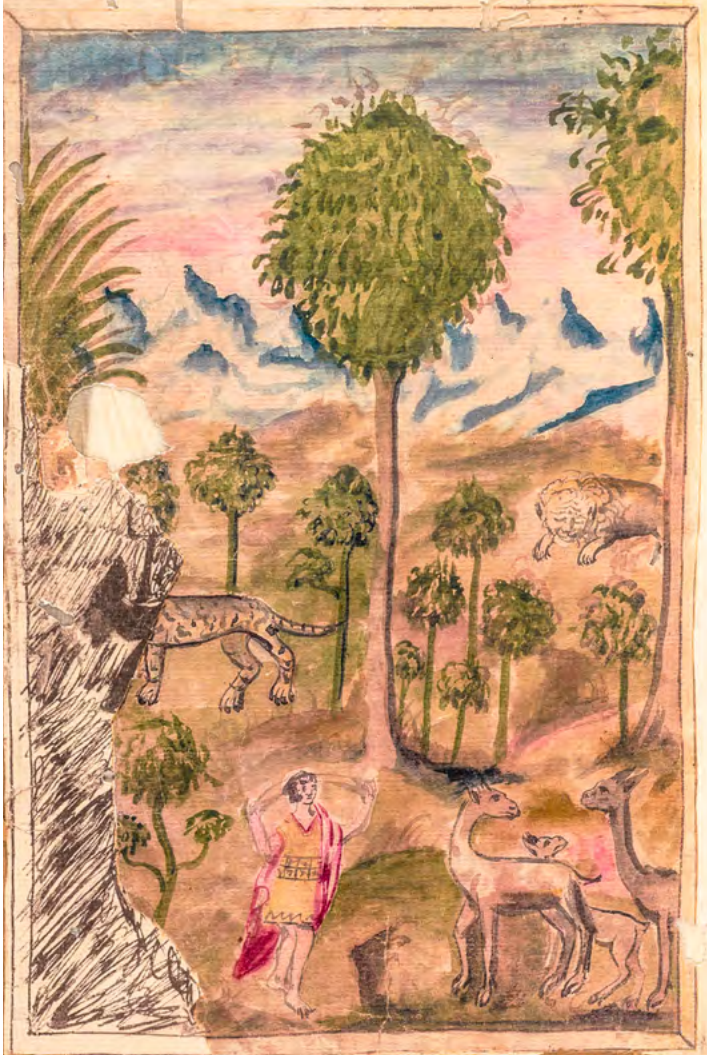


Figure 1

Martín de Murúa, folio 1v,
Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Piru, 1590
Courtesy Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University



Figure 2

Martín de Murúa, folio 19r,
Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Piru, 1590
Courtesy the J. Paul Getty Museum's Manuscripts Department



Figure 3

Martín de Murúa, folio 13r,
Historia general del Piru, 1590

Courtesy the J. Paul Getty Museum's Manuscripts Department

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