

Curatorial Notes

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Introduction

This exhibition constitutes a plurality without prior molding in which the viewer is invited to read and reflect upon an artistic material that is, if you will, “unexpected;” in other words, a material of unusual international scope for the region (Pakistan, India, Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Iran, Uganda...) and a proposal that is thematically not easily reducible and possibly inaugural in nature; a proposal that rises not from an institution, but rather, a subjectivity / professionally independent “individual,” an artist of the Argentinean diaspora, practically unknown in the national setting.

Suggesting it as an artistic project and presenting these notes in relation to the work, all aspects of the experience become “exhibitible.” I can expose fragments and ellipses of the journey without wavering from its purpose. I have defended this position in everything I undertake, as it allows me greater flexibility and the practice of integrating strategies, more agile, perhaps unusual within strictly academic frameworks. With this I mean to say that **I assume certain necessary un-orthodoxy as method and ontological action.** Mine is an artistic work that “flows through” and “takes ownership of” curatorial strategies as investigation and performance in order to intervene in contemporary culture and within the “art scenes,” in this case with a collective, transnational visual text that eradicates any reference to the peripheral, both in an exogenous as well as endogenous sense, for the simple lack of relevance or impossibility of its location within a geographic logic. In this manner, this text may also reveal a certain quality as “intimate journal” of memory of history, for which we mark a rhizomatic course¹, one that may perhaps err on the side of certain generalized, self-explanatory excess; or, it may reflect, in the best interpretation, the conditions of a certain productive heterotopia.

Once the agglutinative concepts have been formulated and the exhibit itself has been configured, upon rethinking it and reflecting upon the context, and as I sought to incorporate some Argentinean artists, I found myself before a great vacuum of references and even with a certain quiet apprehension. This vacuum, and the fact that these notes will circulate outside of Argentina, has conditioned my reflections on this matter, for which reason these notes tend to expand in numerous directions and should be considered as meditative notes on relationships and information susceptible to being developed and documented. Furthermore, in contemplating this development, it is possible to imagine a project of dialogic relationships between a social history of culture of the most recent decades and its motivating ideologies, the formulation and transformation of subjectivities and narratives of Argentinean art history, challenging its internal hegemonic structures and those that subordinate them to more or less parallel or preceding developments of the centers of greater economic force and international influence, both North American and European.

In these notes I have included the generous contribution of the following important writers and curators who worked in the Asian region: Elsa Chen, Meguni Kitahara and Bina Sarkar Ellias. They briefly offer interesting references concerning relevant aspects involved in the content of the exhibition.²

Point of Departure. Curation as cultural intervention and as “social sculpture”

Within the framework of globalization and transnationalization of the subject and local cultures, basically due to the effect of increasing popularity of the use of and access to the Internet, **the contemporary artist has the possibility to act independently beyond the parameters of his or her geography** and to create new communities of exchange, production and exhibition of artworks exciting the

boundaries of and yet not excluding the traditional channels and institutions of the art world. This same possibility also presents itself as a crossroads and as subject of contemplation as it affects a new understanding and assimilation of the role of artists, the same as the role of many professionals has been diversified to include, in this case, art criticism and the curation of exhibits, festivals and symposia. This occurs from an independent drive with certain free-lance characteristics, appropriated from the neoliberal modality and an empowering sense of self-institutionalization and self-procurement, sometimes shared, but a process that always implies some type of agreement and solidarity among participating artists.

This operative work modality, from the bottom up and horizontally expansive by way of the Internet, is interesting as a **phenomenon that reconfigures power** and the established notions of “centers” of procurement and legitimization of artistic production. On the one hand, this alters the role of the artist, placing her or him within a more politically exposed profile; and, additionally, it alters museum practice by imbuing it with the possibility of greater creative sense in presentation, attending to the particularities and variants of combinations of the artistic discourse, rather than to a predetermined “packaging” of contents that suggests cohesion with a theoretic assumption on which we place our belief. Without observing the pseudo-pluralistic methodology that takes into account the inclusion of the opposite point of view within the same presentation, often not falsely equitable or unnecessary as in this case, the present selection has followed the rhizome of variety of form and content, without taking into account a geographic logic, nor the realization of an exhaustive sampling of positions and strategies. Observing interest in diversity but without the pretense of an all encompassing vision, the exhibition has been shaped based on an open lateral collection, with a personalized outline of connectivity, direct, suggested or causingly sought after, which together constitutes an expanded metaphor, provocative and moving; an ephemeral territory, heterogeneous but containing multiple reflections and contemplations. The exhibit is a temporal convergence of meditations that stem from personified or protagonist contemplations on the feminine, that transcends the rationalization of a classification with respect to national/regional origin, as well as clear, binary assumptions about identity and gender. It presents individual artists, mostly women, whose proposals must be reorganized and related to by the viewer in accordance with his or her own decision of implication. Along these lines, *Subjected Culture ...* is a collective exhibition proposed as self-referential multiplication and artistic activism, a sort of “social sculpture” as the concept coined by Joseph Beuys³, an alternative practice of curation-creation and artistic gestation as gestation of community.

The thematic imprint resulted from a personal need to treat a series of **circumstances that implicate me testimonially as a woman and person of consciousness**, somehow put in evidence in the tributes contained in the preface. The murder of Safia Bibi in Lahore and the news on new disappearances among which young women are counted, particularly in Tucumán⁴, added to the observation of a certain “vacuum” or **relegation of clearly argumentative social references in large part of the more recent art that has been promoted in my country as of the 1990s**. Although a greater number of women artists has emerged and gained national and international exposure, some with work that weaves through various levels of cultural evaluation, the tendency has been to comprehend these artists in a more or less individual manner, understated and disconnected from earlier legacies and theoretic proposals concerning the context in which they evolve and involve themselves.

Assuming as point of departure an exercise in contemplation and deepening awareness of the emotional impact in view of repeated violence, subjugation and infinite forms of resistance so often belittled, I established the thematic center of this gathering of works as research, at the crossing point or point of impact between **the embodied experience of the feminine in all of its possible variants** and the material and/or symbolic culture in which due to the condition of the feminine as subject, in some aspect or systematically, has experienced the difference with negative connotations to which it has had to respond in some way. These **Interruptions** that can take the shape of internalized commands, latent

violence or outright physical victimization, repeat themselves in all societies and cultural conditions, globally.

The fact that we refer to **the feminine** and not to **woman** allows us to expand and isolate the topic of observation from its strong connections to what is “natural” and biological, going further to consider the merely cultural and intensely ideological and performative origin of the attributes of gender, taking into account that **the feminine manifests itself in multiple ways in multiple bodies, and that there are more than two human genders or that gender has the possibility of being modified, recreated or mutated**, beyond the dominant binary quality that expresses and serves heterosexist patriarchal ideology in its need to control or subdue bodies and society. *Subjected Culture* ... attempts to place the question of conflict and “lack” or underestimation from the artificial margin and de-centralization of the power of the feminine, to the center of social life. It is an invitation to emphasize the emotions and acts of **resistance** and to inaugurate empowering affirmations while at the same time delving into and exposing the symbolic instability of gender transactions and preassumptions.

Being conscious of the recessive state and/or the “academic site” in which the discourse of social criticism finds itself, and the scarce treatment or reference to informed discussions concerning feminist contributions and developments in culture and particularly within the field of visual arts in Argentina, this exhibit presents a body of art with diverse approaches and historic cultural contexts, with the intent to summon an involved experience and active reading on the part of the viewer, taking into account the unavoidable relationship between art and the greater socio-cultural context.

Unavoidable Avoidance. “The F Word” / (feminism) and the Argentinean Context

Taking, as a point of departure, the consensual notion that when we refer to “the world and its issues,” men as well as women assume a collection of ideas that are almost exclusively cause and effect of documented and recognized masculine actions, **the universalization of the sub-alterity of women** and, consequently, of the feminine in the of its economic, social and political instance, is commonplace in all levels of people’s social and private lives, in almost all societies, or in the best of cases, an integral part of its surely not so distant social history.

As of the cohesive formulation of consciences and commanding intentionalities, first historically organized around the acceptance of a woman’s right to vote, improvements in work conditions and labor rights for women, maternal authority and later concerning more intangible rights not any less basic, such as those relating to sexuality, the right to choose with regard to procreation and the expressions and representations of gender, **feminism as a movement and social thought that evidences the assemblage and functioning of patriarchal society has been a most complex and encompassing emancipating phenomenon**, completely in effect. It traverses and includes many of the emancipating preoccupations of the social struggles of the 20th Century, even having emerged, as many other ideologies of change, from within the margins of the privileged social strata that had access to education and time to reflect. Beyond the achievements and legislative matters still pending, discrimination continues, nevertheless, to function with renewed mechanisms of omission and stigmatization, often ill-informed and confused when not openly conservative. This has come to be called the “backlash,” “bashing” or attack on feminist discourse. This forms part of the neo-liberal trend that competes with and dominates the processes of globalization with the premises recited in the 1990s from the political right of the Northern Hemisphere concerning the “New World Order.”

Feminism as civil political discourse in Argentina emerged during the period of settlement of European immigrants at the end of the Nineteenth Century, within the context of the emergence of socialist ideas and organizations of clear European, egalitarian origin, reformulated to the reality of Argentina. The feminist movement emerges from the hand of pioneers such as Dr. Alicia Moreau de Justo and Dr. Julieta Lanterini, among many others, who in 1906 founded the Feminist Center of Argentina (*Centro Feminista de Argentina*) and the Pro-Feminine Suffrage Committee (*Comité Pro-Sufragio Femenino*), the League for the Rights of Women and Children (*Liga por los Derechos de las Mujeres y los Niños*), among others, and in 1920 the NFU / National Feminist Union (UFN / *Unión Feminista Nacional*). During this historic period, the legislative body of basic principles of social justice was established. Among these basic principles appeared the need for women's suffrage, divorce, and equal pay for equal work.

The political presence of feminism in Argentina has had a long and unique history of triumphs, ruptures and paradoxes. It is a fragmented history, as is the civil participation of Argentineans who, since the 1930s, saw themselves involved in successive coups d'état and military governments. Feminism had an initial period of strong socialist characteristics and resonance within the institutional discourse, beginning with activism on the part of women largely of middle and upper social status, and later with the phenomenon of mass political access for working class women, after the appearance of Eva Perón into the political arena, the materialization of women's right to vote (1947 and 1949) and the founding of the Party of Peronist Women (*Partido de las Mujeres Peronistas*) by Eva Duarte, during the administration of Juan D. Perón. Peronism persecuted the opposition. Among those persecuted were some feminist leaders of the first generation, who saw in the Peronist profile certain anti-democratic characteristics. Peronism denied as well the legacy of the history of important previous social struggles, and established radical changes in favor of the working class and women, but from the top down, in conjunction with a project of construction of power in a mythical-monolithic sense. The perception of feminism as an elitist and "foreign" ideology or even "imperialistic" is a paradoxical and simplistic construct that has been pronounced by differing political sectors, including some women's organizations. This perception was reinforced with the Peronist project. This ideological and class fracture remains a divisive veil over the narrative of women's political activism.

Feminism in art as a historical movement of thought and cultural action of visible impact takes place during the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and Europe, within the climate of social movements pertaining to civil rights and of revolutionary anti-capitalist ideologies of the same period. **When feminism in art began to formulate its first political and theoretic marks, Argentina entered at a firm pace into its darkest period of social and ideological repression.** During the 1970s, a brief resurgence of the so-called second feminist wave took place, with the forming of several feminist organizations, among them, the **FUA / Feminist Union of Argentina (UFA / Unión Feminista Argentina)**, organization which, as so many other political organizations of dissidence or representation of alterity was silenced with the coup of 1976. Among them we can name **Our World (Nuestro Mundo/1968)** that later gave way to the **Homosexual Liberation Front of Argentina (Frente de Liberación Homosexual Argentino/1971-1976)**, with leaders that had strong union and leftist backgrounds⁵ who first worked underground until the brief democratic period of the elected presidency of Cámpora (1973).

The struggles for human rights, social justice and civil liberties in Argentina suffered an almost fulminating attack that completely destroyed the course of their cultural and political advance toward a more just, open and balanced society. Many of the causes and struggles that affected "minorities," among which half of the country's population notably finds itself trapped, in other words, women, were relegated even further in the face of the brutal emergence of the "anti-subversive" attack and the "witch hunt" to which the population in general was subjected under a systematic plan of state terrorism.

In the 1980s, not only had the repressive apparatus not been dismantled, but this very same apparatus adapted itself to the new neo-liberal modality in the form of private security companies, if not directly linked in servile manner to the new political-corporate mafias of the era of Carlos Menem. The internalization of repression has been and continues to be—especially in matters that affect the feminine gender—part of the daily negotiations of ethical and material values in the entire public sphere. At the same time, in somewhat fragmented and generally marginalized form on the part of the media, resistance against the internalization of repression has not ceased. The fear of being “discredited” and the fear of reprisals as a result of confronting abuse and corruption is highly internalized, and not in vain since there is a profound distrust of authority, as well as a distrust of the arduous legal and bureaucratic processes. Whoever is in power rarely demonstrates a vocation for service. **The paranoid-authoritarian models repeat themselves no matter what their affiliation**; they are a cultural-psychological epidemic that will require persistent evaluation and analysis to overcome. The intermittent economic urgency in which the population has been submerged as a result of the process of national “reconstruction”/destruction espoused by “Western-Christian” militarism, in many aspects continued and deepened by Menemism and its consequences, notably monopolized the energy of critical evaluation, protest and political and cultural action during the years after the dictatorship. To this can be added the stigmatic weight of the international defeat of the traditional Marxist left.

The **Argentinean post-dictatorship**, was experienced as a strange mix of relief for having exited the tunnel, along with persistent tension of a symptomatology of complicity with genocide. Within the cultural sphere, the post-dictatorship period was more a paradoxical continuity of fears, phobias, shroudings and simulations of overcoming trauma rather than an open process of liberalized self-uncovering or *destape*. With the participation of some art critics --a sector traditionally bonded to a historic narrative centralized on Buenos Aires and rooted in privileged sectors of society, its values or those dictated by “fashion”--, all expression that was not easily objectifiable and which reflected the uncomfortable and unresolved historic past, tended to be ignored. This sector chose to follow the conservative and official pulse that promised, finally, the yearned-for membership in the “first world” without having to even get on an airplane.

After the dictatorship, if the alternative or the different found relevant generating substances in the midst of the trivialization and lack of prestige of the discourses of dissidence toward the dominant culture, it continued to adapt itself to the imposed system of duplicity “culture-and-under”, only perhaps with less risk of the type of attacks suffered in the past, but not without examples of authoritarian state abuse. Two episodes of **art censorship** and direct and camouflaged threats stand out, in the case of **Grupo Crónica (1984 and 1985)** and that of the **homoerotic work of artist Sergio Tomatis (1986)**, **both cases having taken place in Tucumán**. These were cases in which the very authorities acted, first, to censor and vilify the artists; and second, as promoters of the author, later persecuted by the opposing party in a sort of staging of the absurd, the brutality of latent contradictions, manipulative speculations in an attempt to amend earlier political blunders, without any real attention and responsibility concerning the artworks and the rights of the artists on the part of the acting authorities⁶; thereby sacrificing with these acts the right to the access and opinion of an entire community. The endemic centralism of Buenos Aires that has alienated itself from what transpires artistically in the rest of the country is another layer of unknown and subalternity hardly challenged by the institutional, public and commercial art discourse and action. Often due more to astringent interests and ideological blindness than to an unattributed “invisibility”. The lack of mention or indifference on the part of art critics has contributed to a self-mutilated and scarcely agile official narrative of the history of Argentinean art.⁷

The struggle between the forces of memory and that of “let’s move on to something else,” continues to underlie all social and cultural life. Some dissident narratives will find the possibility of creating newly apt territories within the universities and later with deepening economic crises and institutional corruption, other “street” forms of opposing expression have emerged, some with artistic presence. Feminism reappeared during the first academic projects of gender or women’s studies, with small immediate

relevance in direct political action, and without apparent connection to concomitant art forms, except in the case of literature or, incidentally, film.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, certain established critics insisted on inscribing into the canon artistic productions that sat almost exclusively in subjectivity and in resolutions that, despite some interesting qualities of ambiguity, did not propose deep questioning. They gradually condensed a potential for viable commercialization, first with echoes of the Italian *transavanguardist* painting and later with the sweetened proposals of the so-called "*arte guarango*" (from Argentinean slang, "guarango" refers to daring, risqué ...) **and other neo-pop derivations**, visually attractive and yes, explicitly "anti-ideological." **An interesting development of the 1990s was the communion of that which was considered "under" with the expectations of an a-critical culture encompassed with Menemism, assuming a certain "official" nature.** That "*arte guarango*" of the anti-intellectualization and shift toward "light" attitudes, of the celebration of pure symptom and unevaluated emotionality, of the appropriation of the kitsch as an end or effect and not as means and mode of cultural identity, as well as some "neo-pop" proposals of rapid conceptualism and so-called "de-solemnization of art," navigate—even at the present time—through confusing waters between what is "*hot*" and what is "*cool*," and fashionable. A tendency that speculates with a market viability already signaled which, although it supports a certain instability of identity of latent critical potential, it is generally not made explicit nor analyzed deeply. Because the reality of the socio-discursive context inevitably causes any attempt at putting things in order to overflow, even in the most attentive and respectful rehearsal, in the very heart of the well-known phenomenon of emergence of the "light" artists, some exceptional artists did rise, such as Liliana Maresca (1951-1994). **The point is not to dismiss the interest in these developments; the problem is their manufactured centrality at the expense of a true aperture and historic contest in plurality.**

Because Argentinean artists have always been attentive to international developments, what is surprising is the absence of surprise concerning the lack of discussion about the legacy of feminist art as the last avant garde movement mid 20th Century, still alive in multiple manifestations and processes within contemporary art, a category in which every artist wants to be included nowadays. Can it be said that the **relationship between art and feminism is practically ineffective in Argentina?** What is perceived is a sort of bypassing of its presence and historic strength and an almost voluntary marginalization of the feminist discourse, both within the academic art sphere, as well as in the practice of art in general. Few collective or group exhibitions that appear to not have left relevant tracks have approached their orbit of interests, generally with a frame of reference of "gender theme," implicitly understood as "feminine," a term that carried the ambivalence of conformity with certain under-analyzed expectations.

Art that does not renounce maintaining a critical link with its socio-historical context in Argentina will have two aspects which, in neither case includes expressed reference to emancipating feminist contributions. One is a collective side, of direct intervention and supportive action with political organizations such as Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (*Madres de Plaza de Mayo*), H.I.J.O.S. (*Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*) an organization formed by children of disappeared victims of the dictatorship, the neighborhood assemblies and the organizations of unemployed workers which came about as a result of the national breakdown which inaugurated the 21st Century, with graphic and performative productions. Some examples are the *Siluetazo* of 1982 which exposed in the public sphere the pending question concerning the disappeared; groups such as **C.A.PA.TA.CO. (Colectivo de Arte Participativo Tarifa Común / Common Rate Participative Art Collective)**; **Grupo Escombros (Debris Group)**, from the city of La Plata, which acts since 1988; and after 2001, **El GAC (Street Art Group / Grupo de Arte Callejero)** and **Grupo Etcétera**, among others. Their contributions will generally be ignored by local specialized critics and later recognized by researchers from other countries. The other side of socially critical art more or less conforms to the charismatic model and will have fragmented expressions in individual artists of different generations who will also achieve international attention: León Ferrari,

Graciela Carnevale, Graciela Sacco, Nicola Costantino, among others. This is art that synthesizes new modes of formal eloquence, integrating technologies, creative process and conceptual force. **The social cohesion of the experimental and political fervor of the decade before the last dictatorship never again reproduced itself and the "punishment" left behind interrupted journeys.**

One way of **observing the sharpened affluence of masculine supremacy and patriarchal domination of "the relevant" within the context of Argentinean art**, is to compare enrollment by gender in schools and institutions of art training, and the number of artists recognized by critics, galleries and museums. The results appear to be largely contrasting, except in more recent initiatives that generally emerge from the artists themselves. The programs responsible for issuing awards and scholarships tend to illustrate a similar disparity. On the other hand, what is also notable is the existence or lack of existence of publications, art exhibits and festivals that expressly tackle the ideologic economy of representations and expressions sustaining an analysis of the implications of gender constructs and marks of class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality and other differential factors in the production and reception of art. It is very revealing to investigate the manner in which all artistic creation, whether intentionally or not, necessarily reflects or refracts the implicit contents of the power games that are always present in every discourse or statement.

One only has to observe **Argentinean television** for a few minutes to recognize the high level of "*machista*" heterosexism in force, in a truly extroverted sampling of abuse and objectification of the feminine figure. In an almost cartoonish manner, feminine physical forms are repeatedly and exaggeratedly exposed, in hysterical visual narratives in which women almost never appear as independent transmitters from the general tone in which they act out the Barbie-Showgirl model without questioning it in the least. Notably, **Argentina is one of the countries of greatest consumption of female cosmetic surgery**, even on the part of very young women, and it is becoming popular in the package industry of international tourism. Hysteria, after all, is a masculine creation of its own desire and projection in the body "other" of the woman that it never manages to possess. "Sadism originates as revenge in the face of feminine hermeticism or as a desperate attempt to obtain a response from a body that we fear is insensitive." An honest reflection on the part of Octavio Paz in his text titled *The Children of Malinche (Los hijos de la Malinche)* –1950⁸. Finally, in light of the existential fact that every subject is a mystery to itself, the alleged "hermeticism" or otherness of the feminine that fascinates and exasperates the dominant gender is nothing more than another symptom of the impositions of the patriarchy: "do not contradict me" and "if you do not speak you drive me crazy."

The F Word / Is the word feminism in art circles an omission that may become a pseudo-taboo?

... perhaps more so among artists than among critics, but in any case, it is a distant or passing reference, as in the idea implied in that phrase that was sometimes heard in Buenos Aires until before the return from exile and the successive economic diasporas and new immigration waves from Asian and bordering countries: "Racism is not an Argentinean problem because here we have no Indians or Negroes," ignoring, in addition, the racial mixture of other regions of the country. Art of feminist orientation is perceived as saturation, when in fact it comprises the great absence from the historiography of contemporary art in schools and art criticism. Perhaps in the future a more attentive shift toward these legacies and possibilities will be observed, particularly after the wave of exhibits that have taken place in 2007⁹ in Europe and the United States that specifically focus on art that recognizes feminist ascendancy. **Argentinean artists, due to cultural and class positioning, have been paying attention and in many cases have participated in the proposals of the European avant garde.** Establishing some parallel periods (even of certain avant garde leadership not always attributed, for which reason such leadership never lost its subalternate position with respect to world centers), this "avant garde present" had one of its moments in the 1960s¹⁰, when leftist movements and anti-imperialist ideas were at their

peak. This period of “partial leveling” with international cultural effervescence was foam that fizzled rapidly in Argentina with the dictatorship of 1976. The question is whether that “jump” or omission would become an indelible suture of passage from “proto” to “post”, or whether in light of the revisions and “retro” movements, feminist art will finally have its late or “neo” within the national scene. Without a doubt it does so in the sense of the diaspora, but that is a story that has not yet been written. In the economic plane, the cosmetics of “universalism” have always worn beneath them a conservative suit of class, masculine and European in the racial sense. **Feminism did not constitute itself as a reference that was reinforced by the experiments of the 1960s, and that relegation still wears an invisibly dense and costly veil. But even though the epicenter could not be seen, the waves were felt and continue to be felt in every corner of the earth and in the modes of combination in much of contemporary art.**

We must mention here the well-known artist **Marta Minujín**, currently included in “*Wack! Art and the feminist revolution*” (see endnotes # 9), whose rise takes place within the context of the Instituto Di Tella. She is an artist who shares international standing with European and North American avant garde artists. Minujín is an outstanding innovator, with a spectacular, public art form, with social irony and of heroic scale, a quality notably associated with masculine authors. Perhaps the filmmaker **María Luisa Bemberg** is the only self-proclaimed feminist Argentinean artist. She was one of the founders of the Feminist Union of Argentina (UFA) in the 1970s and, already being a successful screenwriter. Disenchanted with the treatment of her scripts by other directors, she made the decision to direct her own stories and carried out her first two shorts with the collaboration of members of the UFA. It is important to note here that in the ongoing historiographic structure of Argentinean visual arts, film, and in great part even photography, remain marginalized. Not only do the delimitations between the arts and art genres present themselves as highly permeable, but what is also observed with the increasing digitalization of the visual text is a displacement toward the center of time-based processes or moving image such as film, video and animations.

At the juncture of the 1970s and 80s, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Madres de Plaza de Mayo), who do not consider themselves feminists, are true artists of the impossible, transforming a destiny in many cases of domestic relegation into an exemplary front of commitment and frontal public action in the face of prohibitions and persecutions, transforming pain, impotence and indifference into a generating force that would finally defeat the dictatorship. As of the mid-1980s, and especially with some exhibits of the 1990s, the increasing visibility—already mentioned in these notes—of numerous women artists, is notable. Many of them have made important contributions to the discursivity of gender assumptions, some with international connectivity and presence.¹¹

What is still pending is an in-depth study of the processes and consequences of the **delay in the emergence and relationship of the theoretic discourse of feminism**, today of multiple voices, and of **queer theories** with respect to a vision that encompasses self-examination of the social system and, in particular, of art, in and from Argentina and its difference with developments in other regions of Latin America. We must keep in mind that, consciously informed or not by feminism, infinite modes of resistance are constantly produced, but contact with theory truly accelerates production and creativity.

Retroactive assessment and research about culture are fundamental within the context of the systematic invisibilization or relegation of contents. This is particularly necessary with respect to the art produced by women and others who did not or do not respond to the promotional canons and interests, historically dominant within the power sectors of the art world. Nevertheless, the increasing reinforcing focus in Europe and the United States concerning this type of production with some important historic revisions of the past year and the renewed criticism and self-criticism that are generating, indicates a shift on an international level that at the same time forecasts a possible **celebratory moment of revitalization and connectivity, as a consequence of years of struggle and for the benefit of**

the pluralist democratic paradigm, threatened in complex form by the advance of the fundamentalist and conservative forces in both regions, while also foreboding the **possible commercialization of feminist art in the center of the market tendency to absorb protest movements**. This juncture could give way to interesting syntheses and integrations among the contributions and discussions about the generations of the 1970s and 1990s--feminisms, gender and "postfeminism,"—that may allow us to glimpse **new paradigms and models** of social and artistic force that could reinvest the benefits of this attention in the continuity of its own liberating causes.

The body as discursive site and instrument

If everything "neutral" is really masculine, in other words, if everything explicit and implicit in culture and language is masculine--Freud/Lacan/Irigaray—and behaves in the sense of the affirmation of its own power, how can the Other subjugated gender speak and take ownership of itself and the world? This was the basic question of the theoretic efforts of the 1970s.

In the social history of women, **the patriarchal symbolic order has cancelled the female body, the possibility of difference and the independence of its desire and symbolic relationship with the real**. From the theorization of that condition, the emphasis on the necessary primacy of alterity over identity that can guarantee political and existential equanimity was well developed during its original period of protest against the patriarchal discourse, within the assumptions of sexual binarism. This field has multiplied into theoretic positions and developments to consider one's own potential and the social multiplicity of subjectivity, now not only of "the woman" as a "natural assumed category, but one that includes ample manifestations of lesbic desires, insufficiently represented during the first feminist wave, and of other relational and inter-subjective variants that expand the binary model and all form of exclusivity and stabilization of the symbolic. What is also discriminated is the difference between gender and sexuality and their intrinsic relationships with other variables such as social class, race, ethnicity, etc. These developments understand gender and "identification" as functions that are fundamentally regulated by the patriarchy and as a sort of "acting" or performance that, in themselves, lack an essential origin but rather respond to cultural constructs. Thinkers such as Judith Butler¹², of a Foucaultian line, have contributed in this sense to a **politics of transgression of the fixed identity of gender**, and to a theoretic frame propitious to the manifestation of Other "subversive" eroticisms. **These self-proclaimed Queer¹³ theories of great influence as of the 1990s place sexual minorities and other non-normative subjectivities in a leading role of cultural analysis and political expression.**

Just as it can be said that **all cultural production implies a contextual political positioning despite the fact that it can be directly omitted in its subject matter¹⁴**, it can also be said that all discourse, artistic and social actioning contains assumptions that demonstrate the positioning of its protagonists with respect to the issues of representation and value in the field of gender, beyond the gender itself or the sexuality of who expresses it. If what we understood as "universal" contained imbued values of the patriarchy and its expectations of self-reproduction, **the focus on investigating one's own subjectivity and materiality (body) was a logical consequence** of emergence still in effect in art produced by women and other subjectivities, whether sexually or culturally not hegemonic. This **dissolution of distance and protocol between the social body and the body of the subject**, between art object and art-emitting subject is one of the most vivid contributions of feminist art to contemporary art. Consequences of this aspect are its **expansiveness in the social fabric**, the exercise of **self-anthropology, the body as discursive site and instrument**.

The body would be the immediate site of possibility for the silenced subalterity and may reinvent itself as of the very instruments that have been used to silence it. In the words of

Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard¹⁵: “The body is the physical agent of the structures of daily experience.... Given that the body is between biology and society, between impulses and discourse, between the sexual and its categorization in terms of power, biography and history, it is the site *par excellence* to transgress the limitations of meaning according to the prescribed norms of social discourse.”

It is interesting to see how the word “Revolution,” practically hollowed since the 1980s, is reemerging in large art headlines along with a renewed vision of the binomial art and feminism. Undoubtedly, this use is adjacent to the present purposes, within the framework of the obviously valid force of feminist political programs, but neither does it appear as exclusively ornamental. This **drawing of constructs and points of view** make for the evolution of the struggles for emancipation and constitute opportunities and/or signs of transformation. For example, although feminism insisted in a very sanctioning mode upon **the “objectification” of the feminine bodies and the fetichization of aspects of their biological attributes** in the theater of social symbols dominated by the masculine gaze, **the transsexual bodies**, now possible due to the progress of science and technology, **are based precisely on the reproduction of such signs for a deeply desired authentication** of their transformation to the new life and readjudicated gender identity. Without a doubt, from the subjective point of view of the transsexual person, it cannot be said that the reproduction of those “stereotypical” signs are in these cases masks that shelter oppression; rather, the opposite takes place in these resignifying realizations. Likewise, there are other instances in which **art and queer discourse allow us to have a glimpse of the possible plurality of forms of resistance and liberation** from the models given for representation and negotiation of identities and intersubjectivity.

This endeavor of the conquest of **equanimity and right to difference** is the constant that crosses through every possible relationship, action and presence from feminist formulations, for all alterity, and it implies complex processes of investment and appropriation that finally evidence **the “originally” hegemonic as marginal and backward with respect to a realistic and more harmonious version of humanity as heterogeneous plurality.**

The relegation of feminist art is a reflection of the place occupied by women in society. The official practice of art exhibition has been and is to isolate the art objects from the context in which they have been created, as a “neutralizing” and “universalizing” method. On many occasions art of feminist orientation has solved that filter by incorporating such information directly into the work, as in the case of the *Guerrilla Girls* whose work is based on evidencing economic statistics of institutions and art criticism. **The art world has been transformed by feminism and feminism has been transformed by the force of feminist art.** In addition, many feminists find themselves among the leading critics of the art world. Feminism has redefined terms of recent art of the 20th Century and it is in direct ascendance by strategies, resources and the like, of contemporary art produced by women or men in the present day. **It has effectively integrated the personal with the public, arts and crafts, the sacred with the profane, the poetic and the scientific, popular and academic culture, the thematic and the methodological, the objectual and the experiential.**

No other art movement is as intrinsically linked to a social movement and to a profound conceptualization of history and human matters. Feminism has insisted upon the **interconnectedness and dependence of all meaning with regard to its social, economic, political and symbolic materiality.** The traditional modernist taboo of **“the didactic in art”** becomes the target of research and a challenge that allows it to develop its capacity to **adapt and adopt “real” matters as art material** and to establish immediate intimacy with the viewer. The spectrum of these influences is palpable in contemporary art, even in the new, increasingly mediatized modes and in the global popular culture of

"reality shows," for example, with the exception that in such cases the entertainment industry directs its commercial voracity at a fleeting exploitation of intimacy and the abject without any critical sense.

The feminist discourse, because of its characteristic analytic and self-examining incisiveness, branches out and becomes diversified while it establishes points in common and emancipating principles. In the art field, feminism has had historic moments with legendary works that marked milestones, but it identifies itself more as a strong intentionality with some recurring methods and themes rather than as a rigid formulation of precepts as occurred with other avant garde movements; perhaps for this reason it has not disappeared **and can coexist with any aesthetic proposition or artistic discipline**.

The works and the exhibition

The invited artists have a trajectory of commitment confronting the "given" in culture and in their own lives with substantial openness and unique incisiveness in formulation; they commit any subjectivity in the network of their own proposals of representation. All of the works, including the video material and those that are more conceptual, anchored in the use and visualization of language as agent that affects presence and environment, allude to the human body as field of significance, reflective instance or instrument of expression, mainly feminine and its own, but not exclusively.

Not in all cases do the works have a direct or intentional link to feminist preoccupations or those of "feminist art." This is particularly evident in the work of the artists who operate in the realm of Argentinean production. However, certain emotional qualities and tensions explored in the works that illustrate the relative specificities and cultural differences establish a series of reflections and connections that speak of clever inquiries and of liberating resignifications of the feminine in relation to dominant narratives of the context in which their lives take place, with dramatic significance and effective communication. Within the framework of this exhibit, with a high degree of technology and media in the production of the works in general, those of the Argentinean context, along with the work of Pat Payne (USA), are notable for their striking physicality, which is one of the values that they incorporate into their work. It was precisely Pat Payne who expressed in an e-mail, "I am a feminist, even though I am too busy living my life to worry about external labels ... I believe that my art is informed by feminism, but I have never expressly attempted to create 'feminist art.' I have no idea what that would look like."

It is important to contemplate the diversity of cultural contexts and the journey of each artist, in some way insinuated by pointing out the places of origin and setting of their creative voyage, with the inclusion of their writings with the works. The artists who work in/from the "Islamic world" confront unique challenges of symbolic operation, strategies of resistance and exposition that need to be approached; in doing so, one must suspend reductionist evaluations. **Just as gender constructs are culturally and historically relative, no work of art has a fixed symbolic or artistic value.**

Several generations converge, as do diverse cultures of origin and adoption, artistic maturity, and a recurring reference or inclusion of the body as locus of the metaphoric exercise. The discursive lines are multiple and make up a pattern that in each work as a unit indicate different levels of cross references with one or another dominant thematic color, confrontational determination and domain of its own semantic and formal field. Without shutting out any proposition we can establish the following observations:

The sacrificial mind-body, exposed, alluded to, denounced, studied, sublimated, imagined, re-appropriated, humored:

Nilofar A.; Graciela O.; Karla S.; Emile D.; Jinoos T.; Coco F.; Ursula B.; Mabel T.; Lilian N.; Lolas C.; Isis R.; Eli C.; Isabel B.; Jorge L.C.; Anahita V.; Angela S.; Farida B.; Frances C.; Christa E.; Tari I.; Shakuntala K.; Daskat women-Farida B.-Graciela O.; Phoebe M.

The mythical mind–body and the imagined community of values and subverted colonization:

Graciela O.; Gigi O.-Heather C.; Isis R.; Lolas C.; Jorge L.C.

The yearning and inquisitive mind-body confronted with its cultural memory, historically and/or racially displaced:

Frances C.; Pat P., Daskat women-Farida B.-Graciela O.; Lilian N.; Lolas C.

The aging mind-body of our elders, the signs and losses of the communal base, the relationship of cultural identity and generational testimony:

Pat P.; Graciela O.; Jorge L. C

The masked and/or avenging, appropriated mind-body that intervenes within the social and the historical:

Guerrilla Girls; Lolas C.; Jinoos T; Coco F.

The confrontation and desired continuation of the mind-body in another, beyond and/or because of its sexual identity:

Varsha N.-Tejal S.; Farida B.; Tari I.; Anahita V.; Phoebe M.

The self-absorbed mind-body that questions and retells the world prioritizing itself:

Varsha N.; Isis R.; Phoebe M.; Eli C.; Graciela O.; Farida B.; Tejal S.-Marco Paulo R.

The mind-body trapped in domesticity, cultural determinism and seclusion, imposed work and attributes according to gender:

Shadhi G.; Christa E.; Eli C.; Angela S.; Shakuntala K.; Jinoos T.; Pat P.; Phoebe M.; Isabel B..

The *queer*, transvestite, transsexual and transgenderizing mind-body:

Tejal S.-Marco Paulo R.; Gigi O.-Heather C.; Tari I.; Jorge L. C.; Graciela O.; Emile D.

The subversively desirous mind-body:

Anahita V.; Tari I.; Isis R.; Tejal S.-Marco Paulo R.; Jorge L.C.

Without directly alluding to the **discussion about feminism and “post-feminism,”** in my opinion, part of the symptomatology of a transitional evolutionary moment—since feminism has not been “defeated” and if it disappears it will be by virtue of its victory--, **the works** truly “speak for themselves,” and present known preoccupations not yet overcome in the social setting, and shed light on the determination and strength of art that integrates itself with passion and rigor with critical contents. The writings that accompany the artists’ work are included in the epigraphs as contextualizing instrument and in some cases as an integral part of the work itself.

Many of the artists identify themselves as feminists, even though they may not identify their entire work exclusively as such. However, it can be said that the feminist art of today encompasses a wide spectrum of operations and successive reinventions since the time of those first experiments of breaking with the norms, as well as the eagerness to investigate gender specificity. Others, such as the *Guerrilla Girls*, successful “*escrachadoras*”¹⁶ of the international art world, do it categorically; others work more in the field of gender research with a sense of the *queer*, or simply in a self-referential manner. In the

majority, the personal contemplates the social, and in all cases the legacy of feminist art is an unavoidable reference.

The labels and categorizations are always temporary and somewhat artificial, a contextually relative exercise, and of course, a political instrument of social efficiency. Naming is a common action. Linked to mechanisms of understanding and appropriation, it is also, for the same reason, one of the most attractive intellectual tasks that as cultural subjects submerged in and constantly emerging from language, we cannot avoid. Although this exercise of naming can be joined to negative discriminatory intentions, it offers at the same time the possibility to subvert such marks and conquer new, empowering visibilities in the inter-play of culture.

If we had to apply a label to this exhibition, with all the recognition of its legacy to Feminist Art and/or informed by social analysis led by Feminisms, without divorcing ourselves from this dynamic, open and fascinating history, I would prefer something that is closer to the *Queer*, or in combination with it, where *Queer* can be explained as **pragmatic Chimera, self-affirmational**, just as that which is comfortable with what is unstable and diverse, even if it permits the possibility of emotional and rational certainty, and which, being perhaps not “so” radical with respect to forms and intentions at times, also does not propose to shut off under lock and key the perimeter of its own creation of meaning and investigation, nor does it surrender in the face of the glitter of temporary success, which is always slippery.

★

Conclusion and notes on the material nature of the exhibition and the institutional experience.

If there is something that feminist art and cultural analysis have contributed, it is the consideration that **ideologies and conservative dynamics of power are made up in the everyday details, and so is their transformation**. I have initiated and sustained this project within the framework of my artmaking, taking concepts such as that of “social sculpture” of Beuys and inspired by the practice and discussions of feminist art with which I have made contact in the United States, a place where its struggle and its history have given way to a leading role in its gestation and where it is comprehensively more developed. As a multidisciplinary and semi-nomadic artist, I defend this position, one which, not without equal rigor, allows me greater mobility and flexibility and allows the viewer/reader the proportionally inverse possibility to go through these contents in an open way, in accordance with her or his willingness for implication. Each project carries the seed to the one that follows it. The original impulse that gave way to this project came about after the assassination of Safia Bibi, in 2004, during the sixth version of ***Souvenir of Tucumán – Nomadic Anthology of Objects*** in Pakistan. I sorted out the difficulties and set out to determine my base of support; thus, I made the decision to go forward adjusting the scheme of the project, and I cast out a sketch of the proposal with approximately ten names of confirmed artists, in August of 2006.

The first positive response was for exhibition space in Tucumán, where they could only commit to a budget of “\$300 pesos” in the city’s main museum. Additionally, it was a secondary space in the museum that had to be conditioned to a minimum standard, *in situ*, not without uncertainty and insistence barely three days before the opening. I threw myself completely into this project, which finally grew to be a major exhibition. **The project allowed me to take on and confront the institutional situation of some museums in Argentina**, most of which are state-run and depend upon the areas of culture of their provincial or municipal governments. All of them share very active agendas which quite scarcely are materially and conceptually funded from the same institutional administration, with budgets that are reduced and/or irregularly offered and without apparent plans for development and professionalization. Management positions are politically appointed and are not always filled with apt and committed officials

who are able to project long term developments. Some exceptions observed within my experience with this project, are the following: The Contemporary Museum of Art of Salta -- by virtue of the appointees-- and the MACRO of Rosario, which emerged from a mixture of private and public funding with a clear vision and commitment to contemporary national art, professional administration and appropriate infrastructure. By far, Tucuman was the weakest and most incoherent institutional experience only leveled by the personal effort of a few individuals who helped achieve the realization of the show.

In the context of official art institutions that traditionally absorb the "left-over" of attention and budgets, notable efforts are some programs developed by the Fondo Nacional de las Artes / National Fund for the Arts, a federal institution that currently has two exhibition halls in Buenos Aires. Programs that hold the mission of exploring and presenting art productions from the regions of the interior of the country, traditionally disconnected between one another and isolated from the capital, which continues to be the main center of internal migration within the nation. The effort of this institution to **publish catalogs of the exhibitions** also stands out. Although brief, they are a notable exception as it **carries out the necessary documentary investment in the country's art history and its growing cultural heritage.**

The absence of programs that promote artistic creation and curation is evident. Such artistic creation and curation, without other institutions as intermediaries, could benefit artists individually and collectively, directly and efficiently, engaging and supporting them to develop plans of exhibition and dialogue with specific communities. The National Foundation for the Arts was the only institution among those with which I have been in contact in relation to this project that counts with stability and disposable funds to compensate curatorial work at approximately "\$800 Argentinean pesos," according to what was communicated to me. The MAC of Salta and the MACRO of Rosario did cover transportation costs, as well as the costs of my traveling and stay during those days of work. All other production costs of the specific exhibits were supported by the institutions with the exception of Tucuman that neither had participation on any costs of traveling or transportation.

What is interesting about the format of museums as free public institutions is their inherent potential permeability with respect to the art community and the public in general. However, in many cases, their structures, assimilated to the old state bureaucracy and passive dependency on reduced budgets, the supremacy of vertical political "loyalty" (linked to the traditional relegation of the areas of education and culture) rather than being a horizontal loyalty to knowledge and the current needs of the local community, with administrations that depend upon the will and "style" of their directors, limit their necessary transformation in order to respond with greater efficacy to today's cultural demands. After so many institutional and economic crises in the country, after more than twenty years of reestablished democracy, perhaps we find ourselves at the dawn of this **necessary and rigorous restructuring and professionalization of museums, not only in their mission as preservers of patrimony, but also as vital centers of transmission of information and experience.**

The production of this catalog and many material aspects of the exhibition and its international transport have been carried out in the same manner as most Argentinean artists exhibit their work: with personal or private funds, within a still disparate context between production and market possibilities. This is the only reason or strategy by which this international exhibit has been possible from an original individual effort, with itinerating costs of a local type of exhibit. We are foreseen a possible closing event for the cycle of the exhibition in Buenos Aires, with the support of the Fondo Nacional de las Artes, with an evening of Live Art in which some of the artists of the show would participate, along with other Argentinean artists.

With respect to the **curatorial work** that implies various types of generation and connection of logistics between: concept / artists and works / institutions / funds / spaces and agendas / transportation, storage and security of the works / framing and packaging of the works / design and exhibition set-up / preparation of contextual material / audience / documentation / design and production of alternative advertising / translations / theorization of the experience, among other aspects. The work has been as arduous as it has been rewarding, although not in the material sense. My proposal was not conditioned upon professional remuneration but I inquired about the policies of the institutions in this regard, with the intention of making explicit the mutually dignifying importance of systematic recognition, without irregularities or favoritism, of the work of independent cultural generators, just as they do with other contractual situations for services that benefit or support the functions of the institution. A conscious support of Independent cultural generators, can contribute to the dynamization of institutions in the sense of a healthy pluralism. Once again, the problem of neglect with respect to funds came to light, as did inconsistencies with regard to the commitment to develop policies destined to treat and overcome these limitations.

I give thanks to the four sponsoring institutions where the exhibit finally did take place. I thank them sincerely with a self-critizing position, for their interest and their efforts in doing everything possible during a time that, hopefully, can be considered a period of transition toward more solid developments of the economic potential with respect to culture and contemporary art and its role in the general progress of urban centers and the well-being of their inhabitants and their guests.

Notes:

¹ **Rhizomatic**, in the sense established by **Deleuze** and **Guattari**.

² I assumed the commitment to achieve a bilingual catalogue that would include all artists' texts and invited Bina Sarkar, Megumi Kitahara and Elsa Chen, to contribute with a short article for what I thought could materialize with the cooperative contribution of all the sponsoring institutions. On having verified the bureaucratic impossibility of this idea and after unfinished requests for support through other means for this end, this publication finally results in a self-publication, halfway through the itinerant schedule for the exhibit. The writers earlier mentioned did not have the privilege of the margin of time offered by this process, during which my original text expanded beyond the first plan. With the hope that it may be of interest, I ask to be excused for such disparity, although involuntary.

³ **Joseph Beuys** (1921–1986) Artist and “social visionary” born in Germany. He coined the terms “mental sculpture” and “social sculpture” to refer to a wide vision of art and creativity applied to human action in all of its spheres: “Art that cannot transform society and which, therefore, cannot penetrate the heart of society’s questions, [and] in the end influence the issue of capital, is not art.”

⁴ The disappearance of persons in Argentina is not just a thing of the past. The visibility of the disappearance of Jorge Julio López -September 18, 2006-, key witness in the trials that were re-opened against the genocide that occurred in Argentina, demonstrates the continuity of a widely unpunished practice, which serves different ends and interests of sectors of power clearly related to and/or in complicity with mafia organizations. Before this case, many others, the majority less renowned, register the disappearance of young women, some of them murdered. Three different cases have surfaced in Tucumán: **Marita Verón** --April 3, 2002--, **Paulina Lebbos** --February 26, 2006--, **Beatriz Argañarás** --July 31, 2006--, and **Fernanda Aguirre**, who disappeared in 2004 at 13 years of age in the province of Entre Ríos. All cases register notable shortcomings on the part of the official investigations and remain unresolved. These cases re-inscribe the ideology of the dictatorship that demonizes the victims, blurring crimes of violence and abuses within a climate of corruption and impunity with the consent or double manipulation of those who handle governmental institutions as well as the media. This deprecation-upon women has developed into a global industry in the last decades and is related to networks of prostitution, enslavement and traffic of young women, girls and boys, mafias that exploit regions of economic crisis and/or postwar periods, acting with political, police and judicial complicity. In Argentina, as in most of Latin America, the crime of the trafficking and trading of persons is not a federal crime; therefore, it

makes the area propitious for these operations. In addition, there exists no government entity with either specialization or necessary resources to fight these crimes.

Sometimes "They are captured under promises of well paid jobs, in destinations removed from the places advertised for which only 'good appearance' and no study is needed. Once moved they lose contact with their families. Other times the traffickers look for a certain profile to satisfy their clients and that is when the kidnappings take place Marita Verón, a 24-year-old woman, was captured by a band in her province, Tucumán, and according to her mother—who has not stopped looking for her and investigating--was sold for approximately 700 euros. ... The Argentine director of the International Coalition Against the Trade of Women and Children, Sara Torres, states that for more than ten years they have denounced these crimes, which nevertheless remain invisible ... " ... The International Labor Organization / *Organización Internacional del Trabajo* (OIT) estimates that in Argentina there are 500,000 individuals involved in the sex trafficking of women and minors." (Extracted from: <http://revista.pangea.org> REDH - Network for Human rights. Tuesday, April 19, 2005).

On the other hand, Dr. Laura Figueroa, lawyer from Tucumán specializing in human rights, indicates:

" Justice is refused or slowed down when the necessary conditions do not make possible the exercise of the imperium or when getting to the truth is prevented.

After 30 years, society has not achieved the condemnation of individuals responsible for the genocide!

The IMPUNITY of atrocious acts committed in the past, but of permanent execution as are the Forced Disappearance of Persons, constitute the principal cause of the recent kidnappings in our Province. Regrettably, it is like that, since, such serious acts having been not condemned by the State, constitute a counter-value that settles dangerously in the bowels of society. The cases of Marita Verón, Paulina Lebbos and Beatriz Argañarás, among others, prove that the kidnapping and concealing of victims are incorporated as aberrant methodology and the consequence is the nonexistence of protection and defense of society." (Extracted from: <http://www.estoestucuman.com.ar>)

⁵ Héctor Anabitarte, one of its founders, was a union leader who had been expelled from the Communist Party for being a homosexual. Among the five founders of the Homosexual Liberation Front (Frente de Liberación Homosexual) were the poet from Tucumán Juan José Hernandez, the writer Manuel Puig, Juan José Sebrelli and Blas Matamoros. It is important to point out the repression and/or denial of the issue of homosexuality and desire that took place among the leftist militancy. In some cases such negative aspects were conceived by women interested in feminism.

On June 20, 1973 a mobilization took place at Ezeiza Airport upon Juan Perón's return to Argentina after 18 years in exile. At this gathering could be heard slogans such as: "**We're not faggots, we're not potheads, we're soldiers of Evita and Montoneros.**" The event concluded in what came to be called "The Massacre of Ezeiza," with scores dead and wounded as a result of armed confrontations between opposing leftist groups and the Peronist extreme right.

An article available on the web: www.argentina.indimedia.org "La Izquierda y la sexualidad" (The Left and sexuality").

⁶ In 1984 the first exhibition of Grupo Crónica titled *Crónica del Aplastamiento*, received threats that it would be vandalized by the Opus Dei and the clergy requested, unsuccessfully, that the authorities of the Provincial Museum that sponsored it close down the exhibit. The second exhibition of the group, "*Tragamonedas Reina del Terror*", carried out at the **Centro Cultural de la Municipalidad**, also in Tucumán, was censured by the same sponsoring museum officials. During 1985/86 the **Administration** was headed by the actress and lawyer **Nora Castaldo**, a member of the Radical Party. Castaldo, along with the **Assistant Director, Alicia Gómez Omil**, expressly made use of **Ordinance No. 38/76**, which stated that, "... in compliance with the provisions relating to control of the operation of the Police of Morality and Customs," regulated by said unconstitutional ordinance of the dictatorship, still in force at that time, as was expressed in the "Act of Closure" of the exhibition on November 29, 1985, its opening night. With the public gathered together outside the building, Castaldo had demanded to Graciela Ovejero --the only group member who was present at that moment-- that parts of the exhibition shall be excluded as a condition to open the doors. Ovejero consented, with the idea that the absence of those parts would make the act of censorship explicit and obvious in direct presence of the public. Ovejero proceeded to write the word "CENSORSHIP" in the places where works had been removed. When the director realized what was happening, proceeded to close the doors and execute the Act of Closure. **Grupo Crónica** was composed of the following members: **Ricardo Bustos** (founder); **Eli Cárdenas**; **Graciela Ovejero** and **Hugo Heredia**, who left the group after the first exhibition, although he was the photographer hired for

the censored collective work (first photo-performance of Tucumán); and **Fernando Robles**, who participated in the first exhibition, but did not participate in the group dynamics. He continued his artistic development individually.

Ironically, in May of the following year, the same museum administration promoted the exhibit titled "***El enmascarado no se rinde***" ("**The masked man does not surrender**") by the artist **Sergio Tomatis** who presented, among other works, a group of self-referenced homoerotic works, in a separate area with a warning to the public that the exhibit could only be accessed by persons over age 18. Said exhibit unleashed an agitated public quarrel, this time objected to by members of the Peronist sector. The exhibit was finally **shut down by the Provincial Secretary of Government and Justice, Dr. Ermidio Juez Pérez**, for considering that the works "not only attempt against morality, proper customs and decency, but also subvert the natural order of the sexes." The events concluded with the artist's self-imposed exile after receiving repeated anonymous threats.

Between momentary objections that lacked transcendence, whisperings and distortions, the character and meaning of these events remained in confused suspense, impotence and a deeply rooted, consenting, internalized passivity. Twenty years later, both historic events were cited and fragmentally re-represented in the exhibit "**Inscripciones Invisibles**" ("**Invisible Inscriptions**") in June of 2007, **curated by Carlota Beltrame**. Provincial Museum Timoteo Navarro, San Miguel de Tucumán.

⁷ It is important to point out here the emergence of independent curators and writers, in large part women who, for about the past decade, contribute with their research and publications to the enrichment, reevaluation and diversification of the narratives of Argentinean art history and new inscriptions as of curatorial projects and increasing interconnectedness with scenes and producers of the country's interior. Some of these individuals are **Ana Longoni, Andrea Giunta, María José Herrera, Mariano Mestman, Gabriela Massuh, Alberto Giudici, Graciela Harper, Inés Katzenstein, and Rodrigo Alonso, Ana Claudia García, Andrea Elías**. among others.

⁸ ***Los hijos de la Malinche*** ("**The children of Malinche**") from the book ***El laberinto de la soledad*** (***The Labyrinth of Solitude***). Octavio Paz, 1950. Fondo de Cultura Económica 1999 3ª edición.

⁹ List of recent women in art with feminist orientation:

2005 Venice Biennial, invited the **Guerrilla Girls**.

2006, September-October. *It's Time For Action (There's No Option)- About Feminism* Migros Museum de Zúric.

2006 *Cooling Out – On the paradox of feminism*. Kunsthau Baselland.

2006 Several retrospectives of women artists in Switzerland: **Lee Lozano**, Kunsthalle Basel. **Meret Oppenheim**, Kunstmuseum Berna. **Niki de Saint-Phalle**, Tinguely Museum, Basel.

2006-2007 Second edition of the curatorial project about performative practices ***If I Can't Dance I Don't Want to be Part of your Revolution***, in Utrecht and Amsterdam de Appel, Investigates ***Feminist Legacies and Potential in Contemporary Art Practice***.

Documenta de Kassel 2007. With noted presence of **Martha Rosler**.

2007 May 4th. ***Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution***. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA).

2007 March 24th. ***Global Feminisms. New Directions in Contemporary Art***. Brooklyn Museum of New York.

2007 July-September. ***Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*** Bilbao. Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao.

2007 September. ***La batalla de los sexos*** ("**The Battle of the Sexes**") Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporáneo (CGAC) Santiago de Compostela.

¹⁰ In a sort of curious antinomy, during the years of the dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970) and as part of a project of "leveling"/becoming current internationally with the arts and international avant garde movements, encouraged by the developmentalist ideology of United States programs of cultural "liaison"/monitoring with respect to Latin America, and effectively due to the private initiative of the Torcuato Di Tella Foundation, the **Centro de Artes Visuales (Center for Visual Arts)** of the Institute of the same name was formed. This Center would become the setting and source of promotion of exhibitions, competitions and experimentation in the visual arts during the years 1963-1969 and would come to change the arts scene in general, popularizing its presence in society with a modernist avant garde stamp, and with its base in Buenos Aires being known as "the crazy block." Artistic proposals coexisted during this period, for instance, the group of painters of the *Nueva Figuración* with certain legacy of the collagist work of Antonio Berni, with an immediate social vision; and in particular, Alberto Greco, whose work was conceptual, performative and non-objectual, one of direct action within social reality.

In 1968, related to the Instituto Di Tella, and going against its selective policies, a group of artists from Rosario put together a project that would become an innovative milestone in political art conceived as social investigation and production of counter-information. This project incorporated the mediatization and specialization of said information and shifted the production of art and of works of art to the very fabric of the sectors of society in conflict, working in solidarity and cooperation with union organizations and the CGT/Workers' General Committee. I am referring to **Tucumán Arde ("Tucumán Burns"), exhibit carried out in Rosario in 1968 and shut down one week later by order of the police.** Other coups d'état succeeded Onganía's dictatorship as the socio-economic crises worsened, along with successive popular uprisings. Student and worker's organization protests sprang up in different cities, such as the *Cordobazo* and *Rosariazo* in 1969, the *Tucumanazo* in 1970 and the bloody *Mendozazo* of 1972, as violent confrontations with the "forces of order." In this context, divisions of the left and certain groups of the Peronist youth organized themselves to act clandestinely and took up arms. After the brief constitutional period of Héctor Cámpora's presidency and the return from exile and eventual death of Juan Perón (1973-74), the latest and bloodiest dictatorship self-proclaimed as "The Process of National Reconstruction" was established in the midst of the economic and social debacle.

¹¹ **Exhibitions: Mitominas '88**, curated by Monique Alschult, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires; *a: e, i, u o* 1994, Centro Cultural Recoleta; *Juego de damas (Checkers / Ladies' game)* 1995 curated by Adriana Lauria, Museo Castagnino Rosario and Centro Cultural Borges; *Tajos Bajos ("Low Slashes")* 1997, Centro Cultural Borges, curated by Elena Oliveras.

Some notable artists, among others: Ilse Fukova, Monique Alschult (), Ana Gallardo (1958, Rosario), Carolina Antoniadis (1961, Rosario), Maria Causa (1963, Buenos Aires), Fabiana Barreda (1967 Buenos Aires), Marina DeCaro (1961), Marcela Cabutti (1967 La Plata), Mónica Girón (1959 Bariloche), Diana Schufer (1957), Marcela Moujan (1963), Claudia Contreras (1956) Cristina Piffer (1953), Rosana Fuertes (1961). Some of these references are set forth in *Arte Argentino, Cuatro siglos de historia [1600-2000] (Argentinean Art, Four Centuries of History [1600-2000])* by Jorge López Anaya. Ed. emecé arte 2005. Argentina

¹² **Judith Butler:** Professor of Humanities at Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France and Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.*

¹³ Queer theory is a relatively new field of study or theoretical speculation that branched out of gay/lesbian studies in early 90's, which itself emerged from feminist studies, about the mid-80s. These are political form of academics, that among other things challenge the notion of normative sexualities and the humanist notion of natural selves, just as poststructuralism and deconstruction contribute to the cancellation of boundaries between the binary organizers of signifying systems. "Natural" and "essential" "selves" became "subjects" within language, susceptible to changes and resignification. While gay/lesbian studies, focused on questions of homosexuality and culture, queer theory expands its realm of investigation. and has a political critique of, anything that falls into normative and deviant categories.

¹⁴ Here I allude to the dialogic theory of Mijail Bajtin which comprehends the social and historical nature of the authorship of every text or utterance and to the theoretic developments of Marc Angenot which explain how every system of signs contains the marks of the socio-historical, expressing interests and power struggles.

¹⁵ **Nelly Richard:** Extracted from *Márgenes e instituciones: Performances de la Avanzada Chilena (Margins and Institutions: Performance of the Chilean Avant Garde)*, article included in *Corpus Delecti. Performance Art of the Americas*, edited by Coco Fusco. Routledge. London and N.Y. 2000.

¹⁶ In Argentina, an "*escrache*" –a Spanish appropriation from "scratch"--, can be explained as a direct form of protest confronting specific people that have been successful to evade responsibilities through corruption. For example, human rights activists frequently confront former members of the military government or those associated with it by appearing at their homes and chanting slogans and/or writing words such as "murderer" on their front doors. Therefore, an "*escrachadora*" is a person involved in this type of direct confrontational protest.

GRACIELA OVEJERO Is a trans-disciplinary artist whose work has been shown internationally. Her work includes combined techniques of painting, photography, digital imaging, objects, video, performance, installations and original text. In some projects her artistic production embraces curatorial strategies. Born in San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina, she obtained a **Master in Fine Arts** from the University of California in San Diego, a **Licenciatura en Artes Plásticas** (five years degree in Fine Arts) from National University of Tucumán/U.N.T. and a **Professorship in Classical Dance**. Before immigrating to the U.S. in 1986, she worked as **soloist dancer** at the Ballet Estable de Tucumán, **independent choreographer** and **dance teacher** (1972-1985). She **founded and directed** the laboratory dance group ***Alrededor del Movimiento / Around Movement***, under the support of Teatro Universitario and National University of Tucumán (1977-1978). She participated in experimental theater workshops and was member of the controversial and locally innovative ***Grupo Crónica*** of Tucumán (1984-1985).

Since 1991, she works and lives in and between California and the Northwest of Argentina. She was **member of the Arts Advisory Committee at Centro Cultural de la Raza** in San Diego (1989-98) and of the collectives ***Border Arts Workshop / Taller de Arte Fronterizo*** and ***Las Comadres***, interdisciplinary groups that worked in the San Diego-Tijuana border area between Mexico and the United States (1990-93). Ovejero has participated in numerous collective exhibits since 1976, and produced 33 individual shows and major installations in museums and galleries of Argentina, Mexico, USA, Japan, Spain and Pakistan. She has received awards and commissions from public and private funding sources to create work. In 2004, she founded the open collective ***Lolas Crónicas*** as a trans-disciplinary project of actions and interventions. Ovejero's work operates in the intersection between performance and the visual arts as a politico-spiritual practice immersed in the crossroads of diverse histories and mixed traditions.

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