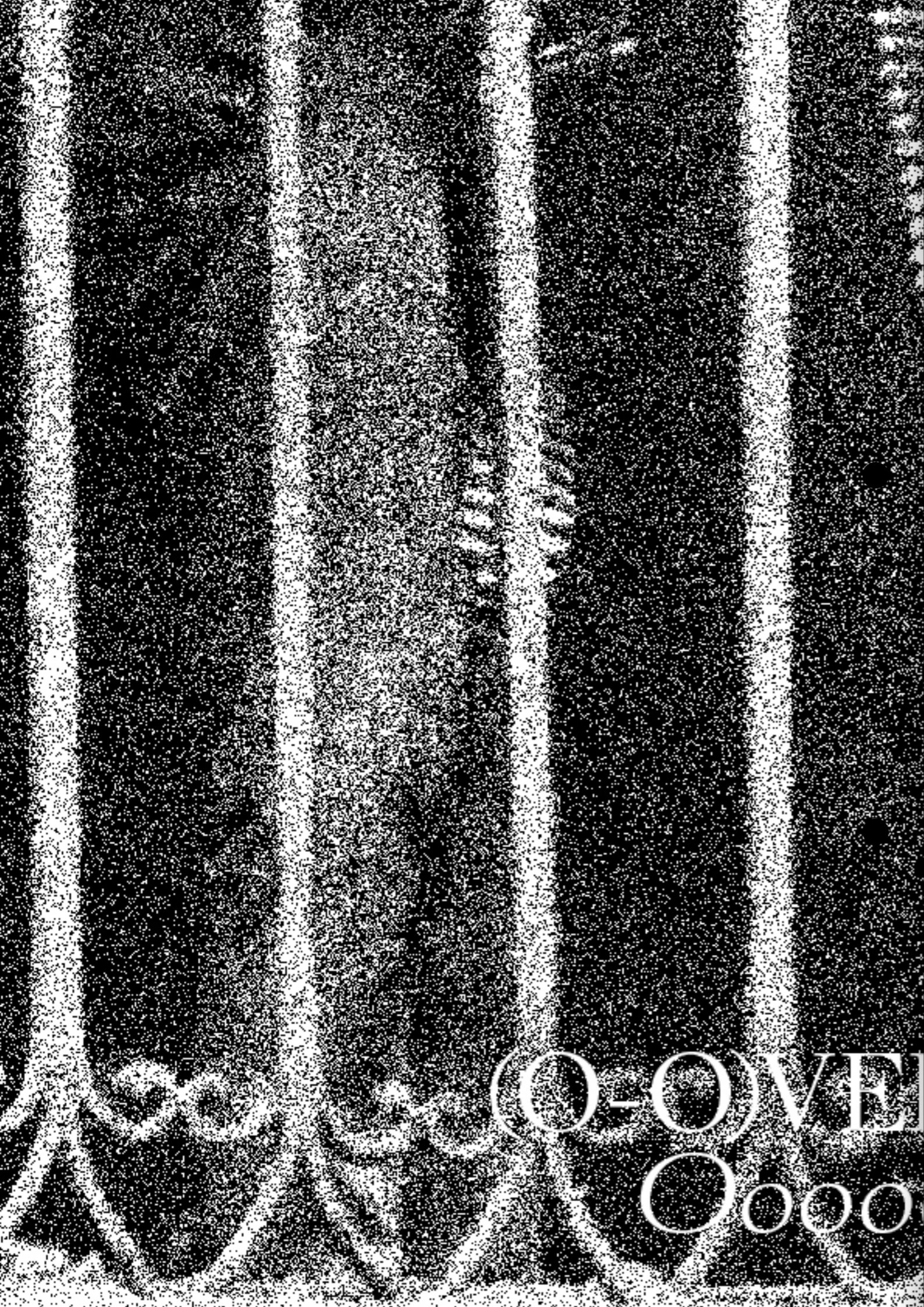


Isabella Solar Villaseca

*Memory
Marketplace*



O-OVERGADEN
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Isabella Solar Villaseca
Memory Marketplace
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Memory Marketplace

FOREWORD

With texts by, respectively, Villaseca's relatives and cultural theorists Victor Ahlén and Anneli Ström-Villaseca, the Danish-Chilean poet Sidsel Ana Welden Gajardo, and the critical thinker Nelly Richard, the body of thinking in this book expands on Villaseca's questions of inherited cultural memory (such as the dance, the rhythm), whether laid down on the horizon of the newborn baby's hands, devised by a political fugitive father, or potentially hijacked and tinkered with as described in the extract of Richard's recent book *Eruptions of Memory* (from which the exhibition title originates).

"Rhythm Is a Dancer", a 90s dance hit stated. Rhythm is also the backbone of Isabella Solar Villaseca's (b. 1992) artistic practice. Whether in her films or sculptural pieces, the work is grounded in her Chilean descent and Swedish upbringing in diasporic communities on the outskirts of Stockholm, singing and dancing to evoke the Patria lost to fascism. And rhythm—and its metaphorical cousin, dance—is the recurring catalyst of Villaseca's new series of artworks, composed for her exhibition at O—Overgaden.

In the exhibition *Memory Marketplace*, her first major institutional show, Villaseca presents a new 26-minute film; a large gymnasium-like floor with lines referring to folk dance steps; a series of fan T-shirts; and sculptural elements resembling the stadium tribune and the presidential balcony. Together, the works scrutinize the alluring, emotional catch of the Chilean protest song and folkloric beat; a type of popular music that tends to summon a certain kind of genuine bodily collectivity and kinship, but which also has a history of being used and manipulated in populist political campaigning and the media's captivating marketing.

In this publication, the exhibition's close companion, or better perhaps, its naughty offspring, these different pieces spark an associative range of words and thinking.

Rooted in this moving material, it is a pleasure to introduce this publication, putting words to Villaseca's multilayered works and their inherent rhythms. The one-year collaboration between Villaseca and O—Overgaden that has enabled her ambitious new artistic production and, not least, this publication, is made possible by O—Overgaden's INTRO program. INTRO is O—Overgaden's special, resourceful, and tailored program aimed at supporting newly graduated artists related to the Danish art scene with, among other things, travel funding and artistic, strategic, and technical advice from senior colleagues in the arts. For more than three decades O—Overgaden has premiered new artistic practices to the Danish art scene and beyond. The support from Aage and Johanne Louis-Hansen's Foundation to further develop this ambition through the INTRO program is unique. A heartfelt thank you to the Foundation, the contributors to the publication, as well as all external advisors, and of course to the team at O—Overgaden for seeing this process through. Lastly, a most grateful thank you to Isabella for taking us, always with high spirits and generosity, as if dancing, on a shocking path through the South American histories of disappearance, dictatorship, and migration, all subjects that unfortunately seem more pertinent than ever.

Rhea Dall,
Director, November 2022

0 ATACAMA

Sidsel Ana Welden Gajardo

I see the shadows so dark. See your dark face in the apartment, in the sand, feel its grains here in your couch, all the copper, all the nitre hiding in that desert you told me about so many times under a blue sky.

I see the tinge of blue. It droops over the apartment; the blue tinge of television news rests on your face there in the couch. The blue sky and the blue mountains hover above us and the white sand covers the floor. All the images we drew together of your mountains and your desert, they conceal the wall. I know exactly what the desert looks like, I've seen it myself, or no, I drew it myself so many times, I saw you paint it, hang it on the wall. We've spoken those words so many times together, mountain, sand, blue, *cerro, arena, azul*. The Atacama Desert is the driest desert in the world, and the grains of sand in this apartment, they sat under your nails, your skin, they sit under my nails now, I don't clean them, I lick them, stick the tip of my tongue under my nail, want to have my mouth filled up with sand just like yours. When you breathed through sand in the desert, when they tried to smother you with sand, dig you down among the others, but they failed so you were hidden in a basement below the sand where no one could hear you, hear any of you, hear your voices, because sand swallows every sound, it is the rug of silence, but the sand is also Santiago, Chile, you. The driest desert has accompanied us to this apartment, it isn't tied to time nor space for it is right here, it lies right here on the floor, we painted it ourselves.

Your sister says that you and your friends need to stop organizing yourself in political groups. It frightens her that you're all sitting in your cabin in the Andes Mountains making plans. Trust that socialism is here to stay and ignore the right wing demonstrating in the streets. It's always the activists who pay with their lives, you must enjoy your youth. You have such a large family. Your sister retells the myths you grew up with as bedtime stories. Even though you know they were written to scare those who wish to rebel, and even though you know they were written down to contain people's minds, you still, at the age of 19, see dwarfs with mangled faces squatting in front of your window at night, laughing. They are *brujos* and their faces can switch from a newborn's to a vampire's to the face of a loved one. Warped nails scratch the window to get a hold of you. And when you wind up in the clutches of a *brujo*, you gradually become translucent before ultimately dissolving as a human being. Only to live on as a translucent figure, shapeshifting, waking up other adolescents at night to stop them from dreaming about change. Don't you love me, she asks you, since you're willing to be taken at night. Remember how your life would look. Would you like to ooze around as white smoke in the mountains, where the only ones able to see you are the others soaring around just as lonely. Like white corpses who never find peace. You don't want that; you want to pinch your sister's cheeks and fetch herbs in the garden for a meal you can have with your family.

The Rocoto chilies beam in September. Your sister tends to them as if they were baby rabbits. The plant has finally outgrown you both. She put the seed in the ground on the morning of a quarrel, so there would be something in the garden belonging to you both, something you could gather around. Something that would drag you home from your meetings in the cabin. You learned everything about those chilies. But no one knows from where they originate. Most people think they're from Mexico, but you're certain they emerged from Chile. The Rocoto chili isn't as elongated as most chilies. It is round, one of the spiciest species, the apple of hell. Its seeds are black and hard, you can rustle the fruit like a wild maraca. It's a special chili, when you slice it open its skin unravels as fine threads of silk and its leaves are entangled in a purple web of cotton-like down. The purple shines as neon in September. That's how you know they're ripe.

You take turns every night. The band-aids take turns. You, your sister, your mother. You're all holding your father's hand when he comes home. At the same chair in the kitchen where he leans back exhausted, letting his arms fall down heavily along his sides. You take his hand in yours and cut out the white band-aids. Fluid and remnants of blood from the cuts are oozing out. They never get to heal before a new one comes the next day. You imagine the pain he endures every day at the factory, but that he never takes home with him. Only the small cuts are frothing mouths, gossiping about his agony. The filth and the oil and the fat. You see how some of the smudges have been there for weeks, settled in the next layer of skin where it can no longer be washed off. But the cuts and the filth are better than the mine, it's better than living one hundred meters below the desert's surface. You know that.

Every day you return to the streets. The palace debris is luring you; it lies like weapons at your feet. Throwing rocks, throwing your bodies, that's the only resistance you can offer. Violence drapes around you, violence twists your arms and forces your bodies to the ground. Face in the dust, you gaze meets the eye of your friend, he lies at your left, you hold on to his gaze as hard as the military's knack around your body. You scream. Your voice is the workers'. If only you could fall asleep. Block out the sound from the streets. Violence has its own sound. Violence vibrates, makes the earth tremble, the chest, the stomach, the organs. If only you could use the asphalt as a pillow, allow sleep to take you and hold on to you until it has all passed. This is one of many days where you nearly die, where you don't get to run. Someone takes you with them.

The Andes Mountains lie black and helpless on the horizon. They are voices of stone that lost the ability to yell.

You promise your mom to come home for dinner. But every day you grow more impatient. Every day more people come. You've become an adult along with the possibility of revolt. You and your friends don't need to obey your parents anymore. You can run for other things than meat and milk for dinner, you no longer need to live beneath the sand to mine copper, you don't have time for that, you can plan your generation's future, you will improve so the military doesn't rob you of power. You have your hideout in the mountains and there you will never be found. Your parents look at the empty seats around the dinner table, but you belong somewhere else now. In the new unions, as cries in the streets and bodies in a mass. You admire your parents for their hard work, but it's their toil that made you aware, that you don't want to work with oil and live the rest of your life with wounded hands.

The earth doesn't give away war secrets, it doesn't assist in remembering the killings, all the bodies it has received. Bodies dissolve and traces are removed, you knock an axe into the old tree, it can live three times your life span. You scratch your names into it, you scratch 1973, you slash a piece of the tree, turn your names into scars, you're desperate for something permanent. You scratch your skin on the wooden splinter till you bleed. It's a way of becoming a part of the tree, to remain standing when your body is gone, a monument able to live long after you, who can tell coming generations about all the killings. That you existed. Nature is so beautiful, it hurts to see how flowers offer themselves as decorations for your graves, and suicide tempts once again.

The memory of their bodies will make you a living dead. It is an unworthy way of surviving. Carrying someone's memory is not always beautiful.

Your native country is fumbling to make me its habitat. I have inherited the quivering earth of Chile. I shake in every movement, the duvet quivers as I pull it over me in your bed. For you are a forced emigrant. The world doesn't exist on the map. And you didn't leave the language in my mouth. You die in exile.

BETWEEN THE IMAGES RESTS A HORIZON

Victor Ahlén & Anneli Ström-Villaseca

In a scene from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, the rebel Vakulinchuk was fatally shot by the military, his body later recovered by his comrades. In the film the sailors carry his corpse to its final resting ground. His body continues to move despite its inanimate state, and despite the violence that tried to prevent its progress.

The central imagery of this scene, central to the film, illuminates two crucial aspects of the moving picture's essence: movements and memories in the form of snapshots, captured by the camera via the light. Each frame is a past *now* and, through movement, the frames are able to create a dialogue between them. Images as moments, created for remembering. Or maybe not to be "remembered". The camera is a memory technology, capable of reproducing several representations of *then* and *there*. The images are not about a personal memory, but a reference to an ever-changing now. Everything we see that creates these images is there. Regardless of this passing moment, they stay the same. Should they be considered as a witness that doesn't pass through time, but stands outside of it? Or is the whole image in its entirety created by time? The best way to describe it would be, as Walter Benjamin puts it, as resembling a lightning strike. What he meant is that a *then* does not shed light on the *now*, while time does not shine a light on the past. In the blink of an eye, there exists what has been and what is, forming a dialectical constellation. But for Benjamin it was not about the actual images and photographs, but almost about joint performances of the past—performance that retains its plasticity in its relation to the past and dependent on the present. The synthesis in between therefore becomes what we perceive. Regardless of what the images depict, whether they refer to a collective worldview or an actual photograph and fragment of an event, it is always constituted by the *present* and the *past*. But in between, the horizon looms.

The film starts and a past collides with a present. Images of vulnerable bodies that resist are immortalized through the film. The film immortalizes images of mutilated bodies that are allowed to mourn. The moving images urge us to remember together. Images that find their way into our society's collective consciousness, to tell the stories of bodies that have been bloodied for believing that a different world was possible—where they could glimpse the horizon.

A scene: A woman dances alone in Chile with a picture of Estádio Nacional in her hand. We are watching archive footage from a television broadcast. The year is 1990, and the woman we see in the front is dancing Cueca Sola, a traditional folk dance that is usually performed by a couple, but she performs it alone. The imagery shows who she is missing, abducted under the military dictator in Chile. The photograph, the film, and the moving imagery; if Benjamin likened it to lightning, here is a kind of electrical storm. The moving imagery and photograph, each referring to different points in time, ask us to dig into our past.

The film starts. Through the camera lens, I view my newborn baby. His fingers carefully tighten around my index finger. We can almost see, in real-time, how that small hand grows before our eyes. Surely that is how it all began—with hands. She stood up and freed those hands for work. The hands that picked up the newborn body, that touched the earth, and now are holding the camera. Thousands of pictures passed through those newborn hands. I see those hands reach through decades, centuries, and millennia. Hands that have worked and grown exhausted, in fists bearing the standards.

Hands that were mutilated in Estádio Chile; exiled, though unable to forget. Hands with far too short nails, reaching for new possibilities. Through the camera's lens, I view the hand of my newborn baby, folding out into an endless horizon.

We are reminded that there existed a Chile before the coup, along with all who disappeared under the dictator's rule, as well as a future in which Pinochet has played out his role.

The archive material itself tells the story of rebellion: a body that resists simply through dance. The images break forth from their layers, not only of time, but of memories of bodies that once upon a time moved with vitality. The lack of a dance partner shines a light on the emptiness: "Look, I existed!" We are prompted to remember how the dance is supposed to look. It becomes a physical manifestation of what Judith Butler described as being decisive of whether someone can be mourned or not; namely, that society is affected by the single individual's death. It is therefore not only about the collision of a past and a present, but also of a haunting. Jacques Derrida spoke about the "dislocation" of time by referring to Hamlet, describing an experience of something that was not right; phantoms reveal themselves and time slips out of order.

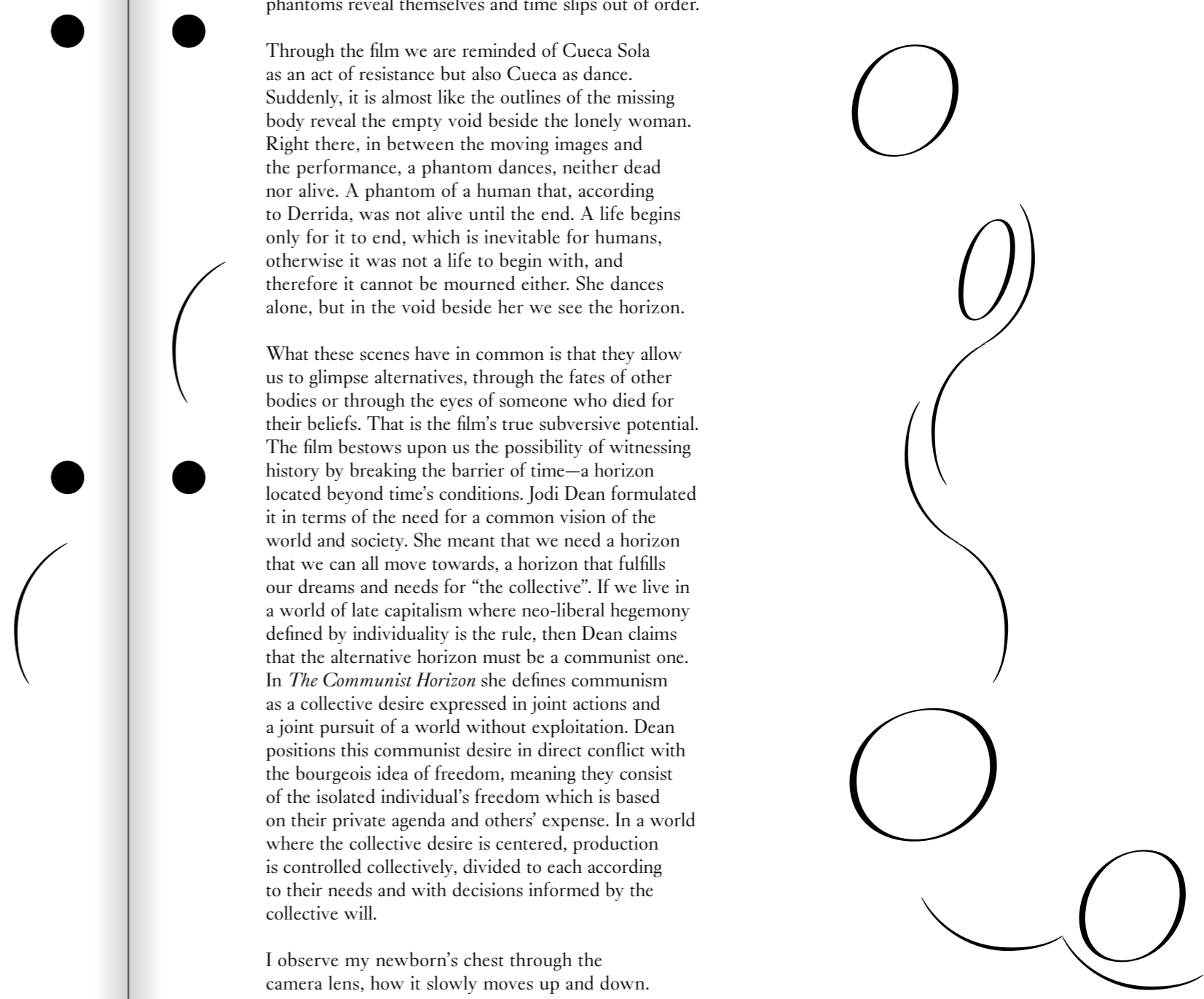
Through the film we are reminded of Cueca Sola as an act of resistance but also Cueca as dance. Suddenly, it is almost like the outlines of the missing body reveal the empty void beside the lonely woman. Right there, in between the moving images and the performance, a phantom dances, neither dead nor alive. A phantom of a human that, according to Derrida, was not alive until the end. A life begins only for it to end, which is inevitable for humans, otherwise it was not a life to begin with, and therefore it cannot be mourned either. She dances alone, but in the void beside her we see the horizon.

What these scenes have in common is that they allow us to glimpse alternatives, through the fates of other bodies or through the eyes of someone who died for their beliefs. That is the film's true subversive potential. The film bestows upon us the possibility of witnessing history by breaking the barrier of time—a horizon located beyond time's conditions. Jodi Dean formulated it in terms of the need for a common vision of the world and society. She meant that we need a horizon that we can all move towards, a horizon that fulfills our dreams and needs for "the collective". If we live in a world of late capitalism where neo-liberal hegemony defined by individuality is the rule, then Dean claims that the alternative horizon must be a communist one. In *The Communist Horizon* she defines communism as a collective desire expressed in joint actions and a joint pursuit of a world without exploitation. Dean positions this communist desire in direct conflict with the bourgeois idea of freedom, meaning they consist of the isolated individual's freedom which is based on their private agenda and others' expense. In a world where the collective desire is centered, production is controlled collectively, divided to each according to their needs and with decisions informed by the collective will.

I observe my newborn's chest through the camera lens, how it slowly moves up and down.

Thousands of pictures pass through my eyes. The sailors carry Vakulinchuk toward his final resting place. His body continued to move despite it being lifeless and despite the violence that tried to hinder its progress. It continues to move, not least when the film ends, and the image of his comrades' hands carry his body into our collective memory. The film defends itself in relation to time, breaking free and demanding our attention.

If the film took a form it would be that of a hand—a hand that reaches through decades, centuries, millennia. It should be the hand that unfolds, like the horizon, and reminds us of what it means to be a human, and witnesses the possibility of a different world. If it was a hand then it would be a fist, a hand that strokes a lover's cheek, that holds a newborn, that touched the earth, that bit nails too short, that holds on tightly to mine when I don't dare to look.



TRACES OF VIOLENCE, RHETORIC OF CONSENSUS, AND SUBJECTIVE DISLOCATIONS

Nelly Richard

The first governmental administration of Chile's Transition to democracy (led by Patricio Aylwin in 1990) constructed itself on a consensus-based model of a "democracy of agreements." This model signaled a shift from politics as antagonism (the drama of the conflict was exacerbated by the polarizing confrontation between the dictatorship and its opponents) to politics as transition (the formation of agreements and the technicalities of negotiations conducted by new institutional authorities and the entrenched powers that remained hidden in the shadows, continuing to block the path toward democratic recovery).¹ The "democracy of agreements" made consensus its normative guarantee, its operational code, its de-ideologizing ideology, its institutional rite, and its discursive victory. What kind of excesses did this new rhetoric of consensus seek to control by attempting to force unanimity, through formally and technologically rationalized democratic agreements, onto the voices of those who fought against the dictatorship? Excessive vocabularies (the dangerous riot of words disseminating heterodox meanings in order to name the hidden/repressed that trespasses into the networks of official discourse); excessive bodies and experiences (the discordant modes in which social subjectivities break the identifying lines drawn by political scripts or advertising spots); excessive remembrances (the tumultuous reinterpretations of a past full of aspirations and defeats – of Unidad Popular [Popular Unity] and the military coup of 1973 – that keep the memory of this history open to an incessant struggle of readings and meanings).

MEMORY AND DISAFFECTION

The recuperation and normalization of the democratic order in Chile was an attempt to exorcise the ghosts of the multiple ruptures and dislocations of life produced by the coup and the military dictatorship, employing the consensus method to neutralize the differentiating counterpoints, antagonistic postures, and polemical demarcations of conflicting meanings through a politico-institutional pluralism that assumes a noncontradictory diversity. This non-conflictive diversity is a passive sum of differences that are almost indifferently juxtaposed, and it avoids any confrontation between these differences so as to forestall any disruption of a neutral reconciliation of opposites. The terms pluralism and consensus were summoned by the architects of the democratic transition to represent a new society in which the official channels of expression only bothered to honor diversity when it was in line with the Transition's carefully calculated agreements, thus avoiding any attempt to reckon with the ideological conflicts of the past. Consensus, the paradigm of political legitimacy, was established in order to normalize the heterogeneous plurality of the social. This was a model that disciplined antagonisms and confrontations and established rules designed to protect macro-institutional agreements. The Transition's official consensus excluded from its national protocol the memory of conflicts that took as their basis and passion the internal struggle around the meaning of the "transition to democracy," apparently forgetting that all supposedly neutral social objectivity is a threatened objectivity. It "necessarily presupposes the repression of that which is excluded by its establishment."²

The Transition's official discourse disregarded the negative force of the excluded and prevented the polemical and controversial vitality of the repressed from disturbing the limits of normalized politics. To avoid impeding the regulation of the pre-established connections between memory, violence, and democracy, the Transition suppressed from its repertoire of accepted meanings the inconvenient memory of what preceded and exceeded the politico-institutional consensus. Claiming that "consensus is the highest stage of forgetting," Tomás Moulian alludes to the "whitewashing" that, during the Transition, began to sweep away sharp contradictions about the historical value of the past and to smooth over disagreements about the objectives of a transitional present in which "politics no longer exists as a struggle of alternatives, as historicity." During the Transition, politics functioned instead as a "history of small variations, adjustments, changes in aspects that do not compromise the global dynamic."³

[...]

The Transition-era administrations followed a consensus-oriented script that turned memory into a solemn yet almost painless citation.

Their evocation of memory failed to mention all the material injury of the past: its psychic density, its experiential volume, its affective trace, and its scarred backgrounds, the pain of which is diminished neither by the merely compulsory method of the judicial process nor by official memorial plaques. Public discourse during the Transition attempted to pay off its debts to the past formally without expressing too much regret, almost without reflecting at all on the repulsiveness, torture, hostility, and resentment that continue to rip apart living subjects. Like many words that are intended to circulate innocently – without weight or gravity – throughout the communicative pathways of media saturated politics, the word "memory" seems to have erased from its public expression the intolerable, antisocial memory of the nightmare that tortured and persecuted subjects during the dictatorship.⁴ The word "memory," thus recited by the mechanized speech of consensus, subjected the memory of the victims to yet another outrage, once again making them insignificant by allowing their names to be spoken in a language weakened through official routines that had previously guarded these identities from any investigations into the convulsions and fractures of history.

[...]

BIOGRAPHICAL RUPTURES, NARRATIVE DISARTICULATIONS

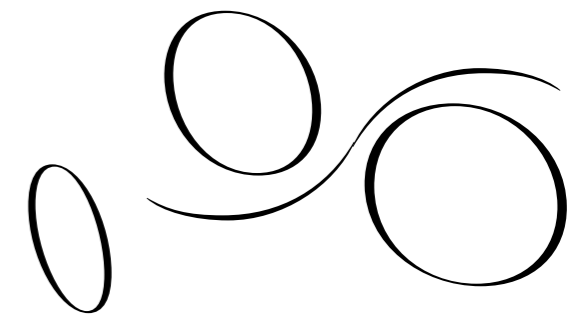
The experience of the post-dictatorship binds the social body's individual and collective memories to figures of absence, loss, suppression, and disappearance. These figures are surrounded by the shadows of a suspended, unfinished, and tense mourning that leaves the subject and the object in a state of sorrow and uncertainty, ceaselessly wandering around that which is inaccessible in the body, as well as around the truth that both the subject and the object lack (it is absent) and need (they miss it). In the most brutally sacrificial dimension of violence, the bodies of the missing are evoked by absence, loss, suppression, and disappearance.

[...]

During the Transition, extremism became part of the regime of the flat substitutability of signs with which (in the name of evaluative relativism) neoliberal society de-emphasized the desire and passion for change.⁵ Whatever the painful motive for this renunciation may be, the post-dictatorial condition is expressed as the "loss of an object" in a situation marked by "mourning"⁶: psychical blockages, libidinal withdrawals, affective paralyses, inhibitions of will and desire in the face of the sense of having lost something unrecoverable (body, truth, ideology, representation). Post-dictatorship thought, as Alberto Moreiras argues, is "more suffering than celebratory" because, "like the mourning that must fundamentally both assimilate and expel, thought attempts to assimilate the past, seeking to reconstitute itself, reform itself, following lines of identity with its own past; but it also tries to expel its dead body, to eliminate its tortured corruption."⁷

This melancholic dilemma between "assimilation" (remembering) and "expulsion" (forgetting) marked the post-dictatorial horizon with narratives split between silence (the lack of speech connected to the stupor resulting from a series of unassimilable changes to the subject's continuity of experience due to the velocity and magnitude of these changes) and overexcitation (compulsive gestures that use artificially exaggerated rhythms and signals to combat the tendency toward depression). At one extreme we find biographies imprisoned by the sadness of an unmovable memory in its morbid fixity, and, at the other extreme, light stories that emerge hysterically through the over-agitation of the quick and the fleeting in order to achieve trivial media recognition. From silence to over-excitation; from bewildered suffering to the spoken simulation of a supposedly recovered normality: these responses to tragic memory reveal, consciously or unconsciously, the problematic status of historical memory in the post-dictatorship era. It is a memory that must avoid both the nostalgic petrification of yesterday in the repetition of the same and the marketed choreography of diversity that exhausts itself in futile variations on the novelty of change.

[...]



1. The numerous difficulties of investigating the mistrust between institutional, military, and present power structures are described in detail in various parts of Ascanio Cavallo's *La historia oculta de la transición* (11, 19, 29, 38).

2. "[A]ny objectivity is a threatened objectivity. If, in spite of this, an objectivity manages to partially affirm itself, it is only by repressing that which threatens it. To study the conditions of existence of a given social identity, then, is to study the power mechanisms making it possible." Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 31–32.

3. Moulian, *Chile actual*, 37, 39.

4. Nicolás Casullo, "Una temporada en las palabras," 17.

5. The AFDD remarked: "It is sad and a terrible mediocrity to renounce these absolute values for other relative ones." *Recuento de Actividades 1992*, 148.

6. & 7. Moreiras, "Postdictadura y reforma del pensamiento," 27.

The mythologization of the historical past as a symbol of the purity and untaintedness of political ideals led to the victims' sanctification. This attempt to redress the paucity of heroic examples in a present devoid of any protest thereby surrenders to the pragmatism of actions with no interest in moral rebellion. During the dictatorship, the weakening of that universe of clearly defined meaning through stark oppositions between officialdom and dissidence locked in a tragic battle disastrously resulted in an abhorrence of all utopianism. Hence the post-dictatorship subject's melancholic-depressive symptom, which leaves her sadly submerged in decay, in the silence and inaction of retreat, without the vital stimuli for articulating responses to senseless threats. Lost was the historical macro-referentiality of polarized, oppositional struggle and the relativist fragmentation of the values characteristic of the post-dictatorship horizon. Some experienced this as a liberating downfall of totalizing truths that broke with an oppressive ideological creed and its doctrinaire hierarchy. However, in the biographies of militants these ruptures were rendered in a particularly vivid way as a panicked disorientation in the face of the explosion of the interpretative coordinates that had once ordered their visions of the world according to the univocal contours of homogeneous centralities and totalities. They were left without any certainty of identity or belonging.

[...]

The official Chilean transition to democracy made use of society's discomfort with memory and the self-censorship with which its protagonists severed the ties between "before" and "after." This protected the immediate present from any charge of infidelity or incoherence. Taking advantage of a tersely circumscribed here and now without historical connections, the Transition saturated this present with the fleeting and transitory disengagement of immediate rhythms and virtues so that history would be definitively forgotten. Likewise, instantaneity and momentariness are the frivolous means with which the Transition's novelty disguised the temporary ambivalence of its game of masks between the present of democratic reopening and the past of military authoritarianism. The first Transition administration may have signaled its estrangement from and rupture with the antagonistic world of the dictatorship, but its neoliberal democracy was entirely complicit with the hegemony of the market. This guaranteed the continuation of the military regime's modernizing policies, considered successful by several converts. Put differently: in the present, the Transition had to emphasize the political and democratic "novelty" of its "discourse of change" in order to silence the non-new (the inherited) of the economic and military forms extending from the dictatorial past. Obscured by the Transition, this perversion of temporalities indistinguishably mixed continuity and rupture. This took the form of incessant self-affirmation as actuality: the exhibitionist pose of a truncated past-present.

THE PRESENCE OF THE MEMORY OF ABSENCE

Tracing, unearthing, exhuming the remnants of the past: these are the actions that human rights groups have ceaselessly carried out, defying the sinister intelligence of a power that erased the evidence (the remains) of its criminality in order to prevent any kind of material verification of its actions. Tracing, unearthing, exhuming: these all mark the desire to make the missing pieces of bodies and truths reappear, to bring together archival evidence, documents, and testimonies that will once and for all finish what justice has left incomplete. The remains of the disappeared and the remains of the past that has disappeared must first be discovered (dis-covered) and then assimilated. This is to say, they must be reinserted into a biographical and historical narrative that admits loss and weaves around its restorative coexistences of meanings. In order to unblock the memory of the past that pain or guilt has encrypted in a sealed temporality, we must liberate diverse interpretations of history. The unstable temporality of their multiple, disconnected fragments can demonstrate new versions and rewritings of what took place. The event is thereby relocated in unexpected networks of historical intelligibility. Thus, it is not a matter of turning our attention back toward the dictatorship in order to record a contemplative image of what was suffered and resisted. It is not a mythical recollection, but rather a reopening of fissures in the blockages of meaning which history can consider neither finite nor definitive.

The memory of the wounded past is most dramatically conjugated in the double hybrid narrative of the disappeared and their families who struggle against the absence of their bodies and thus must incessantly produce the social appearance of the memory of disappearance in a fragile story that is always under the threat of invalidation. Faced with the body's absence, the recollection of identity is prolonged by the story's symbolic construction. This keeps the memory of the missing person alive, ensuring that they do not "disappear" again by being forgotten. "The suffering of memory is used to give life to death."⁸ It is thus a matter "of life or death" that the families' recollections of the victims endure. Their determined obsessiveness cannot be dissuaded from repeating the charges against the perpetrators, so as to concede nothing to oblivion. Hence the indefatigable recollection of the traumatic event, which reiterates loss, re-marks it, thus contradicting (through saturation) the absence of any trace of the social and political mechanism of disappearance that facilitated the material suppression of bodies. Hence, as well, the multiplication of symbolic acts of remembrance by the victims' families that redefine memory against the indeterminacy of uncertain death.

[...]

Truth is separated from justice in a declared disconnection from ethical claims about perpetrators.

Those who have been identified should not benefit a second time from the same perverse operation: the concealment of identities and the evasion of responsibilities. In addition, secret associations are woven between business agreements and networks of convenience by the dissipated forms of forgetting produced daily by mass media. Neither memory nor its suppression will be noticed in the midst of so many fine, invisible forms of censorship restricting and distorting the fields of vision and knowledge. The victims' families know the difficulty of keeping the memory of the past alive and conscientious when all the rituals of consumerism conspire to distract it. Hence the interminable list of declarations, acts, and notices that the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos [Association of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees] (AFDD) regularly publishes in its annual "Summary of Activities." Hence the documentation of the neurotic tasks that multiply along the path toward truth and justice, which victims' families attempt to reconstruct in their anxious, daily production signals and objective messages that substitute for and fill the subjective void of the disappeared's absence.

The memory of "Where are they?" can no longer find a place in a landscape devoid of intensive narratives or vocal dramatizations. Germán Bravo has reflected on this drama's immateriality in relation both to the AFDD testimonies and to the difficulty of inscribing this problematic of memory in Transition-era Chile. It seems these cries can only be heard as "a boring chant, a chant that has now lost all sound, all change in tone, a name ... confronting the stature of time with only the force of its repetition. The infinite repetition of an intolerable name. Of a name that has become inexpressible and inaudible."⁹ The AFDD argues that "justice is non-negotiable." This is to say, "the pain of each and every one of us cannot be quantified." The experience of pain would thus be unquantifiable, irreducible to the market's law of exchangeability, a law designed to flatten qualities and properties so that they can be more easily converted to the neutral regime of equivalence of the commodity form and the sign. However, how can the value of experience (the lived material of the singular and the contingent, the testifiable) be demonstrated if the lines of force of consensus and the market have standardized subjectivity and technologized speech to the extent that it is increasingly difficult for the irreducible singularity of historical events to interrupt the passive uniformity of the passing of time? Where can the most terrifying aspects of memory be recorded if hardly any surfaces remain for the inscription of memory, for the relocation of meaning, and for saving it from the crudeness, maliciousness, and indifference of ordinary communication?

Excerpt from Nelly Richards, *Eruptions of Memory*,
Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018
(originally published by Argentinian publisher EDUVIM in 2007)

8. & 9. Bravo, *4 ensayos y un poema*, 25.

O—OVERGADEN
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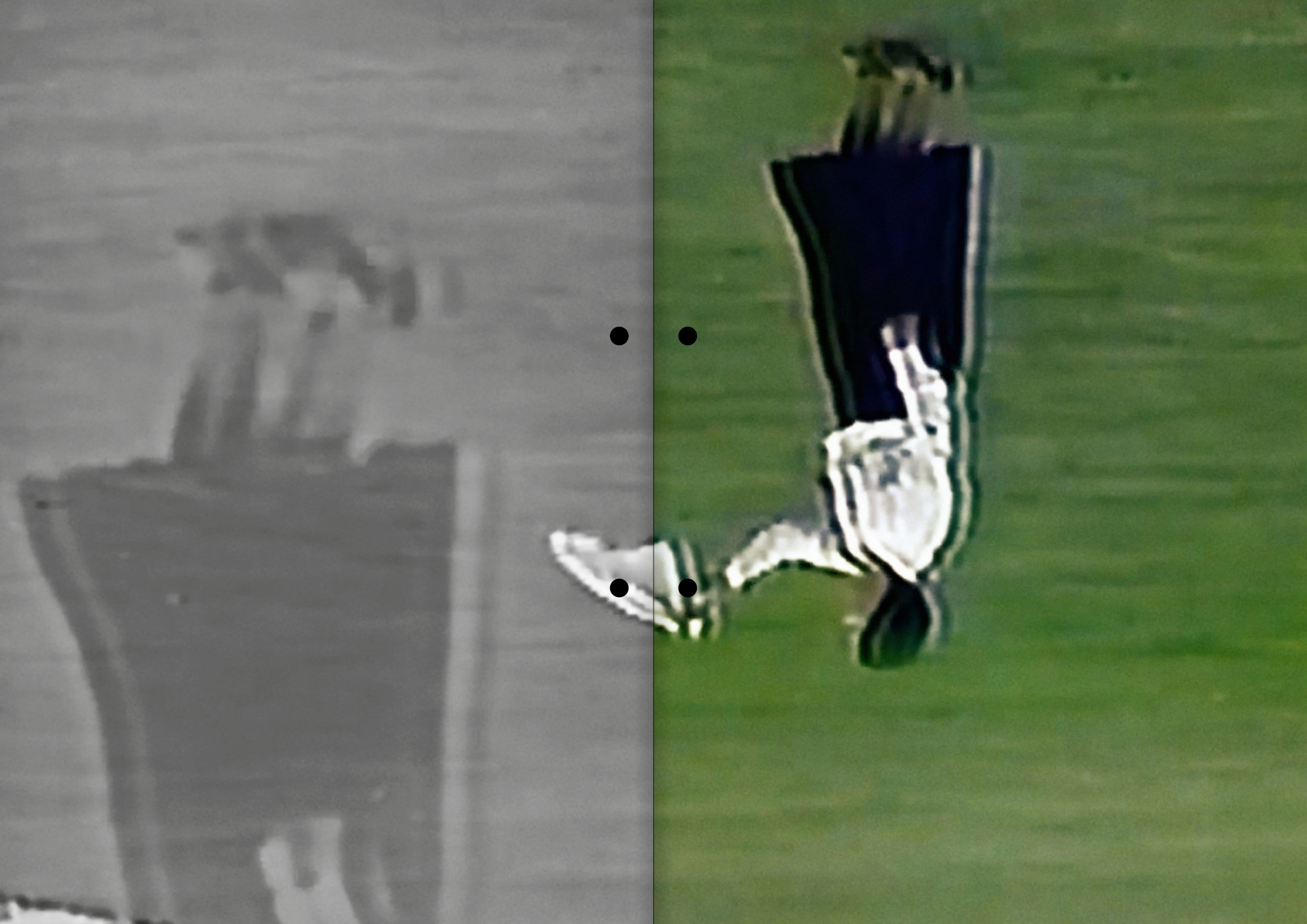
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Its only purpose is to gain money
and nothing more.







Chicago boys



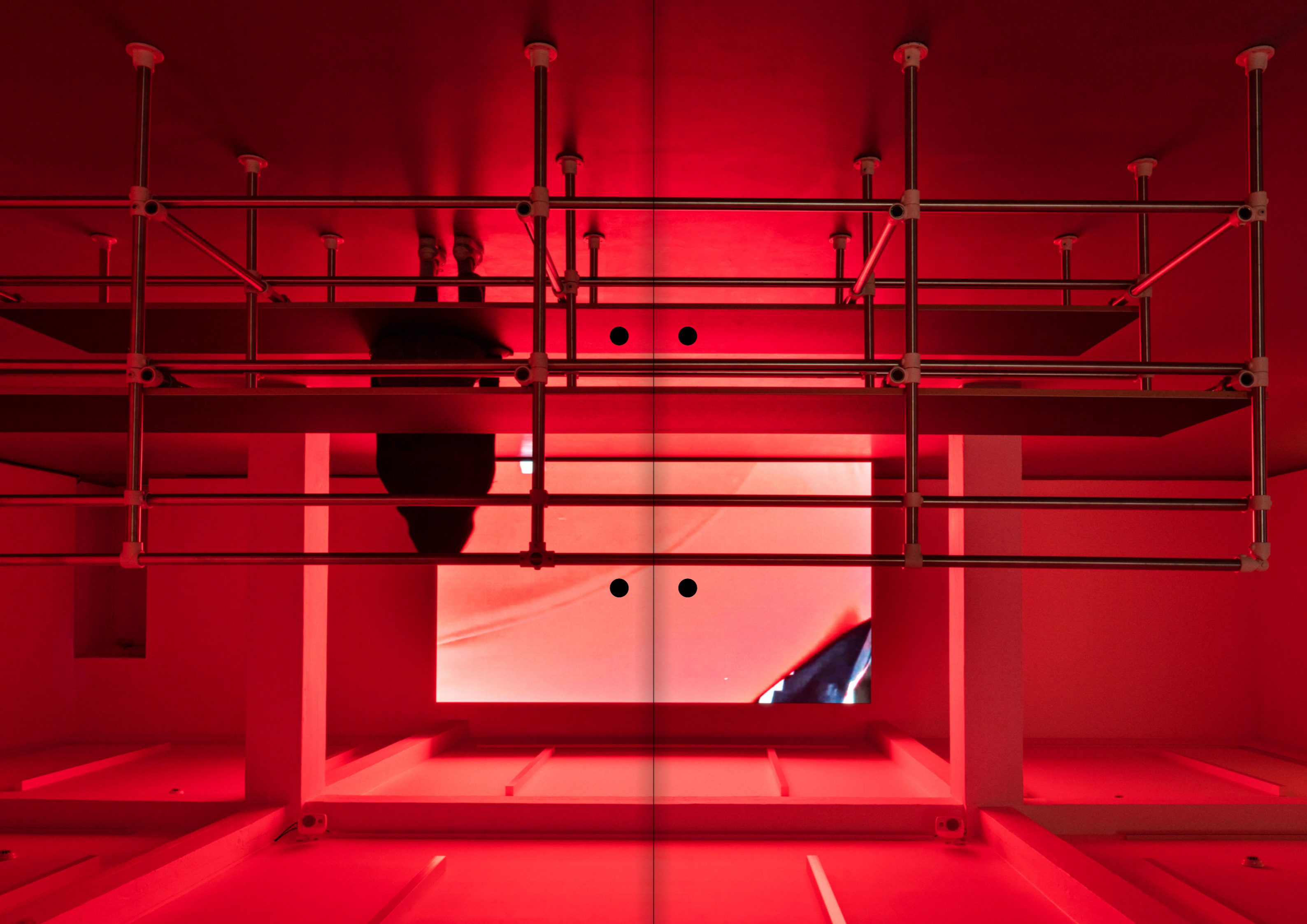
Salvador Allende

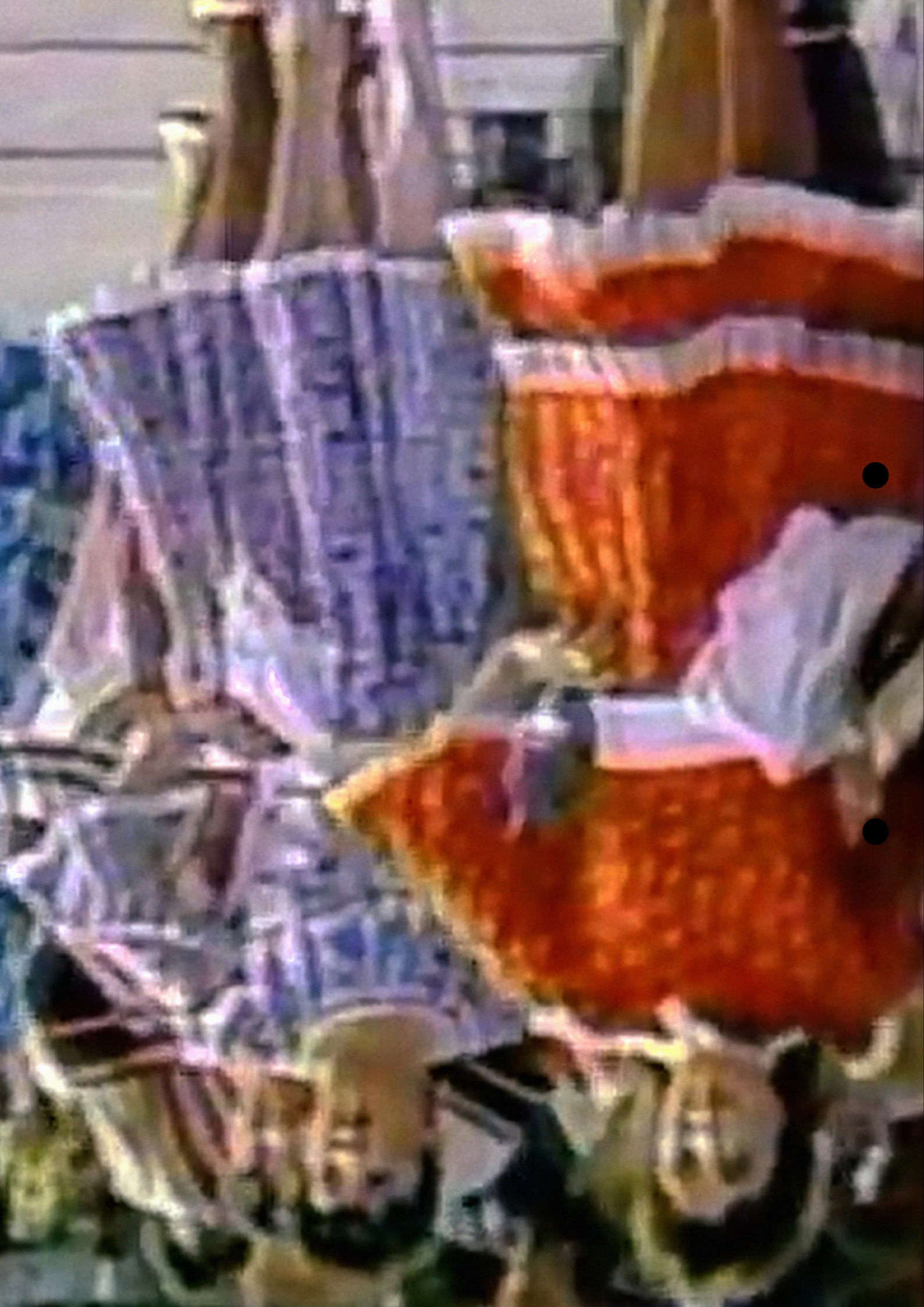


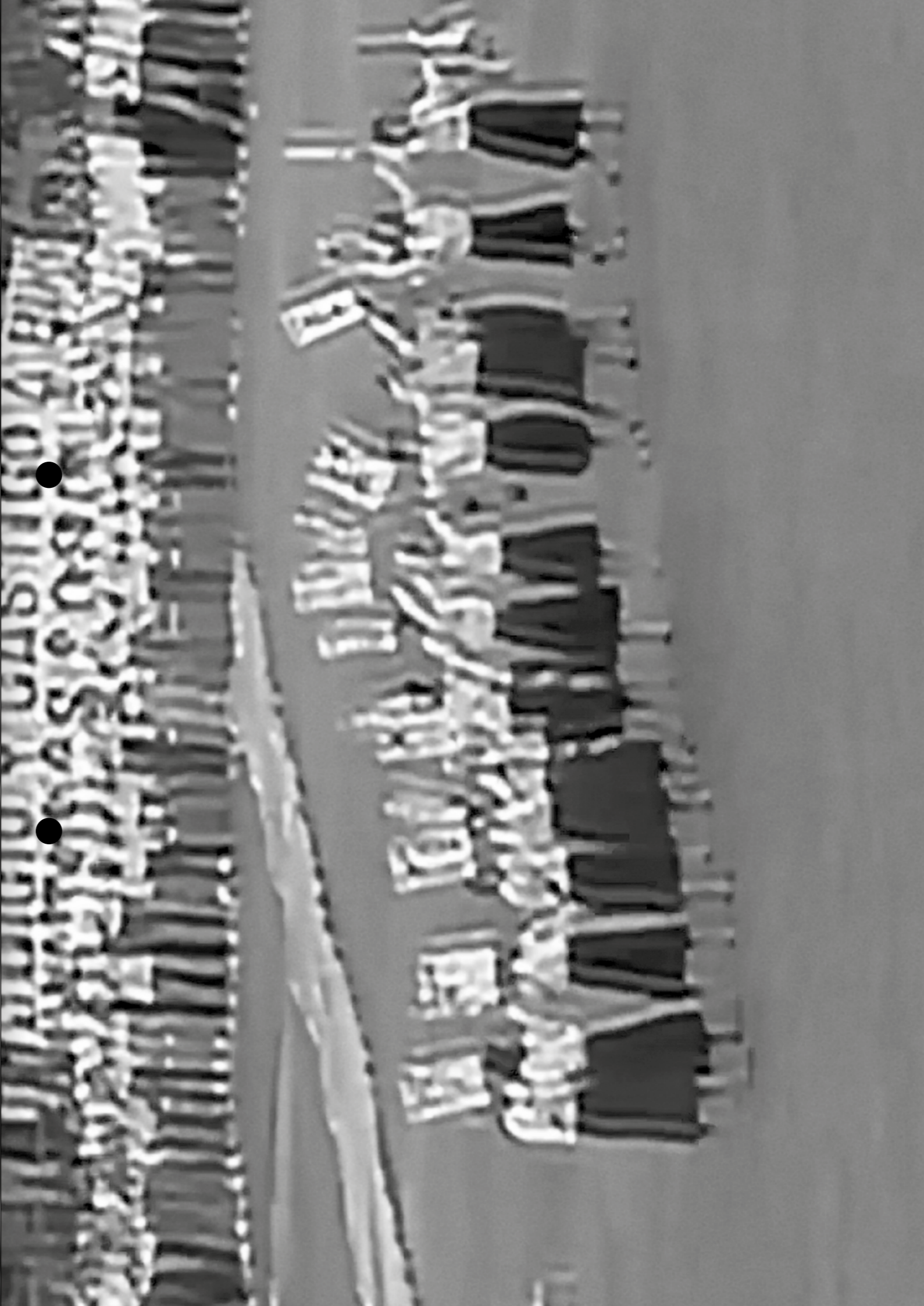
Augusto Pinochet



Coup d'etat











Victor Ahlén & Anneli Ström-Villasca

MELLAN BILDERNA VILAR EN HORISONT

Filmen börjar. Genom kameran betraktar jag mitt nyfödda barn. Hans fingrar kramar förskitigt åt mitt pekfinger. Vi kan nästan se i realtid hur den lilla handen växer för våra ögon. Och visst måste det ha varit så det började. Med händerna. Hon som en gång reste sig och därmed fick händerna fria att arbeta. Händerna som sedan tog emot den nyfödda kroppen. Som vidrörde jorden. Och nu, handen som håller kameran. Tusentals bilder passerar genom den nyföddas hand. Jag ser handen som sträcker sig genom decennierna, seklen, årtusendena. Det är händerna som arbetat och förbrukats. De knutta nävarna, fanbärarna. Händerna som styrpades i Estadio Chile. Som gick i exil, som aldrig skulle glömma. Händerna med alldeles för korta naglar som sträcker sig mot något annat som är möjligt. Genom kameran betraktar jag mitt nyfödda barns händer och de vecklar ut sig likt en ändlös horisont. I en scen ur *Pansarkrysaren Potemkin* skjuts uppfrontskaren Vakulinchuk till döds av militär för att sedan plöckas upp av sina kamrater. I Sergj Eisensteins film för matroserna sedan Vakulinchuk mot hans sista vila. Hans kropp fortsätter röra sig trots dess livlösa tillstånd och trots det våld som försökt förhindra dess framfart. Bilderna ur den, för filmen, centrala scenen belyser två avgörande aspekter av den rörliga bildens själva väsen: rörelse och minnen i form av ögonblicksbilder. Fångade av kameran genom ljuset. Varje enskild bild är en bit av ett förflutet *nu* och med rörelsen sätts de i dialog med varandra. Bilder som ögonblick, skapade för att minnas. Eller kanske inte "minnas." Kameran är en minnestecknologi kapabel att reproducera åskiftliga representationer av särskilt *där* och *da*.

Det handlar inte om ett personligt minne men en referens för ett hela tiden föränderligt nu. Vad vi ser i bilderna som utgör filmen är där oberoende av det specifika nuet, de förblir densamma. Bör de i och med detta betraktas som ett vitne som inte färdas genom tiden men som står utanför den? Eller är det så att bilden helt och hållet utgörs av tiden? Möjligtvis är det enklast att, som Walter Benjamin, likna det vid bixnedslag. Han menar att ett *da* kastar inte ljus på ett *nu* och en samtid skänker inte ljus åt ett förflutet. Genom ett ögonblick existerar det som varit i det som är och bildar en dialektisk konstellation. För Benjamin handlar detta så klart inte bara om *faktiska* bilder och fotografier utan kanske snarare gemensamma föreställningar om ett *da*. Föreställningar som förblir plastiska i relation till ett förflutet och hela tiden beroende av nuet. Synnesen blir följaktligen vad vi uppfattar finns därmedellan. Oavsett vad bilden föreställer, vare sig dem refererar till en kollektiv världsbild eller ett faktiskt fotografi och fragment av ett skenande, konstitueras den alltid av ett *nu* och ett *da*. Men däremellan skymtar horisonten.

Filmen börjar och ett förflutet kolliderar med ett nu. Genom filmen förvigas bilder av sårbara kroppar som gör moirstånd. Med filmen förvigas bilder av sargade kroppar som tillåts sörgas. Den rörliga bilden uppmanar oss att minnas till sammans. Bilderna letar sig in i våra samhällens kollektiva medvetande och berättar historier om kroppar som blödde för att de trodde att en annan värld var möjlig; där de kunde skymta en horisont. En scen: en kvinna dansar ensam med ett fotografi i handen på Estadio Nacional i Chile. Året är 1990 och det vi ser är arkivmaterial från en tv-sändning. Det kvinnan framför är en så kallade *cueca sola*, en folkdans traditionellt sett dansad av ett par, men här gör hon det ensam. Fotografier föreställer hennes sakenade, bortförda under militärdiktaturen i Chile. Fotografier, filmen och den rörliga bilden; om Benjamin liknade det vid blixen sker här ett slags elektrisk storm. De rörliga bilderna, och fotografier i dem, refererar med ens till olika punkter i tiden och ber oss att gräva i vårt förflutna. Där finns ett Chile innan statskuppen, men också alla som försann under diktaturen samtidigt som en framtid där Pinochet spelat ut sin roll gör sig påmind. Arkivmaterial berättar i sig självt om upproret; en kropp som med bara sina danssteg gör moirstånd. Bilderna bryter fram genom lager av inte bara tid men också genom minnen av kroppar som en gång levande rörd på sig. Genom avsaknaden av en partner påkallar dansen uppmärksamhet till tomtummert: "Titta, jag fanns!" Vi uppmannas minnas av en partner påkallar dansen uppmärksamhet till hur dansen *egenligen* bör se ut. Detta blir till en fysisk manifestering av det som Judith Butler menar är avgörande för hurvida någon kan sörgas eller inte. Nämligen att kollektivet påverkats av den enskilde individens död. Det handlar alltså inte bara om kollisionsen av ett *da* och ett *nu*, utan också av en hemsökelse. Jacques Derrida talade om en "utredvridning" av tiden genom att referera till *Hamlet*. Han syftade på en upplevelse av att något inte står rätt till; vålnader uppenbarar sig och att tiden därmed ter sig ur led.

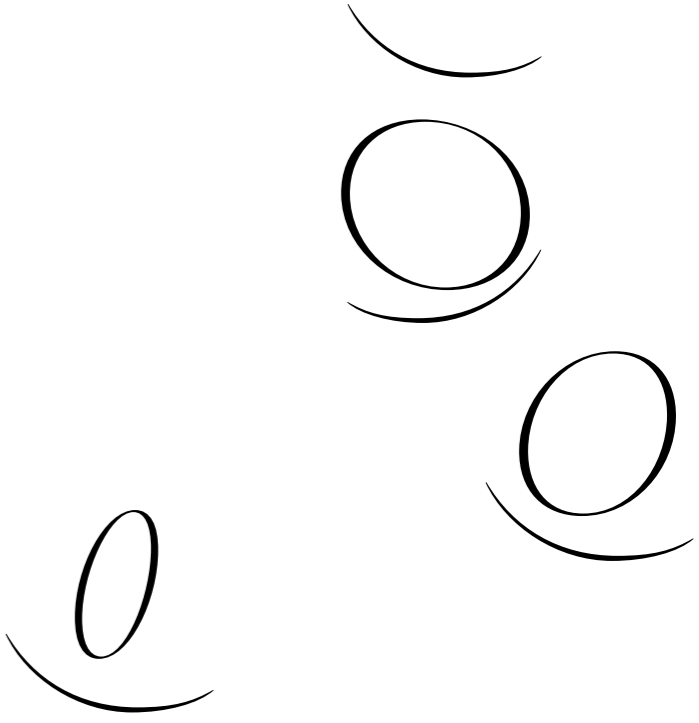
Genom filmen minns vi *cueca sola* som moirständshandling men också *cueca* som dans. Plötsligt är det nästan som om konturerna av den saknade kroppen uppenbarar sig vid den ensamma kvinnans sida. Där, mellan den rörliga bilden och våra föreställningar dansar plötsligt en vålnad, varken levande eller död. Vålnaden efter en människas som levande eller död. Vålnaden inte levde till *slut*. Ett liv börjar och det tar slut, detta är för människan oundvikligt, annars är man helt enkelt ingen människa. Och kan därmed heller inte sörgas. Hon dansar ensam men i tomtummet, bredvid henne skymtar horisonten. Vad dessa scener har gemensamt är att de låter oss skymta alternativet. I andra kroppars öden eller genom blicken hos någon som dog för det den trodde på. Detta är filmens sanna subversiva potential. Genom att bryta sönder tiden skänker vi uppfattar finns därmedellan. Oavsett vad bilden föreställer, vare sig dem refererar till en kollektiv världsbild eller ett faktiskt fotografi och fragment av ett skenande, konstitueras den alltid av ett *nu* och ett *da*. Men däremellan skymtar horisonten.

Med kameran betraktar jag min nyfödda sons bröstkor. Hur den långsamt rör sig upp och ner. Tusentals bilder passerar förbi. Matroserna för Vakulinchuk mot hans sista vila. Hans kropp fortsätter röra sig trots dess livlösa tillstånd och trots det våld som försökt förhindra dess framfart. Den fortsätter röra sig inte minst där filmen tar slut, och minnesbilderna av hans kamraters händer för hans kropp vidare in i vårt kollektiva minne. I relation till tiden väjer sig filmen, den sliter sig loss och påkallar uppmärksamhet. Antog filmen en form skulle det vara en hand. Handen som sträcker sig genom decennierna, seklen, årtusendena. Det skulle vara handen som veklar sig ut, likt horisonten, och påminner oss om vad det innebär att vara mänskliga, och som vittnar om att en annan värld är möjlig. Vore det en hand skulle det vara en knuten näve. Naglarna alldeles för kort, som håller min hårt när jag inte vågar titta.

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ATTACAMA

Sidset Ana Welden Gajardo



Din søster siger, du og dine venner skal stoppe med

at organisere jer i politiske grupper. Det gør hende

bangø, at I sidder i jeres hytte i Andesbjergene

og lægger planer. Stol på, at socialismen er her

i gaderne. Det er altid aktivisterne, der betaler med

deres liv, du skal nyde du er ung. At du har en så stor

familie. Din søster genfortæller myterne, I er vokset

op med, som godnathistorier. Selvom du ved, de

er skrevet for at skræmme dem, der vil gøre oprør,

og selvom du ved, de er skrevet ned for at inddæmme

folks sind, ser du stadig i en alder af 19 år dværg

med forvængede ansigter sidde på hug foran dit

vindue og grine om natten. Det er brujos, og deres

ansigter kan skifte fra en nyfødts til en vampyrs til

for at få fat i dig. Og når man først er havnet i kløerne

på en brujø, bliver man med tiden gennemsigtig

for andre og opløses til sidst som menneske, kun for

at leve videre som en gennemsigtig skikkelse, der selv

skifter form og nu vækker andre unge mennesker om

natten for at stoppe dem fra at drømme om forandring.

Elsker du ikke mig, spørger hun dig, siden du er villig

til at blive taget om natten. Husk nu på, hvordan dit

liv ville se ud. Vil du gerne sive rundt som hvid rog

i bjergene, hvor de eneste der kan se dig er de andre,

der svæver lige så ensomt rundt. Som hvide lig, der

aldrig får fred. Det vil du ikke, du vil knibe din søsters

kinder og hente krydderurter i haven til et måltid, I kan

spise med jeres familie.

Rocotochiljerne lyser i september. Din søster nuss

om dem, som var de kaminunger. Planten er endelig

vokset jer begge over hovedet, hun lagde frøet i jorden

en morgen, I var uvenner. Så der var noget i haven,

der var jeres begges, som I kunne mødes om. Noget,

der ville få dig hjem fra jeres møder i hytten. I lærte alt

om de chilier. Men ingen ved, hvor de stammer fra, de

fleste mener, det er fra Mexico, men du er sikker på,

de er opstået i Chile. Rocotochiljen er ikke allang som

de fleste chilier, men rund, det er en af de stærkeste

arter, der findes: helvedes æble. Kernerne er sorte og

hårde, man kan rasle med frugten som en vild maraca,

det er en særlig chili, når man skræner den op, trævler

skindet som fine silketråde, og bladene er viklet ind

i et lille spind af bomuldsagtige dun. Det lille lys er som

neon i september. Det er sådan, I ved, at de er modne.

I skiftes hver aften. Plastrene går på tur. Dig, din søster,

din mor. I holder alle din fars hånd, når han kommer

hjem. På den samme stol i køkkenet, hvor han træt

læner sig tilbage og lader arme falde tungt langs

plaster ud. Vaskerne og blodresterne fra snitårene

publer igennem. De når ikke at hele, inden et nyt

kommer til dagen efter, du forestiller dig al den smerte,

han gennemlever hver dag på fabrikkens, men som

Snavset og olien og fedtet. Du ser, hvordan nogle

af plietterne har siddet der i ugevis og taget bo

i hudens næste lag, der hvor det ikke bare kan

vaskes af længere. Men sårene og skidtet er bedre

end minen, det er bedre end at leve hundrede meter

under ørkensens overflade. Det ved du.

Hver dag vender I tilbage til gaderne. Murbrokkerne

fra paladset løkker, de ligger som våben for jeres

fødder. At kaste med sten, at kaste med jeres kroppe

er den eneste modstand, I kan yde. Volden lægger

sig om jer, volden vridter jeres arme rundt og tvinger

jeres kroppe ned på jorden. Ansigtet i støvet, du

far øjenkontakt med din ven, han ligger til venstre

for dig, du holder hans blik fast lige så hårdt som

militærets greb om din krop. I skriger. Jeres stemme

er arbejdedernes. Hvis bare du kunne falde i søvn.

Blokere lydene fra gaderne. Volden har sin egen lyd.

Volden vibrerer, får jorden til at ryste, brystet, maven,

organerne. Hvis bare du kunne bruge asfalten som

en hovedpude, lade søvnen tage dig og holde dig fast,

indtil det hele er gået over. Det er en af de mange dage,

hvor du næsten dør, hvor du ikke når at løbe. Nogen

tager dig med.

Andesbjergene ligger sorte og hjælpeløse i horisonten.

De er stemmer af sten, der har mistet evnen til

at rabe.

Du lover din mor at komme hjem til middag.

Men hver dag bliver du mere utålmodig. Hver

dag kommer der flere til. Du er blevet voksen

med muligheden for oprør. Du og dine venner

behøver ikke adlyde jeres forældre længere. I kan

løbe efter andet end kød og mælk til middagsbordet,

I behøver ikke længere bo under sandet for at

udvinde kobber, I har ikke tid til den slags, I kan

planlægge fremtiden for jeres generation, I vil

forberede jer, så militæret ikke tager magten fra jer.

I har jeres gemmested i bjergene, og der bliver

I aldrig fundet. Jeres forældre kigger på de tomme

stole rundt om middagsbordet, men I hører til et

andet sted nu. I de nye sammenslutninger, som røb

på gaden og kroppe i en masse. Du beundrer dine

forældre for deres hårde arbejde, men det er deres

slid, der har gjort dig bevidst om, at du ikke selv vil

arbejde med olie og leve med sår på hænderne resten

af dit liv.

Jorden tøber ikke krigens hemmeligheder, den

hjelper ikke med at huske drabene, hver en krop,

den har taget imod. Kroppe opløses, og sporene

sløres, du slår en økse ind i det gamle træ, det kan

leve tre gange jeres levetid. Du ridser jeres navne

ind, du ridser 1973 ind, du hugger et stykke ud

af træet, gør jeres navne til ar, du er desperat efter

noget permanent.

Du river din hud på træets splinter til du bløder.

Det er en måde at blive en del af træet, at blive

stående igen når din krop er væk, som et monument

der kan leve længe efter jer, der kan fortælle til nye

generationer om alle mordene. At I fandtes. Naturen

er så smuk, det gør ondt at se, hvordan blomsterne

byder sig til som dekorationer til jeres grave,

og selvmordet løkker endnu engang.

Mindet om deres kroppe vil gøre dig til en levende

død. Det er en uværdig måde at overleve på. Det er

ikke altid smukt at bære nogens mind.

Dit hjemland famler efter at tage bo i mig. Jeg har

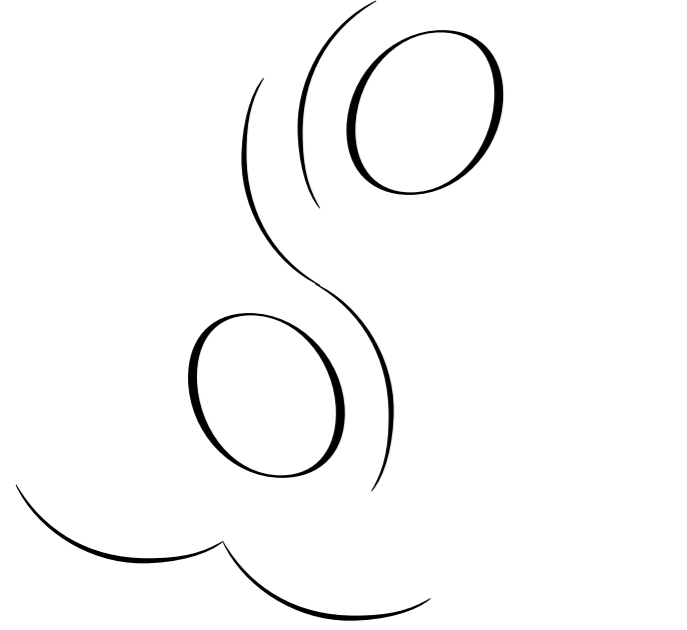
arvet Chiles skælvende jord. Jeg ryster i alle mine

bevægelser, dynen skælver, når jeg trækker den over

mig i din seng. For du er en tvungen udvandrter.

Verden findes ikke på kortet. Og du har ikke efterladt

spøget i min mund. Du dør i eksil.



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Isabella Solar Villaseca

Memory Marketplace

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O-OVERGADEN

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overgaden.org

FORORD

”Rhythm is a Dancer” lød et berømt 90’er danseshit. Rytmen danner også grundstencen i Isabella Solar Villasecas (f. 1992) kunstneriske praksis. Hvad enten det gælder hendes film eller skulpturelle værker, trækker Villaseca på sin chilenske afstamning og svenske opvækst i Stockholms forstæder, hvor det at samles og danse var en fejring af en fælles kultur og et fædreland tabt til fascismen. Og rytmen – såvel som dansen – fungerer som en tilbagevendende katalysator for historiefortællingen i Villasecas serie af nye værker, som hun har skabt særligt til O – Overgaden.

Udstillingen *Memory Marketplace*, som er Villasecas første store institutionelle soloudstilling, præsenterer et nyt videoværk, der bevæger sig fra fundne optagelser fra det chilenske militærkup til nuværende protestbevægelser i landet. Derudover omfatter udstillingen et stort gymnasiumsalsliggende gulv med tegninger af folkedansens trin, en række fan-T-shirts samt skulpturelle elementer, der minder om stadiontribunen og det chilenske præsidentpalads’ balkon. Sammen undersøger værkerne den dragende tiltrækningskraft, der bor i folkløren og protestansagens rytmer; en slags popmusik, som typisk forfører og kalder på en særlig kropslig kollektivitet og fællesskab. Men samtidig har de populære, folkelige rytmer også gennem historien vist sig som et virkningsfuldt redskab, der kan bruges i alt fra populistiske politiske kampagner til mediernes fængslende markenting.

I denne publikation, der følger udstillingen som en slags ureglerlig stægtning, igangsætter Villasecas værker en række forskellige associerede ord og tanker. Publikationen indeholder tekster af henholdsvis Villasecas familiemedlemmer, kulturaktørerne Victor Ahlén & Anneli Ström-Villaseca, den dansk-chilenske forfatter og poet Sidsel Ana Weiden Gajardo og den chilenske kulturreoretiker Nelly Richard.

Memory Marketplace

Teksterne udvider Villasecas spørgsmål om en nedartet kulturel erindring (som blandt andet bor i dansen og rytmene) og strækker sig fra horisonten – konteksten – der omkranses en nyfødt babys hænder, erindringer overført fra en politisk flygtet far til barn og erindringen som et materiale eller et ”marked”, der kan kapres og styres, hvilket beskrives i uddraget fra Richard’s nyhige bog *Eruptions of Memory*, en bog der også har givet Villasecas udstilling sin titel (teksten er trykt på engelsk i denne publikation).

Det er en stor glæde at introducere dette rørende materiale og denne publikation, som for første gang sætter ord sammen med Villasecas mangefacetterede værker og deres iboende rytmer. Villasecas ambitiøse nye værkproduktion såvel som denne publikation er muliggjort gennem O – Overgaden’s NTRRO-program – et særligt og ressourcerstærkt etårigt samarbejde mellem kunstner og kunsthall, der er støttet af Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansen Fonden og er skærpedt gennem til at støtte den enkelte nyuddannede kunstner gennem blandt andet rejsestøtte og kunstnerisk, strategisk og teknisk rådgivning fra udvalgte kolleger i kunsthallen. I mere end tre årtier har Overgaden været den ofte første platform for nye kunstneriske stemmer. Støtten til NTRRO-programmet fra Louis-Hansen Fonden skaber en unik mulighed for at udvikle og udvide denne ambition, hvilket vi er meget taknemmelige for. Der til en stor og varm tak til bidragsyderne til denne publikation, de eksterne sponserpartnere og selvfølgelig til alle ansatte på O – Overgaden, der har løftet denne proces i hus. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en rungende tak til Isabella for – med lige dele skarphed og højt humør, nærmest dansende – at tage os allesammen med på en chokerende rejse gennem Sydamerikas mange historier om forsvindinger, diktatorregimer og migration – alle temer som desværre synes mere aktuelle i dag end nogensinde.

Rhea Dall,
Leder, November 2022

