Stories of missing memory

Jorge Luis Marzo, 2008

The memory we are looking for takes its shape from the desert it is opposed to.

Italo Calvino

1. Tools in the face of absence

In Tuol Sleng prison (Phnom Penh, Cambodia), better known as S-21 due to the secret code used in the prison system during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), around 20,000 people were tortured, killed and "disappeared". The final figure of the Cambodian genocide is estimated to be between one and a half million and three million people.

In one of the rooms of what used to be the prison and today is the Museum of Genocide, a documentary about those events is shown.[1] In one of the scenes, the painter Vann Nath, a former prisoner and one of the seven known survivors of the camp, faces thousands of photographs (police file-type photographs) taken by the policemen of the detainees when they arrived. In the presence of this multitude of faces, all different but given a resemblance by the same photographic framing, the painter talks about "what once existed but has disappeared," of the whirl of memory involved in every flash, but he admits those photographs can hardly "explained what happened," they can only show the faces of those who experienced the events and the quiet magnitude of what occurred.

Some time afterwards, on-camera, the artists walks in front of his paintings (medium-sized oil paintings that show the various tortures they were exposed to)[2] accompanied by one of the former policemen, who he interrogates in a friendly manner regarding the truth behind what is represented in his paintings. The former policeman admits it quietly, in a low tone, showing a shy smile that can only be interpreted as an ashamed gesture that consciously annuls all emotion.

This documentary not only represents an attempt to dive down into an "unmentionable" or "invisible" horror; it not only tries to put into words or images what modern killing techniques make disappear. It is also a reflection on the condition of images when talking about memory, others' memory and its influence on our own capacity to transform the past into history, to retrieve what is denied in the present thanks to an art that aims to bring forth history from emptiness, to recover history from the noise of signs created to leave this emptiness intact; "since not all past takes place in the past", warned Walter Benjamin, "part of it involves the way of resisting

current frauds, not just as an archive or grave, but as a struggle against that habit of filling everything with signs to clear away men and women."[3]

This documentary is an excellent analysis of the hierarchy of "objectivity" that takes place between different formats of the image when it attempts to rescue historical memory from its own absence. Cinema, video, photography, painting… Which format best transmits what happened in camp S-21? Is photography – as Nath states – useless as a way of story-telling, maybe because the very same machine has always been at the service of the administrative demands involved in the disappearance? Is that contamination important, anyway? Is painting more significant, perhaps because it does not imply any demand for objectivity? What values do sculpture, monument, mausoleum, and memorial bring? Are video and documentary cinema efficient and sufficient tools for recording the voices of witnesses, documents, and survivors? Or can moviemaking, with its imprint of imagination that will always fake the horror to make it consumable, explain?

Although important, these are not the ultimate questions posed by the film director. He wants to go beyond that: How can we deal with the emptiness of the suppressed lives and words? How do you manage the story of massive and anonymous death? How can we tell others' suffering and experiences on the border that separates existence from silence? How can we do it when words can easily become an insult in the face of paramount tragedies for which language is not even prepared? Can art overcome the limitations that horror imposes upon words or redeem the words used in this horror? But… shouldn't we reject that distorted relationship between "immeasurable" facts and words? Shouldn't we try again, using all the words and images, even at the risk of being "disrespectful" to the victims themselves in order to tell what really happened?

All these questions acquire a special interest in the light of the great many contemporary artistic practices that focus on issues of historical memory. Hundreds of works in every format, in all languages and in many different places have been created as a way of overcoming silence, disappearance, the manipulation of signs to disguise memory as mere past. The twentieth century represented the implementation of new techniques of suppression based on bureaucratic and all-encompassing ideologies: colonial genocides, such as of the Armenians by the Turks, in the Ukraine under Stalin, the Nazi extermination industry, in occupied China under Japan: sequences of hundreds of thousands of skulls piled up in Cambodian buildings or a panoramic view of great numbers of dead bodies in the fields and roads of Rwanda. All these events are defined by their lack of definition, for having such a magnitude that any counting is rendered impossible, because their victims are also countless. The relationship between telling a story and counting is exactly proportional when we find ourselves in the presence of

such magnitude: we lose sense of both. How, then, is it possible to articulate a language "that treats it fairly", that puts facts at the level of memory, but at the same time at the level of debate? How can art – contemporary art, for instance – help with that narrative dilemma? In the same way that, with the Jewish genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, what really scares us is not the dead, but the process of killing and dying, so telling the story, the need to rescue that "extinguished universe" also faces the same problem: it is not words that scare us, but rather the responsibility of creating a language, a linguistic process able to give sense to a senseless act. If, as Goebbels stated, Nazi politics is defined as the art of making possible something that seemed impossible, then what can be done with "unsayable" words to give them back their possibility? How can their situation be turned around? Or, on the other hand, if "human beings are able to do what they cannot even imagine"[4], how can we imagine what has already been done? How can we give shape to it? Can we tell something we cannot imagine happening to us? How can we imagine things we do not think we are capable of doing?

Jean Louis Déotte has said: [The communal nature of sensitivity regarding disappearance, after the Second World War] "is accepted in some organisations such as Amnesty International, but also in art. These works are not valid as support, infrastructure or foundation for the ethical or political community, but rather as beacons. This community does not do work: it is not formed in the works. Works do not give an identity to it, they are neither places in memory nor monuments. On the contrary, they indicate that what moves us cannot be some people's heroism or the imaginative recreation of the cruelty, but the feeling of the collapse of all sense."[5]

Here is the crucial question: an art working to restore sense, an art committed to restore the possibility of thinking the truth, of using words and images, in spite of having to rethink the victims' role in the story during the process.

2. The kidnapping of words

> They did not wave at us, they did not smile; they seemed oppressed, not so much by compassion but rather by a confused shyness that sealed their mouths and fixed their gazes on that dreadful sight. Primo Levi (*The Truce*)[6]; the story of the day I was liberated from Auschwitz by Soviet soldiers.

Levi also tells the story of Hurbinek, "the child who was nobody" and who died when he was three years old in Auschwitz without being able to say a word, except an incomprehensible "*massklo* or *matisklo*": There is nothing left of him: the evidence of his existence is only in these very words," wrote

the Italian writer. Levi becomes the custodian of Hurbinek's existence. "The mysticism of emptiness:" this is how Levi described the experience of horror during the holocaust. An experience based on the annihilation of men and their word, the total suppression of language and the suppression of the capacity to remember those who could not express their own existence. Therefore he dedicated his life to register, to recognise amidst the mist of memory all those "who were nobody," until he committed suicide in 1987, perhaps as a recognition of language's own frustration.

That mysticism, elaborated not by spirituality but by horror, had not only caused the disappearance of an enormous number of human beings, but it would have also wiped out the very sense of words, of language, to an extent that no expression could have ever communicated what happened without using the same words used by the executioners[7] and without betraying the necessary distinction between murderer and victim. This idea, summed up by Theodor Adorno's famous sentence "to write a poem after Auschwitz is an atrocity" is deeply disturbing and has become central to any discourse regarding memory of the "disappearance." It is so problematic that even Adorno took back his own words shortly afterwards: "Perennial suffering has as much right to express itself as those who are tortured have to shout. Therefore I might have been wrong."

"When we see in front of us the S–21 photographs, we suffer a loss of words," stated David Chandler.[8] Historian Alain Forest, after visiting S–21 in 1982, said: "It is too overwhelming, I cannot see a way to think or write about it. My instinct has been to let my head hang down."[9] When Boris Pasternak travelled around the collective farms of the Soviet Union during the thirties, where hundreds of thousands of people had no choice but to die of starvation, he said: "What I saw cannot be expressed with words. There was such an inhuman misery, so unthinkable, such an atrocious disaster, that it seemed almost abstract: it could not fit into the framework of consciousness. It made me become very ill."[10]

Marcelo Suárez Orozco, when studying the attitudes of those people who had refused to face up to analysis of the situation regarding those missing and tortured during the Argentinean military dictatorship (1976–1983), notes how they told that "those materials are just too terrible to be used for any kind of distanced analysis. Any attempt to analyse those materials would immediately distort an immense and delicate question. Eventually, the analysis merely reproduces the discourse of violence, but in a different language."[11] Suárez Orozco argues that the analysis of horror must be done even when the materials are "so horrifying that any distance from the horror proves impossible." Even that can be a positive thing, he adds, because horror is part of our daily lives.

In many countries where tragedies like these have taken place, there has followed a political process that, far from facing up to the broken memory of the event, has led to amnesiac dynamics, or that has directly tried to cover up recent history. Germany or Japan after the Second World War; or more recently Spain, Chile, Argentina, Cambodia, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, South Africa and other countries (many of the countries that made up the former communist bloc) have emerged from the military or police horror through democratic "transitions" that all too often have promoted written or tacit "reconciliation" and "full-stop" laws. Most of these concessions to the main and secondary actors responsible for the horror, with the purpose of exorcising the ghost of the past or in order not to undermine certain business, political or social positions, have only contributed to transforming historical memory into a simple appendix in school books. In this way, history has become mere past: "The issue is not the disappearance, but the disappearance of that disappearance into an everyday life built on forgetfulness and the articulation of the discourses of reconciliation and transition,"[12]

Specifically, debates on historical memory and those missing during Spanish, Chilean or Argentinean dictatorships have been dominated by the media and by administrative and judicial procedures so focused on the hope of "normalisation" that they have eventually become the architects of some sort of denial of the effects of the decades of terror: "The formulism and the technicality of the consensus thus frustrated an – always controversial – way of creating memory."[13] These hierarchies seem to insinuate that if the effects are not enormous, since societies are able to agree, even in their own sorrow, then to pursue legal courses to recovery memory could prove counterproductive for the democratic process. To those attitudes, the rescue of memory could be like opening Pandora's box and reviving the rancour that would give way to terror, as if terror was always the result of two legitimate positions, thus justifying the crushing of one by the other: "The past has been constantly transformed into a threat, into the archive where all our obsessions lie, into the cemetery of our mistakes, into a sort of social aid trying to infect the stainless nature of an agreement, the stability of a state, the aesthetics of a middle class in a country with Sundays spent at the mall. What is the purpose of remembering? It is not about recalling and internalising diffuse images, as full of uncertainties as the testimony that tells them, but it is about recovering the denied present," in Carlos Ossa's words.[14]

In Spain, for instance, the recent debate on historical memory is a clear example of an agreed exercise of amnesia that has been globally described as "exemplary." In 2007, thirty years after the first Government was elected by voters (1977), the Parliament debated the Historical Memory Law for the first time. Most of the media and half of the Parliament became involved in a debate about the suitability and need for that initiative, a few defending, on

the one side, the need to "also" maintain the dictatorship's own history and, on the other hand, others were undermining the impact that the law – with its proposal to exhume anonymous victims, "missing" victims of Franco's regime – would have on a society described as "modern", precisely because it had been able to overcome the violence of ideological struggles. Pressure on the debate was of such an extent, both from left-wing and right-wing parties, that the law finally drafted was about the minimum that could have been achieved.

In this context some intellectuals' considerations, when working with these tricky situations, gain significance: "We have to bring *the politics of memory* and *forgetfulness techniques* face to face", said the Chilean author Nelly Richard.[15] *The politics of memory* that must be based on the study of the individuals, organisations, techniques, processes and dynamics that protected and guided terror and on the restitution of the name, image and actions of the victims as well as the development of a "sensitive solidarity" towards those who personally paid for what many others defended at that time and that they still defend in the name of freedom and democracy. The *forgetfulness techniques*, on the contrary, are built in the fields of media and entertainment; in the public and private art arena (advertising); in the jurisdiction of educational and legislative policies aimed at filling the social imagination with noise, with misleading signs (presumably neutral signs); but also within historiographical and artistic processes that either grasp the "unsuitability of language" theories with suspicious vehemence or "disappear into the logic of the *document* or *monument*."[16] Many artworks in Spain seem to try to transmit that same Statist logic. And precisely because talking about the regime ran contrary to the "self-referential" traditional vision of Spanish art and it was an issue that did not fit into the carnival of democracy and modernity that the country wrapped itself in.

3. The illusion of closeness

An increasingly high percentage of artistic works during the last few years have openly stressed the understanding of social, psychological, political and cultural events that shape the construction (and destruction) of collective and historical memory.[17] There are two common denominators among many of them: they try to depart from an interpretation of the register in deconstruction code and they question the traditional limits between the subjective and the objective as an explanatory paradigm. Hundreds of metaphors and allegories are created from films, photographs and other solidly verifiable documents. In that sense, the gradual *audiovisualisation* of artistic practices, which has been pointed at as one of the main vectors of inflection[18], should not be seen as a will to transform into spectacle, but rather as a search for the objectivity of the artwork, moving away from the author as the linchpin of its legitimacy. The *reporterisation* of many artworks indicates exactly that. The register seems to consolidate itself around

information, a traditional anathema in the mental universe of formalism.

The ever more popular resource of documentary narration may have many reasons behind it. The willingness to become involved in direct matters of social and political life is obviously one of the reasons, leaving aside certain ethereal sensitivities and confused self-references. The search for a *transparency* that limits the secrecy usually linked to the artistic personality should also be seen in that regard.

On that subject, I was wondering a while ago[19] about the possible transformation of the importance of objectivity in photographic media thanks to the huge spread of digital cameras and the link between them and distribution in the network. The proliferation of portable technology for recording and broadcasting images, widely used in most news we currently see, has resulted in a clear crisis in the perception of informative "objectivity" and "realism," formerly things that were exclusive to journalists. Technology is not responsible for that move, as is widely stated in the terms of industrial determinism; rather, this crisis comes from the failure to achieve independent means of education and information.

It is convenient to think about that aspect, especially regarding art focused on memory. The use of narrative techniques, formerly exclusive to the media, but also the increasing appropriation of sociological and anthropological material, as well as archives, for artistic processes and works meet a need, or even urgency, to approach the chosen issues from perspectives that become increasingly "objectifiable." But, who legitimates what is "objective?" And what can be described as objective when we deal with others' memories? The artist and anthropologist Pep Dardanyà has very sensibly pointed out that the increase in "ethnographic artists" (the expression is borrowed from the critic Hal Foster) among those creators who define themselves by creating "social art," together with the increasing use of techniques from social sciences: "[…] use a technique known as *ethnographic mapping*, consisting of choosing a physical or symbolic space for their performance and getting immersed in it, unfolding the different meanings and reordering them with an interpretative attitude."[20] However, the recent appropriation of "field work" by many artists and the assumption of a "chronicler" attitude towards those realities buried by institutional discourses do not seem to come together with a parallel consideration on the contradictory character of the observer in this process, as Dardanyà warns. The major debate in recent anthropology and sociology has been more the observer's analysis than the study of the observed issue. The strength of resorting to interviews in many creative works with a desire to be "objective" cannot hide the fact that by the simple fact of putting a microphone and a camera in front of someone, the observer is automatically manipulating the person he or she is speaking to, the subject of study, his or her *document*. This does not seem to be a matter for reflection: tools are

appropriated from (let's say) other doctrines, but without taking into account the critical apparatus that used them. However, this aspect, present in many current creative practices, cannot only be read in the light of a wider and more complex perspective. If, on the one hand, we can suspect the presence of formalist and traditional *kunstwollen* remains (that is, the artist *can and must* elude the methodological and ethical determining factors of tools and means, finding himself or herself in a contradictory situation with practices of a social dimension whose aim is precisely to wipe out romantic subjectivity); it is also true that, when perceiving art, the capacity to undermine the dominant logics of administrative thinking acquires a greater significance.

The contradictory communion between borrowing social research methods that are lacking their own critical content and appropriating technology to rewrite it exempt from determinism marks the limits of the muddy arena where "deconstructive" practice takes place. This very situation defines current art as an *eminently cultural conflict*. The problematic movement of a reflective environment limited to "art surroundings" towards a large framework where questions and answers must be generated in socially wider environments shapes any artistic approach to "objectivity" indelibly. But also any approach to the contexts where that objectivity wants to be seen.

The spread in artistic circles of the technical and narrative models that come from cinema, television and environments even further away such as social and political activism (or, rather, the use of media in activist environments?) can be read as the desire of many creators to cross disciplinary and contextual boundaries that help break through the traditional border between contemporary and public art. Only rarely can this be achieved, mainly because the pressure on the actors in the artistic context is too powerful – it is like a sort of "Stockholm syndrome" where the kidnapping victim does not know how to live without a clear mandate. In that sense, the artistic context favours multiple and paradoxical dynamics regarding the visibility of the works: on the one hand, an artwork acquires a visibility in an environment encoded as artistic (such as a museum or a biennial, for instance) that it would not achieve in the anonymity of the visual signs of the streets or any other space not prepared for art. But, on the other hand, an artwork, once it is disguised in a context where nobody expects it, can produce short circuits and sensory bypasses that it can hardly achieve in an artistic environment.[21]

If artistic encoding does not take place in the object but in the context where it is presented, it seems logical that many artists longing to break up the status of a work as "a monument that gives sense to the square" want to focus all their attention, on the contrary, "on the square that gives the monument significance." This can explain the huge emphasis that many current art representations give to the idea and image of the *process*, both

intrinsically creative and the composition of the chosen topic. This resource is usually used to "give objectivity," showing the "objective" determining factors affecting the "shape of memory." However, the ultimate feeling when faced with many of the results outlines a rather contrary direction: the massiveness of those determining factors, of their folds, the vanishing points: the aestheticisation, through resorting to "reporterisation", of those less visible elements that constitute the various manifestations of a multidimensional reality that any story of the past is.

Therefore the claim of the objective register, the desire to become a "scribe" of the deconstructive processes of the historical narrative that we have inherited and continue to inherit, and the interest in avoiding a formalist memory unable to abandon the mandate of an endogamic present, collide with a lack of critical prospects regarding the perceptive environment where we can get information about our artistic activity. All these paradoxes do not enhance or weaken a certain practice in art, but they promote it in the general and complex world of culture as another artistic tendency, identifying it with the official practice of historic "normalisation."

The application of a "register" format (especially when interviewing survivors, their families or murderers) to historical research implies certain problems. As Bernard Bruneteau states referring to some works on the Holocaust, "when interfering with conventional historical research, when transforming memory into history, [the books of recollection and memoirs] have sometimes deprived genocide history of critical and contextual thinking, thus contributing to magnify the idea of uniqueness with relation to the totality of the event."[22] The incessant search for eye- and contextual witnesses of the *suppressed memory* has become one of the artistic-documentary resources most widely used in reconstructions of sense. It is almost compulsory, since it is in the living holder of memory where we can find "living" traces of what happened. However, to present those testimonies without explaining *why* we want to remember leads to an aestheticisation of the document that goes deep into a reading of the past as a simple register, as a mere anecdote, as just a catalogue.

Part of the logic behind that obsession with the *absorbed document*, as we have already pointed out, has to do with the need to fill historic debt with the victims, with their faces, with their names. Thus the importance that photography has historically had in this process. Artists such as Christian Boltanski, for instance, have focused all their reflection on deconstructing and have given a new meaning to the victim's image. When talking about the role of photography in the prisoners entry register in the Nazi camps or in the underground prisons of the Khmer Rouge, it might be wise to remember Gilles Deleuze's words about identity photos, that "they are a product of disciplinary societies and they have two sides: the signature, indicating the individual, and the registration number, indicating their place

in the mass." Photography as a means of restoration of historical memory has had to face the dilemma of how "to name" the missing ones avoiding the use of a disciplinary format.

Photography acquired a very significant status in this type of process due to the fact that it matched the demands of *habeas corpus* (obtaining the bodies), in clear opposition to the administrative *inexistentialism* in the case of those missing: "art can only meet again in photography (Barthes), in the imprints: how an object had to physically leave its imprints on something."[23] Some of that truth applies also to video reportage. The use of survivors' or witnesses' stories, and especially of fictional reconstruction or that accompanied by the documentation of killings or of the subsequent processes in each case, has its roots in the urgency to give logic visibility to facts that reach such a horrific proportion that they virtually lose any possible sense.

4. Distance

"One of the tragedies of writing about tragedies is that the weight and texture of the words matter too much, because suffering needs a certain measure of grace in order to make it bearable for others," noted Jonathan Spence.[24] The question lies, then, in how to overcome that linguistic desert from where memory takes its shape, in Italo Calvino's words.

David Rousset, in his referential study of the Nazi concentration-centred universe, stated that "normal human beings are not aware that everything is possible. Even if the testimonies are forcing their intelligence to admit it, their muscles don't believe it."[25] Therefore it is crucial to reflect on the ways for transmitting past events, without forgetting the real sorrow that questions our capacity to judge things in a balanced way, and not forgetting either that the analysis of horror also has an effect on our way of thinking about it in the present. Our chosen way of getting involved in the horror of those missing directly determines the way in which we see ourselves as reconstructors of memory.

Any reflection on this question will have to deal with the idea of distance, thereby forcing the limits imposed between subjectivity and objectivity in narrative creation. This debate was very much an influence on post-modernity. In the early eighties, Lyotard defined post-modernity as the failure of modernity because "what happened [referring to the Holocaust] cannot be retrieved by any dialectics;"[26] that is, it is not possible to clearly maintain the limits between what I can define as experience and what comes from outside, what is part of fiction and what is "intrinsically historical." If there are no victims or murderers to interview, the reconstruction of the *missing sense* is untenable, it becomes fascist.

The Chilean philosopher Sergio Rojas sums up this idea with great accuracy: "Memory would never be something totally 'owned', since it normally behaves in a way that seems strange to a supposed sovereignty on the part of the 'subject' or 'conscience', to the point that it seems more a surface or a body of inscription rather than a 'skill'. We could even think that 'remembering' means in this context a sort of 'not been able to forget' […] Memory in general would not be so much the 'capacity' to remember, but the *need* to remember. Rather than a resource, it shows a lack of resources."[27] That *lack of resources* when exploring memory matches the increasing absence of witnesses, in part due to the passage of time and in part due to an administration interested in the existing documents. All this takes us to a wider fictionalisation of recollection and historical narration with the intense feeling that comes from the "need to remember" above the "need to get closer to the truth". We are not trying to say that the former necessarily leads to the latter, but the risks are significant.

Jean Louis Déotte said: "An art in a period of disappearance […] forces us to reformulate the concept of the relationships between art history and political history, since it does not apply to the conception of art as a mirror (Marx), as a symptom (Freud) or as testimony and since it moves away at the same time from the Adornian concept of an autonomous art. [Moreover] it is beyond Benjamin's opposition between sacred value (destination art, heteronymous art) and exhibition value (autonomous art), since it has destination value, resistance value and it is, however, exhibited and reproduced very easily. We raise the hypothesis that this art respects an external, heteronymous law: a law that urges it to pick up and raise the defeated in history, those without a trace, those missing. […] Thus the resource of Kant's concept of *historical sign* […] since it refers to the idea that there are no immediate or physical relationships between the one who acts (it could be a victim) and the one who observes, [therefore] the 'real' observers, those whose reaction will show the sense of the event better, are the observers who were not there."[28] Such an argument, looking towards a full "aesthetics of receipt" can prove very useful in the light of what we are trying to explain here: that there is a problem in the way some artistic works understand the reconstruction of a sense of a memory shredded by the silence that horror implies; that, perhaps, the usefulness of those practices lies not just in "solidarity" but especially in the capacity to narrate in a deconstructive way what we understand by memory when none of us were *there*, and how we can project it into the future when we know that not all past events took place in the past and part of it involves the way of refusing the impostures of the present.

[1] S-21: *The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, directed by Rithy Panh in 2003.

[2] To see the paintings: http://www.providence.edu/art/cambodian/v-nhat.html.

[3] Carlos Ossa, "El jardín de las máscaras", in Nelly Richard (ed.), *Políticas y estéticas de la memoria*, Cuarto Propio, Santiago de Chile, 2000, pp. 73-74.

[4] René Char, *Fureur et mystére*, Gallimard, Paris, 1998.

[5] Jean Louis Déotte, "El arte en la época de la desaparición", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas…*, p. 150.

[6] Primo Levi, *La tregua*, El Aleph, Barcelona, 2002 (Milan, 1963).

[7] In that regard, we recommend reading the essay by the German philologist Viktor Klemperer, LTI. *La lengua del Tercer Reich*, Minúscula, Barcelona, 2001 (Leipzig, 1975).

[8] David Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, Silkworm Books, Bangkok, 1999, p. 111.

[9] Ibidem, p. 144.

[10] Ibidem, p. 144.

[11] Marcelo Suárez Orozco, "A Grammar of Terror: Psychocultural Responses to StateTerrorism in Dirty War and Post-Dirty War Argentina", in Carolyn Nordstrom and Jo AnnMartin (eds.), *The Paths of Domination, Resistance and Terror*, University of California Press, 1992; cit. in Chandler, p. 145.

[12] Sergio Rojas, "El contenido es la astucia de la forma", *Chile. Arte extremo. Nuevas tendencias en el cambio de siglo*, Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y de las Artes, Fondart, Santiago de Chile, 2006, p. 47.

[13] Nelly Richard, "Presentación", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas…*, p. 10.

[14] Carlos Ossa, "El jardín de las mascaras", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas…*, pp. 73-74.

[15] Nelly Richard, "Presentación", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas…*, p. 10.

[16] Ibidem, p.11.

[17] This section of the text borrows some ideas already developed in the catalogue of the exhibition *Líneas de Mira*, commissioned by Amparo Lozano for the CAAM in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (2007); J. L. Marzo, "Arte, objetividad y compromiso".

[18] Gabriel Villota, http://www.arteleku.net/4.1/zehar/6061/Villota_es.pdf.

[19] J. L. Marzo (ed.), "Introducción", *Fotografía y activismo*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2006, pp. 7-22.

[20] Pep Dardanyà, "Contaminats i contaminants", *Boletín del Centre d'Art Santa Mònica*, Barcelona, No. 30, December 2006, pp. 11-13.

[21] I am thinking about works by some Chilean artists during Pinochet's dictatorship, such as Luz Donoso, Carlos Leppe, Carlos Altamirano, Eugenio Dittborn, Colectivo de Acciones de Arte, or Yeguas del Apocalipsis. For a more detailed reading of these artists, see Nelly Richard, *Márgenes e Instituciones. Arte en Chile desde 1973*, Metales Pesados, Santiago de Chile, 2007.

[22] Bernard Bruneteau, *El siglo de los genocidios*, Alianza, Madrid, 2006 (Paris, 2004).

[23] Jean Louis Déotte, "El arte en la época de la desaparición", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas…*

[24] Jonathan Spence, "In China's Gulag", *The New York Review of Books*, 10th August 1995.

[25] David Rousset, *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1989.

[26] Jean François Lyotard, *La diferencia*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1988 (Paris, 1983), p. 63.

[27] Sergio Rojas, "Cuerpo, lenguaje y desaparición", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas*…, p. 178.

[28] Jean Louis Déotte, "El arte en la época de la desaparición", in Richard, *Políticas y estéticas*…, p. 149.