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2023/10/31

## Dissertation Review - Patricia Villalobos Echeverria

The dissertation entitled "PUSH < > PULL" was submitted at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw in 2023 by Patricia Villalobos Echeverria. Ms. Villalobos Echeverria, born on June 15th 1965, specialized in the field of fine arts and art conservation within the broader discipline of Arts.

Upon accepting the invitation to serve as an external reviewer for the aforementioned dissertation, I would like to provide my assessment of the artistic and theoretical work as received through electronic means. It is essential to acknowledge that my assessment, while based on the electronic submission, may differ from an in-person evaluation. The experiential aspect of the work, which involves video, sound, and audience immersion in a spatial context that encompasses one's visual field, could have provided additional insights.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to experience some of the earlier artworks presented in the dissertation in person, offering a valuable reference for understanding the imaginative development within the dissertation.

Within the written component of her dissertation, Patricia Villalobos Echeverria provides a comprehensive contextualization of her artistic practice. This contextualization includes the evolution of her role as an artist and researcher, an exploration of the works of artists who have influenced her practice, and an explanation of the connection between the characteristics of printmaking and print media and the artist's creative impetus in producing her work.

Drawing from the historical relationship between printmaking, art, and mass communication, Patricia Villalobos Echeverria explores the unique capacity of the medium to convey political and social content to an audience. This audience, whether engaging with textual or visual content, has the power to construct a collective memory that bridges fragmented realities. As a historical perspective demonstrates, the published image can not

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only introduce new images into our collective memory of past events but also form our Weltbild. Wolfgang Ullrich delves into this in his books, "Bilder auf Weltreise - Eine Globalisierungskritik" (Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, Berlin 2006) and "Raffinierte Kunst - Übung vor Reproduktionen" (Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, Berlin 2009).

The "public" image, as a source for establishing a collective memory, intersects with the artist's exploration of the dissociation and alienation resulting from personal experiences of traumatic events with a political dimension. Using print as a means to investigate the multifaceted memory construct employed in dealing with traumatic experiences, the individual and idiosyncratic aspects merge with the collective and generic. Even in its most rudimentary form, printing can be described as a layered practice, making it a logical and well-suited medium for Patricia Villalobos Echeverria to discuss the layered nature of human memory and its transformative capacity.

"PUSH < > PULL" represents the dichotomy between the individual and the collective, as well as the real and the imagined. Through the utilization of analog and digital creative processes, it juxtaposes mimesis with the coded, as if emotion were set in opposition to logic. The artist's research uncovers a space between these forces, where her work thrives.

At first glance, the introduction of video may appear as a superfluous integration of a different medium into the artistic practice, driven by the art world's necessity to cultivate a narrative of innovation and revolutionary achievements. However, through her dissertation, the artist demonstrates that, despite being a time-based medium, video is not fundamentally different from the printed image in terms of audience reception leading to a reshaping of reality and the impact of images on memory formation. From a technical perspective, the contemporary digital nature of video has blurred the boundary between static images and video. While analog images, whether created with or without optomechanical tools, offer information that reflects reality, which is then transformed into

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a visual representation, the digital image introduces a dissociation from the past and the subject of visualization through the need for information encoding.

The code, serving as a matrix for image multiplication, allows the use of algorithms to simulate the process of filling gaps, "the unknown," in fragmented memory left by trauma and the community's need to address it. Distortion, blurring, obstructed views, and selective focus are all calculated based on available data. While no additional information is added, the generation of "in-between" images opens up the < > space.

Despite the sensory distinctions between experiencing this space through the reception of printed works with analog and digital layering in the printing process and the video installation, which offers animated visuals and sound, both components of Patricia Villalobos Echeverria's work provide imagery for reconstructing the past in the context of a present shaped by dissociation and alienation. In Patricia Villalobos Echeverria's artistic practice, political agitation finds expression through the poetic formulation of subjective experiences, which are intended for sharing, whether through publication or public engagement. A thorough exploration of the political within the private and the private within the political is presented through her biography, her life as an artist, and her personal experiences as an educator.

In her research approach and method, Patricia Villalobos Echeverria adopted a methodology that Vytautas Michelkevicius encapsulated as "visual art and vice versa" in his book "Mapping Artistic Research: Towards Diagrammatic Knowing" (Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2018). In this approach, the artistic practice itself serves as the primary method of research, aiming to yield fresh insights and generate new knowledge.

It is widely acknowledged that this approach is considered risky within the relatively nascent realm of artistic research, primarily because there is limited reference available to

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evaluate the potential outcomes. The main criticisms of this method revolve around the notion that the idiosyncratic process of an individual artist may not permit the research to be continued by another individual, and that the results are contingent upon a deeply subjective interpretation of the acquired experience, making it challenging to replicate the resulting conclusions.

In Patricia Villalobos Echeverria's dissertation, we encounter an exemplary case where the risks taken have proven to be fruitful. The results demonstrate that valuable insights can be gleaned through artistic practice and that the knowledge produced can be made accessible for further research. The ability to analyze and critically examine her own practice while assuming the role of an observer in investigating the interaction between the audience and the work has been key to the success of her work. This success can be attributed, in part, to the artist's experience in communicating with fellow artists and art students and her expertise in the field of art education. Her pedagogical knowledge, as evidenced in the materials provided for this assessment, undeniably plays a pivotal role in maintaining the research's individuality and openness simultaneously. It is imperative to emphasize that the text should never be perceived as the sole substrate of artistic research but rather as the textual component of the dissertation. It is crucial to acknowledge that the academic tradition of conveying information through language often falls short in conveying the inherent nonverbal elements of the artwork. My critique suggesting that the text could benefit from further exploration of the changing paradigms introduced by the coded matrix is, however, brought into question by my preceding statement.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse the conferral of a doctoral degree in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation, preferably with honors, to Patricia Villalobos Echeverria.

Sincerely,

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