

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>**Dossier “Memory and Imagination”****Time regained archive  
The form of imagination****Natalia Taccetta**University of Buenos Aires / CONICET  
National University of the Arts / Audiovisual Arts**Submitted in:** February, 2017**Accepted in:** May, 2017**Published in:** July, 2017**RECOMMENDED CITATION**TACCETTA, Natalia (2017). “Time regained archive. The form of imagination “. In: “Memory and imagination”. *Digithum*, n.º 20, pp. 1-11. UOC and UdeA. [Accessed: dd/mm/yy]  
<<http://dx.doi.org/107238/d.v0i20.3092>>The texts published in this journal are – unless indicated otherwise – covered by the Creative Commons Spain Attribution 3.0 licence. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the work, provided you attribute it (authorship, journal name, publisher) in the manner specified by the author(s) or licensor(s). The full text of the licence can be consulted here: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/es/deed.en>.**Abstract**

This Article seeks to explore the installation Albertina Carri exhibited in the *Sala Pays*, next to the *Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado* (Monument to the victims of State Sponsored Terrorism) in the *Parque de la Memoria* (Remembrance Park) (Buenos Aires, Argentina). From September to November 2015, with his work *Operación fracaso y el sonido recuperado* (Operation failure and the sound recovered), the filmmaker (*Los rubios, Géminis, Cuatros*), makes an incursion into field of installation or the so called expanded cinema, proposing a kind of heterotopia to approach image as a space in which the image itself is transformed. This paper explores the work by reading it as an atlas in the light of obligatory references on the archive's logic –Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin- and on the figure of the specter -Jacques Derrida-.

**Keywords**

imagination, specter, memory, archive, Albertina Carri

**Archivo del tiempo recuperado. La forma de la imaginación****Resumen**

*Este artículo propone recorrer la instalación que Albertina Carri expuso en la sala Pays junto al Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado en el Parque de la Memoria (Buenos Aires, Argentina). Entre septiembre y noviembre de 2015, con su obra Operación fracaso y El sonido recuperado, la cineasta (Los rubios, Géminis, Cuatros) incursiona en el ámbito de la instalación o el*

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"cine expandido" planteando una suerte de heterotopía para pensar la imagen como espacio en el que ella misma se transforma. Estas páginas exploran la obra, leyéndola como un atlas a la luz de referencias obligadas sobre la lógica del archivo –Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin– y sobre la figura del espectro -Jacques Derrida-.

### Palabras clave

imaginación, espectro, memoria, archivo, Albertina Carri

## Arxiu del temps recobrat. La forma de la imaginació

### Resum

Aquest article proposa recórrer la instal·lació que Albertina Carri exposà a la sala Pays, prop del Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado al Parque de la Memoria (Buenos Aires, Argentina). Entre el setembre i el novembre de 2015, amb la seva obra Operación fracaso y el sonido recobrado, la cineasta (Los rubios, Géminis, Cuatros) s'endinsa en l'àmbit de la instal·lació o del "cinema expandit" i planteja una mena d'heterotopia per pensar la imatge com a espai on ella mateixa es transforma. Les pàgines següents exploren l'obra, que llegim com un atlas, a la llum de referències obligades sobre la lògica de l'arxiu –Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin– i sobre la figura de l'espectre -Jacques Derrida-.

### Paraules clau

imaginació, espectre, memòria, arxiu, Albertina Carri

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"- One must do something useful, ¿what can you do for a dead man?  
- Honor him".<sup>1</sup>

In his photographic series *Apareciendo* (appearing), Gabriel Orge captures the image of Jorge Julio López<sup>2</sup> in the Ctlamochita River (formerly River III, province of Córdoba) projected over some bushes with eyes closed and frowning, as if resisting to sink in the water forever. The artistic gesture achieves a ghostly apparition on the edge of the figure, halfway between fading away and sparkling. Ironically, Julio López appears as he disappears from memory and from the present. He resists in the reflection with anger and resignation.

This photograph, as well as the relation between appearance / disappearance it proposes, could serve as a prelude of a reflection on the centrality of image and imagination in contemporary life. In fact, image, imagination and memory form an inseparable triptych that inexorably links the politics of memory with the politics of image, as if all that has been learned about the former should also serve to analyze the latter. Much of the contemporary thinking

that emerges from this intertwining seems to be linked to the search for what Jean-Luc Godard called "the right image", namely, that which combines the visually responsible with the ideologically modulated. In the case of Argentina at the present time, this must be an image that accounts for the lack of a body, the impossibility of mourning and the absence of burial. The *right* image is the one that embodies the abjection of these three elements.

In the *Sala Pays*, next to the *Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado* (Monument to the Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism) in the *Parque de la memoria* (Remembrance park) of Buenos Aires, Albertina Carri exhibited, between September and November 2015, its work *Operación fracaso y el sonido recobrado* (Operation failure and the sound recovered). The filmmaker (*Los rubios, Gemini, Cuatros*) ventures into the field of installation or the so-called "expanded cinema". Alternatively, without trying to define or categorize, it could simply be said that the work relies upon a certain idea of heterotopy to approach image as a space in which the image itself is transformed. In his conferences about space, Michel Foucault describes the relationship between space and history in order to explain some traditional problems

1. This dialogue appears in one of the final scenes of the film *Sierra de Teruel* (*Days of hope*) by André Malraux and Boris Peskine (1945). Although widely distributed after the end of the Spanish Civil War, it became a symbol of republican struggle and international solidarity. These lines are part of a conversation held by an elderly who is willing to climb the slope of Teruel to go find the dead militiamen and a disenchanting young man who represents the generation of his grandchildren.

2. Jorge Julio López (born in General Villegas, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1929 and disappeared on September 18, 2006) was an Argentinean bricklayer, victim of the repression of the Argentine civic-military dictatorship that took place between 1976 and 1983. Years later, during the democratic government, his testimony in trial convicted Miguel Etchecolatz to life imprisonment and he was abducted soon after. To date, there is no news on his whereabouts.

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of aesthetic and fictional constructions of space and he draws attention to the cultural configuration of space, or space as a social product, which makes that localization related problems are translated into the social relations that develop around them.

Unlike utopias, which “are placeless” (Foucault, 2010, p. 19), heterotopias are “absolutely different places” (2010, p. 21). A “space that is other”, or heterotopia, would be a place diverted from its original category, which has in itself a logic of counter-site, of inversion, of distortion of its initial use and its symbolic and cultural significance. To understand how this works in Carri’s artistic proposal, it is essential to consider the way in which the characters operate in a spatial-relational mode that redefines any idea of contextualization. The images she constructs and evokes do not “belong” to the place in which they circulate, they are thrown to a heterotopia from the beginning and, because of their status as strangers, transform places into counter-sites.

*Operación fracaso...* dislocates the canon of image, it is a diversion, a route diverted from a certain type of cinematic and artistic hegemony to address the space-temporality of memory. Cinema –at least a certain sort of it– remains the privileged medium (it is the most widely used device), but it is dematerialized to give rise to an articulated experience of imagination in an encounter with the viewer. The proposal of Carri is traversed by cinematic and literary references, and is fueled by a certain contemporary obsession for archives. Nonetheless, her installation in the *Parque de la memoria* is the result of politics, maintained by the Argentine State between 2003 and 2015, on how to approach the public. It does not rely on the counterculture as it does the so called expanded cinema, but on multiple expressions of contemporary art, from which an intertextual poetics is articulated which allows the artist to reflect both on her time and on her condition of the daughter of a disappeared couple. The artist does so by setting up five events that, deliberately, do not fit only in pain or melancholy, but challenge the affective coordinates of her entire generation.

The quote without quotes (from Benjamin) introduced by Carri constructs a flow juxtaposing different contexts, authors and images without reducing these to explanation or chronology. The work’s syncretism is lodged in the realm of introspection, but no longer towards the infantile universe, as it occurred in the film *Los rubios* (2003), but towards the adult life completing, unsuccessfully, a genealogy. The filmmaker builds an experience of the contemporary in the sense of Giorgio Agamben. In a short text from his book *Nudities* (original title: *Nudità*, 2009), the philosopher refers to the contemporary as the untimely, the noncurrent but possible, the contemporary as he who “holds his

gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light but rather its darkness” (Agamben, 2011b, p. 21). Contemporary is the person who manages not to settle in that darkness and enable the clearing that allows the illusion of emancipation with potentialities to be realized. Indeed, Carri’s work does not propose a serene temporality but it is keeping with chronology only to contest it. It is grounded in an ever-moving time, it does not remain stable, but rather extracts fragments from the past to project itself into a past-present, halfway between suspense and dislocation.

Carri’s parents have been missing since the dictatorship, there has been no trial for their abduction and no homicide has been proven. The State is indebted to a daughter who is now older than her parents at the time of their death and who defies the bonds of filiation by settling down in a time allowing her to self-constitute through memory or imagination, through the fantasized image of her parents: “strong and healthy, rebels with messy hair and clothes, beautiful, abundant in that kind of beauty that youth can give you and so can death”, as we read in the catalog of the work. Unlike Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was convinced that death produces a very rapid montage of life, Carri approaches the relation between montage and life and non-death from significant moments, ordered in a labile succession, between certainty and restlessness, between the describable and the infamous.

In *Operación fracaso...*, Carri proposes the cinema as a burial place (as she somehow already did in *Los rubios*), where memories, along with the gleams they cast, end up. She asserts that the installation originated at the moment when, in addition to the childhood fantasy (which once took the form of a representation with Playmobil<sup>3</sup> dolls), the scene of her parents’ abduction acquired a sonorous dimension. That was the moment when the white paper, to which Jonas Mekas alludes in the epigraph of the exhibition catalog, becomes a place to articulate memories.

The paper is so white, writing is so easy.  
As for memories, one itself cannot resist to  
Those eyes and they return, they return (...). Everything is kept  
Deep behind the eyelids. We keep looking  
All life... until it is filled and everything starts to boil  
And to burp, the rivers of memory.

The game of seeing/looking proposed by Carri’s phrases seems to be one of the core premises of these audiovisual works, but above all they are underpinned by a wound opened by a question: “Can we live without remembering?” The artist throws an inconclusive answer into the not always abundant rivers of imagination and

3. In *Los rubios*, Carri fictionalizes with Playmobil dolls those events that – as an adult – she remembers imagining when as a kid she knew of the disappearance of her parents. This 2003 film is somehow inaugural for the new post-dictatorship -and post-crisis (2001)- film in Argentina. Its inaugural character is not chronological but formal and aesthetic, since by distancing from hegemonic aesthetics from the democratic transition that took place in 1983 (even from more conventional proposals such as *Papá Iván* by María Inés Roqué, 2003), its revulsive and irreverent form challenged the “canons” of recollection, considered as such until then.

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says: "I want to be the bed of that river, I want to be that land, I want to tell the world about the power conveyed by the fact of being here and keep remembering". Thus, she offers herself as a *topos* to navigate the dangerous waters of Leteo.

Perhaps it might be thought that exhibition should be walked through taking into account the iterability of desire but according to the location of the devices. Carri suggests a circuit beginning with the father and ending with the mother. In the background, in the central hall, the word "Presente" (present) orchestrates the temporality of dialectical detention; of the movement that does not advance but interrupts; of the time that is not spent but stopped.

*Investigación del cuatreroismo* (Investigation on rustling), the first exhibition space, is a 60 minute audiovisual piece in which images of films from the sixties and seventies are projected onto five simultaneous screens, which are connected following a logic similar to Benjamin's archive (non)logic. The references are organized around a story (narrated not by Carri's voice but by the actress Elisa Carricajo) on the images that, strictly speaking, do not tell how Albertina Carri traveled to Chaco to take up the investigation that her father had started for his book *Isidro Velázquez. Formas pre-revolucionarias de la violencia* (Isidro Velázquez. Pre-revolutionary forms of violence, 1973). Velázquez was a "gaucho" rustler for whom an operation was launched with several hundreds of police officers. Velázquez managed to escape this operation accompanied by his brother. This operation failed because the Velázquez were supported by the people who looked up to them as telluric and poor gangsters taking the law into their own hands. Carri activates the metaphor of *failure* from the capture of the *gauchos* to the appearance of the parents. In the meantime, she builds herself as a daughter following the steps of an investigation that she took in as her own. Isidro was a rustler who stole cattle in connivance with the outcasts. Carri is also a sort of outcast, along with a generation that produces images to make disappearance disappear, giving birth to a spectral community.<sup>4</sup>

Like Pablo Szir's film *Los Velázquez*, which as of today is lost, Carri's multichannel video screens deliberately lose traces of memories and remains and display a visual panorama of the operation of an imagined film. "I always said that *Isidro* was a movie of men, do not talk to me about films with shootings and

covert homosexual motivations like giving your life for your best friend", says the voiceover (Carricajo), mixing politically incorrect reflections on the "Latinamericanist whiff" of Cuba, in reference to a festival where sex is offered at the door of the hotel and shoes are envied by passing girls. These reflections put the story of a lost film together, the film that Szir left unedited before his kidnapping and disappearance, the failed film that Carri also wanted to make about Isidro, and the ironic twist on the silent news of the 70s. While an explicit narration about her parents is never found in the work –it is still impossible to reconstruct the personalities of Roberto Carri and Ana María Caruso from the fragmented texture of their productions– Carri borders the "lacuna" of disappearance, in Agamben's words<sup>5</sup> through diffuse forms. These forms, however, are clearly no longer the ones of her own composition of absence, they are forms that resignificate the empty space left, which Carri fills with imaginary ruins.

Another station proposed in the exhibition is *Cine puro* (Pure cinema). This name does not refer to the avant-garde experiences of painters and photographers of the 20s, but rather to a structure made with film reels containing a loop of fungus projected as the only reference to the living. The frames move from what was once figurative to a heterodox amorphous sculpture, populated by debris and invented memories. The material brings to life the carrion from the visions of the room where 16 and 8mm projectors project only sounds. On one side, *Allegro*, where nine devices revive an atonal metallic symphony. To the other side, *A piacere*, in which seven projectors are activated as the viewers move around the space. Somehow, the transit determines the trajectory. The relational experience is completed with the affective charge invested by viewers. Carri's machines function as involuntary memories: even if they do not contain precise images, they relentlessly refer to the past of perpetual fatigue and to the despair of hearing from it.

Even going against the interpretation, as Susan Sontag could claim, the installation seems to lead from the failure of a police operation to the time recovered of *Punto impropio* (inappropriate point). This device is a multichannel video installation of color projections onto Caruso's (Carri's mother) original letters written during her confinement. These letters are seen through a kind of giant microscope. For a little more than forty minutes, the viewers

4. The final scene of her film *Los rubios* can be interpreted in this same vein. Together with her film crew, Carri redefines her own family, which, far from the logic of filiation, is defined by generational affective bonds. All this is accompanied by the ironic gesture of wearing blond wigs: her parents were not blond; However, in their old neighborhood people recall that they were blond, perhaps a way to sum up their alien character, their strange power, different from all the people of the place.

5. In *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1998), the third part of the saga *Homo sacer*, Giorgio Agamben queries about the ethics of testimony to problematize the genocide and the figure of subjectivity produced by the concentration camp, that is, the figure of the Muslim. From a dialectic approach to the articulation of testimony/witness, Agamben also explores the debate on the representability or unspeakability of genocide related events. Throughout the text a complex view can be traced that builds on the assumption that Auschwitz is an "event without witnesses" to arrive at the testimony of those that were Muslim as the device that defies the negationism from the very inside of the event. In this sense, as the author explains in the first pages, he aims to border the "lacuna" of Auschwitz. While it is not possible to represent this event in its entirety, or consider all the consequences derived from it, at least it seems legitimate to try to surround the event even in its incommensurability.



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hear a voice, which they end up associating to the disappeared mother, forgetting the impossibility of such an operation. Thus, Carri recovers a certain time while emphatically answering to the question of whether it is possible to live without remembering: no. In Caruso's prose the spectator reaches a state of affectivity in which a voice is given to diffused graphical symbols by an imagining machine that expands the letters to the point of abstraction. The words "Ana" and "María" are at the top of a circular screen as if they were the two planets where Carri's memories go.

## 1. Atlas of own and others' memories

In a brief text, Miguel Valderrama (2009) refers to the "gradual appearance of disappearance" in the art of the last decades. He is talking about the Chilean case, but his words fit perfectly to the way in which Argentinean artists were modeling affection-based or *shock*-based strategies to approach that which is not presentable. Carri's Atlas has elusive rules, more in line with the Benjaminian notion of collection and its ability to project constellations where past and present are dialectically found in the detritus of culture.

The artist assembles memories from unconventional vestiges. To the data and document based history she responds with the hyperemotionalized record of found footage, bringing the premise of collective memory to the extreme. From the letter to the archive, from the script to the frame, Carri deterritorialises all disciplines, since her work is testimonial, historical, political, conceptual and philosophical and is part of what could be called a policy of archiving. Anna Maria Guasch would possibly classify it within the "visual autobiographies", which entail a denial of the author's agency by examining the role of visual memory from plastic elements or, eventually, cinematic elements (Guasch, 2009). In *Operación fracaso...*, images certainly "function as fragments, as ruins, as violated spaces, surviving from the traces of the past" (Guasch, 2009, p. 20). In this same vein, Eduardo Cadava would perhaps refer to Carri's images as "words of light" or "prose photos", that is to say, flashing fragments that reenact the past in an instant of danger.

The fragments of *Operación fracaso...* evoke the "dialectical images" based on which Walter Benjamin approached the articulation of history and the configuration of the archive. That is, without the continuity of chronology, he was inclined to an erratic collection, unpacked like his library; an open archive of/ to the living that transcends the personal and the self-portrait. In this sense, the installation falls within a particular, interdisciplinary history, which proposes artistic experience as a framework of affections. The images it contains can be interrogated from multiple perspectives using anachronism as a methodological principle. To speak of the present, the artist refers to the past of the 1940s, to the television news of the 1970s, to old discarded

material, to the letters her mother wrote in the late 1970s and to her persistence in continuing an investigation her father started decades earlier. With this dislocation of continuity, Carri does not respond to genealogies or recognize any background but is obsessed with the pertinence of the question about time and the way to shape it.

Guasch points out that the archive is founded on two basic principles: on one hand, *mneme* or *anamnesis*, that is, the living, spontaneous memory; and, on the other hand, *hypomnema*, that is, the deliberate, voluntary act of remembering. In both cases, the fascination for storing things, for saving them from oblivion and safeguarding them from hegemonic linearities –including occasional banalization, fashion, or political expediency– is put into play. Carri's atlas, in effect, produces a creative bailout with clear awareness of artistic alternatives to show, remember or hide forever.

The talking heads of classic documentaries are not for Carri, neither the detailed descriptions nor the ordered testimonies; rather she has chosen the thick stroke to describe her parents and the fine brush to draw her memories or imaginations. However, her archive does not escape some epistemological pretension and can be thought of as a "mechanism for shaping the narratives of history" (Burton, 2005, p. 1). Carri turns cinematic images –from fictions, documentaries, or newsreels– into evidence of the past (hers, in particular), subjecting them to a process of "interpretation and even creative invention" (Burton 2005, p. 8), as the best historians do. But the intelligibility of the past matters only insofar as it is assumed as an artistic act, as a gesture of honesty that the work claims unceasingly.

The archive of *Operación fracaso...* is generative, as Simone Osthoff (2009) proposes regarding the contemporary artistic world (pp. 11-12), because it entails the creation of a time, the fecundation of the space-temporality of the encounter, no longer with her parents or her generation but with the viewer, with whom she grounds an ideological and affective agreement. Carri's fragments are not intended to represent anything but seem to attempt to provide an experience. Recontextualization, precisely, allows "documents" to become indexical traces of an experienced memory. In *Punto impropio* even when her mother's handwriting becomes an imprecise stroke, the artist achieves not only an archive effect –that is, a displacement of authority from any chronology and linearity– but an "archive affect", that is, an intensity that emerges from disruption, from distance, "a point of contact with the contingency of 'the real'" (Baron, 2014, p. 11) that allows viewers to read part of their personal transit and create their own transit.

The heuristic power of her images rests on the strength of the interstice as in the atlas that Aby Warburg designed around the end of the 1920s. With metaphorical clarity and a *mise-en-abyme*, the second panel of the *Mnemosyne* (designed at the end of life by the art historian) deals with the iconological motif

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of “Atlas”. Thoroughly analyzed by Georges Didi-Huberman, this panel embodies the hard work carried out by Warburg himself and by any artist who wants, like Atlas, to place a task on his/her shoulders. With his body bent, almost on his knees, the young titan carries a huge astrological body that makes him tilt his head forward because he must hold up the “world on his shoulders”. In her work Carri might be repeating Atlas's gesture with a version of the world that is racked with doubts and disappearance.

## 2. On atlas and remains

Warburg proposed his Atlas as a model for a form of history writing that wished to escape the chrono-normativities of the historiography of his time. He wanted images to challenge euechry to turn time into a surface of permanent non-coincidence. As in Carri's images, past and present come together and push out each other, they criticize and transform each other. *Operación fracaso...* deactivates the possibilities of apprehending time based on standard categories. Her archive is problematic when the “law of what can be said” –as proposed by Michel Foucault (1969) in *The Archeology of Knowledge*– is expanded in the gesture of imagination. Carri expands the rules of enunciation of every possible utterance, as Foucault would have it, and, in line with Friedrich Nietzsche second untimely meditation, *On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life*, she assumes the need to consider the past-present relationship in the figure of appropriation, considering past and present as experiences capable of affecting and shaking each other, assuming the power of conscious praxis of dominant continuities and the necessity of leaks.

Warburg's archive aimed to capture the dynamics of historical process according to an iconographic repertoire dematerializing the canon and the hegemonic approaches to history in order to force to take notice of the cognitive power of the collection of contingencies and interpretations. As a sort of update of the gesture, Carri explores her own critical iconology by separating unheard, unremembered, invented, traditional surfaces. She responds to all these surfaces by creating a space that allows the viewer to wander through her map capturing fleeting routes, a visual network of detours loaded with memory linked affections, disappearance and the necessity to make room for what is, strictly speaking, impossible to remember. From the materiality of *Cine puro* to the intangibility of *Punto impropio*, this immemorial operation, takes the form of a trans-iconographic field raising the question about the relation between time strata drawing from the old duet of word and image. Words follow one another on images that no longer form accurate graphic symbols but recollection experiences.

Carri's Atlas is a huge repository of active-memory retables, summoned by a meticulous montage destroying continuity and establishing links. It dismantles any traditional narrative and reconstructs historical-affective journeys. The work enables an experience, that of the image as the consummation of the cognitive, that of the transit and the reassembly, that of the reframing, the juxtaposition of the multichannels, that of the disparity of the narratives, that of the narration plagued with “dissociative approaches” as those Didi-Huberman (2002) attributes to Warburg (p. 474).

The artist adopts a historical *a priori* subjecting her images to systems of statements that make up nothing less than events and objects through which viewers move guided by their own emotional tissue. Nonetheless, the discursiveness of *Operación fracaso...* cannot be subjected to the same analysis as the Foucauldian archive because there are no precise systems, although the subject remains on the margins as an empty point. It does this by linking the image to the deconstruction of the (unrecognizable) quote and the iterability of the disaffected voice that is not remembered. The proliferating dialectics attributed by Didi-Huberman (2002) to Warburg (p.475) is framed in Carri in an indefinite, untranslatable picture of orality. It forces the viewer to remain in the restlessness of a non-resolution and a non-meaning.

In *Investigación del cuatreroismo*, Carri transforms the five screens into time, where a variety of elements are projected from Argentinean flags to the facade of the School of Mechanics of the Navy, to formations of the army and Videla dressed in civilian clothes with an impeccable light suit. Images populate the machine leaving interstices in which some unreconciled historicity is recomposed. This is how the meaning of *Mnemosyne* arises, and as in that atlas, Carri inaugurates a possible form –failed this time– to make history, but also a methodological field to imagine memory as a radical challenge to inherited ideas.

These ideas refer us to *Restos* (Remains) (2010), a short film directed by Carri, in which dictatorship and state terrorism take the place of destruction and disappearance, not only of people but also of militant films, that is, of an entire clandestine film genre made to be exhibited in political and trade union settings. This reference to counter-information is incarnated by a filmmaker, a montagist played by the Argentinean actor Esteban Lamothe. During the film a voiceover reminds us of the “amputation machine” from the dictatorship that seems to be guilty of the disappearance of the cinema as well as of the “orphanage that can only say I”.

This concealed “we” is imaginarily linked with *Operación fracaso...*, the short film begins with a question: “Is accumulating images a way to resist?”. The voice of Analía Couceyro –again an authorial displacement as in *Los rubios*<sup>6</sup> insists on the subject: “Is

6. In that film, Carri unfolds herself in the character played by the actress Analía Couceyro. At the beginning of the film, the actress introduces herself as the one who will play the role of Albertina Carri and, although the filmmaker actually appears on screen, both women converge at moments like the DNA test or in the famous scene in which the actress remembers what Carri dislikes about birthday parties.

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it possible to give them back the defiant gesture?”. Carri does not answer, but some images could be taken as a principle of sense composition. While in *Restos* a segment of celluloid is burned even when the film will end up, assuming that “accumulating images is a form of memory”, in *Cine puro (Operación fracaso)*..., the film material confirms its possibility of desecration by articulating a sculpture that gives way to a screen compelled to project. At the end of *Restos* we hear an imperative: to make images “available” as a requirement “to clear the path to follow”. There is no guarantee of finding the way, but there is an obligation not to go back. Carri adopts the attitude of the profaner who renders available and desacralizes the hegemonic scene of memory.

In *Mnemosyne*, historical descriptions are grouped by the timelessness of knowledge, conceiving image as a network integrated into a kind of imaginary museum, created by each spectator. Carri, in turn, assembles a device that finds instants –not continuities– of historicity, always about to inaugurate something at the very moment when the device is spread out. The viewer traces possible paths following their own emotional drifts with no other mandate than the contingency of following the path –a possible one– of memory. As in Warburg’s Atlas, the artist provides a territory of visual experimentation that establishes a noncurrent relationship with the image and its traces, with the traces of the past and its images.

### 3. Survivals and specters

In *Operación fracaso*..., the images appear and survive because they are charged with affection. A sort of “kino-photographic” archive is assembled from spaces traversed by the *pathos* that lies beneath the space-time of memory. Like Warburg’s archive, Carri operates on the plasticity of image to derive in the elusiveness of movement.

Time, space, and movement are both eminently cinematic and Warburgian principles. If *Mnemosyne* is thought of as a model of memory, it will need to be considered also as a surface where the gaps of traditional historiography will go –just like Carri’s work–, a sort of space-temporality, where the folds of official versions meet. Specialists such as Philip-Alain Michaud or Karl Sierek noticed the cinematic quality of Warburgian thinking, identifying movement as its main feature, “whose subject-object relations refer back to the imaginary space of another art, which would be invented two years later: cinema” (Sierek, 2009, p. 99). The image captures the subject in motion to engage him/her in the movement of history. In the same vein, Sierek proposes that image is a sort of “bridge”, between present and past, containing the survival whose function will be to “provoke an intensifying and dynamizing effect of images” (Sierek, 2009, p. 18). Survival, that which resists, seems to be the element that makes image understandable in its historicity as a dynamic

force, as timelessness, as an interruption that disassembles the composition in order to take a distant view.

Carri’s work is made up of survivals. In her work the far/near dynamics creates an alternative in time. Just like the remoteness of the diffuse forms projected in the sculpture or the disturbing closeness of the microscope in *Punto impropio*. Here, the gaze is as redundant as necessary. And the middle name (Ana María) opens the 25 letters sent from the past to Christmas time, the cider and the sweet bread are as contemporary as the utterance “period” or the statement “I missed them more than ever” or the request of a “nail file, one of those made of cardboard” or the King Cake.

Carri’s gesture inaugurates what Nelly Richard (2007) calls “temporality-event” (p. 117), which sees the need to change the velocity of circulation to turn dispersion in space into time. With this notion Richard was referring to strategies to aesthetically and politically reconfigure the post-dictatorship scene in Chile. Beyond differences in context, Carri also seems to examine the perceptual and intellectual twisting of her own memory, as if making it –remembered, invented– the setting for the play of others.

As suggested by Walter Benjamin in *A short history of photography*, regarding August Sander’s photos, Carri proposes more than a work of art; it is an “atlas that exercises”, linked to the ability of image to concentrate affection and to disseminate it to destabilize the always threatening amnesic effect. Image is not only a document but a sign of temporality that produces “anachronistic historicity and a symptomatic significance”, as Michael Löwy (2004, p. 125) reads it in Benjamin. It is a complex temporality in which the paradoxes of the symptom are articulated, that is, what really happens in that which is not observed and fragmentary.

According to the way they are organized, the images are overdetermined by the montage as organizing principle. This occurs in Warburg’s Atlas, orchestrated in categories that do not correspond entirely –or not exclusively– to iconological motifs. Anachronism begins to unfold since images, as historical objects, announce untimely apparitions, latencies, sheltering survivals. The rhythms and counter-rhythms of Carri’s montage do not go against history but invent it, assembling it in the same way jigsaws and post-dictatorship subjectivities are put together.

Carri collects small events that escape the reconstruction of a story. From the anachronism of absence, she traces a diffuse archeology between the updating of the projected image and the void of silence. Thus, the different stations of *Operación fracaso*... become an eternal present and references to the past are not fixed in melancholy or in anger, but become survivals, enabling another type of understanding. Survival is the result of time sedimentation in the image.

According to Didi-Huberman, what emerges from the dialectical folding of the image allows us to approach history as Benjamin did, that is: “every presentation of history must begin with awakening”, because image makes the event explode



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showing the materiality of which it is made; “image is not the imitation of things, but the interval made visible, the line of fracture between things” (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p. 149). Image is then dialectic as Benjamin wanted and dynamic as Warburg view it; its power resides in that awakening “formally grasped as a threshold power,” that is, in “its simultaneously original and overdetermined character, emerged immediately and complex to an extreme degree” (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 150).

For Benjamin, image is the original place of each presentation of history. Presence (of ever changing historical events) and representation (fixation of an instant) converge in it. The dialectical image, in its flashing character –brittle, ephemeral, an unmeasurable moment between appearance and disappearance– is made of this juxtaposition.<sup>7</sup> The artist must be very alert to capture this fragility and to conceive it in suspense as a form of caesura for the appearance of the history operated by montage.

But it is rather the montage or remontage that it would be necessary to discuss consecutively in order to qualify the historical operation as such: montage as procedure presupposes in reality the demontage, the preceding dissociation of what it constructs, of what it, on the whole, only remounts, in the double sense of anamnesis and structural recomposition. To recast history in a movement “against the grain”, this is to strive for a knowledge by montage after having made the non-knowledge –the suddenly emerging, original, whirling, jerky, symptomatic image– the object and the heuristic moment of its very constitution. (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p. 157)

Montage is a historical operation, a history-writing practice, an artistic mechanism and an object of knowledge that allows us to produce historical meaning different from the chronological and linear meanings. It is a (choppy) movement where the heterogeneities of each moment of history converge, since, from the assembly of heterogeneous times, a new historical time, strictly speaking, is formed. *Operación fracaso...* fits perfectly into these definitions that propose to consider movement in art as memory assemblies, where images are installed in the survival of the artist's parents.

The concept of *Nachleben*, the “afterlife”, of Warburg returns and becomes anachronistic urgency. This implies that when dealing with an image, one is not dealing with something with precise limits but with the uncertainty that the image is the result of movements that were somehow sedimented or crystallized in it. Didi-Huberman asserts that one is “before the image as before a complex time, namely the provisionally configured, dynamic time of those movements themselves” (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p.35). This allows the surface to be restored to recover “inaudible voice

itches”, voices of the disappeared, retracted into the turns of canonized archives. This entails a ghostly reappearance, in which images –if any– survive the very same crystallization because of which they became partial and destroyed by a certain approach to history.

Like Carri, Warburg reconstructs a “ghost town” with barely visible footprints, scattered in the most unexpected media, “in a horoscope, in a business letter, in a garland of flowers [...], in the detail of relating to the fashions of the time, a belt buckle or the particular curl of a woman's chignon... ” (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p. 36). Carri does the same thing by opening the field of objects to a meeting point like a lightning bolt.

Warburg's notion of “survival” is methodologically linked to anachronism in history. This was not to deny inaction as a methodological principle but to make evident that what produces meaning in a culture is the symptom, the unthought, the anachronic. This consideration urges us to consider a ghostly time of survivals, which assumes that the present is woven from multiple pasts. Carri's present seems to be traversed by this untimeliness that faces the difficulty to look at the present, which between phantom and symptom, installs itself in the footprint.

Survival refers to a view of history that problematizes the notions of tradition and diffusion, built on conscious and unconscious processes or, rather, “forgetfulness and rediscovery, inhibitions and destructions, assimilations and inversions of meaning, sublimations and alterations” (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p. 77). It is a view of history that escapes mythologizations, while not afraid to dig in some sediments. Survival anachronizes history by disarming duration in its more traditional sense: the present is anachronized, a present which is denied by the supposed evidence of the *Zeitgeist*; the past is anachronized, a past which is more identifiable with an impure temporality of hybridizations. Like the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, *Operación fracaso...* is a ghostly file of this type, articulated on heterogeneities and discontinuities, based on the intrinsic value of image and on the relational value. This archive has been “stripped of any chronological or thematic hierarchy, boundary or border –although it has not been stripped of meaning–, it is consistent with a “subjective” historical thought, and it is, to a large extent, a rhizomatic thought, activated from the present” (Guasch, 2011, p. 25).

Like survivals, specters are always driven by a spirit, according to Jacques Derrida. At least those specters that contest “a disjointed or disadjusted now, out of joint, a disjointed now that always risks maintaining nothing together in the assured conjunction of some context whose border would still be determinable” (Derrida, 2012, p. 17). As if returning to Benjamin's dialectical image, Derrida opens his work *Specters of Marx*, addressing the heterogeneity inaugurated in the time of the specter. This figure is used again

7. Such description appears especially in the texts by Benjamin about Baudelaire.



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and again to approach the Hamlet that must bear the “name of the one who disappeared” but that “must have gotten inscribed someplace else” (Derrida, 2012, p. 20). Carri also bears the weight of that spirit and must shape this coexistence with specters, making them not become-body –which is not possible even in the sometimes symbolic terrain of justice– but rather making them become-image.

Derrida (2012) analyzes the figure of mourning at the beginning of his essay, and considers it as an attempt to “ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and by localizing the dead” (p. 23). Put it this way, the question of the specter is exhausted, deactivated, stripped of agency, in a process of transformation; but the figure of the disappeared with which Carri writes her memory prevents this “occupation of place” referred to by the philosopher. There is no figure that can accept this transformation or fill its void. However, the artist does not escape the hauntology that chases her and, in effect, she includes the logic of siege as part of her arsenal of the reappeared in art. *Punto improprio* takes the form of this reappearance from a device that challenges both its specter and its intelligible signals.

“What is a specter made of?” Asks Giorgio Agamben in the short text *On the Uses and Disadvantages of Living Among Spectres*. There, Agamben compares the city of Venice with a cadaver, which can be covered with some makeup and re-exhibited in order to continue to take advantage of it, so that outsiders ignore their dead status and, believing it to be alive, continue to make it exist. This harsh diagnosis allows him to define the specter as that which is made of signatures, that is, of “signs, ciphers or monograms that are etched onto things by time” (Agamben, 2011a, p. 13). For Agamben specters are living cadavers where time is inscribed from multiple signals.

We owe a lot of more things to specters than to the dead, who “not only ask nothing from us, but they also seem to do everything possible to be forgotten” (Agamben, 2011a, p. 17). Instead, spectrality is a way of life, says Agamben, a life of survival, a “posthumous or complementary life that begins when everything is finished” (Agamben, 2011a, p. 21). The specter clings with passion to a life that is no longer its own as the melancholic does to the object he has never possessed. In a way, Carri does this by taking her own memories and the sounds of others to give them a life of impropriety. An so her mother’s words come to life in the silent intonations, in the grammatical descriptions that hinder empathy, but there all the marks that the specter spills on the tongue can be found, more alive than life itself. With that spectral tongue, Caruso speaks to her daughters and to all the children who listen to her in an *epoché* of time, in an “unhinged” (à l’envers) time, as stated by Derrida, in a world “upside down” (Derrida, 2012, p. 33). At this aggravated time, Carri affirms herself as an artist, generously opening up to the singularity of the specter and accepting, solicitous, its untimely origin.

#### 4. Phantoms and fireflies

In *The Survival of the Fireflies* (2009), Didi-Huberman refers to the image of survival in a poetic tone that intertwines literature, film and philosophy. He makes reference to Pier Paolo Pasolini, who had thought the relationship between the strong lights of power and the weakened strength of the vanquished. Shortly before his death, in 1975, Pasolini denounces the disappearance of fireflies, those tiny insects that, at the time of mating, emit a yellowish light that can be seen at night. Pasolini associates fireflies with the desiring body, with pleasure and transgression. Pasolini attributes their disappearance not only to pollution and urban expansion but to the new drunkenness induced by cultural industry and television.

Spotlights pointing to the people have become so powerful that the people have lost all differentiation (“there is no longer a man,” says Pasolini, possibly defying Nietzsche, Foucault and Barthes). Didi-Huberman also reintroduces the image of the firefly from the motif of intermittency and associates it with the discontinuous jumbled character of the Benjaminian dialectical image, a notion intended to understand how time becomes visible, how history appears in a flash. The intermittency of the discontinuous image reminds us of the fireflies because of their “pulsating, passing, fragile light” (Didi-Huberman, 2009, p. 38).

Pasolini’s hopelessness towards the human creatures of contemporary societies equates the way fireflies have been “vanquished, destroyed, trapped, or discarded under the artificial light of the spotlights under the panoptic eye of surveillance cameras, under the deadly agitation of television screens” (Didi-Huberman, 2009, p. 49). Lights have disappeared along with innocence, condemned to death, which is why we have to imagine a possible way out, a way of endorsing a certain historical agency –even if discontinuous and contingent– on which to found history and art. To attempt this is, for Didi-Huberman, the way of thinking an imaginary condition for the form of *doing*:

If imagination –that image producing task intended for thought– enlightens us through the way in which the Before reencounters the Now to release rich constellations for the Future, then we shall be able to understand the extent to which that encounter of times, that collision of an active present and a reminiscent past, is critical. (Didi-Huberman, 2009, p. 52)

This mirrors Benjamin’s gaze on historical time and sends us back to Warburg, not only in relation to the key role survivals play in the dynamics of Western imagination, but also in relation to political functions, whose memorial effects they reveal. In this way, an epistemology of the image interrogating survivals and the pathos is taken that frames history and action, art and the subject.

If contemporary man is “expropriated of his experience”, as Agamben thinks, it is increasingly necessary to stop evoking

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the present time as a "latent apocalypse," as Didi-Huberman notes. *Operación fracaso...* shows that everything can engage in a healthy conflict on the basis that the reactionary destruction operates its havoc both on living and spectral bodies. Carri's work is built on this basis and on the compulsion to remember. The artist's work proposes to reconsider the role of art as a sphere of *doing* (the work of art is no longer an object but an event) and, at the same time, as an affective capture of history.

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