MIND THE GAP:

Fissures and Prospects of an Impossible Consensus

Archiving in Spain's Contemporary Arena

This paper examines the organic response to violence on which the photographic archive is assembled, distorted and embodied from the late 1970s to date in the Spanish contemporary arena. Archive is understood as a toolbox for reconstructing, not only the memories of the past but, following Jacques Derrida's influential thesis, the responsibilities and promises of the future. Drawing on Slavoj Zizek's notion of the 'parallax view' and Chantal Mouffe's definition of 'antagonism' and 'agonistic pluralism', this essay argues that Spain's contemporary art scene shares an approach to the photographic archive that relates to its capacity to affect and to have a counter-effect by the means of movement and alternation; in other words, by displacing the very same representations and devices that have fictitiously constructed the hegemonic historical consensus. By pinpointing the fissures that emerge from apparent incompatibilities, such as the pairing of culture/barbarism proposed by Walter Benjamin, the case studies presented in what follows bring to light often-anaesthetized historical narratives. Therefore, this paper suggests that these cases act as historical agents in disguise, putting to work experiences with history while questioning the referential value of the image: its representational paradox and rhetorical dependence.

"A Spanish *art historian* uncovered the first use of modern art as a deliberate form of torture," wrote Slavoj Zizek in the introduction to his book *The Parallax View*. "Kandinsky and Klee, as well Buñuel and Dalí, were the inspiration behind a series of secret cells and torture centres built in Barcelona in 1938," he continued (Zizek 3).

The person who first elaborated these so-called 'psychotechnic' colour cells, in the same year that Picasso's *Guernica* was taken to Britain (after being displayed at the Paris International Exposition at the World's Fair in Paris), was the French anarchist Alphonse Laurencic, who happened to be in Barcelona when the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 18th 1936. After living in Germany and studying at the Bauhaus, Laurencic moved to Spain and, being a nocturnal swindler, ended up in jail. It is in the trial transcripts that today we can read about his artistic insight and offer to fight against Franco's nationalist armed forces in exchange for extending his lifetime. Surrealist forms, geometric abstractions, and psychological properties of colour borrowed from the German art school motivated Laurencic's multi-patterned cells, otherwise known as 'checas'. In a nutshell, these torture rooms included inclined beds, floors full of geometric blocks and oblique bricks, lighting projecting different effects and colours (predominantly green for its association with sadness), and curved walls covered with distorted compositions intended to drive the occupant mad.

Proposal for *Photographies*, 2019 Vol. 12.3 - Routlege, Taylor & Francis Group

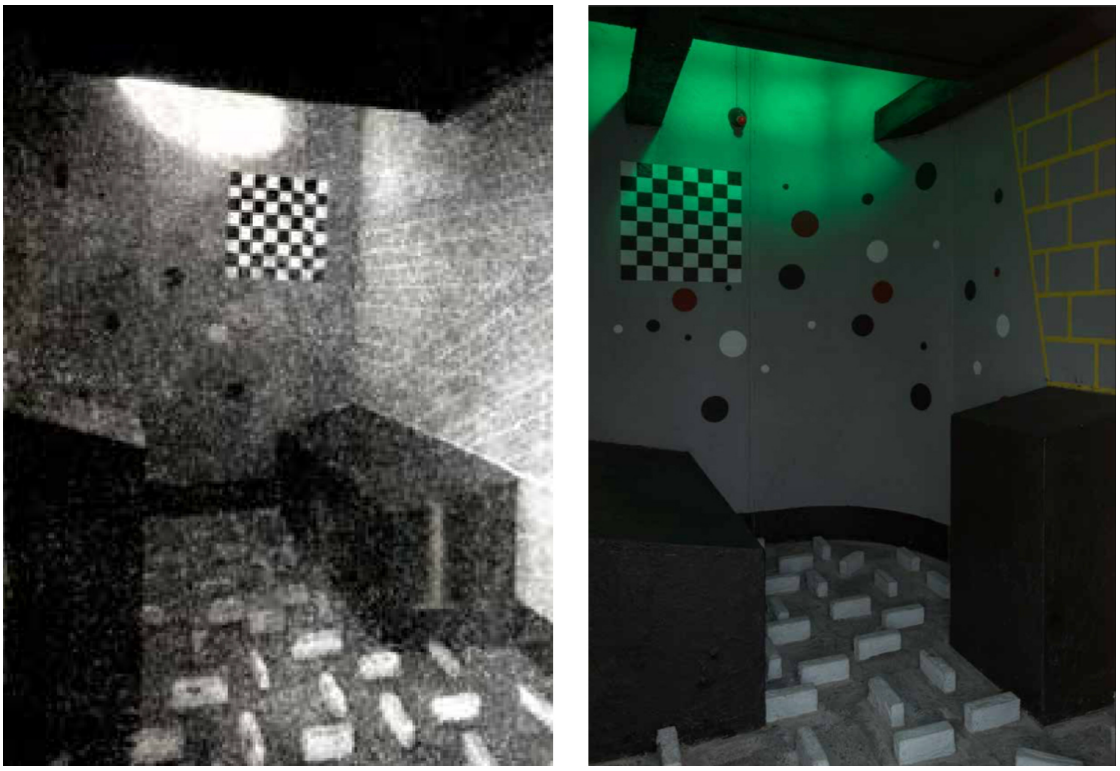

Fig. 1 Pedro G. Romero, vintage photograph, *Cheka de Vallmajor*, in VV.AA. *Historia de la Cruzada Española. TXXXIV. Campaña de Cataluña y ofensiva de la victoria.* Ediciones Españolas S.A., Madrid, 1939-1942 (left) / Contemporary re-enactment in *Tesauros: Décor (Re-enactment of Cheka de Vallmajor, Barcelona, 1937-1939)*, MEIAC Collection, in *Archivo F.X. Habitación*, CA2M, Madrid, 2017 (right).

The 'art historian' who revealed the earliest brutal use of modern art that Slavoj Zizek is referring to in the opening pages of his essay is, in fact, Spanish artist Pedro G. Romero (b. 1964); his thorough and methodical research project, titled *Archivo F.X.*, reminds one of a scholar making an original contribution to knowledge. From 1999 to 2017, Romero was actively, and collaboratively, collecting, archiving and re-enacting more than a thousand photographs and documents that link Spain's history of anticlerical political iconoclasm to positions adopted by the international avant-gardes. He did so while, paraphrasing Jürgen Habermas, "urbanising the landscape of nihilism,"[i] that is to say, the geographies of post-modernism. *Archivo F.X.* aims to set the basis from which to build a counter-narrative, revealing the mutual interests that 20th century radical political projects such as communism, fascism, and capitalism seem to paradoxically share with the aesthetic excesses of the avant-gardes. These common interests are, among others, to eliminate the human figure, enhance perception, and assimilate behaviours.

Within a photographic archive of beheaded sculptures, religious buildings with renewed uses, expropriated sacred places, Laurencic's 'chekas' occupy a primary position within *Archivo F.X.*[ii] For Romero, chekas represent a degree zero of sorts.

Furthermore, they exemplify the impossible gap between the intention modern artists had in mind (most constructivists and theosophists such as Kandinsky and Klee desired to inhabit the world differently, more freely) and the real use their designs ended up having in this particular case (detention, torture, and violence).

This kind of paradox about the malfunction of the artwork, its desecration and vandalism, is what Pedro G. Romero's photographic archival work evinces. "There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism," wrote Walter Benjamin. Romero seems to concur. "And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism *taints* the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another. The historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from this process of transmission as far as possible. He regards it as his task to *brush history against the grain*" (Benjamin 392, emphases added).

If we use the term Slavoj Zizek applied in the aforementioned book to describe the subversive potential that emerges from two incompatible views, that is, two antagonistic stances that become visible when the motion of a 'parallax shift' takes place[iii], we could argue that Romero's chekas reconstruction within the museum space theatrically reveals a contradictory way of seeing the pairing of art/torture, that is to say, of considering the alliance of culture/barbarism.[iv] In other words, chekas expose a short circuit or a gap between antagonistic junctures that, simultaneously, share the interest of enhancing perception through abstraction.

For the past twenty years, Romero has disseminated this collective imaginary, covering the period between 1845 and 1945, in the form of exhibitions, re-enactments, printouts, and performances, while fluidly adopting hybrid roles such as the curator, the lecturer, the artist… You name it. In a recent publication, Romero declared: "It is incredible how historians continue to operate using texts and documents as the only tools for accuracy, and fail badly when they try to show the same History at exhibitions and audio-visual displays as if these were not the formidable devices History used to shape the masses (*and not the well-constructed sentence*). Perhaps one should look at the model Marcel Broodthaers offers *as a historian*" (Romero 23, emphases added).

In this regard, maybe Zizek was not misguided and the artist could be understood as an 'art historian' after all. It is the critical task of the archive to "*put to work* an experience with history," Walter Benjamin reminded us (Osborne 47). Romero's reference to Broodthaers sheds light on his approach to the dissemination of radical narratives in the 20th century. It was Broodthaers's seminal artwork depicting the Battle of Waterloo, *Décor: A Conquest,* theatrically displayed at the ICA in 1975, which is embedded in Romero's archival thesaurus (fxysudoble.org), and that the artist used as a starting point from which to analyse the chekas. Archival material from Broodthaers's influential ornamental work intermingles with his own as a 'cat's cradle'.

The same occurs with Hélio Oiticica's *Barracão* and Robert Morris's *Notes on Sculpture*, which Romero references to reflect on the role of theatre and scenography as artifice and a materialist practice.

Likewise, Romero invites younger artists such as Lola Lasurt (b. 1983) and the collective María Jesús González and Patricia Gómez (both b. 1978), among others, to respond to his work so that his archival findings, once concluded, will have an afterlife. Lasurt recuperated the only remaining Italian futurist film, *Thais* by Anton Giulio Bragaglia, and created an animation focusing on the final act, in which the main character dies alone in a prison cell. Painted scenes have geometric shapes interacting with the protagonists, thus acquiring a living agency. As the film progresses, it becomes more and more abstract to reflect an increasing confusion. In the case of González and Gómez, the collective researched the multi-layered history of a particular cheka in their hometown, the St Ursula Convent in Valencia, and created one of their superb *frottages* to visually reveal the heterogeneous materiality of religious and violent infrastructures.

But the materialist approach that most masterfully displays the promise of artifice is found in Broodthaers's *Décor,* which entails another set of inadequate and opposing relations (comfort and war, interiority and conflict); pairs that return the notion of the body as a spatial mediator to the spotlight. *Décor* anticipated the ultimate fate of the artwork when assimilated by canonical history and the art market. Only by doing so, foreseeing the exploitation of the artwork and evincing it, Romero argues that art can recover its 'functionality'.

However, what functionality is required for criticality? What this essay aims to trace is the organic response to violence on which the archive is assembled, distorted and embodied from the late 1970s to date in the Spanish contemporary arena. The archive is understood as a toolbox for reconstructing, not only the memories of the past but, following Jacques Derrida's influential thesis, re-assembling the responsibilities and promises of the future; in other words, its criticality. To this effect, in these pages I propose a non-exhaustive series of works that seemingly concur with an approach to archiving that relates to their capacity to affect, and to have a counter-effect, by the means of the parallax view—that is to say, by displacement and alternation.

In 1999, the same year that Romero started his archival journey, political theorist Chantal Mouffe gave her first lecture within the context of a museum space at MACBA-CCCB in Barcelona. Titled "For a Politics of Democratic Identity," the Belgian thinker returned to her seminal book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, to explore the inherent antagonistic nature that defines 'the political' as opposed to the ensemble of practices and discourses seeking to establish a certain balance that defines 'politics'. This inherent antagonistic nature of the political that Mouffe's argument highlights resonates with Slavoj Zizek's notion of the 'parallax view', since both terms define

irreducible incompatibilities. Both theorists defend dissent and opposition as inherent to communication and interaction.[v] That is to say that certain positionings and perspectives are not able to achieve consensus and therefore entail fissures. Every action, every frame, every edition requires choice, which results in discrimination and thus exclusion. Didn't George Perec say that to think is to classify?

Mouffe's influential notion of 'antagonism' coined a homonymous exhibition at MACBA two years after her visit. Her lecture was inserted as a text within the exhibition materials and was located right after Manuel Borja Villel's curatorial essay. Pedro G. Romero and Marcel Broodthaers, were included among other artists such as Rogelio López Cuenca, Hans Haacke, Harun Farocki, Guerrilla Girls, Lygia Pape, Allan Sekula, and Jeff Wall, who contributed with their projects. These artists have bodies of work that, in my view, rehearse the asymmetric nature of 'the political' that also defines Spanish artistic and institutional practices. This inadequate antagonism brings light to the narrative's intricacies and activates an affective response.[vi]

This is also the case of filmmaker Basilio Martín Patino (1930-2017), whose critical films on the Spanish Civil War and Francoist Spain rehearse the avid unevenness of 'the political'. His filmography shows the impulse that Spain's journey towards democracy experienced, which framed an artistic and political attitude traceable to date. Patino's particular reading of the period of intellectual exile throughout the 1940s and 1950s presents a country needing to move past the memory of the Civil War and confront a painful present.

Frequently using archival newsreels and anonymous footage and photographs, Patino developed a body of work that proposed unpretentious counter-narratives to the authoritarian regime and its dominant propaganda, which in some cases were only revealed after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. I am referring to the documentary trilogy for which he is best known: *Canciones para después de una Guerra* [Songs for After a War] (1971), *Queridísimos Verdugos* [Dearest Executioners] (1973), and *Caudillo* [Commander] (1974). Namely, the first film of the trilogy, *Songs for After a War,* consists of archival recordings approved by Franco's regime, reconfigured to create a fictitious account. Because of Patino's eagerness for falsification, he called the films 'documentiras' (documentary-lies). The methodology wittily applied by the filmmaker questions the referential value of the image: its representational paradox and rhetorical dependence, which years later became indispensable in his practice as well as that of younger generations. Films such as *Madrid* (1987), *La seducción del caos* [The Seduction of Chaos] (1990) and, more precisely, the seven-episode TV show *Andalucía, un siglo de fascinación* [Andalucía, a century of fascination] (1996) are excellent examples of Patino's visual acuity. As an aside, it is worth mentioning that in *Andalucía,* Patino takes this experimental fictitious

approach one step further while masterfully aligning with other simultaneous projects such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Historie(s) du cinema*, completed two years later in 1998.

Because of the filmmaker's subtle and humorous way of generating political significance with archival footage and photographs, *Songs for After a War* was very well received with audiences of conflicting political stances, who were nonetheless united in their consent and approval. Following Mouffe's definition of politics (the ensemble of practices and discourses seeking to establish a certain 'balance'), *Songs for After a War* withstands the antagonism inherent to the work.

Fig. 2 Basilio Martín Patino, archival footage in *Madrid* (1987) (left) / still from the film (right). In relation to this sequence Patino wrote: "They continue to be here. Due to the incapacity of photography to lie, it is not its capacity to copy reality what disturbs us, but its mystery..." in *Espejos en la niebla*, Madrid: Circulo de Bellas Artes, 2010, p. 113.

This way of understanding the archive as a contestation to authority connects with a global tradition of archiving as an art practice; this shift took place predominantly in the 1990s, the era of spreading capitalism, and coincided with what was called 'the social turn'. At the time, a reading of photography as an archival device whose condition related to its capacity to enact and destroy a mnemonic experience was proposed by academics such as Benjamin Buchloh. This 'enacting and destroying' of

memories, as described by Buchloh in "The Anomic Archives", is what also emerges from the iconoclastic and vandalist approach of Romero's body of work, and from Patino's documentaries of dubious veracity. Buchloh's approach to Gerhard Richter's position with regard to the photographic legacies of the historical avant-garde, resonates with *Archivo F.X.* and Patino's films in the sense that they all share, in their respective contexts and like others at the time, an understanding of "photography and its various practices as a system of ideological domination and more precisely as one of the instruments with which collective anomie, amnesia and repression are socially inscribed" (Buchloh 134). In a "desire for the radical transformation of hierarchical class relations and of the structures that determine authorship and production," the case studies presented in this essay are not interested in recuperating historical memories of a particular event in history for the sake of a moral truth; on the contrary, they pursue the motion of the parallax view, the movement and circulation of the very same representations and devices that have constructed the hegemonic consensual narrative. By shifting its perspective, by 'brushing history against the grain,' its paradoxical nature and violence are hence revealed.

Ibon Aranberri's (b. 1969) proposal for Manifesta 4 (2001), *G-Pavilion*, is yet another example that resonates with this analysis. In his practice, Aranberri offers alternations of historical and iconographical references related to the Spanish imaginary. The appropriation and transformation of Picasso's *Guernica* into a black-and-white reproduction, an antagonistic array that eliminates any sort of in-betweens and greys, and the displacement of the 'uncontested' oeuvre (locating it in the middle of a residential area in Frankfurt in the form of a Mies van der Rohe-style pavilion)[vii] seems to transform a protest icon into an invisible adornment. This parallax motion takes us back to the archive's inherent ability to enact and destroy memories—for amnesia, but perhaps also for anaesthesia. While the representation of Romero's chekas shared the modern interest of enhancing perception through abstraction, Aranberri's device minimised perception through figuration and surplus.

In this regard, Basilio Martín Patino's surplus material in *Songs for After a War* was paired with music that gave a satirical tone to the appropriated images, recovering anonymous historical memories, taking weight off the hegemonic official account, and consequently revealing the artifice of its construction. Like Aranberri, Patino also displaces the logic of the fact/fiction pairing in the writing of canonical narratives. The filmmaker used popular culture, songs, and images from everyday life, such as pictures from newspapers and television newsreels. He presented a story from a viewpoint that would allow collective memories to be rebuilt with an added criticality. His film *Songs for After a War* is projected on loop next to Picasso's *Guernica* at the Reina Sofía Museum's permanent collection; this is in part for its contextual value, but also its

potential to trigger an emotional and mnemonic response. In 2017, Chantal Mouffe returned to Spain to discuss the relationship between affect and politics within the context of the exhibition *Pity and Terror: Picasso's Path to Guernica* at the Reina Sofía Museum. The invitation came from the very same director who, back in the 1990s, had asked Mouffe to introduce the discipline of political theory within the cultural context of the museum, precisely when the so-called 'social turn' was at its peak, globally, in the visual arts. The trend had arrived prematurely in Spain, due to the country's eagerness to construct a social and democratic public sphere after thirty-six years of autocracy.

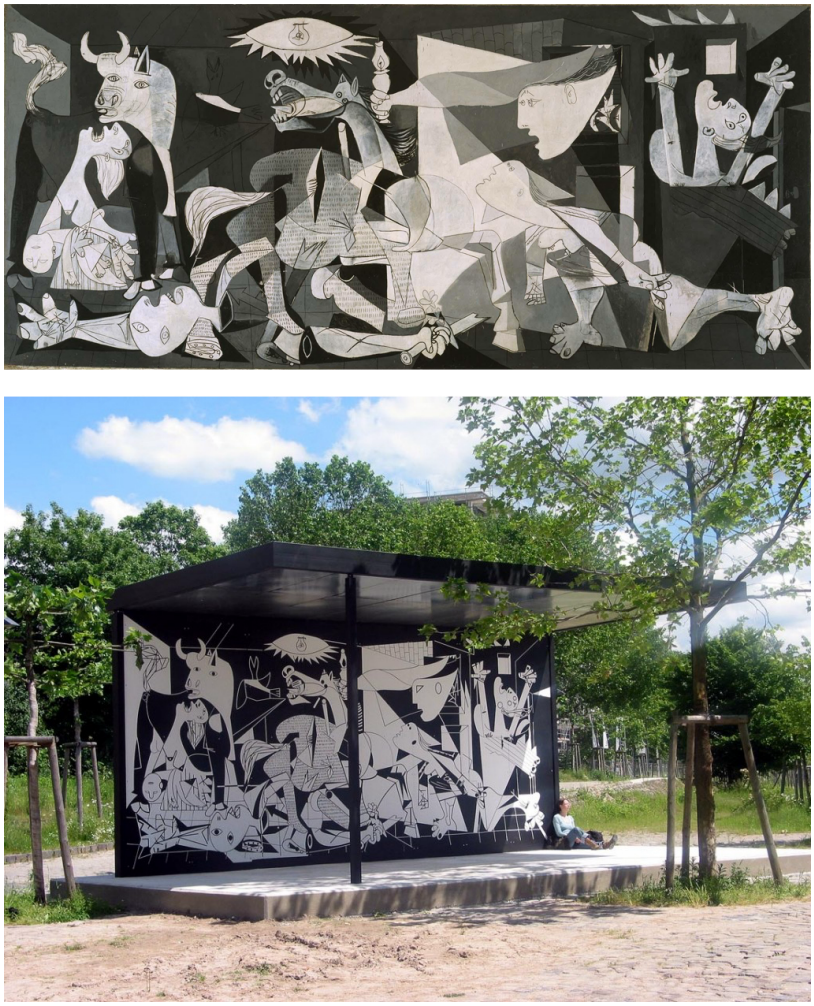

Fig. 3 Pablo Picasso, *Guernica* (1937) / Ibon Aranberri, *G-Pavilion* (2001)

Particularly relevant were the 1970s, when Patino and other contemporaries such as Catalan filmmaker Pere Portabella (b. 1929) showed, with their films, how art and politics were allies in their fight towards democracy. The film *Informe general sobre algunas cuestiones de interés para una proyección pública* [General Report on Some Interesting Facts for a Public Showing] (1976) is fundamental for understanding the transition. In it, Portabella explored feasible tactics for achieving rule of law. Instead of following the usual approach of the documentary format, Portabella also

chose the 'documentira' (documentary-lie) and included fragments of other Spanish cinema works, footage from anti-Franco demonstrations, and reconstructions of historical accounts. By choosing the fictitious version, the filmmaker adds distance to the historical linearity and celebrates a creative freedom that allows him to generate speculative associations and alternate forms of knowledge. Now, we are in the middle of a new shift that characterises our present time, 'the affective turn', which aspires to move away from post-modernist anaesthesia. In her recent visit to Madrid, Chantal Mouffe supported this turn, introducing her view on the relevance of individual emotions and collective affection to provoke change. Relying on *Guernica*'s transcendence and widespread recognition in which artistic and political value are inextricably entangled, she proposed a theoretical transition from her aforementioned definition of 'antagonism', inherent to 'the political', towards a more relational and optimistic form of addressing dissent that she calls 'agonistic pluralism'. This allows her to balance and place value on a sense of hope for a better world that—despite its conflicting nature—*Guernica*'s horror scene still entails.

Yet again, agonistic pluralism, understood as a constructive and hopeful desire to mobilise affects, is what we also find in Patino's latest documentary work *Libre te quiero* [I Want You Free] (2012). This is perhaps his most straightforward film in the sense of allowing the images to perform a narrative on their own. The film is reinforced with interviews and commentaries but with very little editing and trickery. The documentary begins with the confluence of demonstrators at Madrid's Puerta del Sol and the assembly of the 15-M *indignados* movement, who occupied public squares around the country in protest of the economic crisis that preceded these events. The public square's infrastructure and the net of affective relations amongst *indignados* opened up as a 'cat's cradle' throughout Spanish territories—affects and a sense of hope that exceeded the Spanish squares and filmmaker's frames, and converged with artists of younger generations. Conversely, Portabella shot his *Informe General II: El nuevo rapto de Europa* [General Report II: The New Abduction of Europe] (2016), which also presented footage of public demonstrations, symposia and more intimate discussions with cultural workers, academics and scientists, with the intention to reflect on the role of the museum as a space for debate. Resisting any ultimate answers, *General Report II* explores various models of participatory organisation, social and political movements involved in the ever-changing European arena, and various crises—paying particular attention to the ecological crisis. Interestingly enough, both Patino and Portabella abandoned the 'documentira' format at the end of their respective careers and returned to a more conservative linearity, renouncing the fictional potential that emerges from the fissures of an impossible consensus, but also from the agonistic form of muddling and archiving that they had originally favoured.

Fig. 4 Basilio Martín Patino, *Libre te quiero,* film still showing the slogan *Violencia es cobrar 600 euros* [Violence is Getting Paid 600 Euros] (2012) / Inmaculada Salinas, *Violencia es cobrar 600 euros,* installation view at Espaivisor, Valencia (2017).

Nevertheless, artists such as Isaías Griñolo, Inmaculada Salinas, and Teresa Lanceta continue to develop bodies of work that recuperate the motion of the parallax view and 'put to work experiences with history.' For instance, *romance de las plazas* [romance at public squares] (2013) by Isaías Griñolo (b. 1963) is one of his three artist's books dedicated to the political turmoil that aligns with the latest proposals by Patino and Portabella. Its opening pages feature the second amendment of the Spanish Constitution, which has been in place since 1978: the modification of Article 135. This amendment was made very cautiously in the summer of 2011, just three months after the *indignados* took the squares; it raised the principle of budget stability into a constitutional mandate—but with no previous public debate. The payment of public debt, partly acquired by fraudulent practices,[viii] was from that moment onwards a priority over people's needs. Isaías Griñolo's art practice muddles voices, intermingles poems, and collects anonymous photographs about the constitutional deadlock, the anti-austerity movement, and the various excesses taking place in a highly mediatised

and digitised 21st century world. It is a world we archive, and where we are archived; a world where a way to circumvent seems impossible. And to disseminate this landscape with uncertain boundaries, Griñolo invites others to collectively mobilise counter-narratives using 'the formidable devices History has used to shape the masses' that Romero previously described; from visual artists and writers to flamenco singers and activists such as Enrique Falcón, Antonio Orihuela, Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Niño de Elche, and Espai en Blanc. Ultimately, Griñolo's multi-format proposals celebrate collective dissent and its inevitable gaps, and act as a form of resistance and story telling by entangling voices and personal narratives.[ix]

In considering an 'agonistic pluralism', we can also look to the work of Inmaculada Salinas (b. 1967), with whom Grinolo has collaborated on numerous exhibitions revolving around the social effects and irreducible incompatibilities of alienation and emancipation. As an image gleaner, Salinas takes the fictional capacity of her found photographs one step further and reflects on their rhetorical dependence in which repression is socially inscribed. Salinas manifests this idea by means of muddling stories and images: reassemblies that place value on the notions of 'care' and 'interdependence' as inherent to any form of societal organisation from the perspective of genre. Her feminist approach to this matter also focuses on the anonymous labour and precarious wages particular to the contemporary era (Vallés). This is the case of *Prensadas* and her performative artwork *Violencia es cobrar 600 euros* [Violence is Getting Paid 600 Euros] (2017), which recuperates the homonymous 15-M *indignados* slogan that also appears in Patino's latest film, in a manner that highlights the increasingly alienating experience of being both employed and poor in a neoliberal economy. In one of her recent exhibition openings, Salinas spent the duration painting the slogan that gives title to the artwork as if it was embroidered. In this, and her other works, she critically addresses the historical struggles of the commons and the asymmetric relationship between wages and house workers that theorists such as Silvia Federici also aim to align by highlighting the discrepancies between the two.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible,* Jacques Rancière declares that "…it is not a matter of claiming that 'History' is only made up of stories that we tell ourselves, but simply that *the 'logic of stories' and the ability to act as historical agents go together*. Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct 'fictions', that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done" (Rancière 39).

This push to act as 'historical agents' takes us back to the beginning of this essay and how 'a Spanish art historian uncovered the first use of modern art as a deliberate form of torture,' in an effort to demonstrate that intention and function are not always

aligned. At first, Kandinsky, Klee, Buñuel, and Dalí little had to do with Alphonse Laurencic's conjectures, but the train of history ran its course and put them together. Unfortunately, Laurencic's decision to exploit his artistic knowledge was in vain, as his advances did not save his life. In turn, Pedro G. Romero constructed fictitious accounts that evinced this malfunctioned bifurcation: Romero created an interruption, identified the crack.

The same year that Laurencic helped to create the torture centres and Picasso's *Guernica* travelled to Britain, another aerial bombing took place in Catalonia, in what was recorded as the longest and largest battle of the Spanish Civil War: The Battle of Ebro. Franco's abusive allies (the Nazi German Luftwaffe's Condor Legion and the Fascist Italian Aviazione Legionaria) destroyed Corbera de l'Elbre and, unlike Guernica, the now irreducible Old Town of Corbera was not rebuilt but displaced. The motion of the parallax view allows us to see past and present simultaneously: heterogeneous temporalities that define our contemporaneity.

Living in Alicante and teaching in Barcelona, Teresa Lanceta (b. 1951) passes by this Catalan region where her family used to live on a weekly basis. From a very young age, Lanceta embraced weaving as the medium by which to construct her work. Having lived in Morocco's Middle Atlas, among many other locations, her textiles focus on the interdependence and care that arise from the agonistic stories that have, and continue to, help nomadic communities to communicate and share knowledge. Her own travels, displacement and movement are infused in her weaving. And so are the thirty houses or so she lived in over the years,[x] each of which gives name to one of her artworks.

In today's increasingly mechanised and digitised cultures of virtuality and mobility, touch as a collective form of archiving and collecting stories, of making and knowing, can also reactivate new forms of enquiry and add to the historical equation. In the series that Lanceta dedicates to Corbera, the artist takes as her starting reference a silvery blue blanket that her grandmother had used to keep bread from getting mouldy. An artefact passed hand-to-hand that brings us back to the house workers of Salinas and Federici, and their practices towards emancipation and care. But this also refers us to the body as a spatial mediator, which Broodhaers's *Décor* set of inadequate opposites (comfort and war) and Benjamin's critical revision of the theory and practice of historical materialism (barbarism and culture) both displayed.

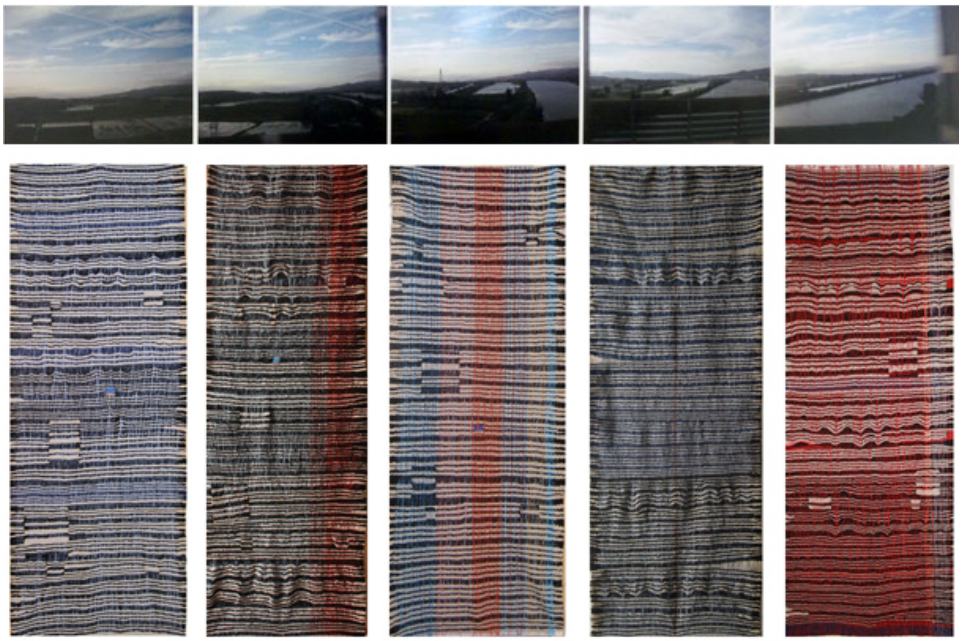

Fig. 5 Teresa Lanceta, detail of *El Paso del Ebro*, selection of photographs, five tapestries (2015)

Lanceta wove five tapestries emulating an inherited object, while gradually introducing variations of red: one for each month of blood that was poured during the disastrous and unjust battle that resulted in tens of thousands of dead and wounded bodies, many of which remain under the rice fields. She also wrote a diary and took, from a train in motion, 230 photographs in response to the inscription 'of collective anomie, amnesia and repression' of those still without image, without figure, without name.

This act of re-weaving and re-telling a rotten history in an alternate way imbues the original blanket with a renewed agency. The Ebro River embodied in a long bluish entanglement of threads is now 'tainted' with streams of bloody red, similar to the ways in which barbarism taints the transmission of a document. There are threats to the initial function of the artefact, an innocent blanket, that 'invert' the logic of care (comfort and war, once again).

At a time when museums continue to lose their social credibility as spaces that bring together and legitimate the transformative power of art, the various proposals presented in this essay manifest the importance of artists acting as historical agents in disguise, so that other alignments, standpoints and perspectives outside of a recurrent anaesthesia are possible. Whether these are re-enactments of archival photographs or footage, iconic masterpieces transformed into adornments and photographic surplus, or snaps in motion converted into beautiful tapestries echoing a silenced virulence, the bodies of work presented in these pages uncover the paradoxical nature of an impossible consensus with a historical current, which continuously takes the other side of the parallax view, the exhausting side of disaffection, alienation, and separation. In

this operation of searching for either a balance or a gap, agonism or antagonism, ‘material rearrangements of signs and images’ within the institutional arena take an essential part in triggering an emotional and mnemonic response. And last but not least, they play a fundamental role in putting to work experiences within the rhetorical conflicts of history beyond ‘the well-constructed sentence’, such as this one.

Acknowledgements
This essay has been written in dialogue with Nuria Enguita Mayo, with whom I share work and interests. The involvement of Enguita as a curator and accomplice of several projects presented in these pages such as *Archivo F.X. Habitación* at CA2M (Madrid) and Manifesta 4 (Frankfurt), as well as her on-going companionship throughout the years as co-editor of Concreta Journal has nurtured not only this specific research, but also my overall understanding of contemporary art practice, for which I am very grateful.

References

Basilio Martín Patino. *Espejos en la niebla*. Madrid: Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2008.

Benjamin Buchloh. "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive." *October*, Vol. 88 (Spring, 1999), pp. 117-145.

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Ciudad: Editorial, 1985.

Daniel Miller. "Materiality: An Introduction." *Materiality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Donna Haraway. *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Fernado Estévez González y Mariano de Santa Ana. Memorias y olvidos del archivo. Las Palmas de Gran Canarias: CAAM, 2010.

Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Jacques Rancière. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, London & New York: Continuum, 2004.

Kojin Karatani. *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2003.

Laura Vallés Vílchez. "Espigadora de imágenes." *El País*, November 1st, 2017.

Nuria Enguita Mayo. *Archivo F.X. La ciudad vacía: Política*. Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tapies, 2008.

Pedro G. Romero. *Archivo F.X. Habitación*. Madrid: CA2M, 2018.

Peter Osborne. "El archivo como vida después de la vida" [Archive as Afterlife]. *Concreta 06*. Valencia, 2015.

Pere Portabella, "Si quieres hacer cine ahora colócate en la periferia y ni se te ocurra salir de ella," *Concreta 12*, Valencia, 2018.

Slavoj Zizek. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2006.

Walter Benjamin. "On the Concept of History." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume, 4: 1938-1940*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

[i] Nuria Enguita Mayo in conversation with Pedro G. Romero on the occasion of the exhibition *Archivo F.X. La ciudad vacia: Politica* at the Fundacio Antoni Tapies, Barcelona, 2008.

[ii] Chekas with *k* to differentiate them from the rest of the detention centres associated with both Republicans and Francoists

[iii] A *parallax view* is a displacement or difference in the apparent position of an object viewed along two different lines of sight, and is measured by the angle of inclination between those two lines. The term is derived from Ancient Greek *parallaxis* meaning "alternation". Zizek uses this idea, which comes from Kojin Karatani's *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, to review the Hegelian dialectic from a materialist perspective and conclude that the Hegelian synthesis is the recognition of the intermission or gap between two positions. The author argues that Hegel does not overcome Kantian dualism, but quite the opposite, he asserts it as such. This coincides with Bruno Latour's thesis, defending that the Hegelian dialectic expands the abyss between the poles of subject and object that it aims to fill (Miller 1-50).

[iv] In 2009, Pedro G. Romero reconstructed the cheka installed in 1938 in the church on Calle Vallmajor in Barcelona. This reconstruction took place within the context of an exhibition organised by the Reina Sofía Museum, *Silo. Archivo F.X.*

[v] My doctoral research highlights that the notion of *dissent* has gained increasing importance in the last few years, finding other thinkers such as Donna Haraway developing literature on this subject matter from a relational and ecological viewpoint, which emphasizes the importance of speculation and science fiction.

[vi] *Antagonisms. Case Studies* explored concepts such as the occupation of the streets as a theatre for spontaneous activities, art as service, fiction and the construction of historical memory, the post-functional object, activism and collaboration, the questioning of the concept of authorship, alternative exhibition models, and the function of artistic practice in the ideological domain. The exhibition launched a website that included "Chantal Mouffe" as a section in the index along with other terms such as "Latin America", "Documentary Fiction" and "Situationism": www.macba.cat/antagonismos/english/index.html

[vii] Mies van der Rohe used a print of *Guernica* to decorate his models' sketches.

[viii] According to a report released by the Bank of Spain in September 2016, the cost to Spanish taxpayers of restructuring the country's banking sector since 2009 has been €51.3 billion. Criminal activity was registered and denounced as it occurred with the Bankia case. See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37470509

[ix] The artist's book was a co-production between Editorial Concreta and Tàpies Foundation on the occasion of *Contra Tàpies*: an exhibition curated by Valentín Roma, 2013.

[x] Phone conversation with the author, July 2018.