

## *The colours of the resistance*

### Curatorial text

#### Play on memory

Without oversimplification, it can be attested that Marcelo Brodsky's work focuses on the exercise and reflection related to memory. To look back on a collective memory comes with doing it in a political way, not so much because this task entails evoking events related to the public scene, the question of power, or, consequently, inequalities and the violation of human rights, but because it mobilizes a quarrelling zone around the meaning of these events. In the blurred stage that is the turn of the century, the need to revisit the figure of memory in terms of thought and artistic practice has intensified. But the need to deal with this question must assume the risks of the memory boom: the ideological manipulation of history and the continuous attempt to capture memories by the instrumental logic of the mainstream, which tends to trivialize them and turn them into a spectacle. A trendy theme at major biennials and exhibitions. But this work must also avoid the traps of computer absolutism that, by archiving and remembering everything, leads to a frozen mega-memory: the perverse total memory (perhaps Fune's globalised in a telematic key) run by algorithms, distorted by fake reports and haunted by the powerful capital interests, which have fertile ground in the memory industry.

Brodsky's challenge, therefore, is to approach memory, not as a deposit where memory is accumulated, but rather as a reservoir of dynamic images, or as a set of alternative layers where we can rearrange what has happened in order to project favourable futures. Walter Benjamin considered that the political dimension of this approach is accessed by summoning the past to appear before the present in the face of the future. This unhinging of time marks a movement inherent to art: the one which disrupts chronological linearity in order to re-imagine what has happened as an impulse of what could happen, as an announcement or promise of the possible. The whisper of the possibility, open even in the midst of what seems impossible, activates desire in the memory realms. Energized, these become available for artistic creation, political action and ethical commitment, and become a space-time of reminiscence, social construction and collective desire. The poetic imagination rests on these spheres to glimpse what is omitted by official histories.

#### Memory to come

Marcelo Brodsky departs from the documentation on situations of injustice and violence which provoke different acts of resistance. The affected collectives rebel against the violation of their rights; but the artist also reacts by means of appealing to poetic detours that promote new readings of what has happened, that reinforce aspects of their own, that link them to other situations and stories that are also full of abuse and injustice, and which also promote social

demands. The artist manually intervenes historical photographs or ones taken by himself, which make reference to events that occurred in specific periods of the 20th century throughout the world. The universality of the outrages committed against human dignity, integrity and life marks the dark visage of the whole world and calls for coordinated positions at different levels. In addition to his support for local demands, Brodsky takes a stand through art. Art does not succeed in healing the wounds of history, but it does turn its symptoms into forces of resignification, setting the focus not so much in what once was or what could not be, but on what is still possible. Thus, the type of memory with which Marcelo Brodsky works, seeks to depart from and already packaged history elaborated by the hegemonic culture – that of the state and the market - and aims to function by exploiting the power of 'counter-memory' (Foucault) that images have. Images that are critical, poetic, political, and ultimately reluctant to the standardization of the instituted memory.

## **Dismemories**

What are the historical episodes that Brodsky seeks to counter-memorise? They are different events, removed from the official packaging, deflected from the attempt to turn the affair into a show or a spectacle. The artist works with crimes qualified as 'crimes against humanity', those known as serious infringements against people's physical integrity, subjectivity, dignity, freedom and equality, as well as attacks on their full living conditions, including the environment. Abominable patterns linked to and dependent on each other. Colonialism, in its many forms, is behind these crimes. It is no accident that this figure is consolidated within capitalist modernity: on one hand, it universalizes the categories of enlightened thought; on the other one, supported by alleged scientific reasons, colonialism conceives the idea of 'race', which legitimizes fatal inequalities and certifies the ethnocentric character of those categories.

However, the artist not only exposes the violation of human rights, he exposes the resistance that it generates; active and collective resistance. And he does so by resisting, in turn, the rigidity of the senses, by means of the resources proper to art: appealing to poetic operations that reinforce what is represented, transgressing the fixed limits of representation. He intervenes in the photographic images from which he starts by means of rhetorical gestures and aesthetic and discursive movements.

## **The writing of colour**

The works that make up this exhibition were intervened by hand by the artist. This operation resorts to two basic tools: painting and text. He thus handles the tensions inherent in contemporary thought: the one that opposes the graphic and the plastic plus, especially, the one that pits writing and image against each other. In both cases, the opposing terms are forced to go beyond their own realms and point to an always provisional third place. Art, which always involves image and concept, cannot be developed out of just one of these indispensable components, whose combinations and confrontations produce productive frictions and force both terms in tension to negotiate meanings

(always contingent), exchange positions and trigger lines of force that act outside the field and in many different ways.

Colour disrupts representation and alters the rigidity of the senses (in the double sense of the term). Writing adds clarifying data or becomes a manifesto or revolutionary testimony. But again, it cannot be taken literally: interfered with by the intense tones that push the actors represented beyond the scope of their own actions, like repression, protest or insurrection reveal more than they express and raise demands, outcries or figures that resonate in different spaces of the social body.

While it does not seek to aestheticize the trauma, the use of colour in this work seeks to alleviate the excessive weight of memories, to open up space for mourning and to reclaim favourable destinies for the surviving eagerness. The colour schemes, shades and brightness illuminate the scene of the crime, they auratise it; they distance or bring the facts closer, they underline details. They do not deny the misfortune, but suggest the possibility of different outcomes to those designated by implacable stories. They seek to dispel in an imaginary way the blackness of what seems irrevocable. They try to transform past or present tragedy into open-ended drama, into a new event. They try to turn the melancholy of an irreparable loss into the pain of blows that can be assumed in the present, answered in another confrontation, avoided in parallel times or reversed in a possible future. The colours encourage the illusions or scattered expectations left by great utopias, celebrate the joy of conquests and paint the warmth of social struggles. The disasters of the world show one side of the story; the joy of facing them collectively shows the other.

### **The inner outside**

On the other hand, the use of chromatic values promotes both the irruption of painting and its expansion into the areas reserved for photography, but it also acquires an aesthetic-expressive status of its own. The work, the *ergon*, goes beyond its frame and resonates in the surrounding space, the *parergon*, which acts as a pivot between the interior and the exterior of the painting. This is why the expography emphasizes and even autonomizes the colours of the installation and the space: it seeks to accompany the slipping of the history beyond itself, as proposed by Brodsky, and the overflow of the different works whose colours confront and refract each other, and create new optical phenomena, new imaginary events.

### **The violence of traces**

This exhibition includes different series, secretly linked by the inscrutable reasons of the image and its unpredictable effects. The photographs in the sequence *Traces of Violence* are taken as an example, obtained with the collaboration of a lawyer for the African cause, who was favoured by the repercussions of these images. The series performs a counter-tragedy, a decolonizing gesture. The denunciation of the first genocide of the 20th century (which took place in Nama, Namibia, by then a colony of the German

empire) is not based on the mere representation of its atrocities, but on the connection of the facts interfered with the colours and the writing of texts that transcribe supposed confessions of the colonizers. The violence of words becomes a condemnation of colonization.

Photographs from diverse times reveal the brutality that has built up over the course of the modern project and is standing on its ruins; but they also reveal the forces that are contesting it through various fronts of political, ethical and poetic resistance. Contemporary times, shaped by total globalisation and financialised capitalism, are becoming the scene of new forms of both authoritarian violence and rebellious reaction. On the one hand, the struggle to recover the conquests lost during the 20th century continues. On the other one, new strategies for contesting necropolitics and anti-rights advances are being asserted, as well as the consolidation of micro-political opposition to the seizure of subjectivity and the growing defense of the critical imagination in the face of the most media-driven trivialization in digital terms.

All these resistance movements need colours and words capable of helping to shake off the spell of an accomplished past and a closed present, and to imagine multiple or crossed timelines, converging for an instant in times to come, allies of the human condition. To summon up the possible. Adorno argued that after Auschwitz it would not be possible to speak of poetry; however, as Didi-Huberman argues, it seemed that only the detour of images and poetic words would allow a glimpse into the black abyss of trauma, not to close it or resolve it, but to convert its painful memory into desire and impulse for other possible outcomes.

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Asunción, August 2024