

THE ZONE (IN REFERENCE TO YAMANeko'S MACHINE)

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When invited to participate in this volume, I saw this as a possibility of sharing a few experiences of artists/intellectuals in order to really look into, across and hopefully beyond the borders of geography. But more so, I wanted this to be a space where we could engage with works that experiment with both form and content, and do so through a concern with public intellectual engagement and the way in which critical practices are shared, communicated or even made available. So I thought of the Zone, the machine in Chris Markers' film *Sans Soleil*, that transforms images, that fractures their iconicity, their embedded and direct meanings, and opens up again the possibilities of their true aesthetic capacities to question history and memory. I thus see this space, the Zone, as part of the ideal of a possible encounter for southern voices, something particularly relevant at a moment when complex associations of critical thinking, theory, technology, creativity, sensuality and politics are finally reaching out. In these new formations (online platforms—see www.sensatejournal.com—, workshops, curated projects—see South-South. Interruptions and Encounters, curated by Jon Soske—, and to a lesser extent independent publications—Chimurenga) one can find spaces and voices that continue to defy as Chris Marker, Robert Gardner, Trinh T. Minh-ha and others did not so long ago, the bounding effects of dominating tendencies towards creative and critical practices.

Through the introduction of audiovisual

contributions we seek to strengthen dialogues along non-traditional planes—geographical and disciplinary. Opening up this space is an effort in the direction of tackling the exceptionalism that has pervaded much academic discourse and political practice. Even though efforts in this direction are not new, the way critical expressive practices are read is something that needs to be furthered not only by opening up parallel spaces for artists in academic discussions and events, but in the pushing of boundaries that unproductively tend to separate “the arts” from critical, engaged scholarly work. Through this, we want to open spaces for those scholars, artists, or media practitioners that continue to blur these boundaries in innovative and critical ways.

Wanting to really look into the production of southern voices, the Zone also seeks an engagement with the limits of regional and nationalist paradigms that have made horizontal dialogues difficult. We want to focus on those practitioners based in non-traditional centers as a means to enable channels of interaction and communication. In places outside the US and European academy, the conditions of production, imagination and public engagement have been read through an ethnographic if not geopolitical boundary. This thinking has produced a national(ist) label on many of these works. This is something that needs to be rethought, and problematized. Think of this contribution then as a call for these voices to be heard, literally, and engaged through their own conditions of being, that is through the poetics and sensualities that sound, image and movement contain.

For this volume we chose four contributions from Colombia. However, this number does not want to be read as showcase of “Colombian documentary”,

but rather, as a way of approaching how, in a place like Colombia, artists, intellectuals and media practitioners working in various mediums have been reflecting on the experience of life amidst conflict. The selection is introduced with a text by Maria Victoria Uribe, one of the most committed scholars in engaging violence and its implications for the way we think about ourselves, as well as to how we live through violence. Her piece provides the context of the Colombian conflict, and introduces the role of the arts with/in it. We then have three contributions each in a different audiovisual medium: a film essay, an audio/installation, and a photography project.

In *Version Libre*, Clemencia Echeverri, one of Colombia's most well known sound artists, relies on the use of echoes, repetition and silences to engage the idea of the phantom that lies within the experience of violence, this time, through the perpetrators themselves. Based on Colombia's version of a TRC, the confessions of these former paramilitaries and guerrillas touches us but also itself. As Gustavo Chirolla suggests in the catalogue that accompanies this piece, “In *Versión libre* a specter has been installed at the same time as the spectral nature of the medium is pointed out.” The experience of this sound installation enables one to feel the agony of those trying to speak behind the mask, that emblem of the revolutionary that is also in this case been used as the emblem of betrayal, torture, violence, rape and massacre. The hidden face struggling to speak suggests the struggle of the confession, its fragmented nature, even its repetitiveness. It can be also read as a critique of the process itself, which is still being worked out in Colombia, and has also been limited by political interests.

Re-membranzas is a reflexive work on memory,

violence, ruins and of the role of documentary in these scenarios. Produced by Catalina Cortes (as a work in progress), *Re-membering* is based on years of following, befriending and visiting groups of women that are working towards self initiated strategies of remembrance in Colombia. Her work takes us up close through the silences created by years of violence, through destruction and ruins, and shows us the palpability of memory as an intimate, everyday act. But going beyond the representation itself, and much in the line of Trinh t Minh-ha, Catalina's piece is a constant reflection on the documentary genre. In the structure of a film essay, she constantly questions the role of the representation, and continuously asks, reflects and pushes the limits of what it means to represent the legacy of violence, but more so, the idea of the ruin also as poetic possibility.

The last piece, titled *The Afterlife of coca dreams* is my own contribution to the number. In it I have engaged the specters of violence and the legacies of shattered dreams through my own memories and evocations of the aftermath of cocaine production and paramilitarism as forms of everyday life. For this, I am developing a photographic series through which I present the aftermath of lives and dreams once fueled by the illicit economies of cocaine production. However, these are images that also allow me to depict (and confront) my own imaginary memories and fears of the violence around this, particularly in places where paramilitaries had a strong authority, not just as an armed group, but as an everyday existence.

Together, the four contributions present an engagement with concepts, experiences and practices of representation, truth, silence and memory. What we hope to open up here then, is a horizontal look at

what is going on across the Atlantic through the aesthetic, evocative and expressive possibilities of practices that are committed to bringing experiences of suffering, loss and hope to the forefront of a critical aesthetic political sphere.