

Dear Camila,

You are writing to me from Kosovo, from another world, far from mine. Writing to me between your summer school studies of ‘Protest, Imagery and Art: Feminist Politics and Practice in Post-Socialist and Post-War Kosovo’ and ‘Spatial Research: Rights, Data, Maps’. Sending me a “brain dump”; a brain dump yet fully fleshed out, still mutating, still warm; from Prishtina, courtesy of sketchy internet access. Extended from The Center of Contemporary Art Prishtina, where you are, to me, in Melbourne, an invitation to look at a preview of your new work, also still forming; new work for a new show at c3. New work addressing forms of repetition. And magnetic forces. And tethered to Chile, where your “father was tortured and exiled during the Pinochet regime”. Before me on the screen, my own spatial map comprised of memories and thoughts bristles and grows the required mountains and oceans, filling in the large black circles before my eyes. You are “talking about Chile” and the “decay of knowledge”; I have so much to learn. You are a world away. And Chile too. The map is vast; I grow tiny. ⁱ

And this of course is what your work will offer people in the gallery: a chance to borrow your eyes and see something anew or perhaps for the first time. It is for such transformation that I head to galleries and performances, and fall into books and films. To grow. To grow through the act of seeing something from another standing. Don’t we all? These are my ‘magnetic forces’, my means of “disseminating information”.

Your work, inspired by “repetition as a method of learning”, is your very own magnetized machine made from “tape-to-tape” audio layered across digital collage. Your homage, perhaps, to a machine whose very name is a composition, a collage, of the Russian words for ‘tape recorder’ and ‘publishing’. To grow, with a ‘bootleg’, sidestepping censorship.

In my mind, your work reads like a creation of your own Museum of Memory and Human Rights;ⁱⁱ “a living museum of Chile’s memory”,ⁱⁱⁱ putting repair into action, exposing nonverbal undertones, fired by the ethos: “NEVER AGAIN”.^{iv} Traces reappear only to disappear, as information is layered. “Chewing darkness”,^v like Gabriela Mistral, your “feet [losing] the memory of softness” in your “thirst in the name of the homeland”. The words you plan to loop may be an echo of Luis Fonsi’s ‘Despacito’, but I hear Mistral, Neruda, Bolaño — do I show my age? my proclivities? reveal the rock I have been beneath? Were it not for your email and Wikipedia, I would never have seen “the most-viewed YouTube video of all time”.^{vi} When Bolaño wrote of pain, and the memory of pain, as being something “sucked away until only a void was left”, is this what he meant. When we apply the same equation to everything, more or less, “pain turns into emptiness”, nice and slow. Perhaps.

The ease of distribution (through your rendition of ‘Despacito’, aided by quizlet), and the scope for reinterpretation (through your sketches manipulated through Photoshop, and adhered to wooden panels with tape), these two things, for me, rest at the heart of collage. Like a magnet to metal. Oh yeah. A convergence of Pinochet and pop. This I got to see. “Simply thinking about it makes my heart race”.^{vii} Oh yeah.

X

Gracia Haby

9th August, 2018

ⁱ Fragments plucked from an email from the artist Camila Galaz, subject: text for exhibition, dated 25th July, 2018.

ⁱⁱ The Museum of Memory and Human Rights (Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos) in central Santiago “seeks to draw attention to human rights violations committed by the Chilean state between 1973 and 1990. Its mission is to allow dignity for victims and their families, stimulate reflection and debate and to promote respect and tolerance in order that these events never happen again”. <https://www3.museodelamemoria.cl/english-version/>, accessed 1st August, 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Amy Sodaro, ‘The Museum of Memory and Human Rights: ‘A Living Museum for Chile’s Memory’’, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, New Jersey; London: Rutgers University Press, 2018) pp. 111–137. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1v2xskk.9, accessed 1st August, 2018.

^{iv} Joseph Brodsky wrote, “The task of a building of memory must therefore be guided by a moral compass.... The goal in the museum’s construction of memory is to become a space that assists the culture of human rights and democratic values in becoming the shared ethical basis of our present and future coexistence. Only in this way can we empower our claim of NEVER AGAIN”, 2011, cited by Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*, p. 136.

^v Gabriela Mistral (literary pseudonym of Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, 1889–1957), ‘Nocturne of Consummation’ (‘Nocturno de la consumación’), Poetry Foundation <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gabriela-mistral>, accessed 4th August, 2018.

^{vi} “In August 2017, the official music video for ‘Despacito’ became the most-viewed YouTube video of all time after receiving its three billionth view. It became the first video on the site to reach the milestones of three, four, and five billion views”, Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Despacito>, accessed, 27th July, 2018 (and quite possibly the only time I will cite Wikipedia as a source).

^{vii} Translated lyrics from ‘Despacito’ courtesy of quizlet app.

This text was produced alongside Camila Galaz’ exhibition you are the magnet and I am the metal (slowly magnetizdat) at c3 Contemporary Art Space in August 2018.

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