

Continuum

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"What can men give shape to? Everything: nature, human society, humanity"

Jean Luc-Nancy

Some territories can be viewed outside of a natural timeline. That is, they exist in the idea of a circular *Pathos* between past and present or in the idea of an anachronistic and isolated fragment in which experience implies a succession of persistent and repeated events. A temporary *Continuum* that insists on an extended memory that could possibly be revealed in the signs and marks returning or appearing in the present. In this case: the northern area of the town of Pisagua and its surroundings.

If luminosity is a substantial aspect for visualizing the desert, several images in *Continuum* unfold in antithetical observations of a time that is "opaque" and painful, still current and symptomatic in relation to history and to a wide curriculum of abused bodies. Within this framework, the tracings of the photographic series *Pampa Negra* (2016) stand out in the form of strange white geoglyphs. They are not organic but correspond to military tracings crafted in gypsum, designed with the purpose of consolidating a target, and thus to reduce and disappear the bodies-others. Not much is known about their date of origin, but with the effects of filters and forced technique carried out by Catalina González, these marks resist like a continuous presence of death, capturing in photographs a war territory that manages to remain in time like an ideological and tactical sign. In this respect, the ghostly signs of the images would be comparable to the signs pointed out by Angel Rama, in the sense of being constructed to remain unalterable in time, and in this way, "to continue governing the changing life of things within rigid frames"².

The markings present in *Continuum* expose and traffic with the presence of a mark that was never gone. In the *Convolutions* video, the monochromatic bodies revolve, contort and march. They are the female bodies of the artist and women who are ex-survivors of prisons created for them in the town of Pisagua in the beginnings of the military dictatorship in Chile. There is a landscape of psychic experience in this video that is possible to be perceived as something "encrypted" and latent: a "residual manifestation of the phantasmic persistence of an unresolved mourning"³. That is, marks in the landscape perceived as an underground trauma, in debt and in the resonance of a forgetful memory.

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² Angel Rama refers to constructed signs as peculiar containers of virtue that "remain unchanged in time and continue to govern the changing life of things within rigid frames." (2008; 21)

³ Idelber Avelar, in relation to the theories of Nicolás Abraham and María Torok.

Undoubtedly, this "encrypted" aspect is closely related to the performance carried out by the women's group in *Convolutions*, as it was inspired, the artists says, by the photographs of prisoners taken by the German Miguel Herberg at the Pisagua prison in 1974. In spite of this - and against all this - the action of the female bodies also crosses other meanings of the ritual, in the sense of a community connected to the territory: one that changes the war signs of the military tracings into new signs of action and life. Not in an exhibitionist representation of bodies/victims, but as modifying and vital presences happening in the simple rite of performance, carried out by women who enhance a new tracing and meaning to these vivid memories and those that will come.

In Chilean art history, it is inevitable to relate this work with that of artist Lotty Rosenfeld or the poet Raúl Zurita, to name a few, forerunners of the Chilean landscape considered in political terms. The sign of Rosenfeld's mark performed in 1981 - in the midst of the military dictatorship - transgresses among other meanings, the sign of death changing it into a sign of life⁴. Today, positions and readings have changed. Catalina González's gaze is keen to tie subtle temporal associations, from a mark of mourning and current histories, to the resonances of a territory where the extractivist and neoliberal economy produces adverse conditions leading to the disappearance of individuals and matter.

As in a *Continuum*, in this signification the surplus value of the work is measured in the gallery room with its form of material residue, in its metaphorical quality of uprooted and repository material. Since when drawing the shape of a checkerboard, the artist follows a pre-contemplated design with black seaweed, seen in Miguel Herberg's photographs, where it is possible to observe the barracks of political prisoners from the military dictatorship. At the same time, there is the projection of the seaweed collector's work that continues the trace of a design already marked (and wounded) onto the landscape.

It is in these metaphorical crossings of a naturalized violence, which is both sign and death, were we observe the factors that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the north of Chile and in Pisagua; and as the artist points out, it is still possible to see them today in multiple ways. In a *Continuum* that elaborates a critical and sharp gaze: in the photographs of their marks, in the persistence of mourning, in the disappearance, in the branching of time and bound chains of so many memories.

Bibliography

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⁴ Nelly Richard (1986) in *Una resta de sentido*, 1986