

different answer—locating the human on the side of life, on the side of the body. “All our culture consists in limiting the body in favour of the spirit. Even the horror of the concentration camps has to do with that will to eliminate the bodily. Today, we face the opposite necessity: rehabilitating the body [...]. The invention of the twentieth century is the S.O.S. sent out by the Titanic in 1912: ‘Save our Souls’. The invention of the twenty first century is S.O.B: ‘Save our Bodies’ that threatened by transgenics and huge manipulations.”

Speaking of the “body,” the author of *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* does not only refer to the physical body, but to the social body, the corpus, the heritage we have at our disposal.

The power of art comes from preserving that which is dead or could die. Its offensive audacity consists in refuting losses and giving an illusory possibility of permanence: “Beautiful instant, do not pass away!” Goethe dared to write.

Violence and destruction can only be creatively faced with an ethics of representation. What is inside the accident? A victim.

For the 2009 Venice Biennial, Teresa Margolles presented a noteworthy installation, curated by Cuauhtémoc Medina. This piece’s title was “¿De qué otra cosa podríamos hablar?” (“What Else Could We Talk About?”). For it, the sombre rooms in a palace were “cleaned” with the blood of victims of violence in Mexico. Only at the end, a caption on the wall informed the visitors what they had just experienced. This devastating valorisation of an absence reflects the task of art in a country with over 34,000 deaths in the past four years.

Accident is always an alert call, misfortune in search for meaning. As opposed to massacre, extermination, execution and other forms of serial death, it demands a response in order to not repeat itself: it imposes self-criticism.

Learning from accident does not mean incorporating errors into a dynamic, but doing without them entirely. Degrees of reaction are variable: it is easier to stop producing a machine or a plane than modifying social conducts or natural cataclysms. All in all, incidents force us to recognize a radical failure. To borrow Jorge Ibergüengoitia’s expression, every accident is a “fast autopsy:” it reveals instantaneously what it holds inside.

Benjamin warned that what we call progress is an overpowering storm. The accumulative consumer and technology society finds in accident an ethics of dispossession. Not everything is realizable and there’s always something to save. Life beats defiantly inside the accident. It’s an emergency call, an S.O.B.: “Save our Bodies.”

This demand acquires a special historical dimension in a country that has started to say: “No more blood.”



Under Discussion (2005)

JENNIFER ALLORA & GUILLERMO CALZADILLA

This piece was shot on Vieques, a small island off Puerto Rico. After decades of local efforts and international protests, in 2003 the U.S. government stopped the military experiments on the island. However, the challenge for the Vieques people has become another: to be able to get their territory back when currently, there are many speculative and turistic interests involved. Through this work, Allora & Calzadilla, make an attempt to mobilize the discussion along the island by creating poetic intersections between power, activism and environmentalism. This was the first public screening of the film in Mexico.