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0 Introduction

The performance work of Regina José Galindo has been acclaimed globally for its intensity and power of political confrontation. To date, the majority of scholarly investigations of Galindo's work have focused on her use of the female body as a tool of reflection, a screen upon which to project the misery of her native Guatemala and the injustices therein. This type of view posits the notion that Galindo is merely another performance artist, and places her work, art historically speaking, at the back of a long line of performance artists whose focus falls upon the *representation* of a supposed "Other". This is effectively the same as saying that she formulates herself as a tool of reflection, pointing out injustices that have already happened—to *other* people. This outlook is evident in the recent investigation of Lidón Sancho Ribés, who notes in the introduction to her book, *Regina José Galindo: La Performance Como Arma*, that (author translation):

[...]we have used as a central axis precisely the history and works of Regina José Galindo to consider the use of the female body in performance as a screen to bring to light contemporary problems.¹

This investigation seeks to go beyond this sort interpretation; not to in any way debunk the work of Sancho Ribés in particular, but rather to establish an alternative approach to this type of analysis. As our title suggests, we shall want to focus our attention on what it is that is *evental*² in Regina José Galindo's work; to discover, more specifically, what a focus upon the consequences of previous *historical/political events*³ in the work might garner in relation

¹ Sancho Ribés, Lidón, *Regina José Galindo: La Performance Como Arma*, ARS, Universitat Jaume I, 2017, p.10.

² The term "evental" refers to that which is thought to be available subsequent to an event. That is, the "trace" of an event. This may include affects from past events, yet may also include affects from events that have yet to occur. These evental "trace" may impinge on the present moment and are conjured into presence by the event's subjects. As Badiou notes "I call trace 'what subsists in the world when the event disappears.' It's something of the event, but not the event as such; it is the trace, a mark, a symptom. And on the other side, the support of the subject—the reality of the subject in the world—I call 'a new body.' So we can say that the subject is always a new relation between a trace and a body. It is the construction in a world, of a new body, and jurisdiction—the commitment of a trace; and the process of the relationship between the trace and the body is, properly, the new subject. See: https://www.lacan.com/symptom6_articles/badiou.html (cited 22.11.2021)

³ The division of events into historical or political is for our purposes a distinction which ought to aid our understanding of the level of event at play, nothing more. It is not a distinction of any consequence other than to denote that the historical (although arguably political also) is the point in time where something significant happens yet is not directly related to the specific world in question. So for Galindo the historical event may be for example the Russian Revolution; the truths of such an event, as we shall see here in our discussion, may yet impinge on the present as part of a set of historical affect; then the political event which is closer always to the

to her position in the field of art production, particularly in regards to new knowledge vis-à-vis the possible extension of *evental* truths⁴. And we should also want to observe exactly how these truths register aesthetically within her work. Such exactness should demonstrate how we might locate the work Regina Jose Galindo historically as pertaining to *evental trace*⁵, and that this approach provides a new perspective. This investigative path seeks to determine precisely how Regina José Galindo’s performance art and poetry might interact with historical event, simultaneously founding a new evental category in the course of art production.

So it is that the tenets of this investigation, described in the paragraphs to follow, prospect to formulate grounds for the establishment of a more complete conception of Galindo’s work, and the thorough understanding of it as the direct extension a process of *truth*—and furthermore, that this truth has been produced by an *event*—.

These words, *truth* and *event*, belong to a technical vocabulary that throughout this investigation ought naturally to expand and develop. Initially, when the term *truth* is employed it is meant in reference to Alain Badiou’s definition,⁶ which, for the most part, parallels the idea of a truth *process*⁷ underway (in the works in question). This notion of “truth” is then a vague and polemic term which requires some discussion to be used in the field of art. This research intends to open a certain argument based on the need of addressing

site in question, and this distinction is constructed for the purposes of this investigation ONLY; that is, the political event whose direct consequences are evident, and remain of importance for a particular World. So for our purposes we claim genocide to be an important event in the World that Galindo relates her work to, and this is certainly political.

⁴ Evental truth for our purposes is something that happens to humans. It is not that truth exists prior to the subject but that the subject brings the truth into sight through his or her encounter with a situation. Evental truth is then a labour that is part of a plural procedure occurring at the site of a singular event. Evental truth seizes its subject, obliges their “fidelity”, and certainly has the power to alter the situations in which subjects come to find themselves. For Badiou, truth is always a “procedure” or “process”; it is not the flash of light produced by the event itself, but the tarrying with its trace, the organization of the newness produced by the event. This is why we are going to refer to that which is around after one event and before the next as “evental” truth. See Pluth, Ed, *Badiou*, Polity, 2010, p.88-89.

⁵ See note 2.

⁶ For Badiou truths are infinite and form part of a generic procedure, which seems to operate at a level above and beyond the materiality of the present, as he notes: “Grasped in its being, the subject is solely the finitude of the generic procedure, the local effects of an evental fidelity. What it ‘produces’ is the truth itself, an indiscernible part of the situation, but the infinity of the truth transcends it.” See Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Bloomsbury, London, 2007, p.406.

⁷ See note 4.

“truth” as an unavoidable aspect of Galindo’s work insofar as it pertains to its *ethical* condition.

The location for this activity is important. It is not the *if*, nor *when* nor *where* of event that is of concern to this investigation, but rather the *in-between*. The onus for the analysis falls not then upon event, but rather the subject as she “performs” and carries with pre-evental/post evental “truths”. It is important for us to understand something about “truth” from the very outset: truth is *not* the insistence upon any historically determined “facts”, but is rather, a set of ideas that are developed as part of a labour, a process that is the direct carrying with evental affects. It is not that we can say, in a particular situation, that this is “true”; but rather, it is something that must be decided upon communally. Truth is then constructed (and remains infinitely accessible), a rational process related in each singularity to the *ethics*⁸ produced in that same situation, what Badiou refers to as “World”.⁹

Looking at politics means looking at socio-political events and the affects they produce. To do this with any clarity, one must (as a *faithful* subject of truth)¹⁰, double-down upon one’s perception of the *truth* of the situation. Here, one *performs*¹¹ the truth of a prior event; becoming then what Badiou refers to as the “subject” of truth. As then the bearer of *fidelity*¹², the subject is that figure who participates in the process of truth. This necessitates

⁸ The topic of ethics is discussed in detail throughout this investigation. Ethics it seems as far as Badiou is concerned, like truth, is something that must be concerned with the details of each and every situation that is to be measured. By this Badiou means that the only true ethics is that which is developed as part of a procedure related to evental truth. To be ethical then is to remain among those who are faithful to the evental truths they experience as the result of an event. This is the process of evental fidelity, tantamount to an ethics of truth(s). As Badiou notes, “To be faithful is to gather together and distinguish the becoming legal of a chance”, see, Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Meditation Twenty-Three: *Fidelity, Connection*, Bloomsbury, 2006, p.232-239.

⁹ The word World refers to a *situation* in Badiou, a coherent set of innumerable appearances governed by a transcendental regime. See Hallward, Peter, *A Subject to Truth*, Minnesota, 2003, p.300.

¹⁰ The “faithful” subject of truth is that person who is obliged to work in the service of truth. To this extent it is the very activity of the subject of truth who brings about the appearance of truths related to an event. The faithful subject is always engaged in the construction of a new present whose process and the end result Badiou calls a truth. See Pluth, op. cit., p.4.

¹¹ For a discussion of performativity as part of the evental trace situation see note

¹² Fidelity and faithfulness are related in our context. See note 10. A process of fidelity involves those subjects who with carry the truth forwards towards its destination. Norris notes that there are two types of fidelity in Badiou, both of which we are claiming to exist in the works observed here in this study. First there is the matter of correctness, validity, warrant, or the match (correspondence) between the truth bearers and truth makers (something fixes this truth-value as part of the event); Then, there is the second interpretation, this is involves some truthfulness to some idea, hypothesis, theory, project, undertaking, or political cause that necessitates an intellectual or political commitment and will also seek to move beyond the boundaries currently in place in any given World. See Norris, Christopher, *Fidelity, The Badiou Dictionary*, Ed. Steven Corcoran, Edinburgh, p.132.

the formation of an epistemology (post-evental knowledges) which are measurable through those postures produced; and of course—recorded materially—they then become historical. These acts of fidelity are in and of themselves *ethical*—to the extent that they are the result of a decision—. The subject *decides (faithful, obscure, reactive)*¹³ that he or she will give themselves over entirely to that which is in excess of themselves (only the faithful is initially activated); the subject is induced as the truth passes through their being. We can review this process in the work of Galindo, and so, from the perspective of aesthetics, it is interesting to observe what form this “passing through” takes.

An example of how Regina José Galindo channels these evental elements is found in Chapter 2, (2.1 below), and the discussion of *affect* and *memory* that emerges within the performance *Quien puede borrar las huellas*.¹⁴ Through observations of this particular work, we see precisely how Galindo continually refers us back to the *realization* of event as potential origin of truth. It is significant to note that this idea of realization is one of the central dictums of this investigation. In order to carry out this realization it seems that Galindo will need to harness the truth of historical event. The “reignition of event truth(s)” is one way to describe the interventions of Galindo—to the extent that immaterial knowledge (truths), and here we are referring to affects, come to the fore to produce would-be outcomes: there is the potential *realization* of political consequence. In this sense the *realization* is the acknowledgment of event, even while the consequences of this event (and all it entails as regards to potential) are comprehended now in the performance (experience). For the duration of *¿Quien puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo charges herself with the technical organization of the elements. This she achieves via the presence of evental traces—social memory and evental affect take on material forms related to the specific site (geographical passing through of space, marking of territories, use of human blood)—; these elements are reflected upon within the work. More precisely, they continue to evolve due to the continued

¹³ Although subjects are called into existence by the event there is a moment in which they must decide between the various possibilities under which they may appear. This is a matter of fidelity and faithfulness to an ethic of truth. Badiou divides the three types of subjects into the faithful, the obscure and the reactive. We have discussed the faithful subject who is always the first to appear subsequently to an event and is the bearer of that evental truth that is derived from the original event. The reactive subject takes up a position against the events true meaning and may formulate itself in denial and in often times violent opposition. Meanwhile there is the obscure subject which is a direct confrontation of evental truth(s); here the subject will attempt to abolish all new ideas related to the event. See Besana, Bruno, *Subject, Figures of The, Badiou Dictionary*, op. cit., p.323.

¹⁴ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/quien-puede-borrar-las-huellas-2/>

drawing upon the political eventual remainder (truth). The adoption of a theoretically historical temporality allows this investigation to acknowledge that the work of Galindo has the potential to reignite political elements long since thought closed—and in so doing—affect both the materiality of the present and the general direction of an as yet undecided future. This suggests that the past has produced specific information which may not be coherent when compared to the reviewed truth of an event. The work of Galindo is in this sense an historical examination, as she herself notes: “I am interested in showing the history of my country, what is said; what is not said; what is denied; what is hidden; what lies are told”¹⁵; and so the historical referencing which occurs within the performance work of Galindo provides a new engagement with this lost, deformed, oppressed, forgotten, or misplaced truth. Consistent with this temporality is the realization of truth(s) traceable to the original eventual sequence. To be clear then about *realization*: in this construction and in the facility of event, the performance of Regina José Galindo has an origin that can be found in the past (yet may be described only loosely by its [empty]signifiers: justice/injustice); and a destination which is equally—only partially defined.

Another central claim of this investigation is that the historical sequence of neoliberalism is clearly confronted by Regina José Galindo. So this is specified as a key condition. This is the first confrontation found in the work of Galindo; so her work seeks to resist a recognizable globalized power structure, or performed social relations of power. Galindo holds this system responsible as it controls all that occurs, all of the institutions to which her work seeks to highlight are shown to form part of this corrupt neoliberalism. Indeed it is here we may also confirm our claim that dissolves the “Other”, for true egalitarian and emancipatory politics views each subject in their subjective relationship toward power, this would include a specific universalism in relation to the state, religion, history, race, revolution, and so on. The organization of neoliberalism has two observable levels of jurisdiction: the subtle coercive control we find in the wealthier Northern countries (The United States, Canada, and Central and Western Europe, Japan, Australia) and the more brutal authority, directly relatable to that of the South (Latin America, México, Central and

¹⁵Regina José Galindo: *The Victim and the Victimizer*, Video (subtitles in English) Guggenheim Museum, 2015. See: <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/regina-jose-galindo-la-victima-y-el-victimario-english-captioned> (Quotation begins at minute 5.08).

South America, Africa, Asia, Southern and Eastern Europe). It is meaningful to note that these Southern zones are also the areas most affected by a current geological event which witnesses the extraction (mining) of natural resources, metals and minerals, the destruction of forests, and coastal biospheres, including deep-sea drilling, oil extraction and fracking. This global picture, which is of deep concern to Galindo, is then geographically refined, to reveal a local situation—historically and culturally at least—that pertains to her own Guatemala. Moreover, for her it is all possible commitment: the particular becomes then the basis by which she thinks other conditions; this is the indefinable “South”,¹⁶ the region—both geographically and psychologically—relatable to a specific post-colonial perspective. Galindo’s work demonstrates that the political system responsible for violence in Guatemala is relatable to social and ecological *injustice* in Germany, France, México or wherever. And that the very same power structure is responsible for an emerging ecological disaster—the consequences of which are ever more present.

One central idea formalizes the prospect of this investigation: that by concentrating upon eventual truth(s)—as internal obligation, the art in question produces a new and singular set of theoretical propositions, each contingent upon a specific set of relations to eventual remainders, both historically determined and political. Put in another manner, what Galindo does, is arrange specific details (words, symbols, affects, and images) in such a way as the original meaning historical/evental significance is reactivated. By this technical intervention the material is [re]membered—not as history per se—but as actually occurring material truth.

¹⁶ The Global South as a critical concept has three primary definitions. First, it has traditionally been used within intergovernmental development organizations—primarily those that originated in the Non-Aligned Movement—to refer to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a post-cold war alternative to “Third World.” However, in recent years and within a variety of fields, the Global South is employed in a post-national sense to address spaces and peoples negatively impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization. In this second definition, the Global South captures a de-territorialized geography of capitalism’s externalities and means to account for subjugated peoples within the borders of wealthier countries, such that there are economic Souths in the geographic North and Norths in the geographic South. While this usage relies on a longer tradition of analysis of the North’s geographic Souths—wherein the South represents an internal periphery and subaltern relational position—the epithet “global” is used to unhinge the South from a one-to-one relation to geography. It is through this de-territorial conceptualization that a third meaning is attributed to the Global South in which it refers to the resistant imaginary of a transnational political subject that results from a shared experience of subjugation under contemporary global capitalism. See: Mahler, Anne Garland. “*Global South*.” *Oxford Bibliographies in Literary and Critical Theory*, ed. Eugene O’Brien. 2017. <https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/what-is-global-south> (11.09.19)

By working through evental remainders such as *memory*, *affect*, *trauma*, and so on, Galindo is able to guide enduring contingent truths towards the production of new knowledge—which is then a new part of what may be considered the present. This new knowledge is the production of a thought process which remains incomplete. Now, can all of this be finally understood to be productive in that it assembles, as was noted, the *realization* of a truth; a truth that extends beyond the confines of the now, and as this paper prospects to demonstrate, into a supposed future?

In order to research the possibilities stipulated above, the following detailed structure is planned for the investigation. Firstly, Chapter 1, which the reader will find has been divided into seven interconnected sub-sections. Here are to be found extensive notes upon the theoretical grounding for the investigation; this is mainly based upon the work of the philosopher Alain Badiou. Also in Chapter 1 are broad explanations of what exactly is referred to by our use of the terms *presentation* and *representation*, vis-à-vis the *performative*; likewise what this means for our interpretation of the “Other” as well as what might be said (inside the scope of this investigation) regarding ethics.

Then in Chapter 2 the investigation assumes its interpretative purposes: Galindo’s artwork ought now to demonstrate (via the categories internally produced) how by reinvigorating specific truths through performance and poetry new knowledge may be produced. This Chapter will approach the topic from the perspective of the following categories and specific works: *memory* and *affect*, analysed primarily in the work *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* (2.1); The *poetic measure* of event, as per the analysis of several key poetic works (2.2). Also the direct connection between *event*, *trauma* and the creation of the *female subject* is approached (2.3), the central question here settles upon the way in which a *subject of truth* comes to be the main concern of the works. Finally at the end of Chapter 2 (2.4) the question of *ethics* and *ethical demand* is discussed. What does it mean to be a faithful subject?

Capable of producing something new—this art that meditates upon the truth of the event—is itself nonetheless inseparable from its own situation. Throughout Chapter 2 the foundation for this investigation ought to be evident: not then a Hegelian transcendental ideal, whereby art is the representation of a transcendental truth (the [re]presentation of violence for example-ininitely reproducible), nor might we be discussing an art form that carries with

its own set of internal meanings (the mode and form, the internal concepts of art). Rather—an art form permeated with that which is essential to its specific World, and as such forms an identifiable configuration. It is tempting to view this type of output as mere reproduction of historical information, but that is not at all of any interest, and would be of even less consequence. Instead, what this text pretends to determine is that Galindo produces a performance art—that directly interacts with evental truth(s).

The concept of a repurposing or reignition of evental truth(s) immanently performed through art is subsequently supported in Chapter 3. Here focus upon the work of Galindo—as per the production of new meaning derived from her art and specific elements of evental truth—is expected to open the way for new knowledge. This is in turn reflected through the relationship of the analysed performance in regards to *micro-political* concerns and the female body (3.1); *identity*, *evental site*, and *public space* are described as elements that impinge on meaning (3.2) and again it is specific analysis of the performances that form the basis for this discussion. Political interference is then approached (3.3). Chapter 4 is a space in which to recapitulate, but should also serve as a focus point for suggested further study. Chapter 5 will be given over to the sources used in this investigation. The current optimistic anticipation is that this exploration—in the very least—opens a number of viable channels by which certain notions pertaining to the discussion of Regina José Galindo and event, rather than delivering any conclusive knowledge, merely provides the foundation upon which further and perhaps more substantial questions may be constructed.

1 Regina José Galindo: Tarrying with Evental Trace

1.1 The Revolution Comes First

As the central claim for this investigation rests in the idea of event truth(s) and Galindo's art—it is reasonable to include here a more in-depth analysis of what kinds of evental elements can be linked to her work. This ought not be, however, an attempt to describe the entirety of events, but rather to describe some of the key points considered necessary to the understanding of our hypothetical frame. As mentioned already, the site of the debate falls at the intersection between one event and the anticipated arrival of the next (although this is not predictable); so once an event occurs there is this gathering at its site, and whilst the event

itself is not accessible, its aftermath and the organising of its consequences are historical, that is they have a set of observable procedures engaged upon by the relevant stakeholders—be they state officials, unions, human rights organisations, artist groups, activists, and so on—; in terms of event they are historically compelled to contest (or strengthen) the actuality of hegemonic state power. Events are (the consequences) thus duly catalogued and absorbed into human language (speaking of course of events that occur within the spectrum of human societies).

Alain Badiou refers to the unknowability of the precise event as the *void*.¹⁷ The event he says appears from nowhere. At the centre of every situation (by this I refer to social construction or accredited order of truth and being) there exists an unknowable void. As human subjects we can never enter into the void to reveal its truths. So in order to get close to event we must first understand that it has a place, what Badiou refers to as a World (in terms of what he calls “transcendental situation¹⁸”); that is, a temporal, geographical and social location that forms the setting for the event to appear. Theoretically the aim of this investigation is to locate Regina José Galindo’s operation as unfolding within a space found between one event and the next. By thinking about Badiou’s notion of a “World” we can begin to ponder the question of how that World might be relatable to an historical process.

The process of truth identifiable in the work of Galindo is far more understandable when the interpretative path already described by Alain Badiou is adopted; and this is because observations of Galindo’s work clearly lead one to think about truths and there is then a correlation between the two. Broad as the topic of truth is in Badiou, it is suffice to describe here only those elements that are of assistance in the understanding of that which is immanently produced by the works in question themselves. So firstly what is the *truth*? One key element that affects our state of awareness when reviewing the works of Galindo is her ability to confront one “truth” with another; by this it is meant that the truth she communicates is that which has been *obscured* in the post-event organisation of information. This obscuring

¹⁷ Discussion of the void is central to understanding what Badiou means when he talks about truth. Truth he says always begins by naming the void. The evental site is that which takes us up to the edge of the void. The void, until the event occurred, has been hidden; it has been universally included in every part of the situation and for that reason has remained hidden. The edge of the void is locatable even if the actual void is not. See Hallward, Peter, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, Minnesota University Press, USA, 2003, p.117.

¹⁸ Badiou, Alain, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, Section I, p.109-139.

or creation of simulated realities relates to Badiou's three categories of the event's subject: there is the *faithful* subject who is convinced by the *truth* of an event proper, and puts his or her body in the service of this conviction (Galindo), and there are then the two rivals, the *reactionary* subject, who will agitate in favour of tempering the new, endeavouring to dilute its persuasion, and the *obscure* subject, who busies him or herself with the covering up of the event.¹⁹ It is of paramount importance for our view of Galindo to recognize that the appearance of the *faithful* subject cannot be preceded by the *reactionary* or *obscure* subject (notwithstanding the faithful subject who has become so long after the original event); this is because only such a subject (faithful) is present as the event formulates, and (she) carries the trace of the event towards the first "minimal production of the present".²⁰ The revolution comes first and then the reaction. As Badiou notes:

To begin with, we should note that the contemporaneousness of a figure of the reactive or obscure type depends on the minimal production of a present by a faithful figure. From a subjective point of view, it is not because there is a reaction that there is a revolution, it is because there is a revolution that there is a reaction.²¹

This point, if truly understood as applicable within the boundaries of the discussion about Galindo's work, releases Galindo from the burden of having to perform herself as "Other" or to put her body in the service of mirroring some resistance or fight back against a perceived oppressive force. Rather, Galindo fixes herself to the truth of the situation which is in direct contrast to the reactionary and obscure "truths" which have formulated to produce the present. As Badiou continues:

We thereby eliminate from the living subjective field the whole 'left-wing' tradition which believes that a progressive politics 'fights oppression'.²²

Rather, for Galindo, as this investigation seeks to maintain, it is the presentation of the truth which is the basis for her art. This is not to say that she need not fight, but it is from the

¹⁹ Badiou, Alain, *Logics of the Worlds: Being and Event II*, Trans Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, p.50-67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Badiou, Alain., *op. cit.*, p.62.

perspective of truth that she must do so, and not from the perspective of a *representation* of “fighting back”. Badiou also tells us that a truth is not something that is part of the present moment in terms of knowledge, and so breaks in upon the scene as a kind of rupture. These truths do, however, form part of an historical process (and this point is expanded upon below). The truth ultimately comes from practice and struggle (something that occurs after the event) and is produced to a certain extent by those who are taken up by the truth as subjects of that truth. According to Badiou there exist alongside truths what he calls “statements” of truths, which remain true for all time and are generic (universal). For example a statement of truth might be “all men are created equal” or “gender equality is a fact” or closer perhaps to our area of investigation, “genocide is not acceptable.” What occurs under the auspices of these claims is the *truth* of the situation creates *subjects* as effects of a process. Moreover, the subject of truth is part of an overarching truth-procedure. It is not that a subject makes a decision, but is rather, obliged; nevertheless, once obliged the subject must then choose the manner in which they serve the event, as stipulated above: *faithful*, *reactive* or *obscure*. This is clearly the case when we observe Galindo, who experiences her own performance as an inner coercion or necessity. It is for this reason that truth is also closely connected to agency. Truth is about action, or intervention. One does not simply know or contemplate a truth. One acts upon it as a subject as part of a *truth procedure*.

1.2 Regina José Galindo as Technician

Much of the critical reception of Galindo, although to date quite well constructed around themes such as violence and feminism—still falls short of getting at the core meaning of her work. Clearly the female human body, her own body, takes onboard the legacy of previous female (performance/conceptual) artists such as Judy Chicago, Susan Lacy, Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramovic, Ana Mendieta, or María Teresa Hincapié. The difference, however, between Regina José Galindo and these artists is one of contact and subjectivity; this means that she is part of what she presents to the extent that she *performs* truths pertinent to an evental truth procedure. This we observe to be a process of *presentation* as opposed to *representation*. The departure point for Galindo is first the word, written and spoken, but then there comes the body. The progression from evental truth to poetical measuring of that truth,

and finally to coming into presence—as her physical body—this all conflates to lend her work a non-replicable intimacy.

Art has been the buffer for many performance artists; what this means is that performance artists have, generally speaking, placed a space between themselves and their performances, so that what occurs is a kind of *act*, a performative process that is *representation*. Here they generally refer to the “Other” and to a specific universal situation, be that *gender, violence*—and so on; moreover, they maintain a space between us and the information they *represent*. But as Omar-Pascual Castillo has noted, in difference to that kind of art, Galindo performs a physical convergence. Galindo functions as the orchestrator of the performance and, simultaneously, the victim of that which is depicted.²³ This means Galindo is both subject and object of her art in such a manner that a closing of the performative space occurs. This claim is clearly in need of further development.

What this subject/object duality essentially amounts to is the following: that the apparent “carnal, emotional, non-rational”²⁴ components in her performance belong not solely to the existence of any dutiful rendering of the “Other’s” suffering, but in fact pertain also to Galindo’s own truthful negotiation of subjective encounters with eventual truths which pour in as *affect*: memories, traumas—and so on. All this is juxtaposed with Regina’s direct experience as *a subject of truth*, as a subject called into being as part of an eventual truth process. Thus, in many of her works she becomes a visual extension, a parallel duplicity—the consequence of political violence—simultaneously preserving a distance between us and the referenced violence—whilst disrupting that distance—.

Galindo’s performance becomes a direct channel, not the *representation* of something, but the *presentation* of something. We remember that all of this occurs *between* one event and the (potential) next. It is the historical presence of the past and the potential of a would-be future that converge in the performative moment. This is what we mean when we describe Galindo as a technician. She is technically organizing the various components; affect is then taken up by Galindo and informs her every move. By providing the place by which the truth of the event can be experienced as a truth and not the *representation* of a truth, her

²³ Castillo, Omar-Pascual, *The Poetic Rebellion of the Oophaga Pumilio* in Regina José Galindo, ARTIUM, 2012, p.66-69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.69.

work is able to achieve something traceable to evental truth (historical)—this is then the harnessing of evental truth(s), an action of immanently guided *performativity* which makes the performance work of Galindo worthy of further investigation.

To paraphrase the previous paragraph: it is the female human figure that conjures the centre of a socio-spatial World, performed by the presence of a body—which reciprocally interacts with both internal and external evental remainders. For Galindo these may take the form of socio-political ideas which recur as affect. This text seeks to develop the idea that all of this derives from a historical evental process that has a destination not yet complete—politically speaking this would be the case if it were to be found that elements of injustice as opposed to justice, or the lack of justice were in anyway present—.

The performance, moreover, (and here an essential threshold where Galindo is at variance with the works of her female predecessors is reiterated) is not at all the strict focus upon a perceived *other* (although simultaneously, the *other* is present), but is, instead, the taking up of historically determined evental affect within herself. Her performances are therefore technically accomplished junctures; where evental truth is thought through—staging an immanent and singular appearance.

Galindo thus differs from many of the female performance artists mentioned above as she is connected to her own particular space and time; not as she who would *represent*, but as she who would *present*. In other words, she is not working with that material—which is external to herself—but with that which is immediately—immanently—mediated by her own sense of (located in a World) being.

In the end, the complexity of all this demands that Galindo make use of the medium of performance—as it is as close to the edge of the void as she is able to get. Equally, as performance, there is always the implied interlocutor to consider; as such (taken to the very margins of the void), the observer is totally absorbed throughout each [re]created socio-political moment; this is entirely made possible via each singular performance, (and the reproductions that form a subsequent material register). These extend out into the realms of the plural via a tenuous connection to a constructed and communal temporal frame. The presence within each performance—of a specific duality (singular/plural)—is the foundation of an observable language.

Now, this investigation claims that what takes place does so before any circumstance has been settled; this for the simple reason that to be in a *circumstance*, is to occupy a space that is, to a certain extent, without agency; this would mean that the parameters are already defined by a concluded event. Rather, inside the interstice, we see there is a knotting of historical time and present time; a space fundamentally creative in that future and as yet undefined elements of a truth procedure remain contingent.

Given the above, a logical conclusion ought to find the idea of *evolution* useful to describe these eventual procedures, and so our claim declares that Galindo is intervening (technically) in an uncompleted process; and so this survey makes use of the term *reciprocal* as there remains a suspicion that the event is *produced* by subjects and those same subjects are *produced* by the event. This notion of reciprocity presents a conundrum: a clear case of which comes first, *the chicken or the egg*? And so let us assume that this issue of what comes first is important; would this be a question of any true significance?

1.3 Performativity and the Event

So the question is raised at the emerging site, or the edge of the void, what is the reality here? Does the truth emerge first or is that truth produced by the subjects? Directly, in answer to this, we must agree that it is *indefinable*, and this is evident if we focus upon the issue of *productivity* and the event, (which is one of the central urgings of this thesis). So what is it precisely that makes this contentious point indefinable? The short answer is that at the actual event site there is a chaotic gathering of subjects that necessarily are thrown into turmoil as they attempt to make sense of what has occurred. This is a process of naming and categorizing, of the organizing of the event's consequences, of the deciding upon what parts of the present have been altered and to what extent, and so on. So how can we begin to discuss this point at which the eventual truth (we know this to be a labour in that it must be tarried with) starts to formulate some kind of change in the present (which must occur via the subjects)?

One side in this discussion is upheld, for better or worse, by the work of Jacques Derrida. We know Derrida concurs with Badiou in that they both insist on the maintenance of event as complete and unforeseeable singularity. But let us put aside for the moment this notion of singularity and focus instead on what part of event we can indeed agree upon, that

being the *what* exactly occurs after an event, for we should all be open to see that there is that which is *after* the event, and that which is *before* the event, and this is where this investigation is nestled—in theoretical terms. In choosing to be here the complex question of what *is* an event is done away with and this is preferable. So what is it that comes *after* one event and *before* the next? To make this point then, Derrida is locating²⁵ a very specific activity at the birth site of the event; an enunciation of sorts occurs he says, yet the actual event and the enunciation itself are indistinguishable—to the extent that a dichotomy is produced: does the event produce the *saying* or does the *saying* produce the event? Hence the chicken *or* the egg (evental remainder/truth *or* the subject).

Now, before delving into what Derrida has said about the nature of the event site and the performativity that occurs there, we must first explain some of the founding ideas behind the concept of performativity. It is pertinent to here set out in two stages what is liable to be a rather lengthy yet necessary parenthesis. So analysis initiates with Austin and his founding text on performative utterances, that being *How To Do Things With Words* (1962).²⁶ This text sets the tone for Derrida who takes up the idea of performativity²⁷ in his essay (originally prepared as a paper to be presented at a conference), *Signature Event Context* (1971).²⁸

So performativity for Austin is something which is related to language and essentially the spoken word or utterance. Let us refer to this phenomenon as that which is covered in the

²⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *A Certain Impossibility of Saying the Event*, Trans. Gila Walker, published in *Critical Inquiry* 33, University of Chicago, (winter 2007), p.441-461.

²⁶ Austin, J.L., *How To Do Things With Words, The William James Lectures*, Harvard University, 1955, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1955.

²⁷ Austin and Derrida are by no means the only thinkers to have developed this idea of *performativity* as creative process. In one essay titled *On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts During Speech*, (published in 1878) Heinrich Von Kleist argues for a mode of sentence construction based not upon rational measured processes but rather upon the enunciation itself which brings into being a sense of truth. See Heinrich von Kleist, *On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Speaking*. Published in *Selected Writings*, Ed. and Trans. by David Constantine, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, (2004), p.405-p.409. Finally, a more contemporary reading of performativity is offered to us by Judith Butler who argues in favour of gender roles as pertaining to a performative process. Her work on this topic extends to several titles but can be traced to an earlier essay, see: Butler, Judith, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, Theatre Journal, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), pp. 519-53. This notion of the female as performed figure is given further treatment in this investigation in Chapter 3 where I discuss feminism in regards to Galindo's performance.

²⁸ Derrida, Jacques, *Signature Event Context* (1971), published in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago University Press, 1984, p.307-330.

field of speech-act theory²⁹. Chiefly, what Austin establishes is related to words, and when spoken, he says, in a certain way and at specific times, some words achieve more than their locutionary function (the mere semiotic conveyance of information). Rather, these words achieve an *illocutionary* force,³⁰ that is they “do” something. As Austin puts it:

I explained the performance of an act in this new and second sense as the performance of an ‘illocutionary’ act, i.e. performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to an act *of* saying something; I call the act performed an ‘illocution’[...].³¹

These speech-act utterances are usually completed through the use of verbs such as *promise* or *request*, so, for example, “*I promise to do it*” (and thus in the saying it is done).

Following Austin, we have then three potential aspects to every utterance: *locutionary*, *illocutionary*, and *perlocutionary*.³² The difference between the illocutionary and the perlocutionary is important to grasp. In the illocutionary the *act* of performing speaking is carried out. Here there is a directive for the listener related to a specific situation, and as we have noted, the verbs are key to understanding the performative role of each specific utterance, so the speaker is either thanking or pleading, ordering, or apologising, and so on. In the perlocutionary, there is the further step of achieving the speech-act whilst simultaneously securing its effect. An example of this is found in the following utterance, said directly from one person to their audience: “I won’t be going to your wedding”. In the saying of this statement the speaker withdraws themselves from the invitation to attend the wedding (illocutionary act) yet attains also the effect of filling the listener(s) with disappointment and loss (the possible absence of the friend in the future—this is a perlocutionary effect—). As Austin notes:

Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the

²⁹ The speech act theory was introduced by Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things With Words* and further developed by American philosopher J.R. Searle. It considers the degree to which utterances are said to perform locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and/or perlocutionary acts. See: Abrams, Meyer Howard, and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 8th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2005.

³⁰ Derrida, Jacques, op.cit.

³¹ Austin, J.L., op. cit., p.99.

³² Ibid.

speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with design or intention, or purpose of producing them[...]³³

Derrida takes up these ideas of Austin (which are devised only upon the spoken word), and formulates a new set of positions based upon performativity, yet a performativity that is “iterable,”³⁴ that is, each utterance may be taken out of its original context and repurposed inside another. What Derrida discovers (and he will include writing in his analysis) is that it is not at all the words in themselves that are important, but the *context*.³⁵ Derrida refers to Austin and notes that in every case there has been some kind of preordained context which permits the spoken words to take on some sort of performative meaning. As he says:

I must take as known and granted that Austin’s analyses permanently demand a value of *context*, and even of an exhaustively determinable context, whether de jure or teleologically; and the long list of “infelicities” of variable type which might affect the event of the performative always returns to an element of what Austin calls the total context.³⁶

From here Derrida will claim that the spoken words in Austin, rather than forming the cause of the performative situation, are in and of themselves part of a culturally inscribed repetition; that in lieu of some original act, we have in reality a highly scripted utterance that is only understandable as part of what is acceptable within the specific situation and indeed predictable in each situation upon the basis of social convention. Derrida finds that by taking Austin’s performative theory and exposing it to questions regarding language (written and spoken, although Derrida will extend this to all signs that signify) and its vulnerability to citation and iterability (all language means something sometime, somewhere to someone—must be understandable—, and thus the same extract can be made to mean again—something new—under entirely different circumstances), he is able to make the convincing claim that it is not language that is the keeper of meaning but social convention; and therefore the intention of the speaker in every case must be subordinated to this tacitly arranged covenant. We have then chains of descriptors that may be iterable, repeatable, legible signifiers—in any given situation—. This differs from Austin in the positioning or site of meaning. Austin

³³ Ibid., p.101

³⁴ Derrida, Jacques, op. cit.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Derrida, Jacques, op. cit., p.322.

maintains that once quoted the original utterance, because now a shadow of itself, and having been deprived of its purpose to perform in a specific moment, no longer contains its original power. Austin refers to these kinds of language replicas as “parasitic”,³⁷ and says that such representations are thus rendered hollow and ineffective. As Austin notes:

[...] a performative will be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy....Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiologies of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances.³⁸

It would not be outlandish to imagine that Austin’s split between original language (performative) and “parasitic” language (quoted) was the inspiration for Derrida’s own division (outlined below). Derrida nonetheless meets Austin’s notion head on by insisting that Austin’s performative is of itself a kind of citation, as it functions only within convention. So it is then that the discussion starts to get interesting for this investigation when Derrida extends beyond the problem of citation and into original language which he says comes from an event. Although discussing language, Derrida lays the groundwork for a claim that may be extended to include *all* events in that eventually it is language that must capture events and decide what it is that has happened. In the discussion, Derrida nominates the *signature* as an original singular event. Of the signature he notes that it:

[...] marks and retains his (the signer) having-been present in the past now, which will remain a future now, and therefore in a now in general, in the transcendental form of nowness (maintenance). This general maintenance is somehow inscribed, stapled to the present punctuality, always evident, always singular, in the form of the signature.³⁹

This is the point at which Derrida announces a division of language into two zones. The performative as original evental trace (in his example the signature), and the performative as citation. This idea, the reader will no doubt have noted, is of central importance to this investigation as it establishes the grounds for an evental performativity. Having then

³⁷ Austin, J.L, op. cit., p.22.

³⁸ Austin, J.L, op. cit., p.22.

³⁹ Derrida, Jacques, op. cit., p.328.

established a clear link between Austin, the founding voice in performative studies, and Derrida, who extends his thought into the area of event, we can now begin to connect these ideas directly to the work of Regina José Galindo.

1.4 Performative Split

In another text created for conference presentation (in the same way as Signature Event Context), titled, *A Certain Impossibility of Saying the Event* (1997)⁴⁰, Derrida expands more directly his ideas about performativity and this perception of a split between two styles of performativity. So, Derrida says, at this juncture, where there has been an event (Badiou refers to this as the void⁴¹), we can distinguish between two types of enunciation. First there is the “saying” of the event, the “enunciating, referring to, naming, describing, imparting knowledge, informing” and there is the saying that “does in the saying”⁴²; in the former the saying is close he says to knowledge and information, and in the latter it is the saying that “enacts”⁴³. There exists, says Derrida, “an utterance that is called performative and does the speaking”. So, if we understand this properly in the light of what Derrida has said in regards to signatures, then we must accept that there exists a *saying* of the event, that “does not say the event, it makes it, it constitutes the event. It’s a speech-event, a saying the event”⁴⁴. One of the many questions this investigation proposes to ask is related to this event saying as *performative* and the plausibility of finding it present in the work of Galindo. Can we discover such a link? If we continue to follow Derrida then the answer is bound to be a resounding yes, because as he has noted, the event, moves into the two possible modes of saying; and once it passes into the political sphere it is finally open to the forces of

⁴⁰ Derrida first presented this paper at the University of Montreal in 1997, which was titled “Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement,” and was later published in *Critical Inquiry* as “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” Derrida, Jacques, *A Certain Impossibility of Saying the Event*, Trans. Gila Walker, published in *Critical Inquiry* 33, University of Chicago, (winter 2007), p.441-461.

⁴¹ Discussion of the void is central to understanding what Badiou means when he talks about truth. Truth he says always begins by naming the void. The event site is that which takes us up to the edge of the void. The void, until the event occurred, has been hidden; it has been universally included in every part of the situation and for that reason has remained hidden. The edge of the void is locatable even if the actual void is not. See: Badiou, Alain, *Meditation Four, The Void: Proper Name of Being*, op. cit., p.52-59.

⁴² Derrida, Jacques, op. cit., p.445.

⁴³ Ibid., p.445.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.446.

historiography (and this may be confronted). In one view there is something that occurs to the modality of event information in that it is taken up and *represented*; so what we have is the production of the event into knowledge; the first category of event is then the production of knowledge and this may or may not lack authenticity—or what Badiou would refer to as the *truth* that the situation requires. Derrida mentions that: “Television, radio, and newspapers report events, telling us what happened or what is happening”⁴⁵; finally, says Derrida, event-making is “covertly being substituted for event saying”⁴⁶. Why then is all of this important to Regina José Galindo?

The difference between the performative types described above is important—because if, (and all of this must be demonstrated in the chapters to follow), Galindo is not involved in the matter of *representation/citation* (other), but *presentation* qua evental performativity (evental *truths*), then it is clear, that in the location of her work as operating *in-between* one event and the next—not as the substitution of event (reporting knowledge) but the *saying* of the event, then she is positioned as indeed tied-in to the continued *performance* of that event, the truth (truth we must recall is something developed within this process and does not pre-exist the performance as a kind of reference) of which forms an original point of origin (by this we refer to the event and not Galindo’s work, which as we know is just a channel); furthermore *if* she practices *performativity*, she is going to be in direct conflict with the type of saying of event *as knowledge* which produces a simulacrum (the result of a reactionary or obscure procedure). For the moment though, let us set aside the notion of conflict and confrontation qua simulacrum, after all, such a conflict would merely form a by-product of the process and this is not Galindo’s *raison d’être*.

Having here established a clear grounding for our theory of the presence of presentation and representation, running parallel to the *experience* of evental truth, as performativity (productive), we now need to remind ourselves that we do not mention these concepts as though part of a binary distinction. Rather, we must view these concepts as part of a new articulation which seeks to bring into visibility the interaction of Galindo with evental truths (their hauling up into the communal experience created) ; so we are saying that through this play with *representation* and *presentation* there is a dialectical tension

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.447.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

constructed which integrates both performer and viewer—with evental truths in the present—even as they continue to be reconfigured and brought back in from obscurity.

There is a compelling argument developed by Galindo herself which supports this idea of a difference in function qua presentation. In an interview given in 2014, Galindo seems to be making a distinction between what is a *performance* and the idea of *performativity*. The difference between the two is the key to an understanding of Galindo that this text intends to problematize. Galindo explains that the performance itself is something that exceeds the actual person who conducts the performance; by this we may conclude that the performance has to come (for Galindo), not from a place of observable political injustice, as would be the case for the artist who says “look at this, which is happening to *others* (*and now I give them voice*)”, but rather as that which is taken up as an essential part of the situation as an *internal concern*, an obligation to respond to the *political* because that is part of a truth and so the work is political not by design, as part of an act of *representation*, but rather, as the very essence of communication—so of the term “political” she notes (author translation)—:

Sometimes this term is very risky and people confuse the terms [...] it is not that the artist is political but that the individual is political and therefore her work responds to what the individual thinks and her work is also going to be political.⁴⁷

Galindo, in this quote at least, distinguishes between (an) artist as the producer of art (she who indulges in the production of art for art’s sake (or for the sake of some “Other”) and the artist as citizen (the “individual” who is taken up by an immanently produced concern); and so she finds the language of art the vehicle by which specific modes of thinking about the political emerge. What this suggests, and this point has been developed in a similar manner by Cejudo-Escamilla⁴⁸, is that there is a difference between she who would *represent* and she who would *present*; she who is political as a performative *act* and she who is political as she has *no other choice*. Here we may continue with a further digression into the topic of

⁴⁷ Galindo, Regina José, LASS 2014, *Regina José Galindo* [video] Latin American Canadian Art Projects. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QVOWF86Y0o> (20.04.19)

⁴⁸ Sonia Cejudo-Escamilla, *The Performative Body of Regina José Galindo: Gender and Desire in Her 2012 Presentations*, *Revista LiminaR Estudios Humanísticos*, vol. XVII, num 1, enero-junio 2019, México, p. 158-167.

representation/presentation. Cejudo-Escamilla developed her particular argument based upon the findings of Mieke Bal⁴⁹, who has also marked a distinct difference between what is identifiable as *performance* and what is identifiable as *performativity*. The distinction is worth going into detail as it supports a view of Galindo that this investigation intends to develop.

In the work, Bal makes the following non-hierarchical division, stating that *performance* is “the specialized and thought-out production of, say, a show, based on the memorization of a script”⁵⁰; while in contrast, she says that *performativity* is: “the act itself, in a unique present, where the memory does its tricks”⁵¹. Now, for Bal at least, the performance as *act* (and here we are referring specifically to performance art) and as *performative* (this notion of *performativity* has been explained by Derrida above) marks a conflation point in that both are present and impinge upon the thoughts of both the spectator and performer alike. As we have noted within the introduction, this is the moment at which there is an attempt to *present* the possibility (or impossibility) of representing something, (theoretically un-representatable), that is, the appearance in real time of eventual truth(s). Bal’s point of view is agreed upon in essence within this investigation, however there are different reasons for this synthesis. Bal places the energy behind her approach solely upon memory.⁵² This investigation finds that memory is merely an *affect* of event. Memories are the clusters of experiences found at the birth site of an event, the same material that continues to form historically from that site. The material of memory formulates a historical connection that is presence. This presence is, importantly, both singular and plural in that it is the juxtaposition of immanently produced affects (subject) which are shared in essence by other subjects, equally called into being by the same event. With this in mind it is logical to make the following claim: the figure of Galindo draws upon the socio-political within, while she instantaneously unfurls herself—inside a specific zone—that is simultaneously singular and plural. Singular because this is the immanently driven performance of one individual subject, and there is no possibility for representation beyond the specific performance

⁴⁹ Bal, Mieke, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto University Press, (2002), p.176-177.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., see Chapter 5 “Performance and Performativity”, p.174-212.

(notwithstanding photography and video evidences), and plural, due to the implied presence of both Galindo as herself, Galindo as artist/technician, the interlocutors (observers/justice), and of course the other(s) (victims/perpetrators). This is precisely how we can argue that she is both subject and object of the work. This space, this text prospects to determine, is a public space, in which a particular sequence of evental truths are thought through and discussed.

These ideas about Regina eventually bring us to the question of the “Other”; to this extent, or in relation to what has just been said, we find that she is not the *other* who reports upon, but is rather the active subject obliged by a truth (which is a performative role and is thus a *presentation* as opposed to a *representation*). We ought to be reiterate that our division between presentation and representation is not to be understood as a binary distinction, one thing better than the other, or more or less authentic and so on. The two terms are employed throughout this paper in reference only to a specific fidelity to evental truth. What we should notice is the function in each mode. Quite simply one thing achieves something the other does not (under specific conditions), and this is important should we be viewing a particular performance through the schema of evental truth. So from the outset then the reader is encouraged to set aside binary distinctions and to understand that we refer to operations that occur (or concur) and therefore are always to be viewed in relation to truths derived from an event, and this is because we are claiming an art form that interprets evental truths. By fusing an attempted *presentation* to an *evental truth*, Galindo effectively cancels the grounds upon which an artificiality establishes the possibility for the “Other” to appear.

1.5 Regina José Galindo and the Dissolution of the Other

As this topic of otherness is central to current study's perspective regarding Galindo, it is necessary to include here a detailed outline of the adopted approach, and what better place to begin such an explanation than from the mouth of Galindo herself; her own words illuminate our path (author translation):

Art is universal, or should be universal. In my work I set out from Guatemala, and I am interested in showing the history of my country, what is said; what is not said; what is denied; what is hidden; what lies are told, but also I am interested to go beyond my own country. I want to show that death is the same in Guatemala as it is in the United States, or Russia, that pain is the same in the Third World as it is in the First World. I think, I create, and I work, because

art is a human bridge that allows us to make those connections between one place and the other, between one individual and the other. This because in the end we are all the same, we feel the same, and we are all interconnected[...] It is through empathy that you can see others not from a distance, but rather you can become involved. For example if I go to Slovenia to discover, to investigate, that in this place there has also been a war, I can realize by myself how the government behaves in a corrupt way, just as they do here (Guatemala), where also there is plenty of death. For example in the piece called *Suelo Común* (Common Ground), I am buried in the ground to demonstrate the same past of death. There is a denied history that exists in a country from the other side of the World, that is the same as in Guatemala. So you can make a bridge to understand that it is not just Guatemala that is full of death and misery[...] Definitely, I am not interested to be made into an exotic artist. I don't want to be introduced as an artist who comes from the Third World, I don't want to see a series of adjectives before my name. I am not the "Other".⁵³

To understand what Regina José Galindo means when she states "I am not the *Other*", and to see clearly her movement from *other* to (non)other or *another*, this text locates her being inside the space that sits between one event and the anticipated next. By this it is meant that her performing from a place of "truth" necessitates the presentation of herself in the state of being that necessarily—through the committed production of evental truth—collapses the distinctions between two hitherto separated spatial positions; the subject and the "object/other" now come to exist as part of a new experience based upon proximity: a shared temporality is established—and importantly, as this text intends to demonstrate, this is an ethical turn which relies upon the realization of evental affect (truth procedure) as internal obligation. By accepting *herself* as herself (by this it is meant her *performance* is seen as an act of fidelity to an internal truth), and not as *other*, Regina *presents* the truth of the situation in such a way that the audience is obliged to see her not as *other*, but as (non)other; the "Other" whose "otherness" becomes *non* via the authenticity of performance (truth), and thus effectively cancels the distance between subject and subject. The mechanics of this operation are based in an ethical reality that underpins all human interactions: that all truths convey *sameness*.

⁵³Regina José Galindo: *The Victim and the Victimizer*, Video (subtitles in English) Guggenheim Museum, 2015. See: <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/regina-jose-galindo-la-victima-y-el-victimario-english-captioned> (Quotation begins at minute 5.08).

This goes, however, far beyond mere acceptance or tolerance of difference. This is because what is cancelled is not the otherness itself, as would be partially the case if we were to make the effort to say “I shall try to understand this person of a different background” (this occurs commonly in attempts to create culturally defined bridges between subjects and results in the continued objectification of “Other”) but instead to accept that the process is one of ethics based upon the truth that the performance conveys. It is the truth of each situation says Badiou, which cancels all difference, and we see that sameness is the reality of all truth (and not at all the question of otherness). As Badiou notes:

I have already named that in regard to which the advent of the Same occurs: it is a truth. Only a truth is, as such, indifferent to differences. This is something we have always known, even if sophists of every age have always attempted to obscure its certainty: a truth is the same for all.⁵⁴

It is important to understand that the idea of the *same* in Badiou does not mean however that we are all identical, far from it. It means that we receive the *truth* in the same way and have the ability to organize society along truthful lines in an egalitarian manner. The truth is we are part of an infinite multiplicity, and as such we are all connected, and as Galindo says, all complete with the ability to “understand” truth as that which comes to us in the *same* way.

The argument of this investigation in regards to Galindo takes up this departure point as an essential element in regards to the manner by which we must approach her work. In this sense the truth of the situation dissolves all difference and the *subject* comes to occupy the same space as the *subject*. This is because (Badiou) there is not one single subject, “but as many subjects as there are truths”.⁵⁵ Now, this argument in favour of the dissolution of *identitarian* obsessions in politics is entirely developed by Badiou in his book, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*⁵⁶. In short, Badiou takes his illustration out into the World from the starting point of Levinas; finding in his work the source for a contemporary misconception of ethics at the core of Western thought. What we have he says is an erroneous “ethics of difference”, noting that:

⁵⁴ Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Trans. Peter Hallward, Verso, 2012, p.27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁵⁶ Badiou, Alain, *op.cit.*

Whether they know it or not, it is in the name of this configuration that the proponents of ethics explain to us today that it amounts to ‘recognition of the other’ (against racism, which would deny this other), or to ‘the ethics of differences’ (against substantialist nationalism, which would exclude immigrants, or sexism, which would deny feminine-being), or to ‘multiculturalism’ (against the imposition of a unified model of behaviour and intellectual approach). Or, quite simply, to good old-fashioned ‘tolerance’, which consists of not being offended by the fact that others think and act differently from you.⁵⁷

Badiou names this type of thought merely an ideology of “the right to difference”, a set of contemporary “catechisms” relating to goodwill with regards to “other cultures”.⁵⁸ He notes that:

This commonsensical discourse has neither force nor truth. It is defeated in advance in the competition it declares between ‘tolerance’ and ‘fanaticism’, between the ‘ethics of difference’ and ‘racism’, between ‘recognition of the other’ and ‘identitarian’ fixity.⁵⁹

From our current point in time it might seem that in accepting this line of thought we necessarily pave the way to violence and oppression directed towards specific minority groups, that through dispensing with otherness we commit some sort of social atrocity, but not so. Both Galindo and Badiou are correct in their call for universalism on the grounds that truth imbues each and every possible situation with what Badiou calls a ‘return to the same’.⁶⁰ The reasoning behind this development is clear and is based upon what Badiou refers to as “infinite alterity”.⁶¹ As Badiou notes:

Infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*. Any experience at all is the infinite deployment of infinite differences. Even the apparently reflexive experience of myself is by no means the intuition of a unity but a labyrinth of differentiations, and Rimbaud was certainly not wrong when he said: ‘I am another’. There are as many differences between myself and anybody at all, including myself. As many, but also, then, *neither more nor less*.⁶²

⁵⁷ Badiou, Alain op.cit., p.20.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.25.

⁶² Ibid.

This step necessarily does away with the idea that homogeneity is the root of the argument, rather it is a multiplicity that dominates the reality of each one's relation to *another*, to the extent that sameness is the result: we are all different to the same extent. The reality is that *othering* is always a politically defined process and this so called 'respect for differences' is really the facade of a deeply divisive political strategy. As Badiou notes, such programs always define an identity that is convenient to the political status quo, and that:

... as a result, the respect for differences applies only to those differences that are reasonably consistent with this identity (which, after all, is nothing other than the identity of the wealthy-albeit visibly declining- 'West').⁶³

So having described here the boundaries for our approach to the "Other" present in Galindo we can go forward to address some of the further reasons for her particular attitude. One of the anticipated criticisms of this course falls upon the reasoning behind this line of thought itself. Why should Galindo be concerned with the doing away with "otherness"? The answer to this is that in order for her work to achieve the necessary site of operation, that is, to extend historical evental truths, she will need to disturb this smoothness at the point of contact between art and the public.

1.6 Representation and Presentation: Evental Truth

Let us recap somewhat where we are in the argument so far. These claims are constructed upon the following grounds. First there is the fact that Derrida has noted the division of evental performativity into two categories (see above). Here we find the foundation for a perceived split between evental presentation and evental representation. The authenticity, however, in each case is a matter of perception. Secondly it is claimed that Galindo has inside her work elements of both presentation and representation, which is why we are focusing at all on this observable phenomena (this is to be examined in the works in the chapters to follow). Next we understand that there is not a hierarchy of presentation/representation, just that one is more proper function-wise to the presentation of evental truth. Finally we will want to add further structural support to this theoretical construction by recognizing that

⁶³ Badiou, Alain, op.cit., p.24.

Badiou has also developed an intricate (positive) dialectical relation between representation and presentation in a talk he gave in 2015. In the discussion, Badiou not only makes an explicit claim for art as a possible avenue of political exploration qua historical event, but he also establishes the grounds by which a future art form might prospect to work from the perspective of historical event—all this via a closer relation to elements of *presentation* as a vehicle for the development of truths derivative of historical events—. ⁶⁴

So it is we can see that both Badiou and Derrida coincide on this possible presence of evental truth, or the appearance of such, as part of a play between representation and presentation. For Derrida it has been the *saying* of event, the performative and unique moment that *does* something in this action, what we are calling presentation, and then there is the saying of event, that is the *representation* of the event which is finally the version captured. This is not to say that *all* representation is false, but in order to present a truth, that is currently being constructed, we need to be aware that such evental truth always completely escapes representation and can only be experienced as presentation. All of this is said in the realization that what we shall be observing of Galindo's work is not *always* performance, and so this is but one aspect of her work that we shall seek to interrogate in this manner, but it is nonetheless an essential endeavour that we make our position clear.

1.7 Performance Art, Evental Truth and Presentation

Performance art is the most effective method to bring the audience and performer into close contact with the truths of historical event. Let us underline here the reason for this bold claim. This text upholds that Galindo's performances are interactions with evental truths and therefore intervene in the consequences of what should in fact be a set of political questions—yet for whatever reason have been set aside in the context of the current-day political debate—. Therefore there is this requirement to step into the becoming of our perceptions, the very nature of how we understand history; not in a reactive manner but rather to participate in what must be a rational and public debate. Our claim is then that in our case the artist performs the function of *technician* of evental truth. Galindo will attempt to

⁶⁴ Badiou, Alain, *Contemporary Art Facing Historical Tragedies*, Miguel Abreu Gallery, December 9, 2015, New York. See: <https://vimeo.com/149324138> (cited 14.11.21).

organize truths which belong originally to an event. So, we suppose, if we follow Badiou, that evental truths are present *infinitely*⁶⁵ and can be accessed at any time—should there be a willingness on the part of a subject to interact with these truths—and to become a faithful subject of those same truths. So what is observable is that these truths are not something that are closed or in any manner historically ordained, but must instead be developed in each case as per the possibilities or conditions of each of the achievable contexts involved. Truth is then a process. It is therefore impossible to *represent* something that is ongoing in the moment. This brings us back to the notion of performance being the most apt in regards to the communication of evental truth. In order that Galindo’s art create a new form of thinking related to event it must get as close to the event as possible (we do not claim art to be an event, nor capable of producing an event, rather, in our samples we see that art is charged with the organisation of evental truths). If the truths of an event are available in the present and are consequently yet to be decided then interaction with these truths is something very close to the event itself, but not at all to be confused with an actual event. Also, let us reiterate that it is not an *either/or* in regards to *presentation* and *representation*, nor for that matter should we in anyway confuse Galindo’s work as the *origin* of truth (rather she performs the role of portal by which historical truths may step out from obscurity). It is entirely possible that both representation and presentation may be part of the same action, indeed they may function in a work at the very same time (talking about the duration of an actual performance). This complexity is necessary and can only truly be approached inside a performance because what is occurring is the not the *representation* of something present (in our case we are discussing evental truths) but rather (paradoxically) the presentation of the possibility (or impossibility) of the *representation* of something that is *present*. It is this “becoming” before our very eyes, something that essentially requires the observers to complete the work in their own perceptions, that necessitates that the process *be* visible; precisely because it is a communal exploration that incorporates consideration of what is conceivable. This is of course what is possible in regards to an event of political or historical nature. So what we are witness to (in some, not all of the cases we shall discuss), furthermore, participant of, is this moment in which art will set out to go beyond the representation of

⁶⁵ Badiou claims that the truth is infinite and transcends the subject in every case; the subject functions as the finite appearance of the effects of a truth procedure (which is infinite). See Badiou, op.cit, p.406.

something and into the realms of evental truth itself, the establishment of which is *not* available to representation. It is quite easy for us to become dazzled by the terms representation/presentation, and to think of them in binary terms. Yet that is to make an error in regards to the function of the art in question. This tension between what is possible/impossible that unfolds in the time of the performance forms the ground upon which new knowledge may be established. Let us be clear: evental truth cannot be *represented*. This is because it is occurring in the present. Performance can come very close to these truths because it is simultaneously (in our case) an action which forms the very frontier between what has occurred in history and the way by which we are to interpret those historic occurrences, *now* in the present, and furthermore, what these truths may mean for the situation in the yet-to-come. We are then duty bound to discuss elements relating to representation/presentation, not to extenuate a binary, but to note that one thing is doing something and another thing is doing something else (qua evental truth). There is representation and presentation at once, and the play of the two produces an effect in itself, a new possible understanding of the present. In the end, we are before the attempt to demonstrate the simultaneous presence of a *possibility* and *impossibility*: the result of these performances is inside the particular moment created by Galindo.

What we see then is a conjuring and tarrying with evental truth in real time, even as it is channelled. And so because it is *presentation* and not *representation*—Galindo opens a rift in the hitherto naturalized status of otherness—. The “Other” appears in her work only so that it may be confronted and dismantled. This process is nothing less than the provision of a possibility, permitting the truth to act upon the present, dissolving the illusion of difference, creating now the presence of *sameness* – this is because the focus for her work (and this ought to be evidenced clearly within the Chapters below) is not in itself the accentuating of the victim, but rather the exposition of the act: what has happened during the event and posthumously to the event? What Galindo attempts to question is “our capacity for truth—our capacity to be that ‘same’ that a truth convokes to its own ‘sameness’—.”⁶⁶

In other words, the ethical grounding for each work, specific to each separate situation, demonstrates itself as forming a tension between the ‘act’ (for arguments sake genocide), and the work’s audience; so that the presentation in each case is itself the very

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.28.

dissolution of the distance between subject and subject. This is achieved once there is a clear understanding that there is no “Other”, merely an infinite number of *anothers*. Badiou has been clear on the matter, as he notes:

It is only through a genuine perversion, for which we will pay a terrible historical price, that we have sought to elaborate an ‘ethics’ on the basis of cultural relativism. For this is to pretend that a merely contingent state of things can found a Law.⁶⁷

It is significant that this question of truth should offer such a unique and fecund manner through which to approach the performance and poetry of Regina José Galindo. And if this particular line of investigation is to be rigorous, the process needs to think primarily about *truths* that rightly belong to an event, and that is why we must reinforce our efforts to look upon the work of Galindo in terms of *evental truths*, and so at the same time getting an answer to the problem of the political in her art; in this movement—a potential process of truth (procedure) which takes us from *injustice* toward the potential arrival of *justice* will be mapped—.

The imperative for Regina José Galindo’s work comes then not from outside of herself, as per a discussion of the “Other” as victim, but is, rather, produced internally by an obliged and politicized subject, drawn up as she is, into a specific political moment. Let us also be persuaded to view her work as material in essence—and therefore open to epistemological enquiry. So this exploration intends to interrogate the work of Regina José Galindo upon the grounds of a supposed evolving and reciprocal association, that which is thought to exist between her work and certain ideas about evental remainders (the sequence of evental truths), a process which is assumed, for the extents of this investigation—to be historically driven. Analysis of the works in such instance might expect to run parallel to the emergence of a number of immanently produced categories: these ought to include *memory* and *affect*, the *poetic measure of event*, *trauma* and the *female body*, *feminism*, *ethics*, *micro-politics*, and *ecology*.

Once such categories arise from within the work, and come to be taken up as they have been by this investigation—as an approach—the question of how this work may be

⁶⁷ Badiou, Alain, op.cit., p.28.

related to political event is then raised; and any interlocuter must notice that essentially the procedure creates a *dialectical*⁶⁸ relationship—productive in that it creates a third element: the extension of evental material in the form of truths. These truths ought to be present within Galindo’s work if she is, as is our claim, an active and faithful subject of an evental truth, operating almost entirely from a position of fidelity to her own immanently produced sense of an *ethics of truths*. As Galindo questions a truth she looks for it first and foremost within herself, and this process necessitates the (co)production of that truth: she performs the truth as *a subject* of that same truth—in what is finally an act of fidelity to that truth—finally an ethical act.

1.8 History and Regina José Galindo

Despite the fact that this investigation has no real truck with event itself—an omission that spares us the convoluted question of *what* is an event, (and this exception extends to any detailed discussion of specific events)—, the fact remains that due to the situating of Regina José Galindo’s work as unfolding within the interstice between one event and the next, this survey is duty-bound to at least cursorily explain—to wit—what follows: an explanation of what this hypothetical connection with evental remainder is composed of.

This research understands the work of Regina José Galindo as pertaining to her historical epoch. As such the theoretical underpinning for this investigation is firmly established upon the idea of event as historical. By this it is meant that although we find that events are in essence singularities, they appear in sequence and succession, and we may observe a long historical line of discontinuities that set the ground between one event and the next, and that despite the singular nature of the evental rupture, we may still yet think of events as accumulations of historical forces that continue on—their consequences feeding into each and every subsequent event—.

⁶⁸ Dialectical here refers to Alain Badiou’s criticism of classical dialectics that he equates with negativity. Instead Badiou will argue not for a creative novelty, based on negativity, but upon an affirmative dialectics based upon the possibilities created by events. Concentrating upon the negativities of the situation in order to gain purchase produces further negativity.

See: <https://thetragiccommunity.wordpress.com/2014/06/02/notes-on-badiou-s-affirmative-dialectics/>
(01.11.19)

Inside Regina José Galindo's work there is clearly an historical presence; and this investigation maintains that we may reach a more profound understanding of the historical in Galindo if we adopt Alain Badiou's process of truth as an interpretative schema. This is because observations of Galindo's work reveal a significant relation to Badiou's theories of event, and so it is that this survey views Galindo's work entirely in relation to evental truth procedures; this in reference to what is in evidence after one event and before the next (affect); there is then sufficient ground by which to establish the work of Regina José Galindo as interacting with historical event. Galindo's work reveals a distinct correspondence to theories of event, particularly in regard to Badiou's explanation of what happens to the subject⁶⁹—as well as an evental truth procedure. So how can we continue to discuss Galindo in terms of historical event, and find a correlation between her work and that of Badiou's in regards to a process of truth?

Might this problem be explained by locating the “old mole”⁷⁰ inside the work of Badiou himself? Despite the complexity of the mathematical abstraction involved in his work, most notably in *Being and Event*, it remains demonstrable, not least within *Logics of the Worlds*, that an event as absolute break is not at all exclusively sustainable, and that Badiou has had to equip his theory with a wherewithal to experience event as indeed historically informed. One of these historical modes inside Badiou is relatable to sequence and to succession—which he says may continue after an event for an infinite period. For the purposes of this investigation this text identifies three such historically determined patterns: genocide and the subsequent sequence of violence related to colonialism; neoliberalism and a global political system of capitalist production—and ecological disaster, global warming, and so on.

Let us make clear then how we can think about Badiou in historical terms. For Badiou, truth (and Bosteels has also agreed on this point of history as process of labour) is something

⁶⁹ See meditation 35, *Theory of the Subject*, in: Badiou, Alain, op.cit., p.391-409.

⁷⁰ According to Andrew Robinson, who has written a series of essays on Badiou's work, “The “Eagle” sees the event in terms of a sudden occurrence which is *creatio ex nihilo* – the event occurs out of nothing. The “old mole” sees the event as a steady process of unfolding of consequences and interventions. The “owl” looks on events as a philosopher, and sees that, in the long term, they are inevitable and recurring. Sooner or later, every regime will be destroyed. Events are guaranteed to happen. Badiou's work oscillates between the three ways of seeing”. See: Robinson, Andrew, *Alain Badiou: after the Event*, In Theory, Ceasefire Magazine, 2015.

that remains after the event.⁷¹ This post-evental truth is present in the immediate aftermath, but is equally found long after the event has passed. Truth is therefore a labour, a task, set upon by those who are called to its side. Yes, the truth finds its origin in event—yet it must be organized, recognized, attended to—its meaning(s) disseminated. Badiou is himself very clear on the matter, and he describes the event as precursor to an historical periodization, what he refers to here as process:

[...] I am convinced that the new can only be thought of as process. There surely is novelty in the event's upsurge, but this novelty is always evanescent. It is not there that we can pin point the new in its materiality, but that is precisely the point that interests me, the materiality of the new.⁷²

This idea of a materiality that remains after an event is the key to understanding Badiou's evental truth as historical. But what we refer to here as historical, while still participating in a culminative process, that is, one truth is connected to another truth through time, is actually the result of a *commitment* rather than what we might describe as a determined process *per se*. It is not epistemological data that sets off the subject's trajectory, but rather an ethical demand—what is ethical is the truth of the situation. What this means is the truth processes underway in the work of Regina José Galindo have their rootedness in similar historical situations, which are the affective basis of her present day struggle for justice in Guatemala. The situation of a truth is that it invades the present as a form of excess so that we come to observe now the excluded part or that which has not formed part of what has been included (counted). Galindo's work will seek to create disturbances so to invent the possible grounds for thought based upon truths; that is, new possibilities emerge that without her intervention might not have been possible. Examples of this can be clearly observed throughout Galindo's work, one of the more striking we find in her confrontations of the State: in order to reveal a truth of Guatemala; that is an observation of the State—*it is based upon murder and corruption*—, then the actualities of the current situation must be challenged from the point

⁷¹ See Bosteels, Bruno, *Hegel*, published in: *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, Edited by A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens, Acumen, 2010, p.143.

⁷² Bosteels, Bruno, *Can Change Be Thought? A Dialogue with Alain Badiou*, 2005, See Gabriel Riera (ed.), *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and its Conditions*. State University of New York Press, 2005, p.252—253.

of view of the truth. Such revelation of the truth has been hitherto kept out of the debate and comes in now via the presence of Galindo as rupture; a silence which has previously permitted what we may term *evil*⁷³ to occur is now given voice.

The concept of evil is central to an understanding of Badiou's ethics in accordance with what occurs as part of a truth procedure. Evil is for Badiou then a kind of perversion of the truth and may appear in one of three forms: *simulacrum*, *betrayal*, or *disaster*. Simulacrum is that which assumes power via the representation of specific definitions as per a particularity: "War" as opposed to "genocide" would be a good example; it is then a void used to describe a substance that in fact does not exist; betrayal is related by Badiou to the idea of "disinterested interest", and to a point of "undecidability" which he describes as a kind of crisis of interest. The subject is pressured to divert from the truth either by their own interest or the interests of the situation, so the subject, unable to withdraw from the situation must betray the truth; disaster is related to the attempts to name what is essentially the unnameable. Badiou calls unnameable what is the "power of a truth" and so attempts to transfer this power onto the situation can be disastrous.

Galindo's intervention in every case is a marked decision to stay faithful to a course of fidelity and is then an ethical act which demands a strict adherence to a perceived set of truths (which must be persuaded to appear), come what may. In order to pursue our goal of locating the art work of Regina José Galindo between two events, those being the historical event and its truths that impinge upon the now, and the possibility that this truth procedure opens up vis-à-vis the future (for Badiou this would be Communism while for Galindo this would be the event of justice), it is useful to establish the "old mole" at work in the very centre of Badiou's thesis. In this manner the investigation formulates a ground upon which an historically determined evental art may be established, in scientific terms. So it is that Badiou's thought may be clarified in specific ways that demonstrate how, to use his terminology, 'Worlds,' which are historically ordered, may be included as part of a theoretical debate on event and the art of Regina José Galindo. Firstly, let us be clear that an event has a pre-event and a post-event. For Badiou, the event is the coming into the world of

⁷³ See: Jan Voelker, *Ethics and Evil*, published in *The Badiou Dictionary*, Ed Steven Corcoran, Edinburgh, 2015, p.110-115.

a set of new “possibilities”, and these possibilities he says are themselves (unlike the event), capable of stretching through time to incorporate history, he notes:

The possibilities opened up by an event are still present within a situation throughout an entire sequential period. Little by little, they peter out but they are present.⁷⁴

This sequential element of evental consequences is what essentially cuts the ground for the placing of Galindo as *in-between*. There is this attendant implied notion of waiting, of organising, and preparing that is further supported by Badiou, and there can be no doubt as to its importance when we come to accept that not only does event have duration in Badiou, but it can also be prepared for, as he notes:

[...]‘to be prepared for an event’ means being subjectively disposed to recognizing new possibilities. Since the event is necessarily unforeseeable given that it doesn’t fall under the law of prevailing possibilities, preparing for the event is being disposed to welcome it.⁷⁵

This is not to say that we can predict the event nor details of its contents, but we can be prepared to welcome its arrival, a subjective (and potentially collective) disposition that is essentially historical in that the subject has experience of events; or to put it in another way, has been affected by the historical truths of past events. So now, even though Badiou reiterates the central concept of rupture, he also sets the ground for the subject to appear as in fact historically generated; so how can a subject be in some way influenced by a previous event or the evental truth that persists through time? The answer is this presence of an ethical call. The resurrection of a truth procedure is not essentially an act dominated by determinism in the epistemological sense but is rather the essential adherence to an ethical demand. What further supports this historical gathering of information is the knowledge that Badiou himself prescribes this kind of historical referencing of past events, he goes on to say:

How, then, should you prepare yourself? In two ways. First by remaining faithful to a past event, to the lessons given to the world by that event [...] The other way of being prepared, related to the first, is criticism of the established order. Even supposing that the established

⁷⁴ Badiou, Alain, *Philosophy and the Event: Alain Badiou with Fabian Tarby*, trans. Louise Burchill, Polity, 2013, p.12.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

order is master of the possibilities, it's a matter of showing that these possibilities are, in our view, insufficient.⁷⁶

So we can see the historical impinges upon the present in Badiou. Nevertheless we must be careful not to make the easy mistake of assuming that by remaining *faithful* to a past event Badiou means that we should adhere to any determined state or set of affairs. What is meant here is that there are truths that the *subject of a truth* will want to take up again in one situation and the next, this is what Badiou refers to as fidelity. What is certain is that these actions of preparation whereby the subject is galvanized to position his or herself accordingly do not necessarily strictly adhere to the actual new events as they unfold, but are the truths or affects traceable to previous events. This brings us back to the location of Regina José Galindo inside that space that theoretically exists between one event and the next, for, as Badiou notes, “The political subject is, then, the interval between the past event and the coming event.”⁷⁷

This political subject which is faithful to the truth of an event is capable of reigniting an obscured or oppressed truth. There is no doubt that if we observe Regina José Galindo her work is precise in its strategies of historical intervention. There has been a specific history that has been pushed aside by the imposition of a State organised process of forgetting. What Badiou's event reveals is that there is an evental historiography which clearly demonstrates that a defeat is not permanent in anyway, and that one defeat may merely act as the historical precursor of another struggle, albeit one that happens in another “World”. The only requirement for the continued reinvigoration of any generic political situation is the intervention into the situation by a subject. At this juncture there is then a knotting in time of the past and the present. The possibility of struggle in the present, can only occur should the subject create the grounds by which this may come to pass—and this process is partially historical (to the extent that it functions upon the faithfulness of a fidelity to a truth that comes from the past to prepare the subject). As Badiou notes:

The possibility of the intervention must be assigned to the consequences of another event. It is evental recurrence which founds intervention. In other words, there is no interventional capacity, constitutive for the belonging of an evental multiple to a situation, save within the network of consequences of a previously decided belonging.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.13.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

An intervention is what presents an event for the occurrence of another. It is an evental-between two.⁷⁸

What we clearly see then is that historical events or the post-evental truths are used to break the circularity of the dichotomy, *Event-Subject/Subject Event*. So it is that history is activated to persuade the situation that an event has happened and that there is an event yet to come. Badiou makes this very clear in *Logics of the Worlds* when he embarks on the explanation of how the Spartacan slave rebellion (led by Spartacus), which takes place in 73 BC, may still, many years later, hold power over a situation. It is the possibility of *recurrence* that lends Badiou's theory the required historical reality, connecting one historicity to another; Badiou is explicit in this inclusion of history—as in this comment here that remarks upon the theme of truth and time—:

Equally, no one can doubt that—weakened by the denial of too many fearful slaves (reactive subject) and finally annihilated in the name of the transcendent rules of the City (of which slavery is a natural state)—for the masses of slaves this present succumbs to a practical oblivion lasting many centuries. Does that mean that it's disappeared for good, and that a truth, as eternal as it may be, can also, having been created in history, slip back into nothingness? Not so. Think of the first victorious slave revolt, the one led by the astounding Toussant-Louverture in the Western part of Santo Domingo (the part that is today called Haiti) this is the revolt that made the principle of the abolition of slavery real, which conferred upon blacks the status of citizens, and which, in the exhilarating context of the French revolution, created the first state led by former black slaves.⁷⁹

Badiou clearly sets out the grounds here whereby historical maxims created in another situation are historically carried forward into a new present, this despite the passing of time and the discrepancy in geographical space and culture. Once the event has occurred, the truth is infinitely available and can formulate new commitment, contributing to the grounds for new events, Badiou continues:

In sum, the revolution that fully freed the black slaves of Santo Domingo constitutes a new present for the maxim of emancipation that motivates Spartacus's comrades: 'The slaves want to and can, through

⁷⁸ Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Bloomsbury, 2007, p.209.

⁷⁹ Badiou, Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Bloomsbury, 2009, p.64.

their own movement, decide to be free'. And this time, the white owners will be unable to re-establish their power.⁸⁰

Past history offers a resource in Badiou for present struggles and modes via which political injustice may be confronted and exposed. For the purposes of this current survey, there is no difference, fundamentally speaking, between history read as one long-line which defines our present, and history read as a sequence of separated yet relatable historicities—at least for the purposes of meanings and affects. Quite simply, eventual truths travel through historical time and this is as much a truth for Hegel as it is for Marx, as it is for Lenin, and certainly as it is for Badiou, who goes on to say that:

It is clear that a political truth, fragmentally borne by Spartacus and interminably occulted by the bloody triumph of Crassus and Pompey, is here dragged under the bar only to be re-exposed in the appearing of modern communist convictions and their denial; just as it was in Santo Domingo, in the global exhilaration provoked by the application, during the French Revolution, of universal egalitarian principles. This means that, together with the truth of which it is the correlate ('Slavery is not natural') the subject whose name is 'Spartacus' travels from world to world through the centuries. Ancient Spartacus, black Spartacus, red Spartacus.⁸¹

It is in this same historical logic that we approach the work of Regina José Galindo's Guatemala and those historical events that continue to impinge upon the present as part of an overarching set of eventual consequences or sequences.⁸² These in themselves produce memories and affects, traumas, and so on, a kind of eventual set of values which feed into the creation of the subject. To be clear: this site is derivative of one event and is filled with the affects of the yet-to-come event, as idea; both future and past impinge on the site and begin to take on a performed materiality (observed in the performance art itself): it is within this

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.64.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The long-term implications of Events seem to be cumulative. Badiou refers to them as a 'succession', or sequence. Social change is an endless process of supplementation of the social structure, as new elements are unfolded and 'forced'. Although change proceeds by way of subtraction, its ultimate direction seems to be additive. See: Robinson, Andrew, *Alain Badiou: After the Event*, Ceasefire Magazine, "In Theory" 2015. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/alain-badiou-event2/#:~:text=Badiou%20refers%20to%20them%20as,direction%20seems%20to%20be%20additive.>

materiality that Galindo draws up those disparate parts that exist simultaneously as part of her own subjectivity, now called into being by evental demands (truth), but also from that which is to be found around her in the particular site, the affects, memories, ethical issues—and so on. This is not the passive activity of a subject caught up in the mere circumstance, rather the subject imbibed with a new historically determined agency. The contingent truth of event permeates the situation. In a similar way to how the teleological imperatives behind Hegel, Marx and Lenin demanded the historicity of the moment be charted in qualitative to quality terms, so the event, becoming historical in its observable interstice, now performs the role of the “old mole”.

The pre-event,⁸³ noted in this text as having been clearly identified and described by Badiou himself, is a place for the preparation and reception of the coming event; it may thus be claimed to be an historically defined place. By seeing the historical element included inside Badiou we can logically extend this idea to accept finally that the event, must be, at least partially, juxtaposed with the conditions in which it occurs. That is not at all to claim that event is merely *historical*, but that the perception of what the event is, was, and might possibly mean to the future, takes place within historically defined parameters. This includes the posthumous stakes; the previous historical grounds, the participants, the financial concerns, the political concerns, and so on—the material conditions of historicity. Events are then categorized into the historical (more so when their details are obscured), the political, the theoretical, and so on. We can therefore agree, that an event can happen inside politics and it may occur inside science or art.

All the same, if we as interlocutors approach an event via its historiography, we find within the texts and images produced a kind of tarrying with event. A successful study of event material must therefore be planted here, in the roots of the historiography. This investigation finds that one of the key points of contact for Galindo is her own analysis of

⁸³ Pre-Event is a concept which takes on a significant weight of importance for this investigation as it supports my claim that the Event is produced by its subjects. I claim that Galindo is one of these militant subjects of the Event; in a text on the topic of Badiou and the Pre-Evental, Nick Srnicek notes, “An event, therefore, is not transcendent to its situation, but is instead localizable within the immanence of the situation. There is no radical disjunction between truth and knowledge, but instead a subtle, dialectical interplay carried out by the aleatory path of a truth procedure”. It seems that the actual naming process of evental elements must be constructed by elements that were already present and may even have been developed in anticipation of the Event, as would be the case with a radical political Event. See: Srnicek, Nick, *What is to be Done? Alain Badiou and the Pre-Evental*, *Symposium-Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, Vol.12, no.2, 2008, p.110-126.

historiography and the possibilities that exist for the reorganization of key elements in the political and cultural life of Guatemala. Analysis of the *a posteriori* organization of the event into language (performance art) and information is vital to our understanding of how an event is produced. Now, as noted in a previous section, there are different elements that converge at the edge of the void where the event appears. This means that we need to be mindful of the potentials in regards to authentic event saying (truth/fidelity) and we have spoken about this topic in regards to production of the event and what it is that Derrida has said. We have also noted that the subject appears and according to Badiou this course will be determined by the three styles of subject which are *faithful*, *reactionary* and *obscure*; and so the faithful subject will be pitted against the other two. This has significance for our investigation because if we are to successfully place Galindo in contrast, we must determine what kind of production has occurred—and let us make no mistake—, as Derrida has signalled,⁸⁴ an event, once it has appeared, is in constant danger from a reactionary contemporary media, who produce inauthentic events through the power of their apparently descriptive speech, he notes that:

An interpretation does what it says. It may pretend to simply to state, show, and inform, but actually it produces. It is already performative in a way. In a naturally unsaid, unavowed, and undeclared manner, a saying of event that makes the event is passed off as a saying of the event. The political vigilance that this calls for on our part obviously consists in organizing a critical examination of all the mechanisms that hold out the appearance of saying the event when they are in fact making it, interpreting and producing it.⁸⁵

To put this clearly, the relationship between the producer and the product is eternally reciprocal, the poles of the relationship interchangeable. So by productivity it is meant that the event is always taking on (producing) something new (a subject) which is the social activity regarding truth. That is not to say that this is an external cause and an interior effect relation (although this can be the case with oppressive power), moreover it is immanently produced from within the specific site anchored moment. This is precisely what is referred to when it is asserted that Regina José Galindo is not performing the “Other⁸⁶”, she is rather

⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.447.

⁸⁶ The “other” is a difficult concept which I hope to develop within the context of describing Galindo’s work. For the short term I refer to Badiou’s criticism of the *other*—which he makes in order to debunk certain ideas

compelled as a faithful subject⁸⁷ of event. Finally, those who are closest to the event have an ethical duty to report its meaning; but, paradoxically, this same reporting can in fact change the meaning of the event, hence the notion of reciprocity. This category of ethics is an important one which ought to develop within this thesis. For the moment let us mark that there is an ethical concern at the heart of the production of an event (the continued extension of its (un)truth.⁸⁸

So far this text has discussed the presence inside Badiou's theories related to truth(s) of a grounds for the nomination of truth as historically linked, this is connected to an ethical procedure (Badiou). Equally there is the knowledge that events occur in sequence and succession: there is a preparatory period that creates tension before the event (based on the functioning of a faithfulness to fidelity in regards to truth), and there comes a set of evental consequences which formulate the basis of the continued social reality. The current investigation places Regina José Galindo right here in the space between one event and the next.

This investigation finds that the notion of a sudden and unexplained bolt from the blue is not adequate to the situation in which we find ourselves. The event must happen and yet it is not happening—*or so it seems*. To attempt to discredit the arguments that support the view of event as untouchable is to waste valuable time and beyond present capabilities of this investigation, after all, the perspective here is not in the event but *between* it. In this short document we can nevertheless open the possibility to a new perception of event and art, which does not do away with any interpretations of event theory—but takes as a starting point the realities of the actual global capitalism within which we live.

The theories of the masters suggest that we must wait for the “second coming” (incidentally, the self-aware title of Franco “Bifo” Berardi's new book⁸⁹ on the topic of

based on the idea of the other and multiculturalism. Badiou says that: “*No light is shed on any concrete situation by the notion of the ‘recognition of the other’*”.

See: Badiou, Alain (2001) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Verso, 2012, p.27.

⁸⁷ Badiou's matrix of four basic responses to an Event (the faithful subject; the reactive subject; the obscure subject; resurrection) are discussed in the following text: Slavoj Žižek, *On Alain Badiou and Logiques des mondes*, published online at: <https://www.lacan.com/zizbadman.htm> 2007, (20.06.20).

⁸⁸ Ethics decrees that (according to Badiou) truths should be brought into the world. “The only genuine ethics is of truths in the plural—or more precisely, the only ethics is of processes of truth, of the labour that brings *some* truths into the world.” See Badiou, Alain, op. cit., p.28.

⁸⁹ Berardi, ‘Bifo’ Franco, *The Second Coming*, Polity, 2019.

language and Communism); as we know this book was written primarily to question the idea of repetition. It is about the definition of a historical occurrence. The affect from a hypothetical repetition (an impinging possible future) established something that was provisory, into an institution, which in itself forms a barrier to change—becoming the very symbol of impotence. It is not then directly related to the question of the event, but to its lack: *Where is the event we so desperately need, and what about a socialist revolution and the second coming of Communism?* In his work, Bifo concedes that a sudden overthrow of power is unlikely, and that the second coming is to be found not in some explosive and determining action (we must note that event is immanent in Badiou as it is in Deleuze) but from within society itself. Such a view is supported today by thinkers from the Global South, such as Alexandros Kioupkiolis, who has, through personal experience, seen the detrimental effects of this waiting eternally for the much needed thunder-clap of history. For Kioupkiolis, and on this point we can agree, it is high time we adapted our view of event to incorporate the nuances of change—to accept that event is not the singular and massive explosion, but rather a plurality of movements, which gather to recognize a common enemy.⁹⁰ In practise, what does such an intervention by the subject into eventual consequences look like? It is the objective of this paper to try to answer this question. Can we not then claim, that event today, accepted historically, and functioning as a plurality, has even more potential towards change? It was Marx who said that Capitalism would be destroyed from within, and furthermore, that it would be the very workers themselves who would finally open the door to emancipation—and so it is that we see this possibility in the realities of contemporary event; not as absolute sweeping change—but as transformative political engagement—a plausible interaction with event that develops a new radical subject; not as explosive revolutionary charge, but rather upon a day-by-day strategic basis.

⁹⁰ Kioupkiolis, Alexandros, *Acts, Events and the Creation of the New*, Constellations Vol.24, No1, 2017.

2 Regina José Galindo: Memory and Affect

2.1 Politics of Memory and Affect

In the following section Galindo's performance *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*⁹¹ will be analysed; an investigative process that forms the first of many evidences which set out to underscore a set of clearly observable categories. The objective here is to demonstrate how political memory and affect—categories observable as arising from within the work of Galindo—are at the core of a new emancipative language traceable in origin to event. This section is then the first of an accumulative presentation of evidences that seek to sustain the central hypothesis.

When faced with the material real of what it is to sense the social fading away of memories, from a particular and specific milieu (in the following example the memory of genocide), there is of necessity a choice. Do we as subjects make a political stand of some kind, counting ourselves among those who refuse to forgive and forget, or do we sit passively and silently, as the truth is distorted and oppressed? One might argue that there is in fact, in a properly organized hegemony, no such election; that social memory adequately controlled, monopolized, mediated, and distorted, is in fact the property of power. It is power (in its mediated form) that decides, as Scotoni has noted, “how long an event can last and which subjects have the rights to exist”.⁹² In the case of Regina José Galindo, we find that she does indeed decide to make an active choice, based partially at least, upon a set of political and material realities; thus she materializes herself as a *subject of truth*. Of the processes behind *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo has clearly remarked:

When it was announced that Efraim Ríos Montt had managed to win acceptance as a presidential candidate, I was in my room, and I suffered an attack of panic and depression. I shouted out, I kicked and stomped my feet, I cursed the system that rules us. How was it possible that a character as dark as this would have such power with which to

⁹¹ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/home-en/>

⁹² Scotoni, Marco, *Politics of Memory*, Ed. Scotoni and Galasso, Archive Books, 2017, p.14.

bend everything to his will? I decided then and there that I would take to the streets with my shout and amplify it if I had to.⁹³

There is then a plainly defined temporality, a moment when Galindo *decides* to formulate herself as a subject of truth. Her decision to resist is clearly stated: this can be read as a subjective attempt to confront the falling away of communal social memory; to prepare herself in her performance, (drawing here on the parlance of visual science) as the *nodal point of reference*; Galindo articulates herself as that which reveals the (alternative) truth of power. As she herself notes of this particular performance, there is a question of communal memory and manipulation:

I say that these efforts were necessary, because Guatemala is a country without memory. The people, with little access to education, are easy to mislead with promises and the little gifts that politicians hand out during election campaigns. The official party, to which Ríos Montt belonged and belongs, made a huge effort and had all the power to reach the Guatemalan minorities, who had difficulty connecting the actual Ríos Montt (the presidential candidate) to the past dictator-president who was guilty of the greatest crimes against their own people, their own blood. Every effort was necessary, any help at all, it was all needed to shout out the truth, by whatever means.⁹⁴

Taking onboard this statement in full it is necessary to begin asking some very specific questions. We can see that Galindo somehow problematizes social memory, but is memory contingent from the point of view of an unclosed and therefore changeable temporality, and moreover, does Galindo, as she intercepts memory, interfere with an eventual truth process?

From here it is feasible to argue for the recognition of an interconnected non-sequential experience of time, one that perhaps necessarily guides an exploration into a possibly new experience of an actual temporality. In such a time we would no longer be upon the ground of truths relayed to us by history *per se* (seen as the result of a determined process); rather, that of a contingent political memory based upon eventual truth(s). Memory under certain conditions may become a two way continuum; what this means is that interaction with communal history (social memory of the recent past qua event), be it the

⁹³ Regina Jose Galindo, *Regina Jose Galindo*, Francisco Goldman, Bomb 94/Winter 2006.

See: <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/regina-jos%C3%A9-galindo/>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

process of *forgetting* or *remembering*, becomes a creative act, the consequences or parameters of which are decided in the temporality of the present. If the present has been constructed upon a dubious narrative erected by the State then it would be vulnerable to attacks from those persons who seek to present a set of truths which might accumulate to build counter memories. Scotoni has noted that memory is in our times open to reconstruction. This is because today, power has adopted new strategies for capturing time (he refers to historical narratives) that are extremely “non-linear, reversible, virtual” and should be contemplated alongside subjectivities, based now upon “perceptions, memory, intellect”⁹⁵. It is observable that Galindo, who designs to posit an antagonistic approach to the dominant narrative, adheres to eventual truths so to provide purchase—Galindo performs eventual truths that open the possibility to create new dialectical space. In a sense, what Regina José Galindo does is provide the means by which to reconstruct social memory. Scotoni refers to this kind of work by contemporary artists as a kind of archaeology of the present.⁹⁶ It is the questioning of current truths while simultaneously presenting a new set of possibilities. This is what we may refer to as the politics of memory, because as we have noted, the ethics of the truth once reignited, perform an alternative to an official cataloguing of the present. It is clear that there is a tripartite arrangement to the political structure of memory, identifiable as *memory per se*, *forgetting* and in the case of genocide, *forgiving*. To this conceptual trio we shall need to return. Before that, let us turn attention to the methodology of Galindo in regards to a particular performance.



Regina José Galindo,
¿Quién puede borrar las huellas,
Guatemala City 2003.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/quien-puede-borrar-las-huellas/>

⁹⁵ Scotoni, Marco, op. cit., p.13.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.11.

One of the central themes of Galindo's work is violence, and this violence is often directed at the female gender, yet is often, as is our case here, directly related to serious—and as yet—unpunished crimes against humanity. The political corruption that converges to disguise the realities of genocide are at the heart of *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, but there are a number of secondary themes that may now be discussed in detail.

Galindo undertakes this particular performance, which is deeply rooted within her own material and subjective involvement with the event sequence of genocide (Guatemala),⁹⁷ on Wednesday the 23rd of July, 2003. The terrain is very specific, Guatemala City, where Galindo directly calls out two of the country's corrupt institutions: the Corte de Constitucionalidad and the Palacio Nacional de Guatemala. These Galindo unswervingly views as direct accessories to the slaughter of tens of thousands of the indigenous populace of Guatemala. In her action Galindo resurrects the meaning of the original event (genocide, and its attendant affect) thus activating a new incursion into the territories of social memory. All of this is achieved in the following manner.

For her work: *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo is animated primarily by the announcement that Efraín Ríos Montt⁹⁸ had been given State permission to present himself as a candidate in the forthcoming elections. This was the same man who had as dictator been in power (for a spell) during a murderous period of history, whereby some 200,000 persons became victims of state controlled genocide.⁹⁹ Galindo reactivates the affect surrounding this

⁹⁷ The violence inflicted by the Guatemalan security forces upon the Ixil Maya people of Guatemala was, according to Guatemala's 1999 Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) to be deemed "acts of genocide". See; *Commission for Historical Clarification*: [http://www.laits.utexas.edu/lawdem/unit05/reading4/Seils_reading.pdf\(23/11/18\)](http://www.laits.utexas.edu/lawdem/unit05/reading4/Seils_reading.pdf(23/11/18)).

⁹⁸ Although his Defense Minister, Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores overthrew Gen Ríos Montt in August 1983, he is considered to have had a major impact on the conflict through the so-called Guns and Beans campaign. The rebels were offered terms through which they would be fed if they supported the regime, but crushed if they continued fighting. Prosecutors say that during his 17 months in power, Gen Ríos Montt, and his chief of military intelligence, Gen Jose Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, ordered the deaths of more than 1,700 members of the Ixil Maya ethnic group, whom they suspected were supporting the rebels. In 2013 Montt was found guilty of war crimes and sentenced to 80 years in jail. See: "*The Final Battle: Ríos Montt's Counterinsurgency Campaign U.S. and Guatemalan Documents Describe the Strategy Behind Scorched Earth*". See: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB425/>

⁹⁹ Montt rose through the ranks to become a brigadier general and the army's chief of staff in 1970 during the military regime of President General Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio. He came to power through a coup in March 1982 in the middle of Guatemala's bloody war, in which Marxist rebels battled the military regime. Civilians - the vast majority of them indigenous Mayans - were murdered by state forces, and an estimated 200,000 were exterminated and their lands cleared, before a truce was reached in 1996, making the conflict one of Latin

event sequence, recognized as a human stain on the history of her country's memory—by making visible and present again the victims whom the State would wish to obscure from the final count—. *How could they suggest this murderer would be fit to once again serve as political leader?*

As interlocutors there is first something we ought to be mindful of: Galindo is not in any manner offering a re-memorizing process of historical narrative, but is instead instigating a sequence of disrupting information—at the symbolic level of *representation*—in so doing rupturing the official cataloguing; this is a de-archiving process that occurs whilst simultaneously questioning the very dynamics of a systemic program of forgetting. All this is achieved through a direct engagement with the topic of violence (and the attempts to forget it).



Regina José Galindo,
¿Quién puede borrar las huellas,
Guatemala City 2003.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/quien-puede-borrar-las-huellas/>

In her action Galindo expresses a fully controlled and immensely courageous performance; she walks a clear line from the Corte de Constitucionalidad to the Palacio Nacional de Guatemala, soaking her feet in a bowl of human blood, printing a soaking foot, tracing a bloody connection between these two State institutes. In so doing she creates a division or interruption to the accepted narrative flow; this is an injunction of a possible *truth* into a situation that Badiou would recognize as belonging to “a simulacrum of truth”¹⁰⁰, which Badiou describes in the following manner:

America's most violent wars. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/11/guatemalan-dictator-rios-montt-jailed-genocide>

¹⁰⁰ Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: an Essay of the Understanding of Evil*, Trans. Peter Hallward, *The Problem of Evil*, Verso, 2012, p.73.

When a radical break in a situation, under names borrowed from real truth-processes, convokes not the void but the “full” particularity or presumed substance of that situation, we are dealing with a simulacrum of truth.¹⁰¹

The foundation for Badiou’s theory is based upon his analysis of the Nazi Party in Germany, who were, according to Badiou, able to pass off a simulacrum for a true event when they spoke about the ‘National Socialist revolution’. As Badiou notes:

[...] they borrowed names – ‘revolution’, ‘socialism’ – justified by great modern political events (the Revolution of 1792, or the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917). A whole series of characteristics are related to and legitimated by this borrowing: the break with the old order, the support sought from mass gatherings, the dictatorial style of the state, the pathos of the decision, the eulogy of the Worker, and so forth.¹⁰²

These designations applied in such a way lend credence to the notion that a true void has been named and that these names, which for the trace of a true event, are subsequently retained—so that they may guide fidelity—, in the now. So power is established upon the grounds of a simulated event. It is quite clear that Badiou’s theory is developed not merely as a means to approach the historicity of the Nazi Party and Hitler’s development of a simulacrum; rather there is the establishment of a means by which we may recognize *all* simulacrum. That is, specifically on the basis that only a true event is universally significant (an event is an event for *all* subjects). We can recognize then a simulacrum as it appeals only to a select few, as in the case of the ‘German’ revolution, which as we know, although formally very convincing, is nonetheless a counterfeit action due to its being concentrated only upon the supposed national substance of a people, and this to the exclusion of all others. Badiou provides theoretical grounding for the possible recognition of *all* simulacrum. As he notes:

‘Simulacrum’ must be understood here in its strong sense: all the formal traits of a truth are at work in the simulacrum. Not only the universal nomination of the event, inducing the radical break, but also the ‘obligation’ of a fidelity, and the promotion of a *simulacrum of the subject*, erected – without the advent of any Immortal – above the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.72.

human animality of the others, of those who are arbitrarily declared not to belong to the communitarian substance whose promotion and domination the simulacrum-event is designed to assure.¹⁰³

In our example here the name “war” is taken to represent what is not. The term war is not applicable in the universal sense as there are not warring factions but rather tiny pockets of political resistance who launch a futile attempt to resist State organized abuse. There is no “war” in Guatemala, rather a systematized genocide and State produced oppression, based upon ethnic cleansing. The simulacrum is, as was in the case of the Nazi ‘German’ revolution, formally convincing, soldiers and military equipment are displayed in the media, Rios Montt appearing in public in army fatigues, and so on, and the word ‘war’ is applied with regularity to describe the successive events (both inside and outside of Guatemala). But the truth of the matter was put succinctly into words by Rios Montt, when he told unarmed Guatemalan peasants, (who to the extents of the simulacrum are recognized as the ‘enemy’), “If you are with us, we will feed you, if not, we will kill you.”¹⁰⁴ Later as we know, Rios Montt, subsequent to his trial of January 2013, would be found guilty of orchestrating a mass murder. He and his former chief of intelligence were charged with responsibility for massacres in 15 Ixil Maya villages in which 1,771 unarmed men, women, and children were killed. At the trial, Judge Yasmín Barrios said she was “completely convinced”¹⁰⁵ of General Ríos Montt’s guilt. She sentenced him to 80 years in prison. Through adopting the term “war” the simulacrum is established. The content of which, in the case of a true “event”, would lead us to assume there was some liberating and just foundation—based upon the fighting between two equally capable forces—. Rather, we have the simulacrum of “war”, whereby massacre and genocide are the only possible outcomes.

Galindo, in *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, performs a direct action, forming at once a present day rejection of the proposed candidate (Rios Montt), whilst making visible the connection between real physical blood, and the visible State institutions—historically guilty of genocide—. This is “putting law to the test, instead of calling for its restoration”.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.74.

¹⁰⁴ Kinzer, Stephen, *Efraín Ríos Montt, Guatemalan Dictator Convicted of Genocide, Dies at 91*, The New York Times, April 1st, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/obituaries/efrain-rios-montt-guatemala-dead.html>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

This idea of restoration relates to simulacra being held up and sustained as truth. Badiou refers to four areas of affect in the establishment of a subject qua an event. So instead of anxiety and the buffeting of “law”, now seen as corrupt, better the calling forth of “justice” and the establishment of a new law along just lines.¹⁰⁶ What Galindo achieves in her performance, is the questioning of the “truth” of an attempted simulacrum. Pluth links Badiou’s notion of mistreatment to the creation of what he calls simulacrum. He also notes that for Badiou a central question for the ethics of truths is the status of the *event* itself, moreover its relation to the situation. In our example it is clear that Rios Montt, in his attempts to become leader of his country, is in fact attempting to formulate a psuedo truth; this is a *simulacrum* of truth. A simulacrum is then “an ethical lapse that emerges from a misunderstanding of the relation of an event to the situation too”.¹⁰⁷

Montt positions himself as the legitimate potential leader of the country. This can only come to pass should the ethical processes of event—the relation to the specific situation—be mistreated. What is intended by the notion of *mistreatment* is related here to the construction of evental truth(s). The *simulacrum* is then the fake filling of the situation—which is in itself an ethical lapse—. The idea is that there is a just “war” based on the establishment of the good against the perceived enemy. Finally the truth of the event is decided by the name that is applied. As this naming is however, in itself the production of the event, it is vital that this naming should be the result of an ethical pursuit of the “truth” or meaning of an event. What Galindo achieves is a clear and concurrent interaction with evental truths via affect: she intervenes where the situation is at its most vulnerable, that is at the point where the truth(s) are creating a specific “World”.

Those who find themselves at the intersection of an event—and a World—are subjects to a truth that necessarily produces an ethical dilemma (this topic of ethics is addressed in section 2.4.) Although it is not always conscious, this truth (produced by an event) will become truthful via its subjects—as and when an individual subject is absorbed by this (local) procedure—to the extent that they begin to feel its affects; moreover, they will be open to addressing its ethical concerns at that moment they become faithful to its claims.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See: Badiou, Alain, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels, Bloomsbury, UK, 2009, p.311.

¹⁰⁷ See Pluth, *op.cit.*, p.141-142.

¹⁰⁸ Pluth, Ed, *Badiou: A Philosophy of the New*. Chap.7 *Ethics and Affects*, Polity, 2010, p.128-153.

Galindo succeeds in her conjuring a foreboding reality: the institutionalized State sponsored violence that lies behind the local establishment of hegemony. For Galindo it is also a personal act of resistance, a small yet individual step towards a confrontation with her own personal source of anger, and bitter disappointment. By selecting a courageous and critical subjectivity, Galindo demonstrates the potential of the emerging situation. She is at risk herself,¹⁰⁹ yet it is a price she must pay if she is to remain faithful to a truth, if she is to present an alternative to the State's simulacrum. From this moment it is possible to build upon a nascent understanding of a new truth of the situation, to establish a counter memory that may in itself produce new subjects along the lines of an alternative truth.

For Badiou, it is at this stage that the subject, called into being by an event, is exposed to the affects produced by the event. Under the auspices of these affects emerges the subject.

To make clear our particular reading of Galindo's interaction with evental affect, more in-depth details are required. Badiou is clear that there is a distinction between *subjectivation* and what he calls *subject processes*. It is essential to note that these components of the subject (*Theory of the Subject*)¹¹⁰ are what essentially define the region of practical materiality—this he refers to as “subject-effect”—. Furthermore, and this is key to our understanding of affect as material, the subject does not in any manner pre-exist these affects or ethical concepts; they are not subjective experiences (psychological), but rather *styles* by which the subject may emerge (materialize). It is interesting to note how these subject processes are observable throughout the performance by Galindo. For example, take the subject affects of *anxiety* and *courage* (explained in more detail below); by walking (a physical material action, itself a symbol of freedom) Galindo emphasizes (even as a disapproving and potentially violent police force look on) that for denizens of an oppressive State there can never be any true liberty or authenticity—at least not within such a political structure. Furthermore, there will always be those who for the State are not permitted to

¹⁰⁹ The action is undertaken by Galindo on the same day that the FRG (Frente Republicano Guatemalteco) organizes a public display of support for their figurehead Rios Montt. The mobilization of support included acts of violence and terror in the capital, using petrol bombs and direct violence against members of the press (a journalist was killed in the chaos) and finally barricading themselves in front of the Palacio de Justicia. Their idea was to terrorize a democratic process, and their violent actions were left entirely unpunished by the State police forces who merely looked on. This was a day of extreme political tension accompanied by aggression and violence on the part of those who supported Montt. See: Ribés, Lindon Sancho, op. cit., p. 124.

¹¹⁰ Badiou, Alain, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels, Bloomsbury, UK, 2009.

appear. The bloody trail created in *¿Quien puede borrar las huellas?* forms the complete metaphor: the line between those who are counted in society, and those who are not (those made absent are present in the performance through Galindo's own personal appearance—her femininity). This is also an attempt to trace the contour of aesthetic representation; applying aesthetics in such a way as to directly antagonize the political establishment's hegemonic structure—now revealed as a manipulation (simulacra) of the way things appear. In relation to the subject this action is not the desperate act of a subject driven by *anxiety*, who has been rendered witless by an event—throwing herself against power in a last ditch attempt at confrontation. Rather she is controlled and *courageous*. So not to lose sight of her critical intentions, Galindo's performance demands that she carefully plan her approach to power. She presents then a specific set of subject *styles* which are themselves informed by evental truth. How might we then best interpret these styles?

Badiou's framework of *affect* is useful as we try to understand Regina's work and how exactly it is connectable to evental affect. As Pluth points out, for Badiou's affect framework there are a limited number of styles: to *subjectivation* belong the affects *anxiety* and *courage*. To the subject-process belong the *superegoic* attachment to law and the pursuit of *justice*.¹¹¹ For Badiou superego, anxiety, courage and justice are knotted together and form the components of a subject; on the topic he notes that:

The four concepts...are neither virtues nor capacities. Better: they are not experiences. [...] Neither anxiety nor the superego, neither courage nor justice, are states of consciousness. They are categories of the subject-effect. What they reveal to us is a specific material region, ruling every destruction of what supports it.¹¹²

Anxiety, like *courage*, is a style of subjectivity that Badiou, in *Theory of the Subject*, designates primarily as both *political* and *collective*. These are the principal affects present at the beginning of a movement's establishment. Anxiety is a form of interruption, which pits itself directly against the first-hand forms presented in the new situation. Anxiety is chaos, an explosion of undisciplined reaction, riots for example, which eventually subside to leave the social order once again intact. For Badiou *anxiety* is a failed mode of revolt and emerges

¹¹¹ Pluth, op. cit.

¹¹² Badiou, Alain, op. cit., p.291.

from the very outset as the acceptance of the impossibility of any meaningful and emancipative social change; in fact, as Pluth signals, it destroys all possibility of destruction.¹¹³

In the performance of Galindo we can see clearly that the subject she portrays is comparable to the subject of *courage* and *justice*. As per Badiou's two affects relating to subjectivity production, Galindo selects a very particular form of performance—via which to present the figure of *justice* and *courage*—. She carries a basin filled with human blood through the streets of the city. From time to time, she pauses to dip her feet—in an action, (on one level) clearly linked to female domestic work—. The bowl, reminiscent of the type of bowls female house cleaners use, domesticates the action, revealing its social rootedness in the collective. Galindo activates her own female body and in the process demonstrates that affect can be transformed into a message through art. This is the message of affect; the public cleansing of affect, the affects of *shame*, *indignation*, and *fear*, are given material form—and are directly connected to the original evental truths of genocide via an overt and singular coupling of the performance and its site—. Galindo asks the questions succinctly: *What is the object of power?*

The visual language Galindo adopts uses a direct and technically orchestrated phraseology in contra. Within *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, her bloody footprints map the affects of genocide in the streets; in so doing, they evidence a clear perversion of event, which is equal to corrupt power. Galindo directly accuses several institutions, and as Sancho Ribes has noted, these include political, civil (law), as well as military¹¹⁴—and to this list we shall need to add religious—: all are implicated in the violence experienced within Guatemala.

As interlocutors of Galindo's performance we are granted a privileged experience of an event process that is now demonstrably contingent, as per the affects of memory and those affects of *courage* and (the absent) *anxiety*. As Pluth notes, courage is the affect, —the portent of a new non-submission to the symbolic order—revealing in the process the dissolving injunction of the real. Anxiety calls for the death of the symbolic order, while

¹¹³ Pluth, op. cit.

¹¹⁴ Sancho Ribes, Lindón, *Regina José Galindo: la performance como arma*, ARS, Universitat Jaume, València, 2017, p.125.

courage, as we can clearly observe in Galindo's performance, positively brings about an interruption.¹¹⁵

For those subjects, however, who intend to remain faithful to the truth of an event, it is not sufficient to rely solely upon courage. Justice and the superego are the two styles in which the subject-process also occurs. The *superegoic* style, (and Pluth has noted this point), is perhaps the antithesis of that which occurs during the anxious destruction. The force of the real is seen in excess to that of the symbolic. In such instance the real of genocide is in excess of the simulacrum of event (victory in "war", reaffirmation of State power, Christian Evangelical legitimacy); the superegoic style thus comes into play here as *buttress*. The crumbling facade of the State is now ruthlessly reinforced in the name of the law (Montt as potential president). Here the subject participates in the restructuring of the symbolic order. In turn, *justice*, the other style of subject-process operates as a relativizing force vis-à-vis the law. It is not, as Pluth notes, anti-law per se. Rather, it establishes the ground by which we may question the legitimacy of a current law, and indeed, replace this law with a new law. As Badiou notes, the superegoic is then restorative (hegemony), whilst *justice* is faithful to the original truth of the event.¹¹⁶

Pluth notes that there is a natural coupling of the affects. Badiou, he notes, has recognized that there are two combinations by which a subject may emerge. Firstly there is the juxtaposition of anxiety and the superego, and secondly the linking of courage and justice. For Badiou, the latter is of course preferable and is that style of subject that is most closely linked to the truth of an event.¹¹⁷



Regina José Galindo
El Peso de la sangre,
Central Plaza, Guatemala
City, 2004.

www.reginajosegalindo.com/el-peso-de-la-sangre/

¹¹⁵ Pluth, op.cit.

¹¹⁶ Badiou, op.cit., p.159.

¹¹⁷ Pluth, op. cit.

In the “World” in which Galindo performs, a key truth token of genocide, as Galindo is fully aware, is blood. Blood, in the context of *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, forms a symbol of genocidal violence, a detail echoed in another performance of Galindo’s, *El Peso de la Sangre*.¹¹⁸ In this performance, which takes place just a year later, in 2004, Galindo had organized a litre of blood so that it would drip, slowly; spattering directly upon her head. The action is realized in one of the main plazas of Guatemala City, right in front of the Cathedral, and is therefore witnessed by the multitudes that visit the plaza on that day. As Sancho Ribes has noted, Galindo implicates the public within this performance, as it is only they, in the face of State organized violence, who might wield the power of action, or, conversely, of inaction.¹¹⁹

Galindo invites the public to step into her created World, whereby they may encounter a truth—which has, as we have noted, been subject to a process of deformation or recharacterization as part of a process of *simulacrum*—; this is an invitation to formulate oneself as *a subject of truth*. Blood here functions as a symbol of aggression and violence that spills out from the event of genocide (genocide because this has been the prevalent sequence of violence in the context) but simultaneously State violence in general is called into question. The blood splashes equally upon Galindo as it does those who stand nearest the spectacle, thus implicating by extension the society within in which violence has become an accepted norm.

Returning to *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, it is the bloody line traced by each of Galindo’s materialized footprints that recall the gory victims of genocide. There is no way to distinguish the human blood with which she soaks her feet from that of her own. She thus forms a living interruption, a material juxtaposition of the subject and object. Performing the role of victim, yet, as intellectual orchestrator of the performance—she is in no sense truly a casualty—and has full control of the action as it develops, precisely in front of those figures of power now held directly accountable.

Finally, this is the quoting of those bodies that are materially no longer present—yet remain in the material as body affect—. As Garbayu Maeztu notes, in performance the body appears in front of others to reiterate the bodies of *others*—permitting the consideration of

¹¹⁸ See: <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/el-peso-de-la-sangre-2/>

¹¹⁹ Sancho Ribes, Lindón, *op. cit.*, p.125.

those absent bodies—, simultaneously performing the potential for further material corporality; more *others* (who may have been part of the future from the perspective of the past), who may yet become themselves present.¹²⁰

The “Other” though, it must be said, is only present in the sense that it should dissolve. This occurs inside the performance which takes place itself in the context of a “World”. The demarcation of a specific physical space signals the realm of possibility for that which appears at a certain time in a specific place. Galindo is a performance artist but she is working in a very specific *Latin American* moment. This is then the making visible of the victim—not as insignificant “Other” but as *another*, a universal material real—and by this it is meant that her performance of a truth necessarily cancels all states of “otherness” in favour of “sameness”, at a time when the State would like to make it all disappear; at a time when the State would prefer to normalize the process of *forgetting*. By activating affect Galindo is able to perform the role of *aporia*; she is neither subject nor object: but a material assemblage of eventual truths present as affect; so it is we see that her performance is incumbent upon the situation by the insistence of the truth therein (in the work as affect), that is, she performs truths that function to construct counter memories. Here for example are the material realities of *trauma* (in Chapter 2.3 discussion will move toward trauma in more detail), of oppressed *truths*, reformulated, so that their affect may resist the hegemonic attempts to force—the State enhanced amnesia—of that which has come to pass (genocide/State organized violence).

The political motivations and methodologies are then clear;—but what about the aesthetic concerns—what does this performance actually look like, and why does it look this way? Meditations upon the aesthetics of *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas? As well as El Peso de la Sangre* reveal a number of interesting particulars relating to the symbolic nature of the work, and underscore Galindo’s intention to go beyond the mere accentuating of violence. Both of these performance mark an intentioned move, a direct and rigorous interrogation of society, to the extent that underlying supports for the impunity found in society comes to light. In *El peso de la sangre*, as in *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* Galindo leans in on Christian symbolism—appropriating politically tacit codes to directly subvert the impact of

¹²⁰ Garbayo Maeztu, Maite, *Cuerpos Que Aparecen: Performance y Feminismos En El Tardofranquismo*, Consonni, España, 2017, p.20.

a specific experience of Christianity (Guatemala)—. We can thus recognize one of the strategic foundations for that which formulates part of a hegemonic—and therefore ideological buttressing (the affect categories of the superego and anxiety as stipulated by Badiou¹²¹)—, tacitly aiding and abetting the corrupt State in its pursuit and control of, or better still, elimination of, the public and social memory. This crucial observation shall be further unpacked below.

So now then let us draw attention to the remarkable use of a specific Christian symbolism that is central to a critical language that Galindo is structuring; this in order to counter the State’s own use of a Christian underpinning to their controlling narrative. In what follows focus falls upon what is extant in terms of Christian iconography in these two performance: *El peso de la sangre* and *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*

Viewers of the video recording of the performance *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?* cannot help but be struck by the initial relevance of Galindo’s corporality, the determined and purposeful manner in which Galindo sets about her task of printing her feet along the pavements of Guatemala city. Her dignified pose and posture suggest a messianic presence, capable of confronting power; and this, be it a conscious or unconscious effect on the part of the artist, sets a marked religious undertone to the work. That is not to say that Galindo is in anyway religious, on the contrary, she is criticizing Christianity, its manipulation rather— whilst however, and simultaneously—, she employs the methods and tools of a classical Christian aesthetic. This adopted aesthetic permits Galindo to make affective inroads into the temporal construction of the State’s organized *simulacrum* (a just “war”).

So Galindo is here exploiting a number of religious motifs in order to counter the tacit involvement of the Christian faith in the very action of State organized processes—not only *forgetting*—but also *forgiving*. How else could there be such widespread acceptance of Montt’s proposed Presidency? It is necessary to return now to the three concepts mentioned at the start of this section: *memory*, *forgetting* and *forgiving*.

Firstly, why would Regina José Galindo reach out towards a Christian symbolism? In order to answer this we need only look at some of the basic details regarding the religious background of the country and the government's collaborations with both the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church (although we must pay homage to the many Catholic

¹²¹ Badiou, Alain, op.cit., p.292.

priests who during the period of the 36-year-war were tortured and murdered as they attempted to protect Mayan Guatemalans from the state sponsored onslaught).¹²²

The importance of the United States influence cannot be underestimated; as object of a concerted foreign effort, Guatemala had begun a spiritual reformation in the form of the adoption of the Evangelical faith (largely due to connections with the United States of America).¹²³ Ríos Montt was himself first a Catholic, who then through his direct friendship with leading American Evangelicals switched his religious path to firmly absorb Evangelical teachings.

It is of extreme importance to note here that central to Evangelical doctrine is the notion of redemption. Montt would himself preach and teach the Evangelical path, despite the fact that his brother was to become a Catholic Bishop. These minor details aside, recent counting of religious attitudes in the country mark that there are very few Guatemalans of atheist persuasion, and that almost the entire population believes (and continues to believe) in some form of Christian deity.¹²⁴

It is clear, that a principal and considerable obstacle—to any sustainable critic or interrogation of hegemony inside Guatemala—would need to include this initial confrontation with the kind of Christian symbolism that Guatemalans were used to—because it is this same that effectively forms part of an aesthetic system that buttresses power—.

The absorption of religious underpinning by government policy in Guatemala is, as has been noted by Sancho Ribes, something that can be traced as far back as Rafael Carrera,¹²⁵ who despite his comparative leniency towards indigenous groups was also

¹²² The following taken from an interview with a former refugee who had escaped to Mexico when the war broke out: “For one, the government created a vacuum when it targeted the Catholic Church because it was seen as siding with insurgents. The military wanted to neutralize, depoliticize the population and many priests were assassinated. ... So the Evangelical church grew exponentially during the war. It was an extraordinary growth. And also many people turned to evangelicalism to save their lives. I mean, if you join the evangelical church, the military won’t bother you.” See the interview with Migel Leon Ceto, (talking to Amy Braken, 2016). See <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-06-30/did-war-change-guatemalas-faith> (19.09.19).

¹²³ The Reagan Administration backed Ríos Montt as he implemented his so-called *beans and guns* policy — feeding and arming supposed sympathizers to help him fight the rebels. The feeding part was carried out in part by American Evangelical missionaries, who operated as Ríos Montt’s representatives in the countryside. See: Amy Braken, *Ibid*.

¹²⁴ A survey taken in 2018 shows that 42% of respondents were Roman Catholic, while there were 39% who claimed to follow the Evangelical Church. Just 13.8% said there had no religious faith at all. See: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1067082/guatemala-religion-affiliation-share-type/> (05/07/21)

¹²⁵ José Rafael Carrera Turcios (24 October 1814 – 14 April 1865) was the president of Guatemala from 1844 to 1848 and from 1851 until his death in 1865.

inclined to abuse those same groups by manipulating them so to adopt the guise of a Christian army. Carrera formulated an army of 4,000 “guerilleros”, made up of indigenous tribesmen, who would enter and destroy villages the state considered “liberal”, shouting “Viva la religion y mueran los extanjeros” (Long live religion, death to foreigners).¹²⁶ These same features of government continue through to the temporality of the works in question, as is evidenced in the actions of the FRG (Frente Republicano Guatemalteca).¹²⁷

Galindo had already adopted elements of a Christian symbolism when she performed herself as an angelic figure, in her first large-scale public performance: *Lo voy a gritar al viento* (1999),¹²⁸ —a work discussed in detail in Chapter 3—. Now, in *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, she adopts the black clothing of a Christian widow, deep in mourning. Indeed mourning is without a doubt one of the central practices of the Christian faith in regards to death. Here the symbolism lends itself to the passing of some 200,000 persons during the Guatemalan genocide. There is also the bare-footedness to contemplate. Almost all of the Christian saints and martyrs are depicted throughout art history as walking barefooted as they preached; Christ himself is depicted in both film and painting as going about his business barefooted. The biblical tales of the washing of the feet are explicitly alluded to by Galindo in the very action of placing her feet inside the bowl, indeed the stopping and starting, at almost every dozen or so steps, neatly forms an echo of the stations of the Cross. However, by far the most important symbol in regards to Christianity—is found when we contemplate the blood—.

Referring then to the blood, as far as Christianity is concerned, the Blood of Christ is that which is shed on the Cross. This is the blood that by and large has a two-fold meaning: firstly it is the blood by which we are to be saved; Christ died on the cross; this is the Christian event: so that humanity might be absolved of sin; secondly: the sacrament or “Last Supper”, the very body and blood of Christ. Above all, it is important to note here that accepting salvation means we are "covered by the blood" or "washed in the blood" of Jesus—and we are made pure and clean in his sight—.

¹²⁶ Sancho Ribes, Lindon, *op. cit.*, P.15.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.123

¹²⁸ See: <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/lo-voy-a-gritar-al-viento-2/>

The question for Regina José Galindo—and that which her performance throws into doubt—is this inferred *forgiving* and *forgetting* which is sensed in the actual memory of the social communal mind. By adopting the key symbols of Christianity Galindo succeeds to subvert and repurpose their central meanings in an attempt to portray power in a new and questionable light.

The State, as noted above, (the government in Guatemala at the time the works were conceived) claims the duty (implicit in the adoption of Evangelicalism) to forgive and forget in the name of a Christian God, after all, it was Ríos Montt who would claim that “amnesty is the spirit of the law”.¹²⁹ There are numerous quotations from Montt himself which support this view of him as Evangelical Christian foot soldier, but it is interesting to begin such a review with a section of the Gospel of Matthew, which Montt no doubt knew very well from his own regular televised Gospel readings.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.¹³⁰

We can compare this Gospel excerpt with Montt’s own choice of wording in a sermon he delivered on April 18th, 1982:

It is very easy to define concepts of politics and philosophy, but to live in reality means that one’s own interests be detached, and see how we want to make a Guatemalan society reality [...] from this Tuesday amnesty is in effect, and amnesty is the spirit of the law.¹³¹

Montt’s real motive however was not to forgive, to grant amnesty to those rebels who had started to agitate in favour of a more egalitarian society in the country, but to suggest that forgiveness was part of what he might share with those who would disagree with his version of what it is to be Guatemalan (the moral high ground). For Montt, one could be forgiven under but one strict code, that you subdue yourself in the name of God, his Christian Evangelical version of God, as he notes:

¹²⁹ Ríos Montt, José Efraín original text taken from “Tenemos que limpiar la casa,” April 18, 1982. Mensajes del presidente de la República, General José Efraín Ríos Montt.

¹³⁰ Matthew 6:14–15 are the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the sixth chapter of the *Gospel of Matthew* in the *New Testament* and forms part of the *Sermon on the Mount*. See: *World English Bible*.

¹³¹ Ríos Montt, José Efraín, op. cit.

But for that (amnesty), you and I must have a reunion, we must have a reconciliation, we must feed the roots, the roots of a greater Guatemala which only happens when you renounce your interests and I renounce my pride, but it is achieved when you believe in God.¹³²

So all rebellion must be quelled, all must surrender in effect to a Christian Evangelical reality which is what Montt stressed as the foundation for his vision of what amounts to “the (heavenly) fatherland”,¹³³ as he notes:

What I want to say is [...] the amnesty wants to offer pardon [...], it wants to pardon; the fatherland wants to pardon; it is extending its arm; your embrace, your lap that your children return to; homes await the presence of its members. We take advantage of the amnesty that wants to offer pardon. He that pardons is noble and the person who accepts it is a noble person; we make our patria something noble. We reconcile, we make our family the root of the country.¹³⁴

What Montt means when he refers to the “root” of the country returns us again to the Gospel of Matthew and the Christian indispensable of forgiveness. For Montt all is forgivable once Christ the saviour is accepted; furthermore in his name, all crimes against humanity are to be written off as necessary evils in the establishment of the fatherland (Christian Evangelical). The fatherland must be purged of dissention, and so all non-Christian voices must be either converted or utterly dominated and destroyed. This much is confirmed by Montt in all that he says, and does:

Listen well, Guatemalans. We are going to combat the subversion by whatever means we want [...] totally just, but at the same time with energy and vigor [...] We are prepared to change Guatemala, we are prepared to do so with honesty and justice, peace and respect for those who are peaceful and respect the law, [but] prison and death to those who plant [the seeds] of criminality, violence and treachery.¹³⁵

So we have then a simulacrum which has the semblance of an event (just war) but which has the contents only of violence and brutality (genocide). *But how might what seems an open*

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³ Ríos Montt, José Efraín, “No queremos prensa subordinada al estado,” MPR, June 20, 1982.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ríos Montt, José Efraín, “Estamos dispuestos a que reina al honestidad y la justicia,” June 20, 1982. Mensajes del presidente de la República, General José Efraín Ríos Montt.

and shut case of religious based sectarianism and ethnic cleansing be further explained in more rigorous theoretical terms? In his short and scathing essay directed towards Paul Ricoeur's book, *Memory, History, Forgetting*,¹³⁶ Alain Badiou sets about a critique of Ricoeur's theory of the subject, on the grounds that it is only to be understood as a minor piece of a loftier Christian theological construction. Badiou accuses Ricoeur of subtracting history from what he calls the "duty to remember". By this duty, and in contrast to the Christian doctrine of salvation, evil, —as of the kind witnessed within genocide—, must be recognized by history—as such—. Badiou directly accuses Ricoeur's interweaving of *memory, history* and *forgetting*, noting that his view of memory, (seen as ongoing process and able to overlay itself upon pre-established structural processes)— simply forms itself as consort to forgetting—. This is because, (this same critic is contained by Galindo's performance) "The victory of the Christian vision of the historical subject" means that "by virtue of the narrative's sovereignty" (Jesus died for our sins) —nothing is ever able to subtract itself from forgiveness—, from the remission of sins, "from the absolution of crimes, from ethical forgetting".¹³⁷

Galindo adopts Christian symbolism in order to subvert a political hegemony that is tacitly underpinned by Christianity and therefore claims a theological power capable of wiping a public memory clean, of bringing about the insistence upon the social process of forgetting, and in the case of Rios Montt, *forgiving*. Badiou, having by now thoroughly debunked Ricoeur's thesis, continues channelling Saint Paul:

Belonging to the collective is ideally secondary to what commands charity: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Let us add: you will remember it all the more to the extent that you have no memory of yourself. Here we witness the preparation, between the lines, of the subordination of memory, as the supposition of a collective imperative, to the saving space of forgiveness that a self grants to others.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ricoeur, Paul, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, Chicago University Press, 2004.

¹³⁷ Badiou, Alain, *The Subject Supposed to be a Christian: On Paul Ricoeur's Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Natalie Doyle and Alberto Toscano, Published in *The Bible and Critical Theory*, Volume 2, Number 3, Monash University Press, 2006, p.27.1-27.9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Through her use of blood, Galindo evokes this sense of an unstated Christianity, and is therefore able to interrogate the status quo: *In whose name is the power of absolution, and how can a corrupt State disguise its actions behind the notion that all that occurs has been for the “greater good”, that what Montt has done has been forgiven, and is now fit for forgetting, who claims this authority exactly?* Badiou is clear on the matter, speaking on the symbolic urge towards forgiveness inherent in the Christ image he states that:

Whatever the scandal at stake (including that of the massacre of innocents), our power of judgment is nothing in the face of the infinity of sacrifice to which Christ consented for our sins.¹³⁹

This is precisely what is at stake: all things are forgivable under Christ, and this is what Montt was almost certainly relying upon. This much we can assume from his direct involvement with the Evangelical movement, which he directly promoted in Guatemala. Even as thousands were being murdered during his spell as dictator, Montt would appear on TV every Sunday preaching the Gospel.¹⁴⁰ It is clear that Galindo attempts to confront this kind of forgiving, which can only take place under the auspices of a simulacrum. A “just war” has not then been the truth of the situation but this notion, supported by the invocation of the Christian theme, is now challenged by Galindo who confronts the narrative with her own form of counter-Christian iconography. When the final count has been made, as far as the State is concerned, it is the Evangelical message (the Christ Event) that must be adhered to at all cost, —the message of redemption—. This is the key to understanding these particular performance works by Galindo: not that she is criticizing Christianity per se, but that she is subverting the societal symbolism quietly embraced throughout the instituting of the status quo.

Almost as if to anticipate this reading of her work, Galindo titled a subsequent action (in which she herself did not use her own physical body) *Ablucion* (2007) (Ablution).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ While Ríos Montt was enforcing news blackouts about military violence, he made sure to utilize mass media for his own ends. Within days of taking office on March 23, Ríos Montt began delivering television speeches broadcasted weekly on Sunday nights. They were his “discursos del domingo”, which were also known as “sermons.” Ríos Montt addressed his audience “about love, the family, abstinence from alcohol and other moral issues.” See: Bonner, Raymond, *Guatemala’s Junta Chief Says God Guides Him*, The New York Times, June 10, 1982.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/10/world/guatemala-junta-s-chief-says-god-guides-him.html> (22.04.21)

Ablution is a word that is explicitly used in connection with religious rites, particularly those of the Christian faith, whereby blessed water, or the blood of Christ (in symbolized form), as noted above, is used as part of the ritual of salvation and forgiveness of sin. As in *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, the blood is to be seen in terms of its double symbolic power. It signifies directly the blood related to gang violence—which this young man had no doubt seen and participated in— (he is a known gang member and reformed criminal) as well as the blood of Christ, as per the holy Christian rites of ablution. By using this particular human subject/object (subject because he is actively seeking redemption, object because he has become the focus for a work of art) Galindo is, as noted by Sancho Ribes, alluding to the culture of gang violence and macho aggression—that has been permitted to develop within Guatemala—. ¹⁴¹ In the action the man is first saturated with a litre of human blood, which he then undertakes to wash away with water.



Regina José Galindo,
Ablucion,
Guatemala City, 2007.

www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/home-en/

The blood of his crimes until now invisible has become clear for the audience to observe—and for himself to materialize upon his own flesh—. The act of washing away the blood indicates the man’s sincere attempt to clear his conscience of his previous crimes. Galindo is, however, again demonstrating that the idea of ablution of one’s sins—and the question of the State’s implicit involvement in regards to impunity—must forever be connected. A policy, that promotes gang violence, whereby members are permitted to rape, torture and murder members of the civil society, often at the State’s behest, is called out in the work. ¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Sancho Ribes, Lindon, op. cit., p.155-157.

¹⁴² Ladgarde y de los Rios observes that in Guatemala femicide must be located within “a continuum of sexual violence” against women that started during the armed conflicts of 1960 and 1996 and continues on after the signing of the peace accords into the present; she notes that “the pervasive and systematic use of sexualized

Galindo underscores the fact that civil violence is partially underwritten by the speedy forgiving that occurs once gang members decide to resign from their life of violence. The ritual of cleaning away the sin is therefore once again the symbolic adaptation of Christian rites in order to underscore the State's shortfall in regards to truth and therefore justice within civil society. The State, which draws upon Christianity to fulfil its necessary quota—in terms of sovereignty—is placed into a new dubious light by the performances of Galindo. Her performance work reminds us of the true characteristic of the State, which is that which, as is the case with event—appears and disappears—;the State then acts as an event's natural accompaniment. The political evental sequences, in this case related to genocide and State promoted violence, is thus registered as an action by the State, now viewed as an excess; a measurable force which can be viewed as characteristic of evental aftermath. Once the event has passed, the State will attempt to fall back into the shadows, effectively camouflaging itself behind its processes of subterfuge and corruption. Badiou, of such situations, has noted that:

Empirically, this means that whenever there is a genuinely political Event, the State reveals itself. It reveals its excess of power, its repressive dimension. But it also reveals a measure for the usually invisible excess. For it is essential to the normal functioning of the State that its power remains measureless, errant, unassignable. The political event puts an end to all this by assigning a visible measure to the excessive power of the State.¹⁴³

It is possible to interpret Galindo's work by admitting that there are potentially two sides of the *subject* post event. On one side, the affects leading to reconstruction (forgetting and forgiving) whereby the *superego* and *anxiety* function reactively; on the other, the subject affects of *courage* and *justice*, through which the truth of the event calls subjects to arms and is—therefore—extended. At the very end of her performance Galindo marks two joined footprints together, the toes pointing towards the doors of degraded power. In front of the

torture and rape of women by the Guatemalan State during the 36-year internal armed conflict [is] a factor that has normalized these forms of violence, especially when considering that this type of violence was institutionalized in military training. Added to this there exists she notes, "ongoing structural impunity" allowing crimes against women to be viewed as admissible or even state-sanctioned. See, Ladgarde y de los Rios, Marcela, *Feminist Keys For Understanding Femicide: Theoretical, Political, and Legal Constructions*, in Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano (eds.), *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, p. xi-xxv.

¹⁴³ Badiou, Alain, *Metapolitics*, (trans. Jason Barker), London, Verso, 2005, p.145.

corrupt police officials now seen lining the staircase she places down the bowl of remaining blood, and, turning on her heel, withdraws. The message is as simple as it is clear: the (her) truth of the event has been delivered. This is the final coming to pass of an event of truth. What is assumed here, at this final juncture, is that one day soon, the currently indiscernible truths (those upon which she acts), will become verified and adopted in equal measure.

Galindo functions as a militant subject of event—she performs herself as but one of the event’s soon-to-be-many tokens of truth. Furthermore, she behaves as if this certainty has indeed, already come to pass. In her performance we see the presentation of the symbolic as per the material transformation of affect. This text has so far demonstrated how Galindo adapts, performs and materializes the affects of a specific political moment (which we can link to a particular event sequence). Galindo is in fact referencing, giving material form (presentation) to that which has no real foundation in the objectified world, yet is—in so doing—able to refer directly to the injustices of power.

So we have been attempting to demonstrate how affect and memory are at the very centre of what Galindo endeavours to achieve (the reissue of a truth as direct confrontation of an hegemonic policy of forgetting). Our text has set out to examine how the event is present in the material world of the work of art, *per se*, (as affect). As the ontological frame for this materiality begins to take shape we shall need to be mindful that an intervention into memory is tantamount to an intervention into event; this because memory as such is an affect of a given temporality which continues to impinge upon the temporality of the present (from both the future and the past). This is due to the trace of evental truth, which as we know, is infinite. Furthermore, we need also be acutely aware, that memory and the act of remembering, and therefore forgetting, is itself the active participation into the truth of an event. This is the knowledge that underpins this analysis of Galindo.

2.2 The Poetic Measure of Event

In an understanding of language as pure form (the notion of poetry as *poiesis*) exists the equation of the word as the very first establishing or organization of that which springs from the void. This investigation continues now by turning to poetical production in the work of Regina José Galindo, as it is here we encounter what is essentially her own point of departure. Unlike any other performance artist of our times, her reliance upon poetical form as initial

organization of evental material makes her fundamentally a poet—who materializes words in the form of actions—in the procedure of performance (truth).

What follows is an analysis of Galindo’s poetical production, with perspectives based upon the language and the poetic delineation of her specific site. This thinking of locus in unambiguous terms as poetic measure—is far easier to understand—if we first consider it as fragment of a profounder conceptual footing. The following, observable beneath the surface in almost all her poetry, represents an apparatus of perception: firstly, there is then this context or specific site, which Galindo relates to her own thoughts on what Guatemala is (event); secondly, there is an awareness, explicit—yet more often tacit—of a general, global or universal experience; furthermore, there is an attendant autobiographical element—harnessing her own impulses—, driven (as noted in section 3.1) by affect. Added to this are the considerations of the supposed “Other” (victim), as well as—finally—, the implied, yet undefined figure, the reader (whose perception is in fact uncontrollable); this subject, as is the claim of this investigation, is the token of truth: the potential and material portal of justice.

This complex arrangement is clearly in need of further development, which is the entire aim of section 3.2. Understanding these elements that juxtapose to form a unique conceptual cluster, should give us the basis upon which to accept the poetry in question as part and parcel of a broader interception into an evolving event sequence.

Galindo has been very clear in her interviews that she “comes from the word”¹⁴⁴ and that poetry is the very foundation for all of her performance works. She first thinks in words which are then transcribed into a visual experience of performance. The precision by which her performances develop owe nothing to chance,¹⁴⁵ and are worked and reworked as though lines of a poem. The poetry, whilst not in itself an event, is that which coils from an encounter with event. At the edge of the void—where the event occurs for language—the poet finds her feet. This literary production comes into existence as trace; for the duration, Galindo demonstrates a tension—a central uneasiness is revealed—now the once embryonic truths that force her hand, conclusively materialize as poetry (and later, performance). As an

¹⁴⁴ Regina Jose Galindo in interview with Guggenheim Museum, “*La Victima y Victimario*”, Guggenheim Museum, 2015. See: www.guggenheim.org/video/regina-jose-galindo-la-victima-y-el-victimario-english-captioned (10.10.19)

¹⁴⁵ Feature on *Regina José Galindo*. RTVE Metropolis, broadcast: 17/03/2012. See: <http://www.rtve.es/alcanta/videos/metropolis/metropolis-regina-jose-galindo/1356005/> (05.07.17).

individual action, the poetry can be viewed as a minor attempt to pull back from hegemonic power, to resist; yet there is confrontation—her own experiences articulate in the rising of specific and infinitely private situations, whilst only to collapse—abruptly—into the infinitely common. This can be seen here in this short poem, where the narrator is simultaneously of noble birth, and common birth:

De la vagina de una reina
 Así nací
 No hubo cigüeña
 Ni mago
 sólo sexo.¹⁴⁶

The “reina” is a recognizable female figure of power; this domination we assume is a personal experience of her own mother, not related to regal birth but to a sensation of community and perception—a woman of some standing in the family or social group—. She is, however, humanized instantly through her physical body and the matter of fact nature of biological reproduction. Just like all other humans, a universality is underscored: this because we may observe that birth is itself at once a singular and universal: unique for the subject, and yet the same for all. This is captured in language perfectly in the following way; what is “solo sexo” for Galindo is a concept that may be probed by asking the poem the following question: *Is a baby’s conception always the same?* A (common) sexual act (save for cases of artificial insemination) is present as an a priori for *all* child birth (así nací). The connotation here is that for Galindo there is always an underlying truth (in this case *all* births follow a common sexual act) which is the drive for her poetical work; truths are available to the individual in such a way that they become universal. Truths are made of things that traverse the present, are over and above the experience of the now and are available as ever-presents for everyone.

For the most part, the poetry is then a universal reflection of that which has come to pass in Guatemala, as Galindo herself notes: “horrible truths, the shame of our time, in front of which none of us can close our eyes”.¹⁴⁷ As with the performance works, the body in Galindo’s poetry has become the material vector; the direction from event to truth, now signals the absence at the core of society. This is an affected body; a body (subject) that

¹⁴⁶ Galindo, José Regina, *Piel de Gallina* (Goose Flesh); Artium, 2012, Spain.

¹⁴⁷ Galindo, José Regina, *Estoy Viva*. Silvana Editoriale, 2014, Italy.

testifies to the thirty years of armed violence in Guatemala; a Guatemala of genocide and of forced disappearance; shooting, rape and murder. Galindo is the subject—who does not appear as herself—; rather she is this aporia, the presentation of a limit, that whilst directly observable—as she who signals an empirical deficiency of justice or law—still communicates her own synthesis of event. Her poetry exposes, via affect (trace of event material) the rotten core of the political-social-cultural context—to which her every word should seek to confront—, to disclose. This is achieved by directly alluding to the truth of the site; this truth is, as that which springs forth from event—a timeless resource—replete with effective potential.

There are endless ways in which we might connect the poetry of Galindo to her work as a performance artist, nevertheless, there must be precision in the underscoring of the truth that flows between the two. Taking evental trace as our guide we begin to see in Galindo's poetry those embedded vestiges of evental affect, which each in their own manner continuously appear. These same form the foundation for an intercepting process that draws technically upon immanent truths, to the extent that something new is produced and continues to be produced. These complex arrangements are treated technically by the poet in the following, twofold manner: the first point of contact for Galindo, rather, at the fore of the poetical outpourings of Galindo, we find the human body, primarily female, affected; her body, which becomes *that* body, then turns out to be the universal body, but which is, finally, never the same: changed by event (the body that underscores a lack: the idea of justice). And, the second point is violence itself, the omnipresent body, that receives violence (the consorts of injustice and impunity are present). The body is thus divided; —on the one hand—, the female body, to which we shall need to dedicate an entire section (see 4.1) and—that of the universal body—, the communal body, or victim. Clearly these remarks require further elaboration.

In order to advance these ideas we may adopt the following dialectical frame, which invokes Badiou's thinking upon poetry. There are two questions that guide this line of inquiry: firstly, *What does the poem think?* And secondly, *What is the poem's object?* For Badiou, who refers to Mallarmé as his key example; the poem then, is an isolated event, as stipulated clearly in his own words:

Indeed, the poem does not belong to the order of communication. The poem has nothing to communicate. It is only a saying, a declaration, which draws its authority only from itself.¹⁴⁸

For Badiou, the poem is a purity unto itself, the epitome of event. There is nothing communicable, nothing destined, nor any opinion based upon the language used. Badiou refers directly to Mallarmé, who notes of the poem that: “It takes place all by itself, finished, existing”.¹⁴⁹ This isolation of language, whilst clinical in its splitting away, clearly locates poetical creation within a regional sphere. We encounter this singularity, disentangled from common life and transliterated entirely without purpose, —the ivory towers of modernity— as that which occurs, now hermetically sealed, impenetrable to any desires to attribute. This is one way we locate the thought of the poem—as it is expressed—.

Badiou is drawn to Mallarmé for the facilitating of his own, —and totally warranted— intention to interpret such isolation in terms of original event. But what if we were to posit a slightly different reading of Mallarmé? What if Mallarmé, for example, is not creating the perfect event, but is instead redirecting his own experience (his truth) of a previous traumatic event (or sequence); and that his language, which expresses a singularity and uniqueness, is in fact to be tethered—not to its own semantic folding in upon itself—, but is, in reality, bonded to a previous historical event? This would be because it is an obliged internal performance of an evental truth, thus rendering his poetry not event per se—but rather—, its direct derivative, a symptom, or better even, its interception (or coproduction), it therefore becomes the making sense of an event rather than the event itself (there is, however, little to distinguish the two process as we have noted in the introduction). This reading is permitted once we initiate a further, albeit cursory investigation, as is the want of literary scholarship; one key approach is the biographical/historical.

Mallarmé, who was born in 1842, hardly enjoyed the sheltered security of family life; his sanctuary endured but five brief years, until the early death of his mother in 1847. This traumatic experience was emotionally reiterated 10 years later by the death of his younger sister Maria, in 1857, and again by that of his father in 1863. These tragic events would seem to explain much of the pining Mallarmé expressed, from the very beginning of his poetic

¹⁴⁸ Badiou, Alain, *The Age of Poets And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, Ed and Trans. Bruno Bosteels, Verso, London 2014, p.23.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p.24.

career—for a new site—, to turn away from the harsh world of reality in search of another world; a world of language, of words. His early life experience was not, by any stretch, ameliorated in later life. That literary abstraction remained the enduring theme of his poetry is testament to the comparative harshness with which adult life continued to treat him; his career as a poet, paralleled by poorly paid bit work, spells of intense poverty, and in 1879, the death of his son, Anatole. It is then possible to conceive that Mallarmé's poetical expressions are not the construction of an original event (from void to word without mediation), —but are instead the affective filtering of a previous sequence of experience—. The reader yet to be convinced by this idea may find what they need by pondering the fact that Mallarme penned a lengthy lamenting poem named *A Tomb for Anatole*, which he composed after the death of his son. Although it was never finished, and is today published as a collection of fragments (one of which is analysed below), it is clear that Mallarme does indeed work in the world of referents and that these referents are the truths with which he must engage, both as singularities and universals: his words perform *his* truth that is also a universal truth. Here with this following fragment the modern crisis of a Godless world which is now complete with *a death* which comes seemingly without redemption (Mallarme will pit the word against the abyss); a pain, simultaneously singular and universal, is now performed by the words upon the page, revealing a truth which was as pertinent then as it would be for the reader today. In *Tomb for Anatole*, (written for his son who died aged 8 after a lengthy illness) a timeless set of truth(s) is demonstrably present, we read:

Oh! you understand
 that if I consent
 to live - to seem
 to forget you -
 it is to
 feed my pain
 - and so that this apparent
 forgetfulness
 can spring forth more
 horribly in tears, at
 some random
 moment, in
 the middle of this
 life, when you
 appear to me.

The event(s) present (in affect) as *truths* within this fragment are then as follows, 1: The death of God (God's death is connoted in the site which is *modern* and so common death must now be debated in the *emotions* and not in the *spirit*, this is a *truth* of modern experience); 2: it is possible that truth be encapsulated inside a given truth statement (truth statements are true for all and may be said by anyone), let us say the following based on a human universal: "the death of a son is painful"; this truth universalizes the event: the death of the son Anatole; 3: the evental truth procedure is not completed: as we have noted previously the event present as truth is *produced* so the words perform this truth: the poem creates a truth, born of event, that is, in this specific case: art and culture can move out from the void created by the death of God. In the above fragment the referent is obvious because of the title and we must admit there are countless examples of Mallarmé's poetry that do not make the undertaking of interpretation so directly possible. Even so, in such structures it is an absence of a direct referent that indicates the presence of an object: this is not then "pure" language unconcerned with the "World", but the appearance of an absence of meaning as the *truth* of an evental process. So it is that we should want to enquire: might not the very withdrawal into language in effect form the object itself? Let us suppose this to be the truth token by which Mallarmé—as faithful subject of truth—is guided. This is then an alternative observation of how the poem *thinks*: it thinks the event as per its affect. Be that as it may, this biographical information comes with the caveat that it in no way undermines Badiou's reading of Mallarmé as unique event—moreover, Badiou has clearly provided the coordinates by which one event may be in fact the beginning of a new sequence of event(s).¹⁵⁰ There is nevertheless a discernible breach—via which this investigation sets out to interpret Galindo's poetry not in terms of original event—but rather that which is intercepting event, therein colluding with its truths.

¹⁵⁰ Badiou refers to the cumulative long-term implications of events as a 'succession', or sequence. Social change is an endless process of supplementation of the social structure, as new elements are unfolded and 'forced'. Although change proceeds by way of subtraction, its ultimate direction seems to be additive. "Periodization" into different periods is possible because each event is distinct. In a sense, different events occur in a sequence. They are irreversible. Even though they aren't logically connected, they follow from each other. In *Logic of Worlds*, Badiou portrays events as having 'consequences' and leaving 'traces' in the world. There are still marks within social reality of past events and their unfolding, however far they have become part of the dominant regime. See: Robinson, Andrew, Ceasefire Magazine, *Alain Badiou: After the Event*, part 7 of 10, 2015. See: <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/alain-badiou-event-2/>

So, having identified in Mallarmé's poetry *absence* as an object and evental truth(s) as its identifiable subject or cause (affect as immanent trace of event), what then of Galindo's poetry? The position of this investigation is that her poetry (and performance), much like that of Mallarmé, thinks the event via the collocation of specific words (or physical actions) stirred entirely by evental affect. In the case of poetry, however, unlike Mallarmé, who retreats from the world, Galindo seeks to confront it. Her words are as technical as they are vulgar; we read carefully constructed prose that sets out to disturb a very specific historicity. This site is based, as we have seen, upon the adoption of a set of political policies (necropolitical in essence), and underpinned by an ideological framework that promotes *forgetting* and *forgiving*; that would sustain unchallenged a simulacrum, were it not for these words that streak across the smoothness of a now called-out corrupt State subterfuge.

As argued in section 3.1, where we have seen the dominant feature of her performance as in fact interacting directly with evental affect; we can see here, in the poetry, a unique isolation of affect, the creation, as direct derivative of event, of a new analytical space. In the following poem, which like much of her work is without a title (a fact that lends itself to the notion of absence) we can find again an indirect criticism of a political system in which a Christian god is present; it may be assumed to be a Christian deity because of the site (Guatemala), and the Evangelical practice of forgiving alluded to in the poem: "perdono al violador", (this we have discussed at length in section 3.1). God appears here only as an absurd and impotent figure. The whole poem, although shorter in form, can be read as an irregular ode to absence and desperation; paradoxically, it is a reverberation of a mode of functional positive thought.

Por hoy
 Me creo lo de ser buena
 Entierro mis odios
 presto mis libros
 amarro mi lengua
 y perdono al violador
 Por hoy
 no me burlo del mundo
 no miento
 no blasfemo.

Por hoy
 sólo te pienso

y dejo tranquilo a Dios¹⁵¹

The “por hoy” which lends the entire construction a prayer like form due to its repetition, alludes to the Spanish tradition of stating an exception, that the ensuing behaviour has this connoted limit: it may be condoned, for now. So this sets a specific time frame for this recess in the normal procedures which take place within this subject’s mind. The place and the subject, are undefined, yet hover below the surface; not, however, to the extent that they inhibit a universal reading. There is a community suggested, and with it a need to adhere to a form of thinking “Me creo lo de ser buena” —this use of “lo” suggesting a communal understanding of the site— (being) “ser buena”. A list of preferred behaviours ensues, which, given the fact that we know this is a temporary arrangement, “Por hoy”, already seem entirely incongruent, or forced—a kind of empty promise—; even so, the subject, —through an implied interior desperation—reaches out toward this set of framed perceived behaviours that are not felt to be her own. These performed choices grant the subject access to a set of inherent powers—to ameliorate somehow—the implied pain and misery of the subject.

Marx has said that religious belief is the opiate of the people.¹⁵² The subject here adopts some of the key traits of Christianity in the hope that reprieve may follow, which indeed in some sense it does (an internal underlying desire to submit to a dominant externality, —conforming thereby bringing liberation—). It is clear however, that this is an unnatural performance of a Christian subject as her tongue needs to be “amarrada” —lest it speak the truth—(truth here related not to any fundamental flaw in Christianity *as such* but to that which is of the situation, or simulacrum). As before noted, the attendant forgiving by the victim of their victimizer is casually related as though—part and parcel—of this confabulation of Christian concepts: generosity, “presto mis libros,” and the confrontation of

¹⁵¹ Galindo, José Regina, *Piel de Gallina* (Goose Flesh); Artium, Spain, 2012.

¹⁵² The full quote from Karl Marx translates as: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people”. Unlike some Enlightenment enemies of religion, Marx, as Welton notes, “perceived religion as the sign of the alienated condition of humanity. The distress they feel—under the oppressive conditions of life—is real, and religion enables people to hang in there until the conditions of life change and humans can discover their authentic spiritual existence as makers of history. And the notion of “spirit of an unspiritual situation” contains emancipatory potential: “this spirit can rebel”. See: Welton, Michael, *Opium of the People? The Religious Heritage of Karl Marx and the Frankfurt School*, 2015.

See: www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/11/opium-of-the-people-the-religious-heritage-of-karl-marx-and-the-frankfurt-school/ (10.10.19)

hate, and evil, “Entierro mis odios”. But these “odios” are surely tantamount to accusations, to real and present memories, claims and resentments belonging to traumatic experience, to lingering affect, —that same which spouts finally—, at the end of the second stanza where the immense weight of the word, “violador,” hints at the unsustainable; the impossible nature of this bold attempt at conventionality. Temporally, from this point, the poem starts to disintegrate towards its final destination, —at the very moment that gender is implied— (for the victim of rape is almost always female), the collapse of this temporary ceasefire. By the time we arrive at the third stanza, the resolution towards a Christian subjectivity is already taking the form of a list of obligations; a list of agreements between the subject (now defined as female) and her encounter with oppressive power: “no me burlo del mundo,” “no miento,” “no blasfemo,” a rhythmic chanting of self-flagellation “-no-no-no”.

In the penultimate line of the final stanza comes the poem’s one authentic thought (from the point of view of the subject and not that which has been transplanted by the big Other), a connection with the emotional/material reality of the subject: a connection of love. It is not clear if this is the love of a mother for her child or a romantic love, but it is love, earthly human love, that takes the subject finally into the realm of (her) truth. Only love for another can calm the rage that is regularly sustained for this absentee God, who yet, stands-by. The placing of faith, not in the hands of an absent and meaningless God “y dejo tranquilo a Dios”, but in those real human connections “—soló te pienso—” opens the end; these final words stand out as the solitary real truth in the poem.

The former promises, so earnestly made, to abide by a set of rules (Christianity) —that have nothing to do with love and human kindness (in this World of the poem)— now fall into the same emptiness from which they came (simulacrum). Tomorrow the subject will take up the battle for truth once again. This conflict takes place in the face of a God now revealed to be—at best—an absent fraud. God, it is supposed by Christianity, is disclosed on earth through his justice. Thus can it not be suggested, that here in this poem, the true object of the poem is an absence? God stands-in metaphorically for justice, its absence is underlined in the poetical measure of the space created, whereby the object and subject, in no way clearly defined, rise and fall from the surface; and whereby the site is determined by an oppressive necessity to obey; justice then (its lack) is the object which is drawn into view by affect. What

is the desperation of this woman? Given the region in which the poem is situated—this can relate to but one event sequence—, that which carries the name of genocide.

The thematization of justice necessarily becomes part of an analysis of Galindo's poetry due mostly to the fact that it is an absence of justice (an absence present in eventual affect or lack) that sustains all of the works. Justice is the object that violates the present within the poems of Galindo—because her words make a mockery of an unjust system of simulacrum—, that which is bonded to the creation of the unjust present; this is achieved by the hauling up into view of the submerged content of a communal memory—via its truthful form— (evental affect). This is simultaneously achieved by aligning this same affect, at once, as it cascades equally from the future. Justice has been violated (lost) in the past, and can only be given its proper due—in the future to come—.

Justice is then that which can never be here in the present. It has been eternally misplaced. It appears in the present only as affect, as idea. The collective reality of the situation is that of a specific set of power relations; —these perform the task of maintaining inequality—and so the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and State sponsored violence is clear. As we have noted, the violence in Guatemala is present as that which creates a specific subject (the adoption of post-evental subjective style and process is a requirement). This subject is directly produced within the (sequence) of eventual affect—in our example the point of reference is the experience of genocide (and its subsequent civil [self] oppression). In the following poem whereby the subject is more clearly defined, a mother is threatened by violence, tormented by the traumatic events that have driven her into the realms of paranoia; a subject harrowed by the continued violence (affect) that threatens her safety and that of her infant child. The object of the poem is again, one might claim, a specific representation of a reality made manifest by the absence of justice—in any form—:

Dejen de disparar hijos de puta
 que retumban mi cabeza
 y encrispan los nervios.
 Estoy en casa
 y tengo miedo
 la abrazo
 me abrazo
 miro
 giro mirando
 paranoia en el cuello

palpitar con prisa
 ojo brincando.
 Me quitan la vida con cada susto.
 Y yo
 quiero vivirla.
 Ella es demasiado bella
 demasiado mía.
 Dejen de disparar cerotes
 que ella sueña
 mientras yo le canto
 Pero mi voz se quiebra
 y me quiebro
 Dejen de disparar
 -que ella-
 me necesita entera.¹⁵³

The voice of the mother (Galindo later dedicated this poem to her own daughter) appeals to some absent power, some intervention, finally, of something just; of course this is, as the narrator knows—impossible—in a world dominated by these “hijos de puta”, who administer an unjust power. Even now (the situation), as those who carry out this material reality of domination (murder) appear at the door, outside in the street, in her community—at the very moment that she seems to be losing her mind—. Her state of mind is dominated by fear “tengo miedo”, to the extent that as readers we can no longer be sure if these gunshots are real, or if they are just the reflection of her own synapses, now fraught by a direct and prolonged experience of violence (evental affect); “que retumban mi cabeza y encrispan los nervios” —are they real or are they pure affect—? Her register physically demonstrates a body marked by the absorption of an unjust “warfare” (in reality genocide) —arriving at the core of her nervous system—, her muscular reactions are permeated by emotions “paranoia en el cuello”, her eyes “ojo brincando”.

What this poem describes is the very moment that reason disintegrates. The frontier at the collapse of reason in the face of an unreasoned power has been remarked upon by Achille Mbembe in terms of what colonialism actually represents. It is the so called reasonable person, committing acts of a very unreasonable nature.¹⁵⁴ Galindo is therefore bringing her readers to the observation point preserved for those of us who exist here, at the

¹⁵³ Galindo, José Regina, *Piel de Gallina* (Goose Flesh); Artium, 2012, Spain.

¹⁵⁴ European Graduate School Video Lectures: Achille Mbembe - "Life Futures and the Future of Reason" - 2019-10-26 See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uv11y10XaLY> (20.05.20)

very end of a modern project based upon reason. What she perceives and transfers to the interlocutor, is the intimacy of an explicit invasion into that most private of Worlds; now childhood—where justice should (ethics) reign—is itself at stake. This threat to infant security is the effective underscoring of a persistent lack of justice in the scene, yet functions also as metaphorical process—a conquest— (each new generation has their subjectivity deformed by a repetition of colonial power); so now the presence of perpetual threat exposes a specific truth: there are no limits to the State’s potential to barbarism.

The form of the poem—set in one long lamenting yet confused stanza—lends itself to the desperation and exasperation of the narrative voice, which belongs to a person whose conduct reflects her situation as totally cornered (therefore prepared to make a last-stand). The voice is female, the place, a domestic interior, is feminized by the close emotional and physical proximity of the mother to that of her infant daughter. The poem is then an unmitigated representation of violence: two people—who, even as they attempt to live those intimate moments of peace—a universal human right in the extreme, “que ella sueña mientras yo le canto”, find that the space they have to endure is bereft of any sign of justice. The mother is resolute in her protecting of her child, yet her very voice quivers with the knowledge that she cannot sustain a reasonable defence. But what she really fears is not at all an actual death (although this idea of an unjust death is an ever present); rather, it is the knowledge that she is, finally, helpless to prevent what passes through her own body as pure affect (injustice and the attendant immobilizing fears and insecurities), “Me quitan la vida con cada susto,” and will surely and effectively, pass through into the being of her defenceless infant child, who, in a corrupt simulacrum of truth, is destined, as was her mother, to live out a life marred by this attendant lack of justice.

Finally there is still the affect that impinges from the future: the temporality of justice runs parallel to human life, so that justice will one day be achievable; that her daughter’s subjectivity will not be defined by State oppression; it is for this very reason the narrator is able to allude to the spark that transforms her current life, (otherwise not at all worthwhile living). She maintains that she wants to continue to live her life “quiero vivirla.” Not for herself—but for her daughter—, (a metaphorical presence of the future) who may yet see the dawning of a new politically just world. A world built not within the auspices of political simulacrum, but upon a society that is—in essence—, organized along just lines. What

Galindo achieves then throughout her poetry—is the delineation of this absence—. Justice is not present for the simple reason that it can only appear as something the situation requires. Badiou has noted that justice, a universal concept (eternally political), is always present as a possibility, only its *absence* is how we feel the unjust. That is not to say that there is a connection between injustice and justice, merely that injustice is “clear” while Badiou will maintain that “justice is obscure”.¹⁵⁵

Galindo adopts the concept of universalism throughout her work. The one thing that is here, as *aporia*, is the universal figure of the victim. Without any form of justice, however, the victim is merely a body without an idea; without the possibility of reprieve. The presence of the idea of justice (bodily possibility) is then also the presence of universality; both we can observe as they occur within the text as *performative* utterance. This complex idea is clearly in need of further explanation, so focusing now upon the characterizations within the poem let us demonstrate how these performative factors are achieved.

In the poem analysed above we are invited into the private thoughts and fears of a young mother. She sees herself and her daughter in all their potential qua the prospect of victimhood; but also present, as we have noted, is the idea of justice as *feasible liberator*. The victim (recognized by Galindo as existing within the actual status quo of the specific site) is thus divided into two politically restricted figures: one is the passive victim, (as Badiou would have as call it: the miserable passive)¹⁵⁶ this then the pure body of victimhood; the second is the consumer body (victim of the simulacrum). In both cases the body of the victim is bereft of justice and is therefore lacking in true universality, a kind of victim everlasting. Galindo, however, posits *a third type*.

The victims within her poetry, and within her performances—demand universality in that they are not *permanently* victims—. Because of the potential return to a just state they are therefore imbued with a capacity toward justice: this is the universal body that claims the idea; that claims that which is present in every truly just duration—equality—. This duration, one might reasonably claim, is in fact the political process by which a new emancipated state may be sought. The lack of justice, or loss of the situation that is just may be rectified in the

¹⁵⁵ Badiou, Alain, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, Trans and Ed Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens, Continuum, 2006, p.52.

¹⁵⁶ Badiou, Alain, *La Idea de Justicia*, Mal Salvaje, 2019.

See: <https://www.malsalvaje.com/2019/05/30/la-idea-de-justicia-un-ensayo-de-alain-badiou/> (15.10.19)

future to come. Justice is then the affect which permeates a situation and is directly connectable to a perceptible sequence of event. Justice in the real sense of the term is, as Badiou has noted, to be equated to a sense of true politics. After all, there are he maintains, two forms of politics:

Indeed, I see there as being two possible definitions of politics. The first centres the question on the conquest and exercise of state power. Politics is here defined as a realistic management of the demands of power. The second definition — one that arose very early on, especially in Plato — considers that the key problem is the question of justice.¹⁵⁷

By highlighting justice, Galindo seeks to open a dialectical space of the possible. Justice is not something that exists but is the conceptual proviso—the idea—that gives birth to further ideas. The space created by Galindo is subtracted from direct identification with any law that would govern the situation along the lines of any given real present. It is, rather, the idea that is revealed. Galindo, throughout her poetry, lays out an alternative genealogy; existing history (the practice of forgiving and forgetting) and law, are hereby pitted against communal memory (the potential for counter memory) —that even now—continue to be guided by affect. The point of Galindo’s genealogy is not the confrontation of history, but to interrupt the flow of memory, to tease out the underlying affect still present in the temporality of the common. In the poetry, experience is reconfigured along genealogical lines, permitting the materialization of affective knowledges along new emancipative lines; this is the construction of new counter memories which in turn galvanize resistance, and thus guide existing potentials toward real material social change. This is then the thinking that the poem does, as it actively opens the way to a future now based upon the idea of justice, (the victim gains equality and universality) and therefore a world where some form of emancipation has come to pass.

In the two poems discussed in detail above, there has been a fidelity to an event; the subjects perform the subject defined by event; yet they are not real; they are at once representations of the “other”; while simultaneously they are biographical. They are

¹⁵⁷Alain Badiou in dialogue with Laurent Joffrin, 2017.

See: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3544-alain-badiou-i-hold-firm-to-the-communist-hypothesis-laurent-joffrin-which-no-one-wants-anymore> (10.10.19).

testimonials, the [re]presentation of memory, a performed genealogy. Experience is thus poetically transformed into the direct expression of a community; this same community is opened again to the idea of justice. And the subsequent potentials of the idea drive a transformation of the past—as it is now part of the present—, a present that is now already part of a potential future, a future built in tangent with the idea of justice, so that non-law (justice) may function as law.

To make clear how all this may be achieved by Galindo's poetry it is necessary to understand the nature of *aporia* in relation to her work. We have identified Galindo already as in fact performing herself as an *aporia*, but in what follows the text ought to make explicit what this means in a more precise manner: to be an *aporia*. In these closing paragraphs of section 3.2 let us read one more poem to demonstrate how the idea of *aporia* is at the centre of a poetic thinking or measure of the event. In the following poem we can derive a sense of a limit—revealed by Galindo through her words—. This limit is in and of itself related to event, and is the same that drives the reader into the realms of emancipation.

El llamado de la sangre
me hace volver

la que corre por las calles
los asientos de las camionetas
las camas del Roosevelt.

Por eso vuelvo
porque el paisaje tropical quema
pero no es infierno

- y yo prefiero mi infierno -

mi país de demonios
de mentes perversas
de gente mala.

Porque acá se respira caliente
pero se respira en paz

y yo no soy paz
soy guerra

bomba lacrimógena
bala perdida.¹⁵⁸

Galindo selects a specific voice in this poem that works to enhance the sensation of a subject/object dichotomy—based along the lines of justice—. As Badiou has noted, justice is itself a negative element for it can only come into being as an *idea* and only should injustice exist (not that they are related); injustice is definable, clear, tangible, moreover it produces victims; —and justice—, we can never know through any material means¹⁵⁹; so, for poetry, it should need to be described, as best it can.

In the above poem the personification of war is described as a bloodthirsty being who feeds off the kinship of the community—much like a vampire—, it is a parasitic element who drops into the field where injustice prevails, and does so time and again, as we are told in the opening line: “El llamado de la sangre me hace volver”. As with the previous poem, the site is described, Guatemala is recognizable as that “paisaje tropical”, it is also that place where men are described, as those who dwell in this “infierno” that is not an “infierno”, but is yet full of “demonios,” and “mentes perversas”, “gente mala”; war is the personified voice that gives a clear description of its ideal terrain, and it is unconscious of those who will perish, those who “live in peace” (indigenous peoples who inhabit the “caliente” tropical zones); —the allusion to genocidal war crimes could not be clearer—.

By using the personification of war, Galindo is, nevertheless, indirectly calling out those who are to be held to account. By making the criminal subject of the poem a third person, a personification of war, she allows the reader a space via which to engage with the poem’s constructed internal tension. There is a crime (perpetrators), there are victims, yet neither are directly named; Galindo permits then the architect and victim to become visible only as elements of emotion; these elements are directly related to affect in that they cannot exist without the knowledge of specific injustice. The details of this specific injustice do not appear here but within the commonality of a shared civic memory. The final line seals the event as that which is currently lost: “bala perdida”; the bewildered subject (war) has no consciousness of why it is present in this place, the implication being that it has in some sense

¹⁵⁸ Galindo, José Regina, *Piel de Gallina* (Goose Flesh); Artium, 2012, Spain.

¹⁵⁹ See: Dimitira Panopoulos, *Justice*, published in *The Badiou Dictionary*, edited by Steven Corcoran, Edinburgh, 2015, p.169.

been obliged. But where does it go from here? There is no direction, no destination. The reader is, as is Galindo, as is “guerra”, as is the victim, their blood “la que corre por las calles”, as are the implied perpetrators “mentes perversa”, “gente mala”, finally enclosed. They are all in testament to the one great lack that is the attendant non-existence of justice.

As Bambach has noted of aporia, to be *aporous* is to be caught in a cul-de-sac;¹⁶⁰ unable to find a way out. Here, “guerra” has taken us to the edge of the literary possible. The appearance is that of a limit: try as the subjects/objects might, even if they switch roles, the results are always likely the same; they cannot escape the central idea that they are at the situation’s maximum, that they are looking directly at a space where *justice* ought now to appear. This boundary is indeed a negative, (justice) yet it is productive in the sense that at this juncture the participants are forced into a confrontation of sorts, a necessary meditation upon what it means to be at the limit. Such paralysis indicates the coming of a new possible engagement, firstly with the truth (event), the truth of the actual present moment, its past evental affect (in our case subject processes from genocidal sequential affect, simulacrum and so on), and of course that affect that comes in from the future in the form of a possible encounter with—or return to—justice itself. The reader then experiences a moment whereby the sensation of impasse is indicated in the very core of his or her being. Such tension, directly derived from a lack of perceived justice (witnessed in the presence of injustice), now necessitates the continued problematization of justice.

In order to bring this power into the forefront, Galindo adopts this central aporia in all of her work, both in her performance and in her poetry. Finally it is this aporia that creates the tension, paving the way to the final step in an emancipatory process, a process remarkable in its similarity to another concept: what Badiou has referred to as *forcing*.¹⁶¹ The only way in which the reader is able to assimilate his or her way out of the impasse is by forming him or herself as a subject of truth (of course the alternative subjectivities are also possibilities,

¹⁶⁰ Bambach, Charles, *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice: Holderlin-Heidegger-Celan*, Suny Press, New York, 2013, p.179.

¹⁶¹ “Truth” is both infinite and generic, so for Badiou the route to the final modality, the unnamable, can only be represented as the future perfect. That means that the truth of this situation “Genocide is unjust” will come to light only in the present, as a future encounter with justice. The forcing element is then the future forcing, or the presentation of the history of the future: it has already come to pass. Forcing is the acceptance and adoption of knowledge as anticipation. The first passage en route to the establishment of a new truth. See Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens, Meditation 36, *Forcing: from the indiscernible to the undecidable*, Bloomsbury, 2005, p.410-431.

but they do not lead to a relief of tension); in order to relieve the tautness created by the appearance and prevalence of injustice, it is essential to imagine a way forward toward justice, toward the creation of a society created along just contours. This can be explained by referring to Badiou's concept of forcing. Here we shall need to be brief as Badiou has explained forcing in *Being and Event*,¹⁶² and therefore the curious reader is directed to this book. We must however, touch upon the upshot, which is that since truth is infinite and generic, the way to the arrival of its unnameable element (in our example let us call it *justice*) can only ever be presented in the future perfect. This is basically what we can call forcing; the forcing of a future history for the truth (when in the future it will be known by all and not just by a faithful few). Today Galindo announces in her poetry the absence which signals the yet-to-come: we have injustice, still the future can and will be different; this is forcing, that the subject *knows* the path of the future. This is because she is guided by the truth, this is what it means to have fidelity to an event, which thus formulates itself, in each case, as truth inside the subject, and also in each case, determines the path towards emancipation. Therefore this is anticipated knowledge about what we will have been in the future (should the truth finally complete its trajectory). So in Galindo's poetry and performance we find the proactive attempt to determine the truth. This can only be achieved via the technical interaction with evental trace from the past, and from the affects of the yet-to-come situation: both are tarried with in the work. It is to imagine, finally, as though the truth of the event (sequence of genocide) will come to a final rest; the site an emanation of a new encounter with justice itself.

In order to walk away from this poem, the reader, in fact, must behave as though this next sequential step of an evental truth has effectively already come to its elementary conclusion. This is the true process of politics qua justice.

In the text thus far (3.2), I have been establishing the form which establishes itself at the beginning of Galindo's technical incursions. Her role, in order to establish a sense of truth at the very start of her artistic procedure, and as (albeit unconscious) technician of event, means that she needs to rely on her own sense of poetics. I should like now to carry on with a return to her performance work, and in particular, with the idea of trauma originating in

¹⁶² Ibid.

event, and now—rising immanently from within her work—as a material remainder of event. Why does her work concern itself so directly with trauma?

2.3 Trauma and the Female Subject of Truth

In this section the investigation is to be concerned with the problematization of another of the central categories identifiable within the work: trauma, to the extent that it should pertain to the appearance of a certain female subject. Can Galindo's meditation upon trauma, evidenced here in her performance *Meanwhile they continue to be free*, (2007),¹⁶³ provide further support to the central claim for an art form that thinks its way through evental trace and forwards towards emancipation?

The international acclaim for the work of Regina Jose Galindo comes at a time when a general recognition and openness towards the "Other" within the field of art has become prominent. Nevertheless, as we have seen in sections 3.1 and 3.2, the victim/victimizer alignment, whilst well established, is not by any stretch all there is to be said about Galindo's work. Through a closer examination of specific performance, we are permitted to disclose elements of a necessarily more urgent discussion, which takes place as the multiples of the unfolding truth procedure fuse to become both a recognizable and utilizable material. This synthesis is at the core of presentation for Galindo. Through analysis of her works, we discover a conceptualization process; rooted, not only within a merciless violence, but also, —a multifaceted approach toward original evental trace—. This procedure therefore reinvigorates the resurrection of an authentic ethico-political thought process. These claims evidently require some in-depth explanations; to wit, for the duration of this penultimate section of Chapter 3 (3.3) this text remains fixed upon this task.

¹⁶³ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/mientras-ellos-siguen-libres-2/>



www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/home-en/

Regina José Galindo
Mientras, ellos siguen libres.
 Edificio de correos, Guatemala
 City, 2007.

For *Meanwhile they continue to be free*, (2007), as is predominantly the case in much of her work, Galindo takes on the task of this performance by making use of her body; —the viewer of the performance encounters this body—, now eight months into her own pregnancy, laid out naked upon a table, her hands and feet bound by human umbilical cord. As was the case for her work *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas?*, (discussed in 3.1), Galindo invokes social memory (affect); here, the specific action references those indigenous women who were victims during the “war” in Guatemala (subsequently recognized as genocide).

In *Meanwhile they continue to be free* there is a direct link with a particular set of historiography produced around the topic. What we see is an express re-enactment (representation), of traumatic event, the details of which have been published by the internationally organized Historical Clarification Commission (CEH).¹⁶⁴ This investigative commission was established during the same year that the peace accord was signed in Guatemala, officially ending the “war” (1996). Their task was to collect as many primary testimonies—which were subsequently gathered into an archive—and made, in its entirety, accessible to the public, online. The final text was called *Guatemala. Memory of Silence*.¹⁶⁵

This document would thus become the only officially produced record; through the text, the voices of the victims speak out about the events of genocide in the region (event sequence). The survivors, (and we are acutely aware that many of these women died during the violent encounters with military personal) were selected on condition that they be pregnant. This direct attempt at foreclosing the future (elimination of the next generation) was in fact ordered as a specified military tactic. The women were violently abused (beaten),

¹⁶⁴www.documentcloud.org/documents/357870-guatemala-memory-of-silence-the-commission-for.html

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

and raped, so to induce the death of the unborn foetus, and to damage her body to the extent that she would either die, or be rendered physically incapable of ever again bearing a child.¹⁶⁶

Incommensurability or excess, as per the particular case of genocide in Guatemala, are at the very centre of both event and trauma. In either of the two, there is a pre-existent context or system that is no more. Something new has been created, and as yet (at an inception point at least), has not been given a name (unnameable). It is clear that in this particular case the parallels between event and trauma are to be sustained by the knowledge that the trauma, both singular and plural, is to be included in what we refer to as an evental trace. The event sequence of genocide is recognized as the cause of trauma. Therefore the traumatized subject is part of a logic related to the post-evental organisation of truth.

By performing herself as the victim of a trauma, conducted directly upon the female body—during the moment that its reproductive capacities are about to lead to the birth of a human being—, Galindo opens a direct debate: now notions of gender violence and the attendant post-traumatic affect that assemble to form this specific female subject rise to the foreground. The female victim of male violence, carried out during a genocide, is directly referenced; this is the counting of that which has received no prior inclusion in the count (the particular regarding pregnant women), no inclusion in the realities (representation) of a particular World.

So what can we know about this performed female subject? In the specific work in question, in conjunction with trauma, let us maintain that it is the transcendental site (the given conditions that Badiou refers to as World)¹⁶⁷ in which the trauma originally occurs that dictate how the female body is engaged. For Regina, in the performance, the female body (her body) is temporarily reduced to the same level as that of the original victims. This is a body dominated by a precise type of male power, now intent upon genocide; —power that seeks to specifically target the female form, her body—. This body is not accounted for in

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Badiou maintains that appearance is defined by situation: “We will call ‘appearing’ that which, of a mathematical multiple, is caught in a situated relational network (a world), such that this multiple comes to being-there, or to the status of being-in-a-world [étant-dans-un-monde]”. See: Badiou, Alain, *Logic’s of Worlds, Being and Event II*, Trans. Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2006, p.118.

any way during what Badiou would have us refer to as *the count*;¹⁶⁸ for this precise World, in this specific site, the female (pregnant) form is not granted appearance. The body is then a multiple presence: a voice, which incorporates, as Garbayo Maeztu notes, the feminine as well as the colonized body¹⁶⁹; this is also the communal body (universal), and as well the individual and traumatized body, her own body (Galindo), her personal experiences as a young woman in Guatemala, of a certain racial makeup, and in this case, the physical real of the pregnant woman.

The victim, however, while present, is not all there is; as politicized agent, Galindo also lends her body towards the creation of a collective pronouncement. This is a decision taken in the midst of a conditioned truth process—set in trauma—yet this is the act of a female subject who is not looking to *act out*, to unconsciously repeat; —but toward *working through*. What follows below ought to explain what these two concepts mean precisely in terms of trauma and Galindo’s particular performance.

As Casalini has noted, trauma is not only personal but is also collective.¹⁷⁰ It is from this standpoint of the communal experience that this particular work is to be approached. It is by taking trauma away from the psychological frame and delivering it to the area of philosophical debate, or to an art field procedure, that traumatic experience might be transformed into a communal political tool. This is a process that starts out by referring specific trauma away from the individual (emplacement for remedial intervention), and towards a broader understanding, as per a critical and social rendering of events; in such a manner political agency can be reincorporated as part of an evolving context. The work of Galindo, and in particular *Meanwhile they continue to be free*, is interpreted as an attempt to work within realms similar to these concepts. To further enhance this idea, let us turn now to a few key notions developed by Ignacio Lewkowicz.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ The count here refers to the multiples that are countable as being present at the site of an event and its subsequent aftermath. See Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Mediation 7: *One, Count as one, Unicity and Forming Into One*, Bloomsbury, p.89-91.

¹⁶⁹ Garbayo Maeztu, Maite, *Bodies, Performances and Feminisms*, in *Piel de Gallina: Regina José Galindo*, Artium, 2012, p.114-121.

¹⁷⁰ Casalini, Giulia, *Feminist Embodiments of Silence. Performing the Intolerable Speech in the Work of Regina José Galindo*, Ex aequo. n.27, Goldsmiths College, London, 2013, p. 27-41.

¹⁷¹ Lewkowicz, Ignacio, *Traumas, acontecimientos y catástrofes en la historia: Estos son los sujetos de la devastación*. Published in “Insumisos”. (<https://www.insumisos.com>) Originalmente en la journal “*Clínica psicoanalítica ante las catástrofes sociales. La experiencia argentina*”, Argentina, 2002.

In order to remain as scientifically relevant as possible, and, as well, with the aim to convincingly connect trauma to event processes, there is a need to divert briefly into the area of clinical psychology. Lewkowicz identifies a unique association between trauma, event, and catastrophe, particularly within the Latin American context. The tripartite schema he develops can be adapted to our investigation here as it largely derives from the work of Alain Badiou, yet is based in clinical observation.

Trauma has, it must be noted, a register grounded in the unconscious, a concept almost synonymous with that idea presented by Badiou and the *pre-event* condition. That noted, for Lewkowicz, in clinical terms, trauma, (similarly to event), is created via an excessive stimulation, which cannot be assimilated by the subject. Equally, and due to the sheer immensity of the crisis caused by the trauma, the subject is rendered unable to overcome the nature of a predicament that is thus registered as an obstacle to proper or continued functioning within that same (new) order (the period following traumatic experience). An impasse is thus a constant present directly experienced by the subject as a subconscious and chronic perplexed state. The actual real of the trauma has no register in representation, no visible radical alteration in the logic to which it affects. And for this very reason, however, Lewkowicz will maintain that an event is necessary in order to transform the state of disarray into one now in accord with the new logic produced by trauma. Event is thus read as an attempt to overcome the state of impasse. For Lewkowicz though, the new situation brought about by the event is not necessarily the creation of a new logic, he comments (author translation):

If the trauma is conceived as the impasse in a logic that laboriously puts into operation the previous schemes, and the event as the invention of other schemes against this impasse, the catastrophe would be something resembling the return to not being. It is possible to think of it as a dynamic that produces dismantling without putting together another logic different but equivalent in its function as articulator.¹⁷²

Reading Lewkowicz's perspective (his thinking about event) we might be forgiven for concluding that events are not always egalitarian (as Badiou maintains). The case for an event of destruction, would however only be sustainable if it were to be understood as the final

See: <http://lobosuelto.com/traumas-acontecimientos-y-catastrofes-en-la-historia-ignacio-lewkowicz/>

¹⁷² Lewkowicz, Ignacio, *op. cit.*

word, and because truth is infinite, this is quite impossible: there never can be a final closing of an eventual truth procedure. So what seems to be a problem in Lewkowicz's theory is settled down again once we understand what he refers to when he says that there is a "return to not being" as part of a catastrophic present, let us call this the "impasse"; in the structure there is then the sense that some part of a process is not yet completed. Badiou deals with this very same type of crisis by pitting his concept of simulacrum against the notion of destructive pseudo-events. For both Lewkowicz and Badiou it is impossible to construct another true logic unless there has been a true event. By this it is meant that succeeding the event a truth procedure has advanced in a clear manner (clear referring to egalitarian, its truth unhindered or perverted), its effects thus recognized and named by all of the subjects (participants) that are produced at its site, which in the case of Guatemala has not been the case. For Badiou there is only the extension of simulacrum (one of three forms of evil)¹⁷³, and for Lewkowicz there is the "dismantling without putting together another logic".¹⁷⁴ It is therefore of importance to the discussion here as to what happens after the event and the way by which the subjects of the event construct its truth(s). Now, clearly we are saying that genocide is an event in the sense that it is part of an historical sequence of event, so how can we maintain this claim yet remain in touch with the possibility that the outcome may yet be egalitarian? To answer this question let us begin by analysing event sequence from the perspective of a sequence (temporarily destructive because the potential settling of accounts is an ever-present of the site's yet-to-come). The following topology, based upon Lewkowicz's ideas, is designed so to better understand the dynamic in regards to the specific historicity (material site) in question:

Original event sequence (cause of trauma): Colonial imposition of a new language and culture.

Secondary cause: The imposition of modernity and the creation of excess; the indigenous peoples (recognized as different and surplus to requirements as per State processes).

Traumatic crisis: Subjectivities do not fit new situation.

¹⁷³ Voelker, Jan, *Ethics and Evil*, published in *The Badiou Dictionary*, Ed. Steve Corcoran, Edinburgh, 2015, p.110.

¹⁷⁴ Lewkowicz, Ignacio, *op. cit.*

Event: Genocide (the simulacrum will apply the name “war” to this event).

Catastrophe: Perpetual social crisis and social injustice (simulacrum).

In order to reengage with evental trace and therefore become a subject of truth the catastrophic would need to be directly engaged. Galindo works within the catastrophic present, relating always to the particular historicity. The ontology of her work is therefore rooted in event and can be accessed directly using the schema outlined above. Nevertheless Galindo seeks to go out and beyond the catastrophic; to where new tensions are created, to the space in which the utterance takes place, the naming process—or the *true* unveiling of the now—. Certainly in the case of *Meanwhile they continue to be free* the actual reality of her era, *catastrophe*, is underscored by her performance, yet there is also the attempt to move beyond this catastrophic limit. There is this attendant and perpetual extension—an uninterrupted calling into question (truth process)—. The event’s truth (its unfolding)—is in no way closed due to its nature as infinite (Badiou). So it is we come to a logical answer to the quandary relating to the egalitarian nature of evental truths. We are thus able to claim that genocide (its truth) may even now rise to the status of egalitarian because it has been but a temporary defeat. The truth of this event is available to us all as an infinite possibility and may once again appear in the present: this is the resurrection of historical truths so that the truth of the past event comes to affect the now: truths are formulated once again in the founding construction of the yet-to-come (forcing). So what is it precisely that Galindo completes in her thinking through of evental trace, or trauma (for our purposes here they are one and the same), in the now?

Galindo presents the affect of trauma in an ethical way without appropriating the meaning or reducing the register in a manner that leaves a sensation of deformation. What this means is that the original event is mediated—so that its affects and emotions are engaged as knowledge—. In the work, trauma is part of a public debate triggered by affective response; here the very processes of art lend themselves to a new materiality based on affect. The performance of Galindo carries the sign of trauma which now in the material forms part of a new public engagement with bodily sensations: both physical and intellectual; a direct result of a relationship with the performance.

In order to be concise it is useful to set out a conceptual margin of sorts, by which the debate is contained and directed as closely as possible towards an interpretation of the

specific work in question. To this end, henceforth, the key concepts can be clearly identified as: *silence*, *absence*, and (in)justice (the unnamable lack).

As we have noted, Galindo performs herself as a living aporia. There is no way forward and out of the silence, there is no way to address the evident absence; the collective tension is then created at the moment the metaphorical performance has an effect: her body is that body, is the body of the other, is the future (birth), is the past (dead victim), is the signifier of an intolerable present (lack). This is the performance not only of specific incidence, but also of a universal abstract, the container of all that is possible —throughout the unfolding of the event—. So what then is this silence? What is this absence?

In Meanwhile they continue to be free, the title is the first step toward the revelation of meaning. “Meanwhile”, as we are standing here in the gallery, “they continue to be free”. The temporality of the victim/victimizer relation continues as an evolving material reality, the consequences of which are *yet to be* decided. We are thus immediately grounded within the time of event, even as its remnants (truths) continue to unfold; and duly, we are invited to become part of the event’s truth. This ethical decision¹⁷⁵ (more on ethics in 3.4) is clearly placed in the hands of the spectators of the performance, and, to a lesser extent, to those of us who absorb its central message via photographic evidences. In the moment we engage intellectually with the representation of what is essentially—and paradoxically—, the unrepresentable, (trauma is not available to representation) we are—as members of the viewing public—witness to the traumatic event as performed by Galindo (now recognizable herself as a militant subject of event). The process has been observed by Casalini, who notes that:

By performing violence and its traumatic memory on her body, Galindo is not only the witness of her own trauma but she also uncomfortably engages the spectator, who becomes witness at her/his turn. The public therefore becomes an active element in the performance, thus refusing the role of passive spectator: activated by an ethics of responsibility the audience moves from the position of spectator to performer.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ According to Badiou fidelity requires the performance of “a series of decisions about the elements of the situation in question, asking whether each one is modified by the event or not”, see Pluth, Ed, *Alain Badiou*, Polity, 2010, p.97.

¹⁷⁶ Casalini, Giulia, op. cit., p.31.

Let us say then that in her performance of traumatic memory (affect), Galindo seeks to break with a certain kind of passiveness—a specific category of silence—. There are essentially two types of silence evidenced within the work. The actual silence communicated by her stillness, and the fact that here, as in many of her performances, there is not a single word uttered; and the silence of the traumatized victim—who is yet to put into words—, the basic coordinates of a new possible now. Both cases may be read as one and the same—but one could argue, in *Meanwhile they continue to be free*, for the presence only of the latter. Indeed, it might be recognized that this apparent second silence is in fact, illogically, the presence of a voice (breaking in on the scene as memory and affect), that is the very particular voice articulated through the presence of the performing body of Galindo. This point will need some unpacking below.

Firstly, the case of the silence: the voiceless body, still—lifeless—. Galindo is lain out on the table, and there is no movement; muteness surrounds the performance and extends into the formation of a distinctive auratic quality. As Casalini has noted, for Galindo there is a need to communicate a silence that intends to reflect the magnitude of the paradoxical situation: the impossibility to remain silent in the face of 200.000 victims of genocide.¹⁷⁷ But does the silence portrayed in this action belong to an attempted mimetic act; the representation of the silence of the dead, the voice of the voiceless, those dead victims who are no longer to be heard—and might this not also be the silence of the traumatized subject, who has no method of reorganizing her present, at least in such a way as to reconnect to her former self? To make such suppositions would be forgivable, given the circumstances, yet nonetheless entirely incorrect.

If we are to accept the idea of a parallelism between trauma and event then we cannot accept the above assumptions, which can be summarized in the following: that this silence is that of the self-reflecting subject, as she battles to ground her memories—and to find a way back to herself—, to calibrate the disoriented whole. Rather, Galindo, is not at all presenting a mimetic presence: the lost subjects. This reading would need us to fulfil our contractual obligations toward the performance (as spectators) by reading along the lines of a repetition—in psychoanalytical parlance—: a transference repetition; that is, a form of *neurosis*. This would clearly subtract the performance from the domain of coherent

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

communication of truth (because truth is an inter-subjective exchange), necessarily locating it within the scope of a compulsive and unconscious repetition of a previous traumatic experience. If this were the performance of the dead, repeating their silence, then, it ought to be argued, there is range only to see this particular performance as *acting out*, whereby the obsessive compulsion towards repetition is finally provided representation. Such a subject would only be possessed of the past, (the dead object) —and the performance would then simply take on an element of re-victimizing the original victim—, because, and La Capra has spoken directly on the topic:

[...] to the extent that someone is possessed by the past and acting out a repetition compulsion, he or she may be incapable of ethically responsible behaviour.¹⁷⁸

The repetition of the violent turn in such a frame is then unmeasurable in ethical terms as an act and is therefore unacceptable here as part of a truth process—in the strict terms of what, for our purposes at least, constitutes a channelling of an eventual truth procedure. As LaCapra has noted, to identify with the victim, to the extent that one makes of oneself a surrogate victim, who heretofore speaks for the victim or in place of the victim is—ethically speaking—a difficult position to defend (think about accusations of a symbolic capital exchange.) This, despite the fact that in the case of Galindo, she is very much within the regional latitude of the temporal/historical frame for this specific trauma—its site—; in other words her place in the situation grants her privileged access to the truth.

For all that, however, this investigation assumes the position that Galindo does not perform any such identity, what we have been referring to as *acting out*. There is built into the work (implied by her use of the her own body) a restriction to the full on identification with the victim. Such a distance permits the space via which Galindo may adapt herself in the name of “empathy and empathic unsettlement”¹⁷⁹. What her performance achieves is a new and virtual space whereby the experience of the supposed *other* is merged with that of her own, and is at once juxtaposed to the experience (communal historical trauma) of the audience.

¹⁷⁸ LaCapra, Dominick, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, John Hopkins, 2014, p.70.

¹⁷⁹ LaCapra, Dominick, op.cit.

What is at stake in this revision of silence is the *idea*. There is, as we have noted, above, a very complex path out and away from trauma; electing the correct way is a process fraught with frustration; there are two ways out, one correct, and the other incorrect, each as similar to the other as that of a real person and his or her directly mirrored reflection. Let us be clear: on the one hand, and this is *not* at all Galindo's way, we are discussing one sort of silence. Primarily this is a silence related to a subjective attempt to work back toward a pre-traumatic temporality (this is attainable to the traumatized subject via specific material coordinates: (repetition of violence in the hope of finding the missing thread that would lead back to a wholeness), in order to reconstruct a sense of self, recognizable to the subject—now frozen out of his or her self's sense of self by the effects of trauma—.

Then, alternatively, and Galindo *is* located here, there is the notion of *working through*. In working through there is the acceptance of the event, and the recognition that there can be no return to the pre-traumatic whole. While both cases are marked by silence, there is, in *working through*, the possibility of a present, (this is, as shall be demonstrated, finally a political act) and in this present a *decision* can be made, based as it is, upon an *idea*. As we know, at the frontier of trauma (event) there is a void. This is the unnameable truth. It is a space dominated by what La Capra has called *undecidability*.¹⁸⁰ In this undecidable silence there is not the option to speak, for the subject has no ground from which to begin, he or she has been raised to zero. For La Capra this psychic zone is describable as a place where forces are:

[...] threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past [...]¹⁸¹

All of this, nevertheless, belongs not to *working through*, which is what I believe Galindo is doing, but to *acting out*. The line between the two is so slender as to be almost imperceptible. This is due to both modes being reliant upon a performative element, yet one is representation of the subject and the other is the presentation of the subject (new). Acting out is the performative and destructive reliving of the event as per a haunting, which adds further damage to the suffering subject(s) as they replay the trauma in a psychic loop. In contrast,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.21

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

working through is the establishment of a *new* possible. It must be noted that this new possible is not in any way related to any such utopia or the like, but is rather the acknowledgement of the new beginning—now replete with the power to take on the word—and to name that which until now has been unnameable. Bistoën is on the same track when he states that:

Viewing trauma recovery as a process of adaptation to trauma-related information skips an essential first step by taking as a given that which must first be constituted by the subject: the “meaning” or “content” of the trauma.¹⁸²

Finally, both paths (acting out/working through) lead to aporia. This similarity is also disconcerting. They are, however, differentiated by the realization that *acting out* is an unproductive aporia, whereby the subject, is “fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop.”¹⁸³ And working through in contrast, is part of what formulates an aporia that is now given materiality by Galindo in her performance, whereby the “meaning or “content” of the trauma are presented from one subject to another.

As we have seen in 3.2, as an aporia, Galindo performs the impossible tension at the edge of the void. There is no language available, yet it is the performance that enables an encounter; here are the key emancipatory forces that lead the viewer (already implicated in the performance as co-performer) forward, out of traumatic paralysis and towards the moment of forcing (Badiou). Thus in this particular performance, the absence described previously in 3.2, is here present; but in this action there is also the incidence of loss (which is in fact the confusion with absence), the unnameable quality (lack), finally recognizable again as justice—evoked once again by the presence of injustice—.

In *Meanwhile they continue to be free*, the stretching of Galindo’s body is a direct metaphor of a temporal tension. This is the anxiety caused by the original event and the posthumous and continuing organization of its meaning, its truths. The past violence committed against the female body is related to the present moment via this extension. Like the grammatical construction of the present perfect, *it has happened* (the ramifications of this

¹⁸² Bistoën, Gregory, et al, *Badiou’s Theory of the Event and the Politics of Trauma Recovery*, published in: *Theory and Psychology*, Vol 24 (6), Sage, 2014.

¹⁸³ LaCapra, Dominick, [op.cit.](#)

completed act impinge now on the present). The material realities of rape and torture of the female body, and the continued lack of legal reprisal are presented.

Galindo places her own body, which forms the signifier for that which is absent: *justice*. The point of this revelation is then the attempt by Galindo to commit to a communal working through. Firstly, there has to be the recognition that there has been within the specific *World* related, a form of overlooking. In a specific site—such as this—there is of course a transcendental structure to which all is related qua ontological possibilities. What appears under this logic is dependent, as Badiou has noted, upon the specific indexing, or better put, the way of counting. Under this logic there is appearing, or that which appears more—or less—in the World.¹⁸⁴ Galindo is demonstrating this concept—with her own body appearing as that which has hitherto had no voice, no appearing—. To be clear, as Pluth notes:

Badiou is arguing that for any world, no matter how inhuman, the same principles of organization (the same “logics”) adhere: there is a transcendental for that world, there are minimal and maximal degrees of appearing in it, there are relations of dependence, synthesis, and so on that can all be formalized.¹⁸⁵

So what does this World related appearance in Galindo’s performance mean in terms of trauma? Let us make a final connection between what is written here about Galindo’s work and what Gregory Bistoën has underscored in his recent research. The key is the indiscernibility of what is present in trauma (event). There is at the root of trauma, as Bistoën informs us, a point of non-accessibility. Bistoën has been precise on this topic,¹⁸⁶ and here it can be observed how he argues for a new approach to trauma related knowledge, he notes:

Approaching trauma in the Badiouian sense enables us to identify a point of inconsistency in contemporary psychological theories that approach trauma recovery as a process of either accommodation to or assimilation of the “new trauma-related information”. We argue that the content or nature of this trauma related information is by no means directly accessible for the traumatized person. Rather it needs to be constituted by him or her[...]¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Badiou, Alain, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁵ Pluth, Ed, *Alain Badiou*, Polity Press, 2010, p.75.

¹⁸⁶ Bistoën, Gregory, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

What Bistoen suggests is that the traumatized subject would be better off taking up a new point of departure which is based not upon the regrouping around the remnants of the traumatized subject (the return of the lost subject/representation of violence in art), but rather, similarly to Badiou's theory of the subject, should start out from an entirely new set of coordinates which recognize the site as such, and furthermore, participate in deciding what has happened, which is tantamount to naming, to speaking out upon the truths of the situation from the perspective of the now, and not the what has been. For Badiou, and this has a major consequence for this line of thought, "the act of nomination of the event is what constitutes it"¹⁸⁸. Bistoen continues to make this event/trauma connection explicit, noting:

Badiou's event can only be comprehended retroactively, because any understanding of it can only take place on the basis of a new horizon of possibilities that is generated by the event. In exactly the same way, the "traumatic truth" cannot be pinned down by the Symbolic/Imaginary framework (i.e., the mental schemata) that preceded it. What is opened up in the trauma is of an unimaginable nature, a something that is evoked but cannot be adequately situated or encapsulated from within the contemporary subjective structuring.¹⁸⁹

This failure of the subject to assimilate what has occurred brings us back to what Lewkowicz referred to as the "impasse"; the limit between one experience (representation of the traumatic experience in a regurgitated loop) as opposed to Galindo's *presentation* of working through, which is the speaking out the name of what has occurred in the event. So for example it is "genocide", that is the name of the truth procedure, and not the simulacrum "war". We also remember, that as far as this particular World is concerned (specific site) the organization of truth alluded to in the work is related to a communal process; the trauma (evental trace) in question is not (as would be the case with a contemporary psychology that attempts a subjective assimilation or accommodation process) reducible to the single subject.

In summary then let us say that Galindo proposes an additional step by performing the limit of the possible. This limit is arrived at by the presentation (pitched intersubjectively) of the absence (absent justice and continued impunity), which is also interpreted as a loss

¹⁸⁸ Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, Trans. Oliver Feltham, Bloomsbury, 2013, p.203.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

(the real of death involved in the loss of these women to violent death and the loss of their unborn children).

The proposal is that of a new count. The multiples of the possible are once again unfurled in the present and the public are invited to participate in their organizing anew. The silence portrayed in the language of Galindo's body reveals the content of trauma to be that of an unanswerable question: *How can we as subjects know what trauma conveys?* The only way to attempt to answer this question is to participate in the work's central intention: to force the additional step. Trauma is not then a given set, but is something that needs to be constituted—by each individual—as per his or her own location within the specific site. Bistoën's conclusion thus helps us understand the work of Galindo in clear terms: trauma recovery requires “an additional, logically prior, and decisive step.”¹⁹⁰

This is the invoking of the socio-political, not in order to define any specific pre-existing lines (a return to the pre-traumatic whole), but to produce—in the instant—the reengagement of the suspended truth. Unlike the tragic silence of *acting out*, the *working through* is the working through toward a *decision*; an active new subject is created along the lines of the original trauma. The subject must not *know* what has happened, but must *decide* what has happened: this decision making process is emancipatory as it imbibes the voiceless subject with a new politically activated voice. The result is as clear as it is positive: *agency is returned to the subject(s)*.

What is at stake is the truth (now produced by the subject who has recovered his or her agency), and in this particular case, according to genocide. The social mechanisms of oppression already alluded to in sections 3.1, and 3.2, are directly confronted by Galindo; this work interrelates the socio-political at all stages of the event, which she performs as an evolutionary process—thus she is able to suggest a new possible alliance between the public—and the possibilities of the implied future, now freed from the fetters of denial and silencing. The thesis put forward by Galindo is then the possibility of a healing from trauma planted within the broader socio-political framework—which is always accountable—. What Galindo does is use her body to speak out against the silence. Her voice is a clear indication of the new possible now, one planted in the idea. This idea is synonymous with a recognized lack: that is *justice*. For the communal traumatized collective, this political call to action is

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

made possible by the creative initiation of an ethical fidelity. The establishment of trauma as part of a technical incursion on the part of the artist sets out yet another possibility for describing exactly how it is that the performance work of Galindo might be deemed an effective manner via which an eventual truth procedure may be thought. To continue, let us now turn to the notion of ethics.

2.4 The Question of Ethics: Faithful Subject

Truth telling and public visibility are elements of Galindo's work that essentially combine to set up performative structures that are deeply critical. The target is a corrupt political system established upon silence and the control of narrative. This does not mean, however, that Galindo steps in to speak for those who have no voice, some kind of absent "Other," but rather, that she inserts herself into the situation at a specific point, intercepting an evolving eventual truth procedure. Galindo thus sets out to ensure that this same truth might act upon the present; this truth, we might posit, is ethical in that it *presents* and *represents* the truth of an event.

The psychologist Pierre Janet, who worked largely with trauma patients during his career, coined the phrase "presentification" to describe a specific emancipatory act; a temporal decision is taken in order to make present the *real* of a given situation, which had hitherto, for the traumatized subject, been taken as all too terrible to countenance. This position is one whereby the subject, still influenced by the past, and simultaneously aware of a future (yet not overly influenced by either), is succinctly aware of what is occurring in the now.¹⁹¹ As we have seen in the above discussion of trauma (3.3), it is in such a moment that the subject is able to make an informed decision, based upon an idea or new form (evental truth), to which they now align themselves. We may call these subjects, these emergent democratic agents, *truth agents*, or to borrow a term from Badiou, *faithful* subjects;¹⁹² these same, now replete with the truth of their situation, may act accordingly, (ethically), from the foundation that this new truth provides.

¹⁹¹ See: *Rediscovering Pierre Janet*, ed. Giuseppe Craparo, Francesca Ortu, Onno van der Hart, Routledge, 2019.

¹⁹² Badiou, Alain, *op. cit.*

This investigation sustains that one of the key tasks of critical art, and by extension the art of Regina José Galindo, is to guide the interlocutor towards this realization of event, towards this emancipation: the renewal of personal agency. This is at root, an ethical act, the revelation of a truth which is equal to an ethical truth. The more we analyse these types of performance the more we can see that it is an ethics that underpins the works. That is how we can connect Galindo to evental trace, because there is a clear connection between what is achieved in the condition, and this in regards to the specific singular situations. To understand this we need to be mindful of what we are referring to here by ethics, so let us note that while this has been derived from observations of the works in question, it is also viewed through the schema provided by Badiou's conception of ethics as a procedure. So, following the remarks made in the introduction, and as well throughout the previous chapters, for Badiou ethics is something constructed as part of a singular process related to specific events. The subject of a truth event is *created by the event* and acts in fidelity to this perceived truth event; and so there is no subject that exists prior to this event, or in other words, there is no point of reference, and this extends to the idea of ethics. By the same token then there is no ethics as such (the Western idea of human rights, multi-culturalist humanism etc), because according to Badiou there is no ethics that exists outside of a given particular situation. What this means is that the subject(s) are made in the situation and can therefore not precede the situation. We have already discussed the work of Galindo in terms of aporia, the simultaneous "presentification" of both a subject and object, the person presenting, in time, a reality, whilst even yet [re]presenting the supposed "Other". It is this tarrying between the *presentation* of a truth, and the *representation* of the "Other," (their concealed truth) that sets Galindo's technical incursions apart from those of her contemporaries. What Galindo achieves is the confrontation of the *idea* of a subject/object dichotomy, and as we have seen this is the cancelation of "otherness;" and so we see that the logic of "Other" is only sustainable from the perspective of a political system seeking to conserve a *them* and an *us*. With this onboard we may now move forward to make a direct connection between Galindo's presentations/representations and the specific truths that operate behind the surface of her works; in this way offering a glimpse of the manner in which these truths can finally be connected to a universal ethical claim.

One of the central themes of Regina José Galindo's performance is death. The works reviewed below are related to death to the extent that they bring hidden material realities of an event (genocide) back up to the surface, thereby opening to question the policies of the Guatemalan government. Also, as we shall see, Galindo goes beyond her own country, to underscore the ethical reality of a global truth. Now she reveals that one corpse is equal to another, and that globalized notions based on the idea of "Other" (its very existence shall need to be questioned below) are founded upon extremely dubious (unethical) grounds.

For Galindo, social change can only occur if the society itself recognizes the truth of its actuality.¹⁹³ In Guatemala the bodies of thousands and thousands of victims can be found, some of them in clandestine pits, others still in community burial sites, where unidentified remains have been laid to rest in unmarked graves. Galindo decides to realize an action, titled *XX* (2007), as an attempt to provide some sense of recognition, a space by which a mutual and basic ethical singular action might occur: the acceptance of a crime. Genocide can be summarized in the following way: it is the designation of a human form to the position of subhuman, the less than human, subjected to an unjustified death, and deprived of dignity in that death. Galindo, (working on this occasion with her friend Aníbal Lopez),¹⁹⁴ organized a collection of 52 marble gravestones which were then placed on top of freshly dug unmarked graves in La Verbena, Guatemala (work titled *XX*).¹⁹⁵ As we have noted, silence is part of the State's tool kit of oppression. Whilst this work obviously functions as memorial to those victims of violence in her country, it serves also to make visible a reality that has been obscured, to make a sound, of mourning, but also a demand. What Galindo clearly demonstrates is the lack of reality at the core of a political status quo in Guatemala, that continues to deny the genocidal violence that took place. But, as Sancho Ribes has noted, Galindo is also underscoring the reality of a political policy that even now continues to hide away the truth related to current public deaths, many of which continue to occur as a direct

¹⁹³ See: *Alemania Con Acento*, Canal DW TV (Alemania): *Regina José Galindo: Artista Guatemalteca*. (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVsKhr2BNSk> (12.09.19)

¹⁹⁴ Galindo has cited Anibal Lopez as one of her key collaborators and influences, especially throughout her early career. Lopez is at the centre of a small group of artists who, during the 1990s, began working on a series of important action art works and performance. He died in 2014. See: <https://despacio.cr/event/anibal-lopez>

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/xx-2/>

result of governmental policy.¹⁹⁶ The State assumes the role of executioner and then conceals its crimes outside of the reaches of the law, as Galindo explains (author translation):

There are dozens of bodies, each day there are eight or ten, fourteen bodies. Obviously, these bodies have relatives, but what happens in the country is that there is so much violence that the bodies accumulate in the morgue ... something very strange happens: the law currently says that when a family member disappears you can go to the police and the police will open an investigation and a search begins after 72 hours. At the same time, in the morgue when a body arrives, it cannot remain here for more than 48 hours because the bodies accumulate and they do not have enough equipment. So after 48 hours they are buried in black bags like dogs without any identification. When the 72 hours pass and the police begin to search for people, the bodies are already buried.¹⁹⁷

In this action (XX), Galindo recognizes the presence of a human being, which according to an ethical process present within this World (decision) should be given the proper attention, not as a dehumanized “Other”, but as the equal of *all* humanity. By ethic we refer to a process underway, truths that appear immanently within the specific site and that are bound to event. The question as to who is XX is answered only in its potential to be *anyone*. In the processing of XX the interlocutor encounters not then the “Other” but “another”; the subject comes to know the subject as part of what is the ethical demand of a singular moment. The issue is then planted in the *affect* of the event which permeates the situation created by the performance, and this is because it is through the affects of an eventual procedure (which is ethical) that an individual will come to recognize that they are now a subject of that situation. What does it mean to be XX, why does XX exist as a possibility, and what are the parameters of the World in which XX exists? These are but some of the questions we as interlocutors might ask of this work. In XX Galindo posits the recognition of a dead “nobody” in order that they may rise in estimation to the level of a dead “somebody”, whose mode of birth, life and death warrants an equal count among all those who are to be counted, this is an ethical procedure. Galindo is therefore, from an ethical point of view, opening the debate along critical lines that have their beginning in a recognition of the “Other,” not as alien, but as a

¹⁹⁶ Sancho Ribés, Lindón, *op.cit.*, p.213.

¹⁹⁷ Galindo, José Regina, *éTica en el arte IV: En el nombre del otro a cargo de Regina José Galindo*, (2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVfwpeij-pk_30.05.19

recognizable “Other”, moreover the coming to acknowledge the truth of an event not as the truth about otherness but rather the truth about sameness.

And so, despite not knowing who lies entombed in the grave marked *XX*, the affects of an event continue to impinge on the situation, creating new subjects of truth, what we have been referring to as evental trace; these construct a new possible present on the grounds that there is a necessary interaction with this ethical demand—Galindo provides the possibility for new subjects to enter into the fidelity concept, tantamount to an ethical decree, that one should remain faithful to what has been and what continues to be the truth of a World. Therefore, and despite the notion of their being labelled “unknown” or “unclaimed,” these bodies maintain a connection to what is a universal reality: that each human birth, life, and death, has the same potential reality as the next. This is not the humanitarian “othering” which is part of a process of ethics vis-à-vis the ethics of human rights—programs of victim counting, and so on—; Galindo rather, emphasizes the nature of an actual governmental *necropolicy*,¹⁹⁸ called out as unethical (evil in Badiou’s terms), as its true evental trace has been overlooked. And so *XX* must be acknowledged as that which underscores a perversion of the law; where truth ought to exist we have instead simulacrum, and those cohorts: impunity, the promotion of disappearance, attendant social anxiety, and of course, silence, all of which belong to the simulacrum of event.

What we find then in the work of Galindo is that yes, the “Other” is present, but not as *object*, instead we have the singular presentation of an erroneous point of view: this is a particular perspective, constructed by a multiculturalist humanism that distorts the truth of what has occurred. So what we are seeing is that the “Other” is something Galindo consciously sets about cancelling; and this is something that occurs naturally as part of the ethical decisions of the situation, which are in effect a process of fidelity to an event, and so this former position (other) is rendered untenable. By drawing attention to the “Other,” as in all essence, a *non-other*, Galindo is able to confront its negativity; Galindo chalks a line

¹⁹⁸ The reference for necropolitics used here comes from Achille Mbembe and his book “Necropolitics.” In it Mbembe theorizes the genealogy of the contemporary world, a world plagued by ever-increasing inequality, militarization, enmity, and terror as well as by a resurgence of racist, fascist, and nationalist forces determined to exclude and kill. He outlines how democracy has begun to embrace its dark side, what he calls its “nocturnal body”, which is based on the desires, fears, affects, relations, and violence that drove colonialism. See: Mbembe, Achille, *Necropolitics*, Duke, 2019.

around the “Other” in order to demonstrate that it does not, for the purposes of a real truth procedure, even exist. Of such a formula Bosteels has noted:

[...] a militant subject emerges only when the particular terms of the various memberships that define society are put down and abolished in favor of a generic concept of truth as universally the same for all.¹⁹⁹

For Badiou, it is *truth* that disbands all notions of otherness, so that it dissolves once and for all into “sameness” and this is what is for Badiou *ethical* in the fullest sense. Both Galindo and Badiou agree on this point that there is no “Other” and this is a central part of what ethics means. Bosteels again adds to this standpoint when he remarks that:

Politics, in other words, has nothing to do with respect for difference or for the other, not even the absolutely other, and everything with equality and sameness.²⁰⁰

This investigation ought now to further explore this impactful idea as it merits a more in-depth review. Galindo herself has always maintained that she is not the “Other,” and has repeatedly highlighted this fact in numerous interviews, both recorded for television,²⁰¹ and as well, for art and theoretical publications. Despite this point she continues to draw attention based largely on the circumstance that she comes from Guatemala, and her performances stem in large part from the atrocities that have come to pass in her own country. In a way, Galindo has seized upon this basically racist assumption as an opportunity to confront euro-centric art systems, sometimes herself adopting an extreme version of “otherness” as per a perceived desire on the part of those who would maintain *her* otherness; such views are thus incorporated into her performance, if only to lay the groundwork for their dismantling as part of the technical apparatus itself. At all times aware of these perceptions, Galindo, regarding her work, and almost as though to highlight this absurd obsession with “otherness”, will often bring these same ideas to the fore (author translation):

What I focus upon is so radical because I am Guatemalan; it arises from where I come from, what I am made of, I am formed from images.

¹⁹⁹ Bosteels, Bruno, *Badiou and Politics*, Duke, 2011, p.31.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ See: *Alemania Con Acento*, Canal DW TV (Alemania); *Regina José Galindo: Artista Guatemalteca* (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVsKhr2BNSk> (12.09.19)

I am violent, I am aggressive. So everything I do is the same, it is violent and aggressive. I am not violent with myself, but it is a more formal matter, there is a positive relationship between me and my body. But yes, the result is visceral and violent, because all my proposals are from the Guatemalan reality, from the Latin American context. Because this reality is violent. And no one is moved anymore.²⁰²

One central observation we may make of Galindo's work is that it is also a clear demonstration that almost every country in the world has been constructed upon a similar sequence of violence and oppression. This is clearly the case if we examine the background to her performance titled *Suelo Común* (2013).²⁰³ Invited to realize a performance in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Galindo decides to make some preliminary investigations into the recent history of the country. *Suelo Común* is based upon her findings at the time, that reveal the nature of an extremely violent past. In the area concerned, hundreds of clandestine burial sites had been discovered, where soldiers and innocent victims of war (some dating back as far as 1942) had been thrown, hands tied and still alive, into large communal pits. In the actual performance, Galindo was buried, faced down in a small grave, covered by a thick pane of glass which permitted the public to walk upon her grave, and to observe her naked body below. Galindo has all along underscored the importance of a universality concerning death, after all, as she has said, death and pain are the same wherever they occur. Speaking directly of *Suelo Comun*, Galindo noted the following:

Basically, what I want to demonstrate with this piece is that we are all constituted by, or most countries are built, on the basis of death and lies. Don't try and tell me that only the Third World or Guatemala is in this crisis, or that the crisis does not correspond to you, that it belongs only to me.²⁰⁴

Common soil reveals the nature of a reality that is built not upon truths, ethical truths, but upon lies and perversions of the truth. Such unethical societies, under the global neoliberal

²⁰² Silvestri, Leonor (2008) In conversation with Regina José Galindo: *Escrito con cuerpo*, Pagina 12 (online), see: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-4268-2008-07-25.html> (08.09.19)

²⁰³ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/suelo-comun-2/> (30.05.20)

²⁰⁴ See: *Alemania Con Acento*, Canal DW TV (Alemania): *Regina José Galindo: Artista Guatemalteca.* (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVsKhr2BNSk> (12.09.19)

code, are now understood as the political norm, where systems of forgetting have driven the truth far below the surface of the common daily experience.



Regina José Galindo.
Suelo Común (2013),
Ljubljana, Slovenia.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/suelo-comun/>

As a citizen of an ethical World to come, Galindo wants to demonstrate how these truths may be incorporated into a new and conscious political debate, one that seeks to place eventual truth at the fore of a society now constructed along newly formulated ethical lines. There is more than an element of utopia involved in these technically arranged interventions. In her confrontation of concealed death, Galindo advances a newly orchestrated archaeology, which ought always to refer to the ethical practice of truth. Clearly the performance itself is a turning of the tables. Here we have a Latin American of indigenous decent, on European soil, not to demonstrate her own “otherness” but to underscore the (non) otherness of the so called “Other”. Galindo objectifies hidden traumas and atrocities that belong not to her own place; this “Guatamalteca,” as she is referred to in the television interview she gave to German TV²⁰⁵—turns the spotlight upon white central European experience: it is the “Other” who comes to be then with the “Other”—by exposing their own buried truths. She is then the “Other” who now in her presence in this particular site, dissolves attributes associated with “otherness” to expose the truths that indeed reveal a *sameness*; the same death and injustice underpins the European experience as it does in her own country. The support for this claim comes when we fix upon the possible reasons for such a move: it is not truth that underpins the World, which for our purposes would be essentially egalitarian, but rather a set of questionable coordinates which maintain difference. It is, according to our current systems of accepted thought, only through the safeguarding of difference, through the processes of

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

“othering,” that the threats presented by totalitarianism and fundamentalism may be thwarted; and so this place must be regulated; *difference* is then the mainstay not of truth in the egalitarian sense, but truth as per the market, which in our current global moment is best signified by the name neo-liberalism. As Bosteels has noted:

But the market, too, works with differences, or at least with semblances of difference. This is even the way in which the general equivalence of the underlying order is capable of reproducing itself. There is thus nothing inherently subversive, let alone revolutionary, about the affirmation of difference, becoming, or flux within the coordinates of contemporary capitalism. Only a strict egalitarian affirmation can break through this general equivalence of capital disguised as difference.²⁰⁶

By confronting and doing away with otherness, Galindo presents an alternative to the false representations of identity which run parallel to a State organised subterfuge: power is thus demonstrable in her action in the sense that it is disobeyed: she does not behave as she should in terms of “being the other”, but rather, performs herself as symbolic token of sameness. The State has shielded itself behind a system of politics based upon difference, which the appearance of Galindo’s entombed body now undermines; this is the signalling of a generalising equivalence, the understanding of this element reveals the true nature of the subject.

All the same, the metaphor of the obscured and buried corpse that symbolizes the hidden excess of historical violence is not all that Galindo has to say on the matter of death. If Galindo hints at those generations yet-to-come, who may arrive to finally unearth a concealed reality, she is equally as enthused about the possibilities for those who even now encounter the realities of a violent world, daily, on the streets, and in the neighbourhoods where they live. In one such action titled *Hilo del tiempo*,²⁰⁷ (2012), Galindo stretches herself out upon the ground, not at all buried this time, but on the surface, in the open, for all to see. Her body is covered with what appears to be a woollen sweater, but is in fact a knitted replica of the black plastic bags used to shroud unclaimed dead bodies. This dark black form on the ground has a single loose thread left tantalizingly astray.

²⁰⁶ Bosteels, Bruno, op.cit.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/hilo-de-tiempo-2/> (30.05.20)



Regina José Galindo,
Hilo de tiempo (2012),
 San Cristóbal de las Casas,
 Chiapas, México.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/hilo-de-tiempo/>

The performance is arranged in a public square in the Mexican town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, where her peculiar presence stirs a spectacular curiosity, and her lifeless form symbolizes the presence of the concealed corpse; here, in a place, where the discovery of real cadavers has been a common actuality. The name of this work is a significant clue as to its meaning. To thread oneself through time, to trace, to seek truths behind our present time, this is the urge of Galindo. This truth procedure is not taken in isolation but is what we may regard as having both local and global stimulus. There is then in a sense a local present, which is specific and derives itself from eventual trace, (affect) and there is the global present, which is the eternal element, what has been through history the sequence of time in relation to event. Each time has its eventual set, maxims, that are eternally true and which collate within the present as though some thread were leading through from one event to the next; the ethics thus becomes historical in the sense that there is a connective element, the subject is faithful in that she acts from the position of fidelity to *all* egalitarian events. These are separate and singular novelties yet they form what Badiou calls the sequence of event. This is not to say that the existent, in terms of event, is in anyway determined by history, but rather there exists a presence, the possibility of eternal truth, it is by adhering to these truths that the human animal is transformed.

During Galindo's San Cristóbal performance members of the public are gradually won over by their curiosity to the extent that they begin to pull upon the loose woollen thread. The metaphor is as ingenious as it is obvious, and summarizes perfectly the idea of this paper; Galindo herself noting that: "You have to go back along the thread of time to find the reason

for so much death and thus, in turn, you may find life.”²⁰⁸ In the action, the anonymity of the corpse is gradually disclosed. Several of the towns women pull upon the thread, slowly revealing Galindo’s naked body below. This continues until finally the head is presented, the definitive movement in the process of truth is achieved. Galindo then, taking to her feet, withdraws from the square.

Regina José Galindo, *Hilo de tiempo* (2012), San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México.



<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/hilo-de-tiempo/>

This is a performance which clearly incorporates the community, whose members through their direct action reveal the truth of the situation. A revelation occurs as the result of an investigation, this allegorical probe thus leading in a direct line to the obscured truth of a situation, in this case not at all a corpse, but the presentation of a possibility: the presentation of the day-to-day actuality of uncovering a truth related to local *necropolitical* realities. But can we connect these truths, at the end of an inquiry, to an ethical ground, and are these truths at all the product of an event?

As we have noted in the previous section (3.3), the *representation* of trauma is not at all a possibility (no more than it would be possible to represent an event), and furthermore, strictly speaking, the representation of the “Other” (victim) is not in any sense an ethical pursuit. In what follows, nevertheless, this investigation moves to press open a manner in which representation may in fact sit side by side with an ethical claim. It is the finding of the current study that Regina José Galindo’s work, for the most part, concurs with this idea of the impossibility of *representing* ethics—but only to the extent that it should be the production of a foreclosure of sorts—. Evidently, the complexity of these statements is in need of development.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Firstly the area of presentation as opposed to representation. In one key recorded interview Galindo has been extremely clear on the matter of her work and representation vis-à-vis the “Other”. We remember that for our purposes, and this idea will be further approached below, the “Other” does not truly exist; better employed is the idea of “another” (an equal in every sense). In the interview, titled *Victim and Victimario*, recorded as part of the Guggenheim New York’s review of Galindo’s work²⁰⁹, Galindo affirms her belief that “art is universal, or should reflect a universality” and that death is the same around the world, “the same in Guatemala, as it is in the United States or in Russia” and that human pain and misery are the same “for each individual who is alive” and finally, that her work should link each individual, forming connections of empathy and understanding, that her work intends to perform the role of “human bridge,” closing the gap between each being and the apparent “otherness” they possess. As we have seen in the performance of *Suelo Común*, whilst Galindo clearly sets out to question otherness, she likewise sets out to problematize the foundations upon which *otherness* is established, after all, as she has demonstrated:

[...] the history of each country, every word that they say, everything that they deny, that they hide, that they lie about... these things make it a central interest of mine to go farther, out and beyond the political realities of my own country[...]²¹⁰

What Galindo reproaches in her work is clearly a lack of ethics in the actuality of our daily political experience, on a global scale. Now, we have discussed the issue of the ethics of representation in regards to trauma (3.3), I would like now to touch upon this same problem in regards to performance art *per se*, and what it means to formulate oneself as both object and subject, both orchestrator of a performance, a *presentation*, whilst evoking the victim and/or sense of (non)other, via what is in essence the *representation*. Taking into account what we have been discussing in terms of Galindo’s work, it is fair to say that ethical representation must have an element of *presentation*. As Edwin Culp has noted in his preface to José Alfonso Sanchez’s book on the topic (author translation):

²⁰⁹ Galindo, José Regina, in conversation: *Regina José Galindo: La víctima y el victimario*. Guggenheim Museum, 2015.

See: www.guggenheim.org/video/regina-jose-galindo-la-victima-y-el-victimario-english-captioned

²¹⁰ Ibid.

The relationship between ethics and representation makes it present, does not avoid its presence, makes it explicit, deploys it in the present, leads it to the praxis of action.²¹¹

This “presentification” of ethics is at the root of the discussion here and is where we may be permitted to render some kind of clarity. As Sanchez has noted, ethics operates in the arena of *practice*, of *action*, and is not in essence a representation. He goes on to question the situation thus (author translation):

Does representation admit an ethics? Only as long as the representation is conceived as a practice, and not as the closure of the practice; that is, only insofar as representation is a moment of thought, of production, or of action, and not the place where thought, production, and action are detained.²¹²

We have identified Regina José Galindo’s performances as technical arrangements that allude to the thought processes of an event (evental truth). Now we can go further in our claim to connect this process as part of an ethical truth process. In this model, ethics are not in any way static, transcendental elements acting upon the situation, but of the present. It is the position of this paper that there are multiplicities of ethics, each ethic as numerous as the situations in which they may be evoked. It is therefore not a question of production but of practice, not a set of laws by which we may judge, but a set of actions by which a body may perform itself according to an ethics of life and justice, perceived only as part of a specific World, or situation, as Sanchez has noted (author translation):

Because it occurs in action, ethics is bodily. In certain practices, the body may have an interiority, a habit that favours ethical decision-making without reasoning or verbal discourse.²¹³

This final comment would seem to support an argument that locates Galindo’s body at the centre of what is for all intents and purposes—an ethical procedure. It is this juxtaposition in the present, the unfurling at once of the *presentation* (herself as political subject/artist) and the representation of (non)“other” (even while this appearance is cancelled within the

²¹¹ Culp, Edwin, (introduction) in *Ética y Representación*, José A. Sánchez, PasoDeGato, 2016, p.12.

²¹² Sanchez, A. José, *Ética y Representación*, PasoDeGato, 2016, p.21

²¹³ Ibid., p.25.

performance) that we are attempting to analyse. In the Chiapas performance discussed above, Galindo is herself the subject of an ethical truth procedure, the truth here related to a government sponsored policy of disappearance in Mexico²¹⁴ and the attendant chaos viewed now as sequential expansion. The Chiapas intervention exposes the reality of a new possibility based upon a new recognition of the corpse(s), not as dehumanized “Other”, but of “another”, equal in importance and of pertinence to a review of a corrupt political process. Galindo presents the notion that these elements must surely be accepted as breach of the human ethical code (as that which pertains to each singular occurrence).

This bodily ethics is present in each of the specific works that Galindo performs. In a sense, Galindo is the presence of experience itself, performing the role of experience, permitting the emergence of a truth procedure via the acceptance of a dislocating affect. To accept these affects is tantamount to the accepting of truths. In *No perdemos nada por nacer* (2000),²¹⁵ Galindo takes her body to the limits of abjection, bringing herself face-to-face with her own subject, which as Cazali notes, necessitates an encounter with the impinging implications of her own pains, fears, and remembrances.²¹⁶ This performance, which Galindo would go on to repeat in Mexico City, (2012), sees Galindo placed inside a see-through plastic body sack, which is then thrown onto a municipal rubbish tip in Guatemala City. What we see in this action is the direct presence of Galindo in the sense that there is a reality now relatable to what is essentially an ethical claim. The positioning of her body in the site where so many Guatemalan bodies end up is the method by which we as interlocutors are brought to task in terms of what is the actuality of an ethical present. This is indeed the bridging effect sought by Galindo, that her apparent *otherness* is transcended via the realization of an ethical truth. This is then not at all the terrain of *representation* (although the assumed [non]“other” is represented at the very moment it is revealed), but the *presentation* of an ethic of truth.

²¹⁴ For an excellent coverage of this particular topic see: Mastrogiovanni, Federico, *Ni Vivos Ni Muertos: La desaparición forzada en México como estrategia de terror*, Debolsillo (Random House) 2016.

²¹⁵ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/no-perdemos-nada-con-nacer-2/>

²¹⁶ Cazali, Rosina, *La Movilidad Como Promesa de Libertad*, published in *Regina José Galindo*, SilvanaEditoriale, 2011, p.55-61.



Regina José Galindo,
No perdemos nada por nacer (2000),
Guatemala City, Guatemala.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/no-perdemos-nada-con-nacer/>

The doing away with the “Other” is a considered technical inclusion in the confluences worked upon by Galindo. In *No perdemos nada por nacer* there is, as we have noted of the works *XX*, *Suelo común*, and *Hilo del tiempo*, also the restructuring of the notion of identity (sameness), a factor of central importance if there are to be any political consequences at all. In *No perdemos nada por nacer* (We Have Nothing to Lose by Being Born), Galindo makes a truth of the adage, *to be local is the best way to be universal*; in ethical terms; *What does it mean to be born and does geography, history and race effect the potential outcomes of each of the lives on the planet?* Galindo poses these types of questions directly to a universal interlocutor. Her position inside the bag is that of a cancelled human form, held in the foetal position, covered in her own faeces. This is a dehumanized form, and therefore an ethical presentation of a truth: the *representation*, an action, a moment of thought, the thinking of an eventual truth.

By simultaneously *presenting* and *representing* the cancelation of a human form, the dehumanizing of the form (ethical) to mere object, thrown onto a rubbish heap, Galindo presents a universal truth: that in this World there is that which occurs in all places, the breach of a universal ethical truth: that all lives have an equal right to life. For Galindo, the “Other” simply, does not exist. It is worth reiterating the fact that this idea is also found in the thought of Alain Badiou, who agrees that we must abandon the falsehood of thinking *otherness* in favour of the realization of sameness. This because a truth is the same for one, as it is for another. Badiou notes:

Only a truth is, as such, indifferent to differences. There is something we have always known, even if sophists of every age have attempted to obscure its certainty: a truth is the same for all.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: An Essay on The Understanding of Evil*, Verso, 2012, p.27.

In her performance *No perdemos nada por nacer* Galindo is actually presenting two levels of an ethical demand. Firstly there is the ethics that are universal; and secondly, there is the ethic of a truth. There is a choice to be taken in the face of such truths: recognizing the truth of the event, do we remain *faithful* to this truth or do we decide to move towards a perversion of that truth. At the local level, for Galindo, the truth is the presence in her World of the remnants of genocide: the devaluation of human life to that of an object. This is related always to her World, her truth in the situation, which is then presented—as she notes of her experience of the local situation:

I have seen many deaths in Guate, even I am used to it. We are sicker than the rest of societies. This social breakdown is like cancer.²¹⁸

Although Galindo recognizes that in her country the violence is more visible, she does not equate this with a comparatively more serious infraction of ethics, because each ethical truth is relatable only to its own situation, its own World. In Guatemala the reception of her *No perdemos nada por nacer* is telling in terms of how a political policy of death and disappearance has been normalized; Galindo notes her experience of being inside the bag, on top of the rubbish (author translation):

Nothing happened, there was a rubbish tip scavenger who moved me with his feet, took out a radio that was underneath and continued his life, because here he is so used to seeing blood, to seeing death. He simply assumed: "Here they have thrown a woman and someone will come". He left so very calmly!²¹⁹

The consensus of objectification that is present in society is resisted in this action which is emancipatory in that it challenges this consensus directly. This is an intentionally construed resistance by Galindo, technically orchestrated so to position the communication of truth in direct contrast to that which has hitherto been the accepted norm. What has been the event in this World that Galindo inhabits? It is the crossing of the ethical truth of the situation, the demotion of human life to that of the subhuman (genocide and its eventual remainder). The

²¹⁸ Bleedwhite (2009): *Regina Jose Galindo y su santa trinidad, violencia, arte y provocación*, Bleedwhite. (Online) see: <http://bleedwhitekingdom.blogspot.com/2009/02/regina-jose-galindo-y-su-santa-trinidad.html>

²¹⁹ Ibid.

truth of the event is the material course that is traced in time, the linking thread from one ethical body to the next. Reading Badiou makes this movement of Galindo understandable, in clear terms, he says:

Essentially a truth is the material course traced, within the situation, by the evental supplementation. It is thus an immanent break. Immanent because a truth proceeds in the situation, and nowhere else - there is no heaven of truths.²²⁰

Galindo renders a break in the formerly arranged consensus that favours the interpretation of victimhood qua violence (in this particular World) as pertaining to the “Other.” She marks the event in its local sense as a breach in the local code of ethics, which forms a bridge to a global code of ethics via a connection to that which is true of all life, the sameness of all beings in the sense that they have an equal claim to truths established in each situation. What has been left out of the culture has been challenged, and a new possibility must now be admitted to the developing sense of the situation, both in terms of knowledge and the political realities forthwith. Recognizing the truth of the event, carrying its material meaning in the form of a truth, is the process of what is an ethical act. A true faithful subject is then an ethical subject who is, one and the same, the portent of an ethic of truths.

3 Regina José Galindo: New Configurations

3.1 Micro-Politics: The Female Body

It is important to consider that when Regina José Galindo’s work is described here, it is done so upon the understanding that she is to be regarded as a *political subject* (Badiou), militant, and charged at every conceivable level with evental truth(s). For the most part, this Chapter 3 will delineate further places or Worlds where *truth* appears within the situation, directly opening the possibility to re-configure a present—now uncovered as profoundly unjust. One of the encounters of this investigation is set in relation to the approach taken by Galindo for dealing with the topic of femininity—what it is to be female in this (Galindo’s) particular

²²⁰ Badiou, Alain, op.cit., p.42.

situation (World)—; that is, the question must be asked as to what relations may be drawn now between Regina José Galindo, Guatemala (historical), and the recent event sequences associated with gender violence and genocide. How is the phenomena of *femicide*²²¹ present in the work of Regina José Galindo and, speaking from the perspective of eventual truth, what does it mean to include the truth(s) of femicide in her work? To move towards an answer for these, and doubtless further questions, this investigation now sets out to discuss Galindo’s performance *Perra* (Bitch), 2005.²²² The action, which directly employs Galindo’s own body as signifier, takes little over five minutes to complete, and is undertaken at the *Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani*, in Milan, Italy. It is worthwhile noting that what remains of Galindo’s performance are the stills photography and video recordings, all of which have been widely circulated both on her own blog site as well as in the media in general (online art criticism). Galindo’s work fits then into the reading given to this type of work by Chloe Johnston, whereby performance works that take place before a limited audience are, even so, disseminated posthumously via art historical documentation and criticism.²²³ In such a manner texts do collaborate with the artists to extend the performed meanings beyond the original geographical confines, and therefore to some extent ensure the universality of the performance. This text is mindful of such extensions of the performative moment and seeks to produce a faithful examination of what are the perceived elements of truth pertinent to those discourse Galindo has presented within her work. Before getting into an in-depth analysis of *Perra*, however, it is of relevance to describe the specific situation in Guatemala. It is only through a strict adherence to a specific set of historicity²²⁴ that an investigation such

²²¹ The term femicide is adopted from the work of several investigations conducted around the specific phenomenon of femicide as observed within the specific Guatemalan context covered as geographical place in much of Galindo’s performance and poetry work. For a good understanding of what the political term “femicide” means in relation to the topic see: Fregoso, Rosa-Linda and Bejarano, Cinthia, eds., *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2010.

²²² See: <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/perra-2/>

²²³ Chloe Johnston made the interesting assertion that the performance historian need not be separated from a performance by not having ever seen it live. Johnston builds her idea in conjunction with the performance works of Francis Alÿs, pointing out that the power of circulation is as vital to the works central meaning as the actual reality of having been there. See: Johnston, Chloe, *Wandering Through Time: Francis Alÿs’s Paseos and the Circulation of Performance*,” in *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 6.2 (2010).

²²⁴ The historical dimension of human phenomena, or the distinctive *sociohistorical* circumstances of a specific event or *series of events*. Theories ignoring this dimension are ahistorical. See: *Historicity* - Oxford Reference; <https://www.oxfordreference.com> (01.04.21).

as this might construct an argument with the coherence required. Surely it is the very the complexity of the topic that renders the conditions as important to the meaning as the works themselves.

What is here referred to then as historicity can be divided into two non-sequential areas: on the one hand we have the historical realities—in terms of social history and/or political veracities in Guatemala both during and after the 36 years of armed struggle (genocide is recognized as part of that particular historical set²²⁵). And on the other hand there are the art historical predecessors—which we must identify as playing a role in the work of Galindo, particularly in regards to feminist performance art. There have been a number of descriptions of female performance art (historiographical) that have overlapped into discussions of Galindo and that ought first be somewhat confronted. They are almost entirely linked to a discussion of form that seeks to explain the power of female performance art as belonging to a range of typical “shock” categories. So for example Gemma Argüello Manresa has argued in favour of a “disturbatory Feminist Art”²²⁶. She makes use of Arthur Danto’s idea of what he called “disturbatory art”.²²⁷ This kind of art, according to Danto, sets out to “modify, through experiencing it, the mentality of those who experience it”.²²⁸ It is also, claimed Danto, in the case of feminist art, the experience of some rare elements he described as being: “funky, aggressive, confrontational, flagrant, shocking, daring, extreme and meant to be sensed as dangerous”.²²⁹ This view is supported further by the theory of the “abject”; the abject, suggested Julia Kristeva²³⁰, (who may have influenced Danto with her notions of the “abject” in art), is behind a form that drives towards a confrontation with female bodily

²²⁵ The status of Genocide is applicable by law to the situation according to the Supreme Court in Guatemala (2018) and confirmed by the United Nations statement: "The court's decision confirms that the suffering and humiliation suffered by the Ixil peoples at the hands of the Guatemalan army constituted crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity," the experts said. "We celebrate the significant progress made in the search for truth, the fight against impunity and the recovery of historical memory of the events that occurred during the internal armed conflict (1960-1996) estimated to have claimed over 200'000 lives,".

See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23746&LangID=E> (20.10.20)

²²⁶ Arguello Manresa, Gemma, *A Philosophy of Disturbatory Feminist Art*, (Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, Mexico), Aesthetic Investigations, Vol 2, No1, 2017, p.100.

²²⁷ Danto, Arthur, *Bad Aesthetic Times of Encounters and Reflections*, published in *Art in the Historical Present*, University of California, 1990, p.299.

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ Ibid., p.300.

²³⁰ Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, 1982.

wastes; now women's fluids, once repressed by the male constructed symbolic order, flow freely under the auspices of art. For Kristeva the female experience takes on an almost religious aspect—yet importantly, femininity remains in the area of the objectifiable. This is because art, viewed as part of what Kristeva referred to as “abject,” and applicable to other 1970s and 1980s feminist artists (those concerned with the female as representative of subversive representation and empowerment), has no wherewithal to discuss the situation from the position of moving out beyond the negative claim.

When Kristeva refers to that which is “radically excluded” from the patriarchally organised social debate, or to that which “from its place of banishment [...] does not cease challenging its master,”²³¹ there is no doubt a closeness to the line of thought developed within this text. We can agree that there are elements of the hidden or the obscured that resurface in Galindo's work, but this is not thought to be in anyway connectable to the question of gender as *abject* expression of alterity. Regina José Galindo need not perform anxieties that are specific to the female gender *per se* (international feminism), but rather pertain to the general notion of female within a very specific World—that is by extension universal; this is, as this section (4.1) seeks to demonstrate, an altogether different setup. This means that Galindo's action is immanent to her situation and does not derive its parameters of operation from an external set of feminist coordinates; it is, rather, the performance of an original set. Feminism is not the transcendental referent; we must first see the eventual trace (truth) in the situation, and then move out from this position towards a universalism, *not the reverse*. This is then a question of perspective, one which confirms the notion of a universality at the centre of Galindo's procedure. Kristeva's idea of the abject is doubtless applicable to Galindo's work, but only if we overlook the fact that what she performs is not at all the *abject* in its own sense, but is rather a set of truths rendered abject by a particular system of State organized oppression. Jane Lavery and Sarah Bowskill,²³² writing upon the representation of the female body in Galindo's work, have remarked extensively on the topic from this perspective, noting that “Galindo presents an ‘excessive’, carnivalized, grotesque, and abject female body”²³³.

²³¹ Ibid., p.2.

²³² Lavery, Jane, Bowskill, Sarah, *The Representation of the Female Body in the Multimedia Works of Regina José Galindo*, Bulletin of Latin American Research, Vol.31, No.1, p.51-64, Blackwell, 2012.

²³³ Ibid.

By the same token, when Kristova claims that abjection is “[...] caused by what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions rules,”²³⁴ Lavery and Bowskill make the entirely logical connection between the abject and what they perceive as “shocking” within the work of Galindo. Now, there is a need to be careful here as the intention is not to make enemies of such an approach to Galindo’s work, but rather to make an adjustment which would necessitate a move away from the implementation of the blanket Westernized canon, by that I refer to the language of feminism. For Lavery and Bowskill, the way to see Galindo is to understand her as merely the *representation* of the female victim. They also insist upon placing her in the category of “Latin American”, *othering* her experience from that of their own European based practice. As they note:

Given that Galindo’s use of the body to explore female sexuality, notions of feminine beauty, race or domestic and national violence is not unique in the sense that other female performance artists of this region also use their bodies to explore such subject matter, Galindo’s performance art must be briefly situated in the broader context of Latin American women’s performance art.²³⁵

Straightaway, as has been noted, there is no need for criticism of this approach as it comes from the correct vision of Galindo as a female who intends to confront power, and yet the *identitarian* nature or tone of the perspective makes it the ideal background from which to further establish our intention here. And that is to demonstrate a different perspective that does not require the pasting onto the situation of an already established theoretical frame, that being in this case the feminist approach. Such a move would demark Galindo as being the representation of victims; so merely making visible all of the absent “others” whose only voice in the matter is via their being represented by Galindo, to the public, who will then in turn make a moral decision based on the embodied evidence. As Lavery and Bowskill have noted:

The representation of the female body and its fraught relationship to patriarchy is not only fundamental to Galindo’s performance art but also to her poetry and blogsite.²³⁶

²³⁴ Kristeva, Julia, op. cit., p.4.

²³⁵ Lavery, Jane, Bowskill, Sarah, op. cit.

²³⁶ Ibid., p.52.

Now, this is all very interesting, but while they rightly connect a systematic violence to the female body, they overlook the origin of the performance from the perspective of Galindo—that is not at all interested in the abject; for Galindo, who is always looking towards a working through, which is political (World related), the abject would be tantamount to a falling back into the trap of objectifying women. The slight difference in interpretation makes an entirely different prospect of the work. Lavery and Bowskill fuse their ideas onto Galindo, insisting that:

[...] the artist (Galindo), poet and blogger negotiates between different meanings of the grotesque and abject in her works so that they vacillate ambiguously between subversive and empowerment, on one hand, and disempowerment, on the other.²³⁷

This vacillation, one could argue, merely leads us round and round a closed circuit, from victim to perpetrator, and then back again (and the audience predictably knows his or her role in the performance: to be morally disgusted). Galindo, in contrast, will want us to understand that pregnant women are not “abject” in themselves, but have been rendered so by a specific system of violence, and the same for all female figures that she performs. The abject is then not the central core meaning, as Lavery and Bowskill have claimed, but is rather merely the evidence of something far more sinister: *femicide* as political and material reality. This claim can be substantiated by an analysis of how the “Other” is dissolved in the performance of Galindo. So how exactly do we sense the dissolution of the other, and how does this lead us toward the reading of Galindo’s work as based upon evental trace?

So far we have been discussing “shock” and its value regarding the female body in art. We can say that “disturbatory feminist art” is then, according to Argüello Manresa, that which has the power to disturb our emotions, since, as she notes (speaking of the artists Regina José Galindo, Lorena Wolfler, Mayra Martell and Maya Goded), these are “disturbatory” artworks: “because they arouse moral disgust”.²³⁸ Needless to say this is negative if we are to think about the art in terms of social change, because such a strong emotion as disgust tends to signal the end of the thought process, and as we know, if we are to accept the idea of evental trace (a force of truth not yet concluded) then such a finality as disgust would seem entirely out of place. For Argüello Manresa, however, there remains a

²³⁷ Ibid., p.53.

²³⁸ Argüello Manresa, Gemma, op. cit.

social change element inbuilt into the performance/audience relationship. This she links to the contamination of the social environment by the realities of that which has come to pass: *femicide*. She notes that:

[...]disturbatory feminist art focused on femicides, on violence against females, elicits moral disgust not just because the artistic vehicle in some cases can be disgusting, but because they show what has been done with female's bodies is morally disgusting and the situation is contaminating many spheres of the social life.²³⁹

Plainly the focus for Argüello Manresa is then placed upon the female body. It is through the representation of a destroyed female body that the work comes to formulate a meaning; the disgust aroused pertaining here not only to the performance but moreover to what it represents. But in the case of *Perra*, (a performance that takes place in Milan), this then becomes a body, that should we maintain the line of thought offered by notions of the “the disturbatory”, would seem only to be perceived (by the audience) as that which belongs to the “Other”, a concept which has been challenged in Chapter 3, and which we should want to insist has no place in a reading of what is truly the operation at work in the performance of Galindo. It is not at all the *representation* of the “Other” but the *presentation* of (an)other. The space suggested by Argüello Manresa is then that the performance, specifically designed in the form of a disturbance, is conceptually separated; an opening of sorts occurs which is to be filled now by the emotion of disgust and by extension, *sympathy*. The arousal of sympathy would then be the desired effect of this kind of art, but, as Susan Sontag has signalled, “sympathy,” or its consort, “emotional amnesia” are both present in depictions of harm in regards to the body of the “Other”.²⁴⁰ In such a set-up we as audience experience the works (Sontag discusses photography, but her idea is in this context valid) as though in tandem within the dynamic of emotional saturation or sympathetic allure; finally we settle inside the safety that all this violence is happening to somebody else. Argüello Manresa's conviction that there has been some kind of event is, needless to say, in accord with what it is this investigation is attempting to put forward, but her persistence in the maintenance of

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Sontag, Susan, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Picador, New York, 2003, p.80.

the *othering* procedure makes of Galindo's art nothing more than an opportunity to represent, and not, as is the central claim of this investigation, to *present*:

Since these artworks do not merely report an event, by showing the testimony of the experience of the other they unveil the social, political, subjective and bodily dimensions of the situations depicted, because they show how feminicides are gender crimes that contaminate and affect directly the people living in those social contexts, and how they may affect anyone as long as any female can disappear in the three senses given. Then feeling for the other sympathy by disturbatory artistic means makes possible a recognition of the others vulnerability as well as our own.²⁴¹

Argüello Manresa's text understands that there is a register inside the minds of the audience, and on this point we can agree. But the onus upon disturbance and sympathy make this logic of a dubious nature; this because there is a glaring lack of explanation as to what happens precisely to the subject who has had such a meaningful encounter with a supposed "Other". This happenstance, according to Argüello Manresa, is present within Galindo's performance—yet her account remains bereft concerning a logical explanation as to how this operation might possibly lead to any significant political outcome. It seems that for Argüello Manresa, moral indignation and physical disgust are themselves suffice; together they conjure adequate emotional strength to effect some element of social change.

What Argüello Manresa looks to be getting at is that in the actual performance there is something of a presence, something strange, something obscure, which for her mind closes the distance between a subject and an object, yet not sufficiently that we may begin to discuss a subject encountering another defined subject upon a levelled ground. Returning to Lavery and Bowskill we can see that they have recognized this necessity in the work of Galindo and that is why in their theoretical work they have found it useful to do away with the subject/object dichotomy through their introduction of the *uncanny*.²⁴² It is, they maintain, the subject's sensation of the uncanny, brought about by the direct exposure to the abject, which causes the cancelation of otherness and then sets the subject in the presence of the

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.101.

²⁴² One hundred years ago, Sigmund Freud wrote his paper on 'The Uncanny' (Das Unheimliche). His theory was rooted in everyday experiences and the aesthetics of popular culture, related to what is frightening, repulsive and distressing. See "The Uncanny"; <https://www.freud.org.uk/2019/09/18/the-uncanny/> (01.05.21)

subject, what we have been calling the cancelation of the “Other” in favour of “another”: the subject encounters the subject. This meeting of the “Other” is a significant moment for Lavery and Bowskill and they make of it the locus vis-à-vis the mechanics of Galindo’s sensibleness in regards to politics. As before, they take their lead from Kristeva, whose following remarks upon the uncanny, a central tenet of Freudian analysis, come to represent for Lavery and Bowskill a kind of piloting set of concepts; it is the abject, says Kristeva, that “threatens to destabilise the split between I and Other, inside and outside”.²⁴³ This thought of a collapsing of a distance between the subject and object is inspired by the notion that the “Other” has always existed as part of ourselves (psychologically), as Kristeva notes:

The uncanny would thus be the royal way (but in the sense of the court, not of the king) by means of which Freud introduced the fascinated rejection of the other at the heart of that "ourself," so poised and dense, which precisely no longer exists ever since Freud and shows itself to be a strange land of borders and othernesses ceaselessly constructed and deconstructed.²⁴⁴

Encouraged by this kind of thinking Lavery and Bowskill make an entirely feminist reading of the work of Galindo, and through this same initiative move beyond the confines of a “disturbatory” art as that which functions as root cause of disgust and sympathy (Argüello Manresa), and out towards an art form that is on the borderline of cancelling the subject/object dichotomy. It is the *uncanny* Kristeva will maintain, that prevents us from easily assimilating or rejecting the ‘Other’, and so can facilitate a more equal relationship.²⁴⁵ Through the *abject* the audience of Galindo’s work may have an experience which permits the closing of the gap between subject and subject; this contemplative issue may then lead the exposed subject to decide on becoming involved with the work in a more developed political capacity, as Lavery and Bowskill have noted:

The viewer of Galindo’s work may want to look away and re-establish the boundaries which have been disrupted in the presence of the abject, strange yet familiar ‘Other’, but to do so would be to suppress part of the ‘Self’ and replicate the actions of a society which has often looked away from the problems Galindo’s work addresses. The viewer is thus caught between a desire to not see and the realisation that a response

²⁴³ Kristeva, Julia, op.cit., p.7.

²⁴⁴ Kristeva, Julia, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia, 1991, p.191.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p.192.

is required in order to not be complicit, and it is this difficult position into which he or she is thrust which makes Galindo's work so effective in conveying a political message.²⁴⁶

Now, having made a mini-review of just some of the notions around Galindo's art in respect to feminism, we are still going to have to find that these concepts of a "disturbatory" or "abject" category in art, whilst informative and useful, are by no means all there is to be said on the matter. It is the finding of this research that by shifting the focus away from representation and onto presentation it is possible to discover the evental truths that flow through from the past and on out into the future. It is not the uncanny that cancels the "Other" but an encounter with evental truths, which as we have noted in previous sections, dissolves the falsehood of the "Other" so that we come to see in the situation rather a sameness, that is, that the truth affects *all* subjects in the same way. So, in the logic that we can develop this argument in favour of an evental trace at the root of the work, in this specific case, *Perra*, let us move the focus of the discussion away from these ideas of "shock" and towards what is of much more consequence, that is the historicity.

It is the *place* moreover that is as much a protagonist in the works as the artist herself and this has to be, given the background, an essentially historical deduction. So what is this context, in terms of its form or affect and how might we begin to describe the specifics of Galindo's historicity in relation to femicide? And here we are not discussing the geographical notions of "Latin American" or, any other such identitarian labels, but are instead embarking upon an inquiry which regards the specifics of a detailed historicity.

For the purposes of this section let us continue to concentrate on the period after the signing of the *Peace Accords* (1996)²⁴⁷ in Guatemala (the end of the 36-year armed conflict) through and up to around the dating of the work discussed here in section 4.1 (2005), so the decade that straddles the new millennia. What human rights organizations record, after the signing of the *Peace Accords*, is a transference of viciousness from organized military violence (which had already culminated in genocide) now dissipating into broadly executed civilian murders. Guatemala becomes one of the most violent places on earth and certainly one of the most dangerous in Latin America, particularly for women. The "post conflict"

²⁴⁶ Lavery, Jane, Bowskill, Sarah, op.cit., p.63.

²⁴⁷ For more information on this agreement see: <https://www.un.org/press/en/1996/19961227.sgsm6138.html> (20.10.20)

death rate soars way above those numbers recorded during the “war”, and much of this violence, which has a variety of scale, as well as geographies (although most of the sexual crimes and murders occur in or near to Guatemala City), and extending itself between the public and private spheres, is intended to victimize females. Writing in 2015, Catherine Nolan and Catherine Fraser²⁴⁸ note that:

The reality of both every day and extraordinary violence which permeates Guatemala’s public and private sectors is deeply rooted in the country’s colonial and post-colonial histories [...] The internal armed conflict and resulting genocide, which reached its height between 1978 and 1982, produced a cycle of violence and a systematic tolerance for, and perhaps support of, injustice and impunity²⁴⁹

The overwhelming statistics point directly (and across the board) at the State as sole creator of the situation in Guatemala. This investigation is clear that the term “femicide” as defined in the investigations of Fregoso and Bejarano²⁵⁰ in relation to the observations made in Guatemala is apt to describe the situation: this is a State organized and systematic *subalternization* of women. Victoria Sanford also makes a political claim on the term “femicide”, explaining how it builds upon the term *femicide*, which is insufficient in that it fails to grasp the various threads that feed into the phenomenon. Sanford argues that:

Conceptually, it (femicide) encompasses more than femicide because it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators, but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny. Femicide connotes not only the murder of women by men because they are women, but also indicates state responsibility for these murders whether through the commission of the actual killing, toleration of the perpetrators’ acts of violence, or failure to ensure the safety of its female citizens. In Guatemala, femicide exists because of the absence of state guarantees to protect the rights of women. Impunity, silence and indifference each play a role in femicide.²⁵¹

What we may attempt to establish here is the relationship between Galindo and her experience of the female situation in Guatemala, which, as this text intends to demonstrate,

²⁴⁸ Nolan, Catherine, Fraser, Catherine, *Femicidio: Placing Gendered Violence in Guatemala*, published in *Western Geography*, Vol.21-22, p.10-38, 2015.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁵⁰ Fregoso, Rosa-Linda and Bejarano, Cinthia, *op. cit.*

²⁵¹ Sanford, Victoria, *Femicide in Guatemala, ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, 2008, p.20-21.

is entirely relatable to a universal experience of women and violence. Here the particular functions as referent for the general. This argument will require some validating in the paragraphs to follow. What is clear is that the historicity of the period in relation to art history, once analysed for its production in relation to historiography, is certainly inadequate in its attempts to lump the work of Galindo in with other performance artists such as Linda Montano, Mariana Abramovic, Orlan, or Ana Mendieta. This is, as previously noted, due to her performance of a limit, an aporia, whereby Galindo is implicated personally, yet remains also partially universal—she speaks of violence and political oppression, femicide, in Guatemala—but does not make of herself a referent: her identity is not, one could argue, part of the performance in that she is entirely present. The reason for this distance between herself as identifiable token and herself as universal sign is her strict adherence to a truth which is beyond herself as a signal. Not the elaborately staged events of the “shock” or “disturbatory,” the “spectacle”, the “sympathy seeking” nor the exposure of the “victim/victimizer” dichotomy, nor even the autobiographical “testing” of the female limits; rather in Galindo, we have the *performance* of a truth; we see a simplified engagement with the truth(s) of the situation. Galindo’s work is thus far more than a body art that seeks to unsettle—but forms instead a communication, or class of cipher—, revealing, as Horn has noted, “a starkly coded, cultural and political signifier within a larger system of signs”.²⁵² These signs are, as we have seen throughout Chapter 3, attributable to a system of affect.

Galindo works entirely in conjunction with truth(s) directly connected to event(s) and is guided by patterns of truth statements that reverberate within her work, “*genocide is not acceptable*”, “*femicide is a crime*,” and so on. It is not necessary for Galindo to use any theatrical tricks, to engage in the construction of situations, but merely to think her way, poetically, into the situation at hand—and its attendant truths. There is no “shock” value, no representation of the ‘abject,’ because the situation is suffice in that the proximate injustices need only be channelled. There is then no requirement for mediation beyond the directing of a truth, and this is what makes Galindo’s work stand apart from that of her predecessors. This can be clearly demonstrated in her work *Perra* (Bitch). With *Perra* Galindo takes up the performance motif of the female body given to her by those 1970s predecessors, yet

²⁵² Horn, Maja, *Bodily (Re)Marks: The Performance Art of Regina José Galindo*, Artpulse Magazine, June, 2019.

successfully relocates its violence. In *Perra* there is a direct communication between her work in the tradition of feminist performance and what she is now driven by, the truths of feminicide, moreover, it is the historical truth, evental in nature, that is present within the work. In *Perra* (Bitch), it may be argued, Galindo is making a performance that is the propagation of a truth; the organisation within one World of a truth, a particular truth, marked by a specific historicity, is now rendered demonstrably universal in the process: what has been so in Guatemala is now seen as replicable in Italy, and by the same token in anyplace, anywhere, or anytime.



Perra (Bitch).
Regina José Galindo
PrometeoGallery di Ida Pisani, Milano,
Italy, 2005

www.reginajosegalindo.com

Any discussion of her performance is enriched by a return once again to the nature of a performed truth. Performance is present here in the sense described by Judith Butler; and so we should want to turn to Butler's argument²⁵³ on the performativity of gender to describe a specific type of female gender that is performed within the context of this specific historicity: Guatemala/Italy, 2005. In *Perra*, Galindo is again this aporetic figure, delineating the limits between the performed female figure and her own subjective incongruencies with what is essentially an allotted place in society. The performed figure present in *Perra* is the actual coming into being of a conflict. This idea can be explained by understanding that in *Perra* there is the drawing upon a certain incorporeal symbol (available only as affect, produced simultaneously as immanent and exterior/historical), namely the female victim, more specifically in the context of Guatemala (historical) a female body that has become

²⁵³ Butler's argument on gender as *performed* is of course well known and she develops the idea across numerous titles. For the purposes here I have referred to her essay: *Gender Politics and the Right to Appear*, Cap 1, in *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Harvard University Press, 2015, p.24-65.

(throughout the period) a geographical space of violence and humiliation. Galindo performs this body that is simultaneously generic and specific. For Butler, the gendering of the female role in society takes place prior to the subject's formation within language itself. There is a key element that Butler recognizes that is present in *Perra*: that is the division of the reality "gender is performative" into two roles. These roles give rise, says Butler, to two differing perceptions or possibilities: the first is that we radically select our gender, and the second that we are utterly determined by our gender norms.²⁵⁴ So how does Galindo perform this potentially conflictive area and might it be transformed into a dichotomy specifically relevant to *Perra*?

The overwhelming catalogue of evidence accrued via intensive investigations of femicide in Guatemala indicate unmistakably that there had been and continued to be a systematic devaluation of female gender in Guatemala. What has been noted time and again is, and the following quote is explicit on this point (and here our text can build the case to support Butler's idea of gender performativity as social phenomenon), because:

[...] women in Guatemala represent the centre of the family and the community. This cultural position, however, "provides no actual respect or physical and emotional protection...gender specific exploitation, discrimination, violence and oppression exist in laws, cultural and moral norms and daily behaviour of society".²⁵⁵

What is described in the above quote is the deeply entrenched misogyny that is present at all levels of society and one should argue, within the very language that is adopted to construct that society, including gender. This view of a systematic oppression present in the World is essential to understand in relation to the notion of a performed female presence. As Susan Berger also notes:

[...] symbolic codes sanctioned by the Catholic Church and by Civil laws meant that men should protect and provide for their women and that women, in turn, should obey and serve men. The female body was considered impure and women untrustworthy, necessitating policing of the female body [...] supervised so as not to succumb to sensual pleasures.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p.63.

²⁵⁵ Nolin, Catherine, Fraser, Catherine, op. cit., p.14.

²⁵⁶ Berger, Susan, *Guatemaltecas: The Women's Movement, 1986-2003*, University of Texas, 2006, p.20-21.

This is a patriarchal brutality that is (and this idea is replicable within Butler), at the root of all notions relating to femininity in Guatemala. Barbosa has also noted, among others, that while the State is behind organized misogyny there is an additional self-oppressive strand at the core of Guatemalan society.²⁵⁷ This type of despotic auto-control has been remarked upon in the context of Galindo's poetry (see 3.2); In *Perra*, it is present again in the very performance of herself as a victim (she performs herself as victim, taking possession of her own body as part of an art performance). To this point we shall want to return. To clarify further this idea of auto-subjectification (here the text extends to establish the presence of a performative gendering qua Butler) in the role of female as that which is constructed via gender norms: in this case a patriarchal view of the female as the property of male dominance.²⁵⁸ Of the Guatemalan moment in question, Manuela Camus has noted that:

Women nowadays seem to reproduce even more traditional roles than what one would expect as mothers, wives, friends, and even prostitutes: they are always in service, on call.²⁵⁹

What seems to be the common if tacit agreement within Guatemalan society, and this attitude extends also to those held by women, is that women ought always be answerable to men, and that the victims of male violence are to blame for the brutal way in which they are tortured and murdered. Camus continues to say that: "Women have also been caught in the same scenario of production and reception of violence"²⁶⁰, a fact that formulates itself in the very construction of the female gender inside Guatemala (although as Galindo demonstrates subjects can and do escape this force).

²⁵⁷ Barbosa, Emilia, *Regina José Galindo's Body Talk: Perfroming Femicide and Violence against Women in 279 Golpes*, Latin American Perspectives, Issue 194, Vol. 41, No. 1, January 2014, p.59-71.

²⁵⁸ Nolin, Catherine, Fraser, Catherine, op. cit., p.25

²⁵⁹ Camus, Manuela, *Desclasamiento y violencias en Ciudad de Guatemala*, in López García, Julián, Bastos, Sebastián and Camus, Mauela eds. *Guatemala: Violencias desbordadas*, Universidad de Cordoba, 2009, p.353.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.



Regina José Galindo
Perra (Bitch).
 PrometeoGallery di Ida
 Pisani, Milano,
 Italy, 2005.

www.reginajosegalindo.com

In *Perra* we see Galindo, dressed in the uniform of contemporary art (black), seated alone in the white cell of a contemporary art space, in Italy. She has made herself available to art. Both men and women use the term “bitch” to refer to females who tend to be outspoken or to those women who in some way fail to perform correctly their gender assigned role in the given situation, which is, in the male organized world, to be silent. Here Galindo reactivates the term to underscore the universality of the moment (*bitch* is internationally accepted). This is about her, as a *mestizo* Guatemalan, but it is equally about her as a woman, an internationally acclaimed artist and orchestrator of the presentation, and so on. There are then several levels at which we may begin to engage in the performance, but we should like now to go straight on in for the essentials. So we have been noting above a connection with Butler, and her central theory of gender as performative process. On this topic Butler notes:

When, long ago, I said that gender is performative, that meant that it is a certain kind of enactment, which means that one is not first one’s gender and then one later decides how and when to enact it. The enactment is part of its very ontology, is a way of rethinking the ontological mode of gender, and so it matters how and when and with what consequences that enactment takes place, because all that changes the very gender that one “is”.²⁶¹

Now, Butler has split this gendering performativity into two streams, this is a duality that she will insist formulates the very foundations of any performative, what is essentially first a “choice” and here we must use quotations because the choosing comes late in the process: so we “radically choose our genders”, yet the choice is merely a tarrying of the subject with her condition, which Butler will maintain is encased in language, as she notes:

²⁶¹ Butler, Judith, op. cit., p.61.

For if language acts upon us before we act, and continues acting in every instant in which we act, then we have to think about gender performativity first as “gender assignment”—all those ways in which we are, as it were, called a name, and gendered prior to understanding anything about how gender norms act upon us and shape us, and prior to our capacity to reproduce those norms in ways that we might choose.²⁶²

Butler’s choice of words here sets us up for the succeeding part of her construction, which will entail the acceptance of a second figure, which we might symbolically attach to this epiphanic moment that Butler describes, the realization that there can be a line drawn in the sand; thus we have the figure who *does not* accept the gender normalisation that has been the entire purpose of a societal push towards a communal performance of gender; and this to the extent that the subject is seen to choose to be in this role, and so this is what we have been referring to as the process of performativity in regards to gender. And so in contrast to the first performative type Butler says there is a second and that one cannot exist without the other. This second kind is, unlike the first, capable of agency in the sense that she may cast off the gender norms that have been pressed upon her from the beginning. Butler describes the simultaneity of the situation thus:

So let us assume, then, that performativity describes both the processes of being acted on and the conditions and possibilities for acting, and that we cannot understand its operation without both of these dimensions. That norms act upon us implies that we are susceptible to their action, vulnerable to a certain name-calling from the start. And this registers at a level that is prior to any possibility of volition.²⁶³

So let us look at the first category of the performative (Butler), the gendering of the female as per Butler’s claim upon performativity. Thinking about *Perra*, can we not posit that Galindo is performing herself partially as this subject who sees herself as *victim of oppression* as she is involved in the *objectification* of the female form (a mimesis of the male violence perpetrated upon females)? She takes her own body to the extreme of pain and torture in such a way as to perform a violent act upon herself (this is indeed what women do when they force upon themselves gender roles previously defined by male ideas, the male construction of the

²⁶² Ibid., p.63.

²⁶³ Ibid.

symbolic order). This is the first moment of performativity that we can say Galindo is working with. She therefore performs the violent truth (evental), which is historically linked to gender violence in her own country; one of the truth statements underlying the work comes then from the voice of the oppressor: “all women are bitches,” yet (and this will be further developed below) continues to perform the *universal* female. The second level of Butler’s two-fold interpretation of gender performativity is, however, also present: that she chooses to perform also the role of *she* who would *not* conform to the role of victim. By making of herself a victim (now performed within the context of art) Galindo breaks with the gender role of passive victim assigned to her by a patriarchal system, selecting rather to make of herself a critical voice. This is the conscious confrontation of the status quo. An act, that even as we observe, unfolds and continues to unfold: in other words her subjectivity as female artist is performative and contained within the evidences of this performance. This is clearly the second style of gender performance possible under the notions developed by Butler.²⁶⁴ Indeed, their presence together in Galindo’s performance underlines perfectly Butler’s point of view on the matter, as she notes:

That is why we can, and do, describe the powerful citational force of gender norms as they are instituted and applied by the medical, legal, and psychiatric institutions, and object to the effect they have on the formation and understanding of gender in pathological or criminal terms. And yet, this very domain of susceptibility, this condition of being affected, is also where something queer can happen, where the norm is refused or revised, or where new formulations of gender begin. Precisely because something inadvertent and unexpected can happen in this realm of “being affected”, gender can emerge in ways that break with, or deviate from, mechanical patterns of repetition, resignifying and sometimes quite emphatically breaking those citational chains of gender normativity, making room for new forms of gendered life.²⁶⁵

So, assuming that there has been some kind of short circuit performed in *Perra* in relation to gender; what has been the purpose of this in terms of Galindo’s performance as a whole, and is there a further performativity at the core of the work?

Before getting into this question we should be clear about the historical connections between Galindo’s action (*Perra*) and the realities of what has happened in Guatemala, in so

²⁶⁴ Butler, Judith, op.cit., p.63.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p.64.

doing we seek to develop a clear historical link between evental sequences of the past—and Galindo’s performance—. Part of what has come to form the basis for the creation of an oppressed gender in Guatemala (and now performed by Galindo in Italy) has been the systematic brutalization of the female body. Galindo uses a knife to cut into her own flesh, drawing blood during a somewhat painful objectification of her own body. She pauses for breath during the episode which takes some five minutes before the entire word “Perra” (Bitch) has been inscribed upon her living flesh.

As noted by Nolin and Fraser, in Guatemala (both during the armed conflict and subsequent to it) body destruction, dismemberment, and post-mortem assault²⁶⁶ are part of a planned terrorization of the public.²⁶⁷ There is then a political element to the aggression against women that demonstrates that the motivation is related not only to sexual aggression, but also to power and dominance, to the oppression of the civilian population. Furthermore, there is a sequence or pattern that the perpetrators follow with what seems to be a strictly adhered to set of rules. The woman is first abducted (often in broad daylight in front of eye-witnesses), then sexually assaulted, and as noted by Freddy Peccerelli:

Not only is the woman killed, but her body is revealed to the public by the perpetrator in order to “transmit the message that they have the power”.²⁶⁸

The writing of the word *Perra*, it may be sustained, thus mimics the words etched into the bodies of victims in Guatemala, but we should also want to posit that the writing of “perra” exceeds the boundaries relatable to mimesis. The extent of the gender violence in Guatemala (historic) is in practice far beyond that of the writing of words, with reports of doctors

²⁶⁶ Criminal profilers and forensic analysts believe that post-mortem trauma to the body, and subsequent display or intentional placement of the body where it will be discovered symbolizes intent to make a point beyond the act of killing one person. As Nolin and Fraser note, post-mortem inscriptions and violence were common place alongside pre-death torture and rape: “As crudely revealed in countless media reports and compassionately represented by Portenier (2006) in her documentary film, *Killer’s Paradise*, the visible brutality of their wounds illustrates the violence of the actual incident leading to death (and post-mortem violence as well, since the objective is not only to terrorize the woman, but to terrorize the public). Nolin, Catherine, Fraser, Catherine, op. cit., p.19.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Peccerelli, Freddy, Executive Director, personal communication (FAFG’s work on femicide) Fundacion de antropología forense de Guatemala, Guatemala City, May 5th, 2008.

themselves at the morgue being “shocked by the condition of the bodies”.²⁶⁹ These bodies are often found, as noted by Nolin and Fraser:

In public locations such as street corners, public squares and roadways, where they may be found by strangers and family alike.²⁷⁰

There is then a clear *performative* element to the destruction of the female form in Guatemala. The perpetrators perform, time-after-time, this ceremony of male dominance which is inscribed into the consciousness of the society via the continued repetition of the same pattern. This is a murderous sequence which points to a State policy of impunity in regards to the pursuit of the criminals involved. The objective is to terrorize women and of course the wider public too. An important and central part of the message to be conveyed by these bodies—designed as they are to be found—is about political control and the construction of a patriarchal system of power: women are *subalternized*, so effectively the killers performative role is to create over and again this victimized subject. And control of their gender is part of this overall generic contempt for women which is now practiced directly upon the body, controlling the possibilities of her body both during and subsequent to the assault. As Nolin and Fraser note:

Therefore, the act and illustration of violence on the space or surface of the body is as important to the killer before the victim’s death causing fatal harm as it is in creating a message to the public and inflicting visible terror as was practiced during genocide to silence remaining communities.²⁷¹

The symbolic nature of the word *Perra* becomes more powerful once we begin to absorb those histories that pour into the performative moment created by Galindo in the form of affect. There is a direct line to be drawn from the genocidal crimes of the armed conflict, through the civilian violence of the then contemporary Guatemala and through and into the art gallery itself. There is no doubting the connection between genocide and the murders of

²⁶⁹ Galdos reports that discussions with doctors at the Guatemala City morgue revealed a series of patterns. See: Galdos, G. 2009, Film: *Mourning their Daughters*, Al Jazeera English, 17th June, 22 min. at: <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/witness/2007/06/2008525184540195870.html>

And: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UULMvFjtZM> (20.10.20)

²⁷⁰ Nolin, Catherine, Fraser, Catherine, op. cit., p.19.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

women within Guatemala city and the continued campaign of violence against the female corporality, as Nolin and Fraser make clear:

The bodies carry marks similar to those seen during the genocide: hands are tied, defensive cuts and multiple stab wounds are evident, morgue records of these recently killed women bear disturbingly similar descriptions to those of women killed during the armed conflict.²⁷²

So if marking the bodies post-mortem²⁷³ has been historically performative in the sense that the killers use their victims' body to send a message—thereby reproducing over and over the desired effect: the domination of women as systematic political policy—then what is Galindo doing exactly when she writes the word “perra” upon her leg with a knife? The *performativity* of the moment, taking into account what Butler has said about gender performance, constructs a specific conflict between the presence of the female victim and the presence of the female critic (artist). This conflict must be resolved not by Galindo herself, but rather by the audience who participate in the action by actively deciphering the coded message.



Regina José Galindo,
Perra (Bitch).
PrometeoGallery di Ida Pisani, Milano,
Italy, 2005.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com>

Upon these grounds can we not suggest that this notion of *presence* is of central importance? In performance art there are present simultaneously two vital elements and it is these essential features, the *performer* of performativity and the audience, a fertile correlation that make of performance art the logical device of Galindo's intent. Diana Taylor has recently argued for

²⁷² Ibid., p.21.

²⁷³ See note 39.

performance to be read as that form which is most effective in the conveyance of a truth: that to be *present* is to be simultaneously *singular* and *plural*, as she notes:

Present/e, simultaneously singular and plural in both languages, conveys the ontological condition that one is/we are never fully present alone, and plurality always entails singularity. This “I” is part of a “we,” or various “we’s”, inextricable from them, yet remembering, again, as Jean-Luc-Nancy makes clear, that we are *with*, yet separate.²⁷⁴

There is then in the performance a convened presence, the performance artist, with the help of the curator, has invited the audience to experience something. One might further contend that this invitation itself has a context which may be described in part as belonging to a World that the performance is organized to confront—and to open up; because, as Gomez-Peña has noted, performance art offers:

A conceptual ‘territory’ with fluctuating weather and borders, a place where contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox are not only tolerated but encouraged...²⁷⁵

Gomez-Peña suggests that there exists an almost unstated understanding between the performance artist and her audience—as to the possibilities for the communication. One of these possibilities is of course related to the reception of the communication, the wherewithal of the audience to try to understand the message which is conveyed in the structures they encounter. In *Perra*, the audience is guided toward a specific self-reflection which is related to their own experience of their body in space and time, which is now shared directly, *face-to-face*, so to speak with the performer. In this way new knowledge is created, or, if you prefer, a relationship of equality is attained, so that the act of female degradation is now experienced as the *same* in Italy as it is in Guatemala. For the moment, the question remains as to how this performed situation might be a communication of a truth in regards to the audience reception and perception of the entire moment produced by Galindo within her performance.

²⁷⁴ Taylor, Diana, *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence*, Duke, London, 2020, p.10.

²⁷⁵ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Ethno-Techno: Writings On Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy*, ed. Elaine Peña, Routledge, London, 2005, p.22.

Let us take as a starting point the inscription of the actual word, “perra” on the leg of Galindo—by herself. Galindo gives herself the moniker “perra” in this action which is the accomplishment of performing herself then as a specific kind of female body, victimizing herself, yet also questioning this victimization process as part of the procedure. There is then a brutal reality on display for the audience of the work which formulates an immediate connection, but what this tension is made up of is initially unclear. This can be better explained, however, through the adoption of a conceptual construction that Taylor has referred to as ¡Presente! According to Taylor, ¡Presente! is a shared state of mind whereupon subjects mingle with subjects and come to realize that they are present in a space together and that this is the only manner by which being may properly be experienced. She notes:

¡Presente!, with and without exclamation marks, depends on context. As much an act, a word, and an attitude, ¡presente! can be understood as a war cry in the face of nullification; an act of solidarity as in responding, showing up, and standing with; a commitment to witnessing; a joyous accompaniment; present among, with, and to, walking and talking with others; an ontological and epistemic reflection on presence and subjectivity as process; an ongoing becoming as opposed to a static being, as participatory and relational, founded on mutual recognition; a showing or display before others; a militant attitude, gesture, or declaration of presence; the “ethical imperative,” as Gayatri Spivak calls it, to stand up to and speak against injustice.²⁷⁶

The context for Taylor, like Badiou, comes into contention as a singularity within which subjectivity is very much part of a process. If we understand the performance at face value, taking into account the *performativity* of words and language as described by Butler—we can reasonably assume that by writing “perra” upon her leg, Galindo has some sort of message to translate to us in relation to the meaning of this word. And what this meaning is, one could argue, is both historic, as in related to the notion of the performed female presence as historical construct, and present, because it has become part of a performance art piece that now demands a presence; and so we must insist that this is not at this point representation but presentation and furthermore that this is productive in that the dialectical relation between the past and the present spring forth as part of this ¡Presente!.

²⁷⁶ Taylor, Diana, *op.cit.*, p.4.

¡Presente! enacts not just an attitude and a defiant stance but also a way of knowing and being in the world that asks us to rethink and unlearn some of the limitations imposed by Western thought and education. Our epistemic, political, and economic institutions were built on the backs of the conquered, the enslaved, the indebted, and the excluded, and not simply because black slaves and indigenous peons built the universities in the Americas that would deny them entrance. The colonialist project coproduced systems of rational thought in which the isolated, individuated subject came into being as a product of his own self-recognition, turning all else into an object of knowledge to be mastered and controlled.²⁷⁷

¡Presente! Is the concept that best describes what occurs to the subject during the performance of “Perra”, because it includes the plurality of the truth (Badiou tells us that every singularity is a multiplicity). And the product of the dialectical procedure occurs as the result of this tarrying of the interlocutor with all of this information that pours out through him or her and yet whilst the evental trace is historical in that it comes from the past it has a clear destination that is in the yet-to-come of the present moment which is filled with the affect of that which is surely part of the present, part of ¡Presente!; this is the decision by the interlocutor to be faithful to what it is they now think and feel as a direct result of this encounter. Accordingly this ¡Presente! is part of what the observer of Perra participates in and shares with those elements of affect that spill in from the past and pour in from the future. So once the interlocutor has learned how to interact with this type of work (and this might occur in an instant) he or she is likely to imbibe every sight, feeling, sensation, place and emotion that emanates from the work and so here is the certainty of the matter—that they are moved by the presence of truth(s) towards the acceptance of this truth and are transformed—into subjects of that truth. They must then decide what it is that is to be done with this truth, and once they come to understand themselves as one subject, as an equal to the subject presented, as part of a multitude, they are obliged to take the ethical decision that is in accordance with this truth. Galindo is therefore not a representation (female/victim/artist/) but is rather involved in a presentation of a process which occurs in the same historical space, she is presenting the very process described by Butler, the confrontation of the performed gender, the “gender assignment”, what Butler describes as “all those ways in which we are, as it were, called a name” is now seen, and through the performance, the symbol for all of

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p.24.

the historic gendering that has been normalized is accrued, inside this one word, the name, “Perra”, and so it is described and a new political possibility is presented as a result.

So we have spoken already about the presence of Butler’s two forms of gender performativity, but in the case of Perra we should want to go beyond this duality and towards a more complete idea of the truth, which is that it is a plurality, and this plurality is captured by Taylor in her concept !Presente;. And it is productive in that the dialectical relation between the past and the present occurs as part of this !Presente;, and so we have as part of a communal experience the necessity to make a decision. Once again what Galindo is doing is she is opening the channels through which elements of truths may reformulate themselves in the performative moment. “Perra” is the word which incapsulates all of the possibilities that are indeed present in the World as affect; the materialization of affect (now reduced to a bloody inscription) which we have been saying is synonymous with the extension of evental trace.

This possibility is present inside the work and is, one may decide, part of the work’s meaning in terms of the affect which is delivered to the moment. A subject, we as the audience should conclude, must have some power external to herself that forces her hand, yet she has the agency to deal with this in new ways according to her own decisions.

The space opened up then by the problematization of the written word—and Galindo’s right to make such a claim upon herself—is indeed the creation of an aporia. The presence now of a performed aporia is productive to the extent that the viewer must move in order to understand the meaning the word conveys in its true essence: an unbearable limit is accomplished. Ethically the subject (Galindo) has opened a direct opportunity for the viewer (this is emancipative): to produce something new in tandem with the specific condition, that is to agree with the ethical position which comes from the *truth* of the situation and is communicated now in the truth statement: “the subalternization of women is wrong”. This is not due to any shock value or sympathy, but rather, to the presence of Galindo’s pseudo crime, for the duration of the performance—indistinguishable from those historical predecessors: she performs herself as victim and perpetrator, yet does so in such a way as to force the observers to complete the meaning of the work within themselves (as immanent possibility).

Effectively and for the duration of the performance a conceptual lasso is created (¡Presente!), which pulls into its grip the elements captured by history and the powers revealed by an eventual truth. The now, then, and furthermore, the *to come* of the moment are performed. This last element I will develop in later sections, but for the moment I would like to demonstrate how the performance of Galindo's in this particular work is in itself a dialectical proposition because it creates the third element which is the desire to ethically adhere to the communication of the truth. This is the cancelation of the "Other" and the realisation of (an)other that occurs within the audience of the work—and, we should want to claim, is the meaning of the performance. Because all women are *potentially* subaltern (and we remember that this performance is conducted in Italy) then there is a universal truth present that is enlivened in the minds of the audience through their tarrying with the truthful element of the performance. As we know, the truth of an historical eventual sequence has the ability to create traces within the present moment and this Galindo achieves within her action as a performative act. By writing the word "perra" upon her leg she makes the announcement that the truth of the statement, which in its status as an element of eventual trace, functions as a singularity, and forms thus a singular demand, that is that truth belongs to us all equally. As subject of a truth Galindo is then its militant operative who has the obligation to communicate an eventual truth that now moves over and above the historical temporality to encompass—in one singular moment—the entirety of all possibilities related to it (truth): that it may establish a new present as part of a procedure that assumes its completion in the future. As Badiou has noted:

Truth is a diagonal relative to every communitarian subset; it neither claims authority from, nor (this is obviously the most delicate point) constitutes any identity. It is offered to all, or addressed to everyone, without a condition of belonging being able to limit this offer or this address.²⁷⁸

In *Perra*, Galindo creates the possibility for an ethical process. Ethics, as is the understanding of this text (a view described in detail in section 3.4), does not exist beyond the very moment in which it occurs. Ethics is thus *performatively* evoked in the action as the observer must, given the combinations of what they experience as observer of the action, design themselves along the lines of an extension to the performativity (they become subjects of a truth); so the

²⁷⁸Badiou, Alain, *Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism*, Trans. Ray Brassier, Stanford, 2003, p.14.

truth extends *performatively* and the truth of the evental sequence of feminicide is now channelled out and toward the disruption of the present; this is the resurrection of evental truth(s) in the now for the purposes of radical interruption, and for the purposes of social change, a social change which is assumed to have been achieved in the yet-to-come. Galindo formulates herself as a consequence of event, the ongoing token of truth that survives the original event in order to organize its meaning, to prepare, between one event and the next; this does not depend upon identity, it is an affirmative and universal negation of the present, a “no” in favour of an alternative possibility for both the present (which is entirely unsettled by this appearance of the truth) and the future (because the present insists via this truth on the already having occurred *in the future* the consequences of this truth, (in the understanding of this paper: *justice*). Until justice is achieved, Galindo must perform herself as in limbo: she is the evental subject who appears not as emancipation, but as promise of its possibility to come.

This is the operation at the root of the performance *Perra*, since to attempt to understand the situation becomes a profoundly egalitarian procedure, this because such an inquiry has to come from the point of view that all elements of the situation are equal; all subjects who grasp for knowledge do so from the same standpoint of discovery: there is no difference in the position of the seeker in regards to each specific singular situation; universality is thus the guarantee at the instigation point of each and every investigation into a truth. Badiou has made this very clear, as he notes in relation to ethics:

It is our capacity for truth – our capacity to be that ‘same’ that a truth convokes to its own ‘sameness’ [...] The only genuine ethics is of truths in the plural – or, more precisely, the only ethics is of processes of truth, of the labour that brings some truths into the world.²⁷⁹

Galindo in the performing of an evental truth (related to subalternization of women or the normalization of gender violence) is then performing herself as the operator of a singular universality, indicating in her appearance of herself as “perra”, that an illegality has occurred (evental sequence) and that the knowledge produced by this truth has a bearing or consequence for all: she continues to construct then *feminicide* as a truth of a situation that is

²⁷⁹ Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Trans. Peter Hallward, Verso, 2012, p. 27-28.

present, not that which is part of the experience of “Other” but rather, as part of a performative temporality that incorporates *all* those who bear witness to it.

3.2 The Event Site: Identity and Public Space

Thus far we have been focusing upon areas of Regina José Galindo’s performance work with a view to making connections between her output and that of truths which may be said to have originated in an event. This text now continues to develop this theme via the contemplation of Galindo’s performance of 1999: *Le voy a gritar al viento*²⁸⁰ (I’m Going to Shout it to the Wind) and its specific *public space*. Not all of Galindo’s performances occur in public to the extent that the space itself forms part of the work’s meaning, however, this is most certainly the case when we consider, *Le voy a gritar al viento*, a performance in the centre of Guatemala City. Through analysing this work it can be demonstrated that there are evental truth(s) that continue to impress themselves upon the present, and furthermore, in this particular instance Galindo has been able to append public space, to draw the social, historical and political relevance of the architecture into the meaning of the work. We have seen how Galindo has moulded herself into a subject of truth (Badiou) and how her continued efforts set out to maintain specific truths, that they may form the grounds for new political knowledge. We have also noted that Galindo achieves this in many cases by transforming herself into an aporia. Galindo formulates herself as the aporetic limit (what this limit consists off—in this particular instance—is described below), and so the formerly inconceivable is forced as product of the positive dialectical relation she constructs. This relation—composed of herself and her audience—is productive because the space to experience an aporia is formed. But what are the precise elements of this limit, and can they be related to *public space*; moreover, how might this conjunction serve as an apparatus of truth, and why is performance so effective in comparison to other art forms, say poetry alone? The answer to these questions comes if we consider the form of the work and its particular public space: *performance* appropriately juxtaposed with public space can materialize itself as a powerful communicator of truth(s), overcoming in the process some of the more important problems relating to the communication of truths.

²⁸⁰ <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/lo-voy-a-gritar-al-viento-2/>

The obstacles that hinder the successful communication of truth(s) are manifold, and are implicated here as motivation for Galindo's turn from poetry—as its own form—to its inclusion as part of a broader performative arrangement—as seen in *Le voy a gritar al viento*. Jacques Rancière has identified melancholy²⁸¹ as one major impediment for any politically charged artist. This is a gloominess that feeds on its own impotence, whereby criticism is itself absorbed into the system it seeks to critic. Rancière says the key to the communication conundrum is action. And so it is that emancipation begins at that point where the opposition between viewing and acting is challenged. All of this takes place in language and language belongs (the system of saying, seeing and doing) to the structure of domination and subjection. As Rancière notes, emancipation begins:

[...]When we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poems with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way[...]²⁸²

Rancière describes clearly an emancipative process that belongs to performance—but in order to see how this mechanism is driven we need to go in closer. There exists it seems a force that compels the viewer to “observe, select, compare, interpret.” But is it not the experience of *aporia* itself that brings the subject(s) to the common conclusion that action is mandatory? Paradoxically, the lack of a path necessitates an all the more invested search for one. Such is the weight of this sensation of limit, what we are naming *aporia*, that we as interlocutors are obliged to shift our perspective. Galindo “refashions” reality (what is meant by *reality* is discussed below) in her performance to the extent that we share in the vision of the *aporia*—and by this it is meant that there is an experience of a *non-traversal*. It is what Derrida has identified as the “experience” of *aporia*, (and this point has also been made by Bambach):²⁸³

²⁸¹ Rancière, Jacques, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso, 2011, p.33.

²⁸² Ibid., p.13.

²⁸³ Bambach, Charles, *Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice: Hölderlin-Heidegger-Celan*, Suny Press, 2013, p. 180.

As its name indicates, an experience is a traversal, something that traverses and travels toward a destination for which it finds passage. The experience finds its way, its passage, it is possible. Yet in this sense, there can not be a full experience of aporia, that is something that does not allow passage. Aporia is a non-path.²⁸⁴

So if, as is our claim, Galindo is performing an aporia, what are the elements we need consider in order to go beyond the problem that she performs: the “non-path,” and what does this performed limit consist of? Let us first begin with Galindo herself. The first site then for Galindo is a place of action (body). As Garbayo Maeztu notes, in *Le voy a gritar al viento*, Galindo is at once appropriating both public space and language.²⁸⁵ She performs, hovering high above the public, reading her poems, and tearing away the pages. This action of reading implicates the viewer who is obliged to take his or her own action—which is to listen—or to try and listen, yet they encounter only the sensation of aporia, the physical aspect of this limit is performed by the incommunicability of her words, now drowned out by the city sounds. In order to complete the work, to receive the full communication, passer-bys were driven by their curiosity to pick up and read the poetry that Galindo had thrown to the air.

What they were able to perceive above their heads was a very particular body in a very particular moment in time. An indigenous looking woman is dressed in an angelic bridal dress. Further elements of aporia are wide-open as this is the appearance of that which, after all, ought not to appear: self-aware “otherness”(now re-appropriated), the female body, the indigenous body. The colonial history of Guatemala is present in the architectural surroundings, and like an angelic figure, high up in the vaults of a Catholic church, Galindo’s figure bears down on the viewer. The height underscores the fragility of the body, for if she were to fall she would surely be broken. Galindo’s incorporation of architecture is striking for this very positioning of herself so high up—her figure interacting with the space of the arch as though part of the original design.

The Post Office Building in Guatemala City was constructed during the modern period (finished in 1940) and has evident neo-colonial leanings, most obviously in the construction of the arch—which is a direct copy of the *Arco de Santa Catalina*, built in the 17th Century as part of the colonial convent school in Antigua, Guatemala. Doubtless every

²⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques, *Acts of Religion*, Routledge, New York, 2002, p.244.

²⁸⁵ Garbayo Maeztu, Maite, op. cit., p.120.

city has its own socio-political account to relate, and that public memory is impregnated into each and every brick and stone is a fact of daily life; but how much can we truly know about our environment and how much of it is, in reality, merely ideology? The place here in Galindo's work is of paramount importance to the meaning of the performance as all life that has appeared has done so in the shadow of a very specific set of architectures which continually participate in the ideological construction of the local patterns of thought. One might say *local* yet there happen too global elements which equally act upon the subjectivity of the public as they move about in public space. According to Hannah Arendt all identity is collected together from its dispersed and fragmented state by the action of presence within a space. Only then can the individualized experience of the one be given over to the being in contact with each other in unity and in reality.²⁸⁶ Arendt also describes the kind of place where the public may come together in such a way and this is something that is constructed and has a material duration and stability in historical terms.²⁸⁷ This is a space of dialogue, of the singular becoming plural, all of which occurs in public places and their concomitant signals and meanings which participate in the possible utterances made within those same boundaries: all of the history and power related to each individual temporality take on a meaning; this is finally the language each building has (in some sense) which conjoins now to formulate its own performative language. According to Victor Neves, this space is also a place of action, as he notes (author translation):

The public space is a space of action, a locus of experience, of the experience of the individual with his immediate environment and with others (men), taking identity as a unifying factor, mobilizing for collective action.²⁸⁸

Galindo's action clearly sets out then to problematize the architectural language of the Post Office Building in Guatemala. This is achieved by transforming the public space itself via the incongruence of her own physical presence. The performance of Galindo therefore adjuncts the performative language of the building in order to present in public space an

²⁸⁶ See: Villa, D.R. *Arendt and Heidegger, The Fate of the Political*, Princeton, New Jersey, p.90.

²⁸⁷ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition, Chicago, 1998.

²⁸⁸ Neves, Victor, *Los Espacios Públicos: Vacíos con identidad. Lugares con poética*, published in: *Identidad y Espacio Público: Ampliando Ámbitos y Prácticas*, Diego Sánchez González, Luis Ángel Domínguez Moreno (coords), Gedisa/Biblioteca Iberoamericana de pensamiento, Barcelona 2014, p. 252.

alternative set of symbolic messaging. If we understand what Neves has said above correctly, the building itself presents the moment with a very specific set of experience in terms of the individual and his or her experience in public. The place then is not at all passive, but rather performative; the subtext of this architecture is to buttress a specific ideology in respect to the socio-political—setting the tone for the kind of social relations that may occur; as Neves continues (author translation):

But also of place, that is, territory with spatial significance, of what we designate as the identity of that place, something that is concentrated in a central, cultural, symbolic nucleus and that in some cases is rooted in memories and in other cases it assimilates new meanings induced by the intervention of the architecture. In that type of sequence the meanings become poetic.²⁸⁹

What is poetic for Neves is for Galindo part of the communication she is attempting to make, in public, while adapting herself to the language of the architecture at hand. The action she enacts is performative in that it assimilates the language of architecture in order to reposition its signs in relation to its referents. This means that Galindo effectively calls into question those authorities who would draw their power in part from their connection to what is an essentially unjust sequence of events; this is colonialism, which is present in the architecture, which has not included any elements of what is for Galindo truly Guatemala, no commemoration of the violence and destruction which has been part of the experience. Finally the space has been commandeered in her performance which seeks to penetrate beyond the ideology of the public space and to induce, as Neves notes above, the kind of intervention that may in essence lead to a productive outcome for the procedure (social change). Public space is that which binds us together and which makes communication possible, that makes the acceptance of specific identities possible. As Neves notes (my translation):

The public space, and later, the general set of urban structures, are a unifying element - both territorial and functional, as well as social: public spaces found and consolidate social ties (which are in fact often stages of various manifestations), they individualize themselves as frames of identity in relation to the city, and denote a symbolism (political and cultural) that welcomes users from various social groups. Undoubtedly, they are classified as qualifying elements of the

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

community, both in material terms (urban planning, physical occupation), as well as in intangible terms (historical, cultural, social).²⁹⁰

Should we accept these remarks as astute observation, describing an inner-city experience (modernity), we must also accept Galindo's intervention to be of the utmost importance—because in her performance she problematizes the very nature of how elements such as those described by Neves have come to be normalized within her specific socio-political milieu. The situation has become so ingrained in the social language of the place (in relation to the architecture) that she has found it necessary to posit an entirely new physical and therefore socio-political relationship to the building in question. The “frame of identity” is therefore shattered and a new contingent space now replaces the former smoothness of the ideological (colonial/neo-colonial) language transmitted by the building. What Galindo wants to achieve is the questioning of the socio-physical identity of the city with respect to this specific site—but also by extension other similar architectural sites. It is clear that this form of criticism on the part of Galindo seeks to intervene directly upon the site, changing the meaning in a very public way; she therefore succeeds to underscore the importance of marking these buildings as in fact performatives; they are part of the ideological structure that continues to generate the conditions for an unjust social system in her country.

The public interpretation of the meanings for these buildings in relation to colonialism and the subsequent barbarism carried out within the spaces, makes this an important place for us to contemplate the nature of her intervention, which functions via a relation to eventual truth(s) that belong to the situation; finally these elements conjoin to drive the particular work, *Le voy a gritar al viento*. The reality of the situation is that buildings in their ability to communicate, may participate in the *performance* of a society in relation to customs, habits, tastes, decisions, and furthermore—readings of history; what has been important in history and what has not. In order to make inroads into the accepted narrative Galindo has chosen to place herself in front of the architecture, therefore opening the question as to what exactly does this woman, her background in relation to the historical conditions, and the things she is *saying*, have to do with the building's language? Surely a new language has been performed as a result of this direct intervention into a performative communication. There is

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

a clear connection between the creation of the social subject and his or her interaction with particular public spaces. That is why Galindo has chosen to hang herself in front of the architecture, functioning as a direct interruption, putting herself in-between the ideology of the buildings and the normalisation of this background; what has been merely contextual is now drawn into the foreground by Galindo's presence. Only by posing an alternative experience of the space through her precarious physical manifestation does Galindo perform this interruption to the smooth surface of ideology. The phenomenon we regard as *intersubjectivity* (the intersubjective projection of identity) occurs under the auspices of architecture, moreover these buildings shape the possibilities for that which comes to pass. It is living with buildings in public spaces together which permits a particular public space to again become persuasive, to energize in some sense the reassessment of memory and cultural identity—as far as it pertains to a specific site. These spaces which are public in essence, take on the role of central protagonist—and must therefore be considered part of a communication that speaks in the performative sense.²⁹¹



Regina José Galindo,
Lo voy a gritar al viento,
1999, Guatemala City.

<https://www.reginajosegalindo.com>

For the performance *Lo voy a gritar al viento*, Galindo makes of herself a precarious presence, her figure presses into view the morality of a shared public space, an incongruity

²⁹¹ Rivera Herrera, Nora Livia, Ledezma Elizond, Maria Teresa, *La ciudad como valor e identidad*, published in: *Identidad y Espacio Publico: Ampliando Ámbitos y Prácticas*, Diego Sánchez González, Luis Ángel Domínguez Moreno (coords), Gedisa/Biblioteca Iberoamericana de pensamiento, Barcelona 2014, p. 81.

that seeks to demonstrate—in no uncertain terms—the kind of voices that are normally heard, and the kind of faces that are normally publicly permitted. Galindo creates a direct rupturing of the normalized public space, while at the same time she performs a new political potential: the transforming of her own body into a socio-political public space. What is conventionally venerated in such public spaces is thus inverted (here we are referring to State sanctioned activities); instead, Galindo’s performance underscores: (post)colonialism and those recognizable consorts: silence (the words which are spoken are in reality inaudible—thus their inaudibility performs the very absence of voice), violence (State), female domination, indigenous degradation and dispossession. Her body, in full view, hanging from the colonial arch; this diminutive Guatemalan woman, who speaks loudly (via an amplification system) of guilt and shame—that those sovereign/hegemonic powers would rather have remained obscured. This is then a public and historical space, and this action which occurs in the fullness of public view, is duly seen, heard and the artistical remnants (photography/videos/poems) now archived as historiography. This, we ought also recognize, is a *reality*, and as such is essentially *public*. Hannah Arendt provides a key definition for that which is *public*. Firstly, she says, the public is a space where appearance occurs, and things can be seen and heard by others and by ourselves. This she says is what constitutes reality:

Since our feeling for reality depends entirely upon appearance and therefore upon the existence of a public realm into which things can appear out of the darkness of sheltered existence...²⁹²

Secondly, the public is the world. Arendt understands this world not as the physical space in which we live, *nature* for want of a better term, but instead a conceptual shared reality, a common idea in which our lives begin and end. This is a world that “relates and separates men” at the same time.²⁹³ So how can Galindo’s performance communicate a truth within this world?

Primarily then let us return again to the body—what precisely is this body doing in the action in question? It is an action of some considerable corporality, she hangs there, suspended, unable to move, a temporary point of focus which interrupts the smoothness of

²⁹² Arendt, *Hannah The Human Condition*, Chicago, 1958, p.51.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.52

the architecture, her body, although slight, nonetheless imposes itself upon the imagination of the viewer, momentarily: above all, literally, her body is now decontextualized, and remains, dangling in the region of spectacle, and so it is predominantly her physical presence which engages us. If we see where she is hung, under the arch, it is exactly above a passage, where persons may normally traverse from here to there; Galindo is therefore blocking this leeway by making her presence impossible to ignore. This presence demands to be interpreted, to be engaged with by the public below. This figure, now through the juxtaposition of herself and her elevated physical location, high up inside the neo-colonial vault, claim authority, prising it away from the background, forming now a new foreground, which is full of political significance—the true meaning of the performance—. So what does it mean, politically, to be present here in this place and at this particular time?

Firstly we must note that to be present in the public sphere is to be at once part of one's own singularity yet to form part of a plural. There is an "I" and there is a "we", a concept which has been extensively defined by Jean-Luc Nancy in his work *Being Singular Plural*.²⁹⁴ Galindo's presence demands this contact and her being there then necessarily makes of the space a political space because to contemplate her presence is to be drawn into the undertaking of a political act. Galindo appears then in that space that Arendt has referred to as the "space of appearance", she is present in the location, *in public*, where "the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together...[whose] true space lies between people living together for this purpose".²⁹⁵ But how can they live together after the atrocities of what has happened in Guatemala, and those acts of violence that continue to occur? Galindo's presence raises these questions and it is upon these grounds that we may refer to her performance as *aporia*. So what we have been saying about *aporia* is that Galindo's performance is *performative* in that it presents a specific moment in a procedure which has developed between herself and the public (interlocutors), together they reach the limit; simultaneously singular (a unique performance) and plural (the uniqueness of the performance is wholly reliant upon a plurality), in other words what is communicated to the public will decide if the performative intention has been completed. There are two ways by which we can interpret Galindo's performance in terms of success, and therefore of value as

²⁹⁴ Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Being singular Plural*, Stanford, 1996.

²⁹⁵ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, 2nd Ed, Chicago 1998 (1958), p.198.

art (assuming that art has an element of social change as immanent possibility). So what is it exactly that is *presented* to us in *Lo voy a gritar al viento*?

Firstly, and here we return to Butler (see 4.1), there is the idea that Galindo has been the receptor of a *performative* situation: that being the oppressive State apparatus that has deemed her, and persons like her surplus to requirements (this has been the performative naming, as per gender/victim/indigenous and so on); Galindo says “no” to all that, she performs a presence not at all desired by power; her performance is thus a direct counter performance, the first of two decisions to form the word “no” as a performative act—no to the *status quo*, for as we are aware the current situation is maintained via violent State sponsored implementations of aggression (derivatives of genocide). So the first rejection is directed to the oppressive State. Secondly she is through her manifestation creating an additional performative act; that her presence generates a sincere *no* in the form of her body, in the form of her words, even as they fall from her mouth unheard as they do; in this second moment Galindo rejects the narrative that would make of her a victim, the wholesale rejection of “otherness”. In both cases we should want to apply the same conceptual tool in our reading of the performance; thus it is apt to refer to what Taylor has termed “animatives”.²⁹⁶ *Animatives*, Taylor says, are communicative acts which make use of the physical body in order to performatively reject a set of normative and overarching messages (performatives) regarding the construction of subjectivity.²⁹⁷ She notes that:

Animatives, as I define them, are embodied, communicative acts that refuse the performative utterance that tries to interpellate and frame them. Animatives, thus, are necessarily relational and responsive. Taking a knee [during the national anthem] and looking out the window [when the teacher speaks] only enact refusal to within their specific contexts, the codes within which they function. Their efficacy relies on the extent to which they can upend or derail the performative utterance through expressive and affective body-to-body transmission.²⁹⁸

The interpellation of Galindo’s body within this public space makes for the rejection first of the performative organized by the State (present here in affect). The production of identity

²⁹⁶ Taylor, Diana, *¡Presente!* Duke, 2020, p.1-44.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.48.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

as per the State is very much present in the minds of those onlookers who must steer their eyeline upwards towards this strange and unwieldy presence that has arranged itself high above and beyond reach, here where she cannot be touched, nor heard (not without amplification). This physical distancing is clearly by design, and relates to a second refutation; and so our reason conveys now not to the first rejection, the dismissal of a performed oppression, but rather this second repudiation which occurs simultaneously and, like the first, takes on the active role of that which is performative (the rejection of a prior performativity in regards to the subject), or to use Taylor's new term: *animative* (in the positive sense). To be clear then the performance is the appearance of two animative actions that occur concurrently: in the first instance, affect (see 3.1 for a discussion of affect) is drawn upon to generate a sufficient force of communication and emotional connexion. In this vein those same onlookers now "take action" as they are involved intellectually in the deciphering of the symbolic content of the communication; in this instant we can understand animatives as: "...part movement, as in animation, part identity, being, soul, or life, as in the Latin anima."²⁹⁹ The term captures the fundamental movement from affect to material presence; to be *present* then (in this specific case) can be interpreted as an act of a specific kind, because as Taylor notes:

Animatives, however, refer specifically to acts that convey affect. In other words, we know affect through acts (animatives, gestures) and not the other way around. Animatives, as acts, are key to political life. But affect, clearly, goads action.³⁰⁰

What is clear is that the performance takes place in public space and if we are to take at face value the first animative rejection observable within the work then we can start to imagine the work as being entirely related to this notion of the victim; the victim of State oppression. In this reading then Galindo appears in public space as a kind of display, and of course we can be forgiven in viewing all of this as a *representation* that attempts to stand up to injustice and to speak out for those whose voice has been obliterated, the "Other" as it has come to be known. Taylor refers to this kind of presence as one which:

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.4.

[...]always engages more than one. Sometimes it expresses political movement, sometimes being together, walking down the street or celebrating and enacting our response, position, and attitude in our encounter with others, even when the other has been disappeared, or hides its face.³⁰¹

So what is it we should know about this apparent otherness—the victim? The sense of the “Other” is clearly part of what makes this performance so dynamic, so *animative* in enabling Galindo to do away with a perceptible oppression (in itself an emancipatory act); and yet can we not go further still in the acknowledgement of this particular performance, recognizing instead the essential example of what we may now refer to as *animative* art? As art historical documentation shows, the work clearly responds to the widely held notion of “otherness” that was beginning to be vigorously debated at the time of the work’s conception—an idea that continues to be important to debates regarding postcolonialism. It is therefore worthwhile going into some detail on the topic of “otherness” that forms part of Galindo’s emancipative and animative drive (because it is rejected inside the work).

What is the general argument provided in regards to public space as something controlled by hegemony? What does it mean to appear in such a moment, or, as is the case of Galindo, to embody? José Luis Barrios has noted the existence of a legal situation whereby a certain life has been annulled, deemed unworthy;³⁰² a curtain has been drawn across it. This is a bare life,³⁰³ separated, and now clandestine—in that it can never be represented under the current conditions of domination (sovereign/hegemonic power). What Galindo achieves for this invisible and unnameable existence, one could claim, is visibility; to appear where there ought not be appearance. These are a plurality without representation; it is what Barrios refers to as a “hiatus”.³⁰⁴ These (non) territories are not recognized by the legal system, and so exist only as exclusion zones where the value of human life has been exiled from the reality of existence in time and space. Helena Chávez Mac Gregor, taking her lead from Agamben, refers to these spaces as states of exception, where the extension of the law has

³⁰¹ Taylor, Diana, *op.cit.*, p.4.

³⁰² See: Barrios, José Luis, *El Clandestino: ley, hiato y bando*, in *El intruso: política y exclusión. Tres reflexiones en torno a la clandestinidad, Las lecturas de silencio*, Ibero 2015, p.57-83.

³⁰³ According to Agamben, bare life: “remains included in politics in the form of exception, that is, something that is included solely through an exclusion.” See: Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford, 1998, p. 11.

³⁰⁴ Barrios, José Luis, *op. cit.*

been suspended, and marks a limit in the acceptable judicial order. Moreover, the clandestine functions to formulate that which is readable as inside/outside; it is those abandoned areas—where right to life does not exist; spaces outside the realms of sovereign power, that even so, function to trace a community.³⁰⁵

So these spaces are where there is no possible representation, and yet there is *something* that exists; it is part of—but not seen, not accepted into the possibilities of representation. They are, in short, zones of exclusion.

Now, although these elements of “otherness” exist within the work (*other* because the zones are occupied by the “Other”), they do so only so that they might be dismissed. Galindo’s self-awareness in respect to these views—which in essence formulate around a conception of “otherness,” permits her performance to *animate* a new perspective in regards to the “other”—she performs the political conditions by which a new positive dialectal relation between herself (her experiences are extremely personal and relate to Guatemala, to the atrocities that she herself witnessed growing up in a country dominated by a succession of dictatorships), and the wider public—might be established along *animative* lines. So what we are saying is that clearly there has been an organised attempt to performatively create a victim (the other as victim who exists in the margins) through systems of sympathy or empathy (postcolonial/multiculturalism), to which Galindo’s performance formulates itself as an *animative* procedure, in order to say “no” (despite those supposed palliative intentions) to this also. What has hitherto been permitted to enter into the scene of public debate is *animatively* reformed—and now in Galindo’s performance—the obligation to eventual truth(s) function as drivers of an animative communication—to the extent that new and as yet uncharted territories are opened. These are undefined spaces of pure potential, as Galindo herself states (author translation):

What interests me in my work is not so much the limits as the tensions that come about when one approaches them. Being close, without knowing close to what...it’s a tension that goes beyond both the other and me. Because there are no perfectly defined limits – they’re ambiguous.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Mac Gregor, Helena, *Políticas de aparcación: El clandestino El intruso: política y exclusión. Tres reflexiones en torno a la clandestinidad*, Las lecturas de sileno, Ibero 2015, p.85-101.

³⁰⁶ Regina José Galindo in conversation with Gontzal Diez, Murcia Pavilion. Interview reproduced in: *Regina José Galindo*, SilvanaEditoriale, 2011, p.153.

The claim here is that Galindo's limits (related to truths which go "beyond the other and me"), which she describes here as "ambiguous," are necessarily so due to their lack of any finality: this is rather the tarrying with a set of truth(s) that sit now upon the surface of the situation—so she achieves in her work a kind of *contemplation*. By contemplating these spaces of "exclusion" as she does, we are faced with eventual truth(s) that in the case of Galindo come directly from violence against the female body—a barbaric remnant of the "war" in Guatemala; she does away with the *subject/object* dichotomy and performs herself as a historical *public space*. This is a contemplation that however is meaningless as a singularity. It is only as a multiplicity that this contemplation makes sense. In other words the spectators perform an equal role in the contemplative organisation of her performance. As Galindo herself puts it: "My body is not like an individual body, but a social body, a collective body, a global body".³⁰⁷

This notion of a global body can be recognized within *Le voy a gritar al viento* as it is part of why there must be the second sincere "no"; the *no* is directed toward the idea of Galindo's *being* as part of a set; in *Le voy a gritar al viento* a sense of the perpetual battlefield relating to "otherness" is first induced, then dispensed with. What this means we ought now to explain.

So remarks have been made on the corporality involved in the action and the fact that Galindo has decided to remove herself from the possibility of being touched, to distance herself from contact in such a way as to suggest, if you want, a deliberate *animative* statement of intent. Surely if her only concern was to communicate the realities of dispossession she could merely have opted for a soap box and distribution of her poetry at ground level. This physical elevation of her presence to the status of that which is beyond reach is significant because in so doing she challenges not only the reality of dispossession, the "victim", the "Guatamalteca", but she also suggests the shifting in site (taking place now in public space) of the prescribed limitations of the (conceptual) argument, which has been founded upon the appropriation of the situation for the purposes of naming once again the "victim"; this subject is, as is her want, transformed by Galindo into a poetic angel. What this means exactly can

³⁰⁷ Interview reproduced on back cover: *Regina José Galindo*, SilvanaEditoriale, 2011.

be explained by delving into a short discussion conducted between Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou.³⁰⁸

What is questioned primarily in their discussion, and which is observably evoked in the performance piece of Galindo, is the idea of the dialectic as constant negative interaction with an already established norm. There is a dialectic in place in the work of Galindo and this has been noted above as it produces a third element which is the appearance of an aporia. What if the dialectic were not based upon a negative, the constant return to order of a recognizable difference (in this case understanding violence and genocide), but rather the establishment of a positive dialectic that would embrace difference as part of a truth which would support the necessity for socio-political change? The complexity of this question needs to be unpacked somewhat. Starting out then with our given example which is Guatemala City and Regina José Galindo, let us assume that there is an established norm in terms of the structure of perception. Now, how can this norm be assimilated to a recognized difference, that is: dispossession, the appearance of the dispossessed, and the subsequent generation of the “Other”. Our claim might well be that it is entirely possible that in *Lo voy a gritar al viento* Galindo demonstrates that focusing purely upon the subject as central element is problematic, such a dialectical construction produces not the solution but another problem, and this point is made clear by Athanasiou, who notes:

On the one side, dispossession signifies an inaugural submission of the subject to be to norms of intelligibility, a submission which, in its paradoxical simultaneity with mastery, constitutes the ambivalent and tenuous process of subjectification.³⁰⁹

This situation establishes a problem that is unique to these types of situations and these observations may be adopted in the pursuit of what is the truth of Galindo’s performance. There is a recognizable parallel between the tenuousness of the subjectivizing process and the actual physical connection Galindo materializes, linking herself and the colonial arch above her head. Galindo *animatively* draws our attention to the position into which she has been forced: suspended and powerless, this “Other” is once again rendered without agency, and this as a direct response to her incorporation into the norm that works to create the

³⁰⁸ Butler, Judith, Athanasiou, Athena, *Dispossession: The Performative In The Political*, Polity, 2013.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

dispossessedness of her situation. There is then a friction, a problem which is performed by Galindo; and what I am trying to establish is that this aporia is further enhanced by the knowledge that there is no pure vision to be gleaned from within the situation itself. This is because the very notion of dispossession, as Athanasiou notes, is fraught with an array of incommensurable problems, as she notes:

In this sense, dispossession encompasses the constituted, pre-emptive losses that condition one's being dispossessed (or letting oneself become disposed) by another: one is moved to the other and by the other—exposed to and affected by another's vulnerability. The subject comes to "exist" by installing within itself lost objects along with the social norms that regulate the subject's disposition to the address of the other.³¹⁰

Galindo demonstrates that a "norm" need not be the measure of the situation, but rather the realization of a new possibility. It is clear that the poetry of Galindo spoken from such a height makes us think of the inaudibility of voice in terms of dispossession, to those voiceless ones who pertain to those forgotten zones discussed above, and relentlessly reproduced and appropriated today as belonging to the "victim" class in relation to hegemonic discourse. Nevertheless, there is value in focusing on the eventual truth(s) present within the performance for they provide us with recourse to establish an alternative approach. Let us start out to do just this by recognizing the "animative" nature of the (corporal) language involved. If we limit our understanding of the notion of "Other" (and the reader is reminded that for our purposes we refer to Badiou's treatment of the other), as having been produced by a certain postcolonial/multicultural perspective (in this particular case) those referred to (postcolonial/multicultural discourse) in the generic as having been reduced to insignificant human matter, perhaps existing in "hiatus", then Galindo's elevation of herself above the passageway is the clear symbolic presentation of a singularity, she has broken away. Galindo performs herself as a singularity and in so doing she calls out the normative preconditions for achieving singularity within already established regimes of domination and appropriation (so this is as pertinent to her decision to confront State power as it is to her continued refusal to accept being named "Other"). Her rejection of "otherness" prevents the foreclosure of her ability to perform truth(s); Galindo is aware that focus upon the negativity of generic

³¹⁰ Ibid.

“otherness” will not enable her to convey the true message behind her work, for as Athanasiou notes:

But forging identities around injury is a slippery path [...] An identity politics that relies on claims of woundedness ends up reaffirming the structures of domination that have caused injury.³¹¹

Galindo’s re-appropriation of her corporal language presents the situation with an aporetic force; a clear dilemma which necessitates contemplation. An unnameable quality arises within the situation itself and is uniquely historical: the subject has been named (other/savage) once (colonialism), and now there is an attempt to name it (victim/other) a second time (postcolonialism; this despite its claims towards palliative analysis); a process of appropriation and re-appropriation occurs within Galindo’s work, because she sends a *no* first to the oppressive State, but then she sends a second *no* to those systems of analysis that would appropriate her suffering and the suffering of her community in the name of “otherness”. The performative creation of the other/victim is animatively negated. And so, to the aporia; as Athanasiou notes, there comes the time where we need to respond to the emerging realization that:

This is perhaps about the shifting or disrupting of this limitation, even though there can be no question of overcoming it and even though (or because) language always fails us. In the context of proliferating contemporary forms of injurability, we are called, politically and intellectually, to name the occasions and come to grips with them.³¹²

Coming “to grips” is the establishment of new social norms. Athanasiou’s words are a critique of a culture of pain, and the creation of identities based on dispossession. These cultures, we have been saying here, are performative and ought to be confronted and dispensed with, and this can only occur as part of a very public debate. This is the message of Galindo’s work. Social norms become so only through the process of a recognition in public and by the establishment of a common consensus as to what boundaries establish our social world. Galindo’s animative performance brings into public space the new possibility that humanness is not necessarily characterized by the recognition of “otherness” to the extent

³¹¹ Ibid., p.135.

³¹² Ibid., p.133.

that naming goes on infinitely; the endless proliferation of naming the dispossessed. It is not a question of recognizing *Whose life (and death) matters?*, but rather we might ask, does the focus not fall in a far more egalitarian manner when it is placed upon something new, something entirely different—that would allow a universal singular to emerge? Galindo challenges the posturing of those who would constantly begin their political investigation of the situation from the point of view of the embodied subject. She is not signalling in her floating presence the subject, nor the object, but rather the *truth* (ethics) of the particular situation which can now be read as a universal situation (this claim will be developed below). The suggestion would therefore seem to be that we should concentrate our attention not upon the subject at all, not upon the naming of the subject (“other”, “mestizo” “black”, “victim”, etc) but rather upon the truth of the situation as per each and every individual case, which if considered ethically must entail the realization that the singular is in fact part of the universal. The reason for this is clear, as Butler notes:

So perhaps what appears to us, you and me, as a possible tension between particularism and universalism is actually rethinkable in light of a general politics of naming. If we are always named by others, then the name signifies a certain dispossession from the start. If we seek to name ourselves, it is still within a language that we never made. And if we ask to be called by another name, we are in some ways dependent upon those we petition to agree with our demand.³¹³

What Butler describes is the possibility for us to leave behind the debate around the particular and the universal, in favour of a critic of naming. But from our historical site we may only move towards this position as part of a process, and there is this continuous enigma presented by the linguistical impossibility of such a desire. But this it seems is the position and one way by which a subject may begin to approach this idea is by the confrontation and rejection of this very naming process and that is what Galindo has presented us with. There is an aporia that must be described and this is Galindo’s achievement: her presence in public now forms a physical saying in the *animative* sense. The public must come to terms with what the aporia means for this specific public space. This aporia is the tarrying with the incommensurable reality that the naming process is impossible if we are fixed upon the notion of the subject, the recognizing of the subject as the starting point for an emancipative political process. As

³¹³ Butler, Judith, op. cit., p.138.

we have discussed, the *aporia* is productive and its performed presence brings the public face-to-face with that which is the *truth* of the work. There must be a contemplative encounter with what it is that appears in public space, and so the constant desire or requirement to name finds no resting point in what Galindo offers—she has removed herself physically from this possibility, and with the prospect of naming now eschewed she creates instead the aporetic space of deliberation. Butler describes an almost identical process as a moment of *poiesis*:

There seems to be an overdetermination of the social at the site of the name, so however particularistic we want the name to be, it exceeds us and confounds us. At the same time, its generality is the condition of our particularity, the instance of its singular renewal and innovation, sometimes a moment of *poiesis*: “Strella!”³¹⁴

Galindo’s *aporia* creates the space for contemplation of the individual subject, and the identity of that subject as “Other” is now problematized, demonstrating the truth(s) that underpin situation. The truth of the situation is not located in the subject—but rather passes through each of the possibilities, inducing potentials that are historical in origin, yet have a direction and drive toward a yet-to-be. In order to understand Galindo’s *aporia* we are forced necessarily to engage with evental truth(s) that are as *true* for Guatemala as they are for France, for the USA, for Russia, for wherever; this is the universality of ethical truth (Badiou) and is present within her performance. In the process of contemplating what it is that Galindo presents, (evental truths) that come through history and formulate themselves on the surface of the present, we come to the realization that we must act in the name of the *truth* and this is a necessarily political and ethical act. It is the action required, and here there would seem to exist no better word to incapsulate the issue than *justice*. It is the absence of justice that Galindo’s work signals, a signal which incorporates at once the singular and the plural; to this extent her work brings the essential realization that the *other* is dissolved by the contemplation the *aporia*, a dialectical in the positive sense that produces the possibility to engage with truth(s).

³¹⁴ Ibid., p.138.

3.3 Performance as Political Interference

The findings of this investigation thus far signal a clear relationship between art and politics in the work of Regina José Galindo. But does an actual encounter with a particular performance by Galindo stand up to the claim this investigation has sought to develop: that Galindo presents the establishment of a new possible grounds for the appearance of truth, an opening of sorts, that is, the exploration in real-time of new political possibilities and alternatives? Furthermore, are these same, in what is essentially a dynamic process, made possible by a new and prolonged encounter with evental truth(s)? We ought to be mindful from the outset of 3.3, that by using the term *politics* we do so in reference to an agreed upon community; that humans have organized to come together in some way shape or form in order that the shared world may be organized. This coming together of Galindo and politics is a dialectical process in the positive sense, in that it produces a third element: the invention of a new means to describe an historical event. This process includes the possibility to observe the materialization of that which has been hitherto obscured: the truth of the situation. All of this takes place—not as part of a system of representation—, but rather as part of a new classification related to what is described here as a *presentation* of the *representation* process. In other words the building and sustaining of a close relationship between art (performance) and historically derived evental truth(s) occurs as an open uncompleted procedure, therefore rendering art, in this case, prime witness to evental truths—even as they are determined (thought) in the present—and this includes the presence (affect) of yet-to-be revealed consequences. The process is not one of historical event *represented*, but one of historical event presented in the form of its truths materializing in the now. In such a set-up it is clear that the artist has indeed a very special function, because she has become, really, the conductor of what is *infinite* in the situation (the truth), thus establishing the truth—finally—in the *finite* moment. This is nothing short of the creation of a new relationship to truth(s) which are evental in origin, and as such, politically, of paramount importance. What makes *representation* impossible then, in this regard, is the knowledge that we may never represent the *actually occurring*, it simply may not be; and this is why, in my opinion, Galindo has opted to engage her particular condition via performance.

The situation is defined by history, and history is to be understood (in this study) as the sequence of marked events that have been recorded. The term *history* is then stated here

for our purposes as pertaining to human activity, a succession of wars, revolutions, and events which have been organized politically after the fact; the truth(s) of these events entering into reality via the recognition of what has been an event and by the *representation* of that event in historical terms. For the Oxford English Dictionary, the simple definition of the term *history* is “the study of past events”³¹⁵, and equally for Merriam-Webster, it is “[...]a chronological record of significant events (such as those affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes”³¹⁶. To this extent we may take the liberty to say that the history of the world is the history of events. The organization of this information has been the central focus for political life. In some sense we may also assert that politics is the domain created in society for the very purposes of determining what has been an event and what should be its consequences. So for arguments sake (and without getting into the question of what is an event) let us say there has been some kind of huge and violent dispossession, of the type that may be witnessed during a genocide. Now, we have already noted that Galindo, although discussing her local site, is also extending herself out and into the universal. So the dispossession is in Guatemala, but it is also in Syria, in Sub-Saharan Africa, and so on. This is because what is a truth for one must be as well a truth for all. So returning to the central claim that art and politics merge in Galindo’s work; to establish this idea as that which is based in an observable truth—we can look at two of her works which deal with the issue of immigration. The two works span across the desert of time and space literally as they are performances which focus firstly on the point of departure for the immigrant, *Curso de supervivencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estado Unidos* (2007) and then upon their reception at the point of arrival in the new territory—in this case the United States, and *America’s Family Prison* (2008). Through observations of these works it may be demonstrated that the organization of the event, (evental truth)—its organization once the sole task of political will—, has now, through Galindo’s opening, become a question of artistical will, and has therefore become recognizable as an issue related to political aesthetics. So what exactly are we discussing when we discuss the aesthetics of the political?

³¹⁵ See: *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). www.oed.com

³¹⁶ See: *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. www.merriam-webster.com/

The political will that has demonstrably created our global history is something that has been recorded by representative means (indeed it may be that in specific cases political will has been the cause of there being representation at all) and may be accessed by the historian at any time. Needless to say not all historical sources are captured by history, yet this is of acute importance to our discussion, because what has been omitted has usually been excluded on the grounds that it does not sit well with the power of the time. So what we, as art historians are interested in are those elements of representation, and in so doing, historical sets display what has been included and what has been excluded or overlooked. It is in this way that one could argue that the history of art is the history of representation (and what representation has missed). Politics is then established firmly upon the grounds of representation and has not been able to exist without things representing other things to our perception. This is the condition of representation, that things should be seen by others and their truths determined. This investigation understands also the nature of this interaction, that is, what is perception and what is representation—takes place in a socially constructed world which is politically organized as a plurality. As established by Hannah Arendt, the plural basis for all politics is a given, she notes:

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world.³¹⁷

The plurality of the audience, the plurality of public opinion, the plurality of possible outcomes, these are all existent in the two performances of Galindo we shall want to engage below. Also present is the contingent and unpredictable nature of all actions which can be described as presentational rather than representational, because they are, as Arendt claims, “without intermediary of things or matter”, and so through presenting, Galindo is necessarily opening a space which is contingent, its outcomes unpredictable. It is by this measure that we may claim Galindo to be interrupting a political process. She presents to the plurality of the situation a new set of considerations which are directly derived from event—even as its truths continue to move forwards, infinitely so; Galindo captures eventual truth(s) in her

³¹⁷ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, second edition, Chicago, 1998, p.7.

performance. But how does Galindo avoid the traps of representation, and why would she need to avoid them? What is the problem with representation *per se*?

To tackle these key questions let us begin an analysis of the performance, *Curso de supervivencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estado Unidos* (2007)³¹⁸. There are numerous reasons why a person would seek to become an illegal immigrant, be it in the U.S. or in Europe, where today thousands die every year—deaths counted as a direct result of the dangers immigrants face—.³¹⁹ The seas, rivers, deserts and mountains that separate immigrants from their chosen country of “safety” become for many their final resting place. What is universal in this historical account is the existence (in almost every case) of a prior event—violent in essence—, but crucially forming the root cause of for an historical sequence; this is the succession of consequences, which we have discussed (Badiou), and which frequently display injustice (genocide), and considerable economic crisis. In the case of Guatemala, the lack of opportunities for young people (of a certain social background) means they have little choice but to abandon their country in search of a new possibility for life. The economic hardship in Guatemala is a direct result of the country’s own history, which is as we have noted, one of constant conflict, violence (particularly against women), and a general and perpetual sense of unrest and insecurity.³²⁰ As the anthropologist Emily Yates Doerr has noted of those who make the journey from Guatemala to the U.S.:

Their stories, my research, and investigative reports from human rights groups and others reveal how policies and U.S. political interventions of the past—and the present—have led to malnutrition, maternal and

³¹⁸<http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/curso-de-supervivencia-para-hombres-y-mujeres-que-viajaran-de-manera-ilegal-a-los-estados-unidos-2/> (20.11.20)

³¹⁹ Since 2014, more than 4,000 fatalities have been recorded annually on migratory routes worldwide. The number of deaths recorded, however, represent only a minimum estimate because the majority of migrant deaths around the world go unrecorded. Since 1996, more than 75,000 migrant deaths have been recorded globally. See: <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migrant-deaths-and-disappearances> (20.11.20)

³²⁰ The work in discussion here is directly linked to the U.S. in that it has a U.S. bound projection, but also in that it is connected to an event which was sponsored by the U.S. There have been numerous publications of confidential documents which directly connect the U.S. to the horrors of the “war” in Guatemala. Emily Yates-Doerr has published a number of papers which demonstrate the clear connection between the U.S. and several horrific military interventions in Guatemala which she, as an anthropologist has directly linked to the need to immigrate away from the disaster. See: Yates-Doerr, Emily, *Why Are So Many Guatemalans Migrating to the U.S.?* Sapiens, WennerGren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Chicago University Press, 2018. <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/guatemala-migrants-united-states/> (20.11.20)

infant mortality, fractured communities, deep-rooted violence and corruption, and the loss of loved ones among Indigenous peoples living in the highlands. Those who leave for the U.S. are fleeing these conditions, which have been inflicted upon them, and doing what they must to survive.³²¹

Little wonder that Galindo was able to find the ten would be immigrants to participate in her course. This performance is primarily a microcosm of a political situation that exists in the country and which has been deliberated upon as preparation for partaking in the course: this process produces the communal decision to make a path towards the U.S. This is a group that has come together with a clearly defined purpose: to decide what is the best course of action in order to survive the gruelling journey ahead. For the performance, Galindo hires a “coyote”³²², a man usually dedicated to guiding immigrants (for a fee) across the desert and into the United States. The procedure includes also a physical sports expert (extreme sports and survival specialist), who gives advice on survival techniques. Using maps supplied by the coyote, the survival guide is able to predict the terrain and the types of challenges they might need to be prepared for. There would be a perilous period before crossing the border, followed afterwards by a further stage of extreme danger.³²³ It is clear that this particular performance has a uniqueness incorporated into its structure in terms of its temporality and therefore its direct connection to eventual truth(s). There is a forward motion, initiating in historical event (genocide),³²⁴ running through the performance and culminating in the

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² The Coyote is a paid (male normally) person who takes illegal immigrants across the frontier between Mexico and the U.S. Surveys collected by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security place the cost for each person crossing from Mexico into the U.S. between around 600USD and upwards of 1,500USD. These figures fluctuate as they are compiled by several different agencies. This is the cost of hiring a “coyote” as per the rate in 2008. See: <https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois-smuggling-wp.pdf> (20.11.20).

³²³ Sancho Ribes, Lidón, *Regina José Galindo: la performance como arma*, ARS, Universitat Jaume I 2017, p. 178-180.

³²⁴ Yates-Doer, Emily, op. cit., According to the anthropologist Yates-Doer evidence to support the view that there had been a genocide is contained in the “report from the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), a U.N.-supported truth commission tasked with investigating the events of more than three decades of war, from 1960 to 1996. After almost a year of investigation that included interviews with 11,000 people, the independent commission concluded that military and paramilitary groups were responsible for 93 percent of the more than 200,000 war-related deaths. The commission’s conclusion that the violence was almost entirely carried out by state forces countered the popular narrative that an ideological battle between communism and capitalism had split the country in two. This narrative held that the war entailed insurgents, or guerrillas, on one side fighting for land redistribution and counterinsurgents on the other purportedly defending the rule of law.

supposed future arrival into the U.S. This movement is extenuated by the emotional anticipation of the ten—as they prepare to abandon all that they know in order to embark upon this death defying journey into the relatively unknown. The temporality of the work is further enhanced by anecdotal information relating to the particular political moment. As Sancho Ribes has noted, as the course culminated in a wall climbing instruction, one of the participants was heard to observe that they had learned how to climb the wall separating the U.S. and Mexico, even before it had been built.³²⁵ The U.S. had barely announced intentions to build a wall to keep out immigrants. Of the work, Galindo (who was not herself directly involved in the performance beyond being its main orchestrator), notes of the performance (author translation):

The participants learned about the route and learned how to make shelters, how to make a fire, to be guided by the sun and the stars. Also, where to find water and roots or bugs to feed. What to do in the case of animal bites in the desert, dehydration or in the event that someone be taken by the river. The women learned where to hide condoms and birth control pills as they would surely be raped on the way. In the end they all learned to cross the wall and received a payment in pain to be able to pay for some bites on the way. I know the group left Guatemala with a coyote on January 15, 2008, I never knew what happened next.³²⁶

In terms of representation we come to know this performance only through the photographic remnants and textual data produced by the artist herself and her collaborators, Marlon Garcia, who was the photographer, and David Pérez who shot the video.³²⁷ We do not know the names or identities of the participants nor what became of them after they set off. These are generic immigrants in almost every sense, and even though we see their Latin American racial origins, this does not detract from the idea that they may just as well be Syrians or Sub-Saharan Africans plotting their routes across the Mediterranean Sea. The historical event,

The CEH instead found convincing evidence of genocide. Of the 42,275 killings it documented, 83 percent of the victims were Maya. The report can be accessed here:

<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/357870/guatemala-memory-of-silence-the-commission-for.pdf> (20.11.20)

³²⁵ See Sancho Ribes, Lidón, op.cit., p.180 (footnote 83).

³²⁶ This quote has been taken from an interview (translated by myself) reproduced by Lidón Sancho Ribés in her book: *Regina José Galindo: la performance como arma*, ARS, Universitat Jaume I 2017, p.179.

³²⁷ As well as Galindo's own website, the images of the performance have been reproduced in the book: *Regina José Galindo*, SilvanaEditoriale, promoteogallery di Ilda Pisani, Milano, Italy, 2011, p.229-235.

strikingly, is not at all directly represented and this is noteworthy as it is central to the notion of an art form that might directly engage with the political organization of eventual truth(s); this in preference to an art that would merely act as a lamentation. By not engaging in any direct representation of the event the performance is permitted to engage politically with the determination of the event in terms of its truth(s), the organization of the *what is to be* of the event, even as the consequences continue to unravel in the now. There has been a violent dispossession and yet here in this performance there is not a single detail relating to the historical details that have brought about this necessity to leave, to journey to another place. This is a necessary part of what Galindo is trying to achieve in her work, that is, a new form of political art that will eschew the direct representation of the historical event in favour of a more subtle intervention into the political arranging of the truth. In a sense, Galindo has taken on the role of politics, as politics has, to a large extent, and from the perspective of justice, failed to make inroads into the situation.

It is necessary for Galindo, if she is to remain in contact here with the truth of an event, to distance herself from representation; this is because representation is the foreclosure of the possibility to present something *new* to the situation. We remember that there is the infinite truth that must be transmitted now to a finite moment. The organizing of this survival course is in itself the finite realization of a truth which is derived directly from an historical event. Now, representation is only recognizable and relatable to a structure which persists as part of the situation in terms of what is the political moment, or what is the accepted reality of the shared political space. In a sense Galindo wants us to go inside the collective determination of the event, if only to recognize that the truth of an event is more important than its representation. By remaining outside the realms of representation Galindo presents the process of representation as a political act. The event has created these “undesirables”, and now they must be accommodated in the world. In this performance Galindo moves away from representation and towards the political organization of life as part of art’s possibilities. To *represent* is to be instantly subsumed by hegemony, this is because a representation may only refer to the situation from within the same confines of that situation: by this we refer to the hegemonic structure which hitherto dominates the system of representation. Galindo also demonstrates that this process should be one that is undertaken visibly, as an exploration of the possibilities—and to show the plurality of this same. This is the creation of a new

understanding of the event from the perspective of its truth, not from its disaster, nor from the perspective of its “Other”, or its synonym, the perspective of the victim: rather it is the *presentation* of the impossibility to *represent* that which is clearly—still underway. Galindo demonstrates that the truth of the event has not come to rest in any type of final destination and the fact that we can tarry with this notion demonstrates the very openness of this performance—which now avoiding direct representation—performs the clearing of a conceptual space; the opportunity now to see this impossibility of representation (this is an action in motion) and for this reason to capture the possibility of truth: which is bound eventually to justice. It is the visibility of the becoming of the truth as materialized in the action that makes this performance of value as truth token, and grants it the power to communicate the truth that would otherwise be dissolved in the singularity of the historical event—if it were to be represented. The course is then allegorical in essence, connected to eventual truths which are demonstrated to have an as yet uncompleted destiny. This is then the proposal of a new concept of justice which may be developed as a political reality, by art. Galindo has succeeded to discuss the event without recourse to direct representation, in so doing, she has created the possibility to create something that moves beyond the status quo and towards the realization of a truth as part of a new process now directly linked to a future possibility: that justice may arrive.

Cuahtémoc Medina has noted the importance of the term *representation*, which he says crosses the fields of politics and art, forming a kind of “intersection” whereby the logic of legitimacy works in tandem with a system of cultural signification.³²⁸ Medina also draws upon the etymological roots of what it means to *represent*, noting that there seems to be a connection between the concepts of “delegation” and “appearing”, the implication being that to represent is to stand in for some absent element. In addition there would seem also to be an attendant “return to presence”, or to demonstrate for those observers in attendance that there is indeed an equivalent presence able to form itself as delegate of the supposed referent, be they ideas, images, or concepts—they may be represented to the observer.³²⁹ This being so, we ought also to add that in order for this to occur there would have to be at least some

³²⁸ Medina, Cuahtémoc, introductory notes in *La Imagen Política*, “Representación” XXV Coloquio Internacional De Historia Del Arte IIE, UNAM, 2006, p.23-26.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

minimal (albeit tacit) understanding of the world to which both the referent, and its “representative” belong—in terms of a relationship to the receiver of the message, the observer.

Medina describes several distinct methodologies by which we may come to understand the *what* of representation in the field of art *vis-à-vis* politics. Medina says that to understand the term *representation* (as a concept) we need to comprehend that we can (while we employ this concept) only understand the world as it is *represented* to us and never as a direct consequence of our direct sensual encounter with the real; in other words, if we accept the concept *representation*, then we must also accept that the world is always mediated. All of these interpretations described by Medina have some relevance to our discussion here of Galindo and are therefore worthwhile passing through. In the first instance Medina notes that art itself may be interpreted as a unique system of political representation.

Medina draws upon several arguments to show that there are indeed clear historical antecedents in regards to art establishing the framework for the political to appear, or to come into being as a form of representation itself. Medina notes (author translation):

There is ample evidence for the existence of analogies, parallels, and overlaps between the history of cultural and artistic institutions and the history of representative political systems. Moreover, the models of exhibition and distribution and the terms of the critical debate of modern art frequently precede the evolution of political institutions.³³⁰

So it would seem that the opening of exhibition spaces which were in themselves contingent gaps, seem to perform the role in society of political prologue to that which is observed to develop later-on inside a broader sense of socio-political representation. In the second instance, Medina notes that *representation* is the very basis of a new criticism which sets about the conscious questioning of the way representation chooses to select specific images and the way specific narratives are constructed in society via these same images, concepts and ideas.³³¹ This form of critical approach to representation comes up into importance in the debate mainly as a confrontation of the idea of “cultural studies” and the fact that postcolonial investigations now begin to impinge on the constructed ideas formed around the “Other”,

³³⁰ Ibid., p.24.

³³¹ Ibid., p.24-25.

and the consequences in terms of hegemonic representation and the actual day relationships which persist due to the historical practices of colonialism, ideological domination and subjugation. As Medina notes (author translation):

Authors like Eduard Said have made us accustomed to conceive of critical studies as the construction of identities, and as analysis of the structures of power and domination of a society, where the elaborations of geographic, racial and national stereotypes, such as "Orientalism" in art and literature are actually interpreted as "political doctrines" that establish the hierarchy between colonizer and colonized.³³²

In this model representation is clearly to be put under scrutiny, for barely hidden beneath its surface we find a completely biased agender which finds its roots again in a colonial historical event. Also of marked importance at this juncture must be the exact manner in which representations are delivered, the system of representation, the institutions and exhibition spaces involved in the very processes of representation. In this sense, and in the views of postcolonial criticism, modern culture must be interacted with as though a theatre of ideological and political ideas which constantly juxtapose, creating new combinations, new forms of political resistance and opposition.

Finally, Medina recognizes the fact that representation has participated in hegemony. The political order of the world is supported by the numerous systems of representation that underpin all that we know regarding the political structure of modernity, this ranging from parliamentarianism as formal representation of the democratic procedure, to the political conceptions that are derived from Lenin, of the "party" serving as representative of the "proletariat and its project".³³³ As Medina notes:

In this sense, there is no political apparatus that does not base power on the use of representations, beginning with the operation of postulating the interests, values and projects of a class, ethnic group, elite or group as if they were the interests and projects of the nation or humanity itself. For this reason, for theorists like Ernesto Laclau, the idea of "representation" is "constitutive of the hegemonic

³³² Ibid., p.25.

³³³ Ibid., P.25.

relationship", insofar as this is always the result of a particularity "embodied" in a representation of the general will.³³⁴

What Medina outlines here in this last observation is that politics relies heavily on the utilization of representation for particular ends. It is for the purposes of this investigation interesting to recall the remarks of Derrida, who upon describing the site of the event noted that it was at this very moment that the event itself now disappeared, would remain for us only inside the representations that were constantly being produced.³³⁵ In this way we can describe an event as being produced by representation (what this means is that the truths are organized/obscured), for the event, although existing *outside* of representation, can only become part of our world through its transformation into a thing which can be represented (History). But as we have been describing, Galindo's work seems to hover in a new space that is neither here nor there, not entirely part of the system of representation yet something of representation persists. In order to clarify these remarks it is interesting to continue with a further quotation from Medina who at the end of his annotations on representation says the following (author translation):

But insofar as the universality of the community is only attainable through the mediation of a particularity, the link of representation becomes constitutive.³³⁶

If we take Medina at his word here, we may be able to conclude that representation is an element that whilst not entirely subtractable from the scene, may be tinkered with to the extent that it no longer takes centre stage. There is a "universality" at the heart of Galindo's work, which is relatable to a particular "community" (Guatemala), yet there is a distinct lack of representation in terms of what the work means. One could of course argue that the work is merely a meditation upon the realities of a group of immigrants and that there is no going beyond that: so that is precisely what is represented. But this kind of indolent interpretation grants no agency to those participants involved other than to run from one disaster into the

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *op. cit.*

³³⁶ Medina, Cuauhtémoc, *op. cit.*, p.26.

next. They would then be nothing but the representation of victims. We can believe however that Medina is correct when he refers to a link with representation and a constitutive force.³³⁷

There is in the work of Galindo the *presentation* of a representation process. So this is presented in the unfolding of the performance and can only be transformed into a representation through the observation of the work itself. What is represented in the work itself is that which is its constitutive act, its performative act, in the sense that the observers construct the representation of a truth as part of their understanding of the work. Galindo presents in her work the communicative channel through which eventual truth(s) may be translated; this means that the performance itself is a codified signal, a performative utterance formulated upon eventual truth(s); this is the determination of an event in time, and so this is the assuming of a political role for art in time. In this way we may say that Galindo's art has overcome the conundrum described by Medina regarding representation, because there is no representation in the performance itself (to a direct representation of an event), merely the invitation to represent, the invitation to participate in the construction of what the event means, what the events consequences are. To go into the eventual truth is to participate in the meaning of the event, and this necessitates the engagement with the event's truths. It is in this way that her art thus becomes constitutive for it performs the role of an art form that presents the actual process by which representation occurs.

This is clearly observable in another work that again has no direct representation in regards to the historical event that underpins its meaning: *America's Family Prison (2008)*. This work presents the reality of what is an all too often real experience for immigrant families who finally arrive on foreign soil (particularly the U.S.). Galindo was acutely aware of the impending reaction to her compatriots on their arrival in the U.S.; this much she would surely have garnered from her own direct experiences, for example, at Princeton University, where in 2008 she gave a conference demonstration of *Curso de supervivencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estado Unidos*, afterwards she noted that (author translation):

I did not receive a single applause, the room remained in complete silence, then little by little, the conservative gringos began to raise their hands and express their disagreement with this type of project. They hated me. That day I let them know: "I'm not going to ask my

³³⁷ Ibid.

compatriots to stay in the country. For one or many reasons they are leaving. I can only ask them to be careful, that should they be leaving, that at least they try to get there, alive.³³⁸



Regina José Galindo,
Curso de supervivencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estados Unidos,
Guatemala City, 2007.

www.reginajosegalindo.com/curso-de-supervivencia-para-hombres-y-mujeres-que-viajaran-de-manera-ilegal-a-los-estados-unidos/

The general attitude in America was (and continues to be) one of hostility towards immigrants; they remain outside of the legal recognition afforded to regular persons and are therefore denominated “alien”, existing in a limbo world where exploitation and abuse are rife. As Sancho Ribes has noted, Galindo began to investigate the reality for Guatemalan families in the U.S.; Galindo was able to discover that in regards to immigrants of Central American origin, the law was different to those who were Mexican (North American). For Central Americans private prisons were being used to detain those who had crossed the border illegally.³³⁹ The law which resulted in the incarceration of immigrants was bolstered by sentences of between three months and three years. As Sancho Ribes has noted (author translation):

During the confinement, the inmates are forced to work without pay to the order of industries and recognized brands within the country. As it is not a prison itself but rather an incarceration centre for immigrants without regulated visas, this type of organized detention is arranged in

³³⁸ Interview with Regina José Galindo (2014) Latin American Speakers Series (LACAP) Latin American Canadian Arts Project, 3rd of May, 2014. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QVOWF86Y0o>

³³⁹ According to Lindón Sancho Ribes there were 52 prisons in Texas in 2008. Sancho Ribes, Lindón op. cit., p.180. Galindo based her performance of the type of cells provided for at the T. Don Hutton “Residential Center”. A short documentary produced by Michael Gossage and Lilly Kaber, and titled “America’s Family Prison,” details how the retro-fitted prison housed mostly mothers and their children, from infants through to 17-year-old adolescents. The facility was run by the Corrections Corporation of America, (CCA) a for profit organization who had a vested interest in having as many “residents” at the facility as possible. See America’s Family Prison: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9Uub_9uQFk8 (20.11.20).

family cells where entire families often live. This means that the children, together with their fathers and mothers, are kept in confinement and are effectively prisoners in same way. This in addition to the fact that these children do not receive any kind of education during their stay.³⁴⁰

We have previously remarked that generally the State will remain concealed until such time as an event forces its hand, that is, it has come into visibility only as a requirement of control and force. For *America's Family Prison* there are two historical events that impinge upon it as a performance: we have noted already the historical grounds for the work which are traceable to an event in Guatemala; yet equally here we must include the weight of a second historical event that comes in the form of the global economic crisis (the banking crisis of 2008) which seeds a series of crackdowns and political rollbacks against immigrants. For *America's Family Prison*, Galindo materializes the idea provided by Foucault, who, speaking of prisons noted that:

This is what is so fascinating about prisons: for once power does not hide itself, does not mask itself, but reveals itself as tyranny down to the most insignificant detail, cynically applied; and yet it's pure, it's entirely "justified," because it can be entirely formulated in a morality that frames its exercise: its brute tyranny thus appears as the serene domination of Good over Evil, of order over disorder.³⁴¹

The discussion of *Curso de superviviencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estado Unidos* led observations to conclude that Galindo was involved in the presentation of the representation process. Following Foucault, Galindo now makes explicit a representation of power on one side (Governmental crackdowns) yet she is simultaneously involved in demonstrating also, and once again, the presentation of the representation process vis-à-vis the eventual truths; something happened that forced immigrants to go to this absurd place, a prison, when what they wanted was to be free, to have access to lives worthwhile living.

It is interesting to analyse this second performance by Galindo whilst employing the tripart schema of *representation* underlined by Medina. In so doing we should be able to

³⁴⁰ Sancho Ribes, Lindón, op. cit., p.181.

³⁴¹ Foucault, Michel in conversation with Deleuze, Gilles, *Intellectuals and Power*, 1972, p.3. See: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/gilles-deleuze-michel-foucault-intellectuals-and-power.pdf>

emerge closer to the truth of the situation—as far as is possible. So starting then with *representation* as the prelude to a political policy, in *America's Family Prison* we see that the work indeed foreshadows some of the central political debates that have since developed, and that from our position in 2021 continue to advance in both the U.S. and in Europe. Important investigations conducted in the public arena have revealed the extent to which private profiteering from these kinds of prisons and detention centres continues to form part of the reasoning for their existence. Galindo draws direct links to this work and to those who are in fact making huge profits. These same people are in many cases members of the United States Congress.³⁴² This clear underscoring of a political corruption at the heart of the political policy to imprison immigrants demonstrates (first in art) that there exists a prison for profit policy embedded in the very epicentre of United States political policy. This scenario, at the time not common knowledge in political circles, is revealed and discussed in the arena of art and is thus a representation of a political issue yet to become widely engaged with. We of course know that since then this type of modern day slavery, although not in any way tackled sufficiently, is now debated publicly, and the abusive political-economical relationship between prisons, immigrants and private profiteering is now far more a topic of public deliberation. In Medina's second point³⁴³ there is a focus upon the representation of "otherness" in the debates that have come to mark the academic tendency known as "postcolonial". Thus the representation of the political "Other" now catered for by liberal policies of "care" are also criticized here in the work by Galindo—who participates in the performance by imprisoning herself, her husband and their daughter. Together they spend 24 hours inside the cell taking their meals, sleeping, washing and using the toilet as though real prisoners. Now, it is clear that by choosing to bring her family along for the performance Galindo has purposely set out to underscore an important discrepancy in relation to the liberal practice of "othering". Firstly power has decided to criminalize particular sets of humans, basing the law upon the relationship one country has with another (We have remarked that the differential treatment of Mexican and Guatemalan prisoners is related to specific political agreements between governments); and so there is this condescending recognition of the

³⁴²According to current reference material it is not clear who exactly are these U.S. Congressmen as the research is conducted by Galindo herself and the claim is made in support of her performance in this particular case. See Sancho Ribes, op. cit., p.182.

³⁴³ Medina, Cuauhtémoc, op. cit.

human rights of the “Other”, so that the family are permitted to be detained together (its more humane), yet there is at once the demolition of these same human rights; this kind of subterfuge by power is described in the performance as belonging to a dubious political will which allows some element of “human rights” in order to disguise the reality that these prisoners are in fact workers, trapped in a system created to hold them in stasis: together yes, but together as slaves, the children deprived of basic educational needs, malnourished, and so on. In the performance Galindo clearly underscores the manner in which representation (the family together) may be used also to disguise the more sinister aspects of a particular political will which seeks to create otherness in order to subtract profit. In relation to representation and hegemony, we need only think again of Foucault’s position on the topic of prisons and what has become in the U.S. as well as in Europe: the politization of a narrative which positions the State as protector of the native community—who now require protection from the invading and largely demonized “Other”. The State is then represented here by the prison box itself, and the notion that prison is the rightful place for these “Others” who have wantonly broken the law and must now be detained. This action by the State affirms again the establishment of power over those it seeks to dominate. The importance of this can be explained perfectly by reference to Laclau’s idea of *representation* as that which itself is constitutive of the relationship between the “people” and hegemonic power: in this case it is the prison box which “incarnates” the representation of the general political will.³⁴⁴ In this manner Galindo could be interpreted as confronting this ideological construct, drawing a clear line under the relationship between State power, corruption and an indolent kind of liberal socio-political condescension which creates on one hand “otherness” to be respected (keep the family together) while in the same moment imprisoning them needlessly and for financial gain.

³⁴⁴ Laclau, Ernesto, “Identity and Hegemony” in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso, 2000, p. 44-89, quote used in Medina, Cuauhtémoc, op. cit., p. 25.

Regina José Galindo, *America's Family Prison*, USA, 2008.



www.reginajosegalindo.com

All the same, there is a further level that we can take the reading and this brings us back once again to the presence of evental truths. In a prior section of this paper the involvement of the U.S. in the “war” in Guatemala and the support by the Reagan administration of the genocidal approach to rule practiced by the State in Guatemala³⁴⁵ has been discussed. There is then a connecting thread that runs from historical event and tenses between both of the works I have discussed here. There is of course good ground to discuss the representation of elements as per the interpretative schema described by Medina—but there is this additional level that relates to something that cannot be represented as it is occurring during the performance itself. This is the *presentation* of the *representation* process. In *America's Family Prison* the analysis can begin with the question: *What is the American family?* This ideological construct is the first thing that is problematized by Galindo because to talk about it is to make it appear to the conscious mind and then there happens a need to compare this family with the performed imprisoned family. There is a truth here that flows through the work and necessarily dissolves otherness; this ethical reality places the family inside the prison under a new light—which demands to be experienced not as a looking upon otherness but rather a looking upon *sameness*. This reading is supported by an interesting anecdote which comes from the day of the performance. As Sancho Ribes notes, many of the public who attended

³⁴⁵ For a good reference on the Reagan administration in Guatemala see the New York Times investigative article: Greg Grandin “Guatemala Slaughter Was Part of Reagan’s Hard Line” (2013). The text makes very good historical connections to the political violence in Guatemala and the U.S. “[...] genocide was indeed an option in Guatemala, supported materially and morally by Ronald Reagan’s White House. Reagan famously took a hard line in Central America, coming under strong criticism for supporting the contras in Nicaragua and financing counterinsurgency in El Salvador.” See: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/05/19/what-guilt-does-the-us-bear-in-guatemala/guatemalan-slaughter-was-part-of-reagans-hard-line> (cited 21.10.20).

the original performance were astounded³⁴⁶ to look in upon the family inside and to see that they had with them an infant girl. The complaint was that to keep a young child in a prison was unethical, whether or not the child was with her parents. Galindo reveals in this work the existence of these prisons and the existence of Guatemalan immigrants who have been incarcerated for their crime of illegally entering the United States. Finally what Galindo achieves to present is the very manner in which representation is formulated; the absence of the original event in *America's Family Prison*, in the same way as that upon which we remarked as regards to *Curso de superviviencia para hombres y mujeres que viajarán de manera ilegal a los Estado Unidos*, creates the space for eventual truths to formulate themselves finally in a *representation*, which is the intellectual construction of meaning in the mind of the observer. In order to understand the piece those who interact with *America's Family Prison* are ethically obliged to encounter the truth which is reformed again here in the cancelation of otherness. This is an American Family Prison, where inside sits a young family of Guatemalan origin, who in all their immediate impotency continue to perform the truth of the situation; a cancelation of otherness is accordingly achieved—and the way is thus opened for the appearance of a new political ground—one now based firmly upon justice. By posing this line of perception about Galindo's process, this investigation is able to make explicit a claim that has until now been simmering in the background: Galindo's performance work presents the confrontation of art and politics.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Concluding notes

This investigation has sought to make a complete analysis of some particular works of Regina José Galindo, establishing a clear connection between what it is she has done in her work (material), and the notion of truths which may be connected to event (evental trace). The fundamental claim has been that she has taken part in the extension of eventual truths via the

³⁴⁶The exhibition space itself during the day of the performance where Galindo and her family were present saw a number of protestations raised as to the ethical properness of keeping a child locked in a prison cell. See: Sancho Ribes, Lidón, op. cit., p.183.

performative consideration of their affects. So we can see that this text has maintained, specifically, that Galindo's work is—*of and in itself*—part of an evental truth procedure.

Following these assertions we are at liberty to note that the works we have observed have permitted this investigation to make a number of interesting discoveries in relation to a particular approach (evental); and certainly, through our analysis, we have been able to uncover a set of recognizable traits. We should want to summarize some of these attributes in the ensuing conclusive paragraphs. It is these same *evental* qualities, (that have here been observed as occurring inside of Galindo's works), and that we should now prospect to assemble under the one sign, which now we come to name as *evental art*. So it is that our claim also extends to include the idea that the current course of art production, (which for our purposes is delimited within the spectrum of political art), has been, in an observable manner, disrupted by the performative development of *working through* evental truths. It has been shown throughout these chapters that Galindo's art has become *political* (albeit as a by-product); and so we notice the technological organization of evental information that politics itself pretends to undertake; Galindo's work has engaged where politics has failed to appear.

The current study has been able to demonstrate how exactly it is that Galindo's work steps into the gap where politics should be, how it challenges via this link of evental trace, persuading our time to doubt those proclamations that have underpinned (historically) notions of otherness; revealing how specific contemporary issues have consequences that are—even now as they are presented—open to change. The yet-to-come of every moment is experienced clearly as the *possibility* that exists in each instant: this is the opportunity to create a more egalitarian society, displacing legacies of colonialism and genocide through new connections based upon pluralism and community. This is the very definition of politics, to consolidate the truths of event so that a society worth living in may be organized. Galindo's rational tarrying with evental trace establishes something entirely new in the field of art. That is, an art form capable of thinking through the consequences of an event whilst simultaneously *presenting* the possibility/impossibility for those truths to appear in the now.

In order to contextualize the categorization of Galindo's work (as evental) it has been useful to address her relationship to art in historical terms. So the investigation started out by

underlining where Galindo has been located by recent scholarship; and so there would be this attempt to pinpoint the output of Regina José Galindo from this new perspective. This was not in any way an easy task; this due to the multi-faceted nature of her performance and poetry works. A broad observation, however, would surely find that her work belonged to a sequence of art whose origins may be traced back to the 1960s, and critical performance art; a form notable in that it consciously establishes a social point of contact for art. These types of politically grounded artworks have recently been discussed in depth by researchers such as Grant H. Kester, Claire Bishop, and Claudia Mensch, (to name but a few). Polemic categories such as *social practice*, *social choreography*, *political art*, *social engagement*, *institutional critic*, *performance art*, *activist art*—and so on—are thought to best describe the situation.

This analysis has recognized the importance of these areas of scrutiny, and has sought to take into consideration their associated findings, certainly in relation to how art is perceived. In this context—the present study has theorized to add to the debate around art and the public order—concerning politics, culture, society, and the corresponding potentials.

What this investigation has established throughout is a relationship between Regina José Galindo and truths that may be traced in their origin to an event, what we have hitherto referred to as evental truths. There is then the location of Galindo inside the interstice between one event and the coming of the next event. Clearly this temporality, a complex construction, has needed some extensive explanations in regards to the logic of its function. So what has been said is that Galindo's work is that which works in tandem with truths, a reading of truth that has been related to Alain Badiou. So the claim is that Galindo is herself a faithful subject of truth(s) and that all of her work is relatable to this notion as clear departure point. What is faithful is the subject who has decided to act (ethics) in order to channel the infinitude of the truth into the finite moment, which is in essence a very practical and material endeavor that produces finally the possibility for something new to appear (this the tarrying between representation/presentation and/or the possibility/impossibility of these elements to appear simultaneously. This is the organization of the truth so that it may function to devise new forms of politics itself.

There is then first the *historical/political* event and all that it entails in terms of affect. This has been the past of Galindo's experience and it continues to function within her work as evental truths that run parallel to all existence, for all eternity. There is still, however, the event to come, which I have intended to describe also as part of the *work of art* in regards to Galindo—and that is the anticipated arrival of justice—. Affect is present in each instance as an historical impingement, but is also present as it pours in from a future which Galindo works toward—becoming herself the material sign of what Badiou has referred to as *forcing*³⁴⁷. According to this thesis what this forcing communicates is the possibility for a new politics, now described in art. Galindo's horizon is that which incorporates the possibility of politics as part of the *realization* of evental truths.

So first the text set out the conditions via which we may be inclined to interpret her work vis-à-vis evental truth. The claim is that she has become a *subject* of truth and is therefore functioning as finite appearance of that which is infinite. The purpose of this mode of operation is the *presentation* of the truth, that is in our case an ethical turn related to the dissolution of the *other*, and the appearance of *sameness* in the situation. So it is Galindo's project that is measured by the extent to which it takes up its meaning and dignity from evental truth. The demonstration of this process as present within her work has been one of the intended goals of this investigation and is clearly something completed inside the chapters.

We have then seen how this idea of evental trace appears first as an *affect*, and how there exist a number of subject effects which are related to the confrontation of simulacrum. The text was able to demonstrate through a number of examples how the affect of *justice* functions to construct (as performative element), the possibility for an alternative reading of an evental procedure (in Guatemala) which had seen the imposition of a State constructed "simulacrum". We remember that for Badiou *justice* is not something which is *idealistic*; as in it exists as some sort of supreme situation, but is rather, in its true Platonic inspiration, the

³⁴⁷ Forcing is really the faithfulness to a revolution: the future is now possibly different because we now know the path. The future history of the truth that has come to rest in its final destination which is the correct destination for truth(s); by staying faithful to the truths produced by events a path to emancipation may be determined. Forcing authorizes the anticipation of knowledge about the yet to come. It is the pre-emptive description of a truths destiny. See, Badiou, Alain, *Being and Event*, op.cit, p.400.

creation of a *new* possible. It does not create laws but impinges instead as that which calls into being the *possibility* to create law (which is specific to the conditions of each particular World). What Galindo identifies, and that which has been underscored throughout the text is the gap between politics and State law, which may only be breached through the activation of a sense of justice qua the situation, that which is missing from the situation is the ethical production of a new possibility: justice must then formulate part of the subject's process as that which has the power to confront and cancel elements of the *simulacrum*.

This notion of an affect relating to absence was thus further developed enabling the presentation of further examples via the analysis of the poetic construction of her form (poetics as prelude to performance); the investigation was able to develop the idea of an affect of justice that impinges at the site of production: where the eventual truths are guided into a materiality and filtered via Galindo's work. What is now distinguishable from the analysis of these poetical texts is that justice is absent from the situation; but also, the underscoring of what is justice for our purposes, that is, it is equal to politics, as is the case for Badiou.

For Badiou (as is the same for Galindo), justice is the name of a politics that is more exactly a truth of the possibility that is in itself a politics observably singular in each of its appearances. Justice is in effect the place or thing that is remarkable of a situation's possibilities and not its material real. A situation that has justice has the opportunity to establish a path towards egalitarian materiality, and truth(s) function to support and guide this process. This has been the finding of the analysis of Galindo's poetry coming out of it as we do and moving on in the direction of her performance. Justice in absence is then felt as the lack of an opportunity to establish an egalitarian real. There is then no tracking down of justice in empirical terms, but rather the essence of a procedure, the existence, or not, of a possibility that is simultaneously singular and plural (universal).

The investigation also analysed how Galindo had confronted the *absence of possibility* and had been successful in the founding of a way to navigate the social trauma had functioned to cancel the voices that might speak out in the name of justice, in the name of the *possibility* to create a new declaration based upon the overcoming of trauma. The creation of a new zero moment is equal then to the realization of the truth of a trauma that is shared and must now

be confronted as that which produces not silence but the balancing of accounts in relation to that which has occurred—and thus a new count was established—: not then permanently victims, but those who have *decided to construct* their notion of what has happened based upon the possibilities afforded by such a procedure. Agency is returned to the subject who now leaves victimhood behind. This is then a political act as it emphasizes the possibility to make a recount of the count, that is, that the victims robbed of their agency as individuals are now imbued with the ability to speak from the perspective of a new ground. And this should be a realization which underscores a new political real: the subject has now recreated itself in relation to eventual truth.

Of course the decision to deal with trauma is one of faithfulness to a subjective perception which is, as we have also demonstrated an ethical decision. To be a faithful subject of truth, in the case of Galindo, means that she must align herself ethically with the truth of the situation. This step has resulted in the necessary cancelation in motion of the sense of “Other” which in a true ethical procedure dissolves. “Otherness” is done away with in such a way that as observers, and via the functioning of Galindo’s performance, we encounter the truth of the situation that is “sameness”. True ethics (Badiou) reveal “otherness” as “sameness” and so it has been central to the argument that a discussion of ethics had to become part of this procedure of truth. The truth of ethics is that it demands of every moment to be the truth of that moment: *sameness* permeates everything and from this perspective we may begin to understand the situation qua political potential. Political equality sustains each moment as a singular demand or ethical turn related to equality which is established again and again in each individual moment as that which is. Taking into account ethics, which are themselves defined only in each moment and are non-prescriptive, we can also say that politics formed within this procedure is process and does not have an horizon or real to be realized; it is called forward via its *idea*, and this idea is based in the ethical. This ethical truth is infinite and extends then, as we have been able to demonstrate, from the historical past, passing through the subject in the present as she extends herself into a supposed future. Ethics may not be detained in the present, this is the meaning of the discussion and this is entirely connectable to the notion of eventual truth that extends historically, through the present and into the as yet contingent future.

Finally we began to look into how exactly the instruments for the construction of the idea (political agency) are progressively forged. Falling back into an historical analysis grants the investigation the grounds by which a more intimate understanding of Galindo's performance may be attained, especially in regards to eventual truths and those female concerns expressed within her work. In this way the investigation moved toward an enhanced understanding of the *performative* and the female experience as per the historicity of the situation. The importance then of *presence* as a factor in performative communication cannot be underestimated and has been discernibly connected to notions of eventual truth. Galindo confronts the situation from the perspective of women who have been deemed subaltern by a State policy directed towards gender violence as part of a system of oppression, a system that is shown by Galindo to be in itself a *performative* act.

We looked also at how Galindo incorporated this performativity as having a background or place. What is public is the manner by which narratives are constructed and sustained. Galindo incorporated architecture as part of her performance work, and now sought to challenge an accepted ideology, one which had buttressed power to the extent that specific ideologies have been constructed. Galindo reassigns the ideological tide through a new performative drive which juxtaposes her own message with that of the historical. In this way we were able to exemplify how Galindo transformed herself into a double rejection of the State simulacrum; and in so doing redefined her position applying a methodology related to what Taylor has named the "animative". The animative is the physical description of a communication that occurred inside the performance of Galindo, which is performative in the sense that again, it creates a *new possibility* as part of an action: the possibility to reject the name. By adopting colonial architecture as part of her performance Galindo was able to describe a double negation, the negation of State oppression is now echoed by a wholesale rejection of otherness. This is attainable through the correct channeling of eventual truths which stem from history and are also present in the now as ethical truths: this is the dissolution of the "Other" and the rejection of liberal policies that aim to position her as the "Other", tantamount to a re-victimization of the subject.

The political real was also developed as part of a possible encounter within Galindo's work. The idea of political agency is equated then with true politics and can only be intimated

through the careful *presentation* of truth as opposed to the representation of truth. In order to eloquently participate in a truth procedure Galindo had found it necessary to do away with *representation* and to concentrate herself as far as possible upon the *presentation* of truths (the attempted realization of evental trace). This step is what makes her work so effective in avoiding the pitfalls of representation, that is, that representation forecloses, while presentation extends and permits the communication of a truth which is (as is our stipulated claim) the same as the establishment of a new political possibility.

This research has attempted to demonstrate the manner by which evental truths may be harnessed (in the present) in order to challenge political simulacrum. Galindo's work exemplifies that the possible truth of a politics, singular in each instance, yet universal, is equal to justice. And that this justice is that which is developed (in each instance) as part of a performative (animative) push based upon evental truth and its natural destination which is the establishment of the possible, the idea of justice that pours in from a fictionalized future (forcing). Justice for Galindo is the name of politics, and politics is that which must be performed and created.

The consequences of this inquiry are to be deemed worthy of attention on the grounds that the notion of evental truths, producing art, effects the current field of art with an alternative approach. This is because there is no ground by which we may construct arguments based upon representations, if, as is the claim here, representative art is no longer an effective manner by which to communicate truths. This investigation is related to a small handful of Galindo's works but one may be forgiven for suggesting that should the same methodology be applied to her other works we would discover the same identical operation: the creation of political possibilities as per the cohesion to evental truth. A suggestion for further investigations might entail the application of this methodology to the work of other important artists working today. The absolute confirmation of the findings would then need to be agreed upon as occurring in a number of artists before we might confidently claim to have discovered new knowledge. It is the humble conclusion of this investigation, however, that a door has been opened to this possibility.

5 Sources

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