

Buenos Aires, September 30th, 2023



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REF: DISSERTATION REVIEW

PATRICIA VILLALOBOS ECHEVERRIA (born June 15, 1965)

*PUSH <> PULL: The Potential of Prints and Digital Media to Explore Concepts of
Dissociation and Alienation.*

The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław,
Faculty of Graphics and Media Arts,

Doctoral Thesis in the Field of the Arts in the Discipline – Fine Arts and Conservation.

FOREWORD

I received materials for the Patricia Villalobos Echeverria 's PhD assessment from herself since May 2023 and from the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław in July 2023. I do know her work previously to this request, so - besides the review of the thesis- my evaluation is conducted from multiple perspectives: my knowledge of the artist and her work for the past 25 years; the numerous collaborations and projects we have undertaken together in the USA, Argentina, Europe and China; the essays I have written over the years about her work; the attendance of several of her exhibitions in Spain, the USA, Prague, Argentina, England, etc; my background in the fields of Contemporary Art with focus on Latin America and expanded print media; my understanding of the Latin American art landscape and the candidate's connection to it, and my experience working as the director of

artistic projects with creators from around the world, both in international projects and in running the residency program at Proyecto'ace.

I first met the candidate in 1998 at a conference at Ohio University in the USA. It was a brief encounter. A young Patricia approached after my lecture and handed me a postcard featuring her work (yes, printed on cardboard in those pre-smartphone days!). That was it. The postcard featured her multimedia installation *Reciprocidad-Reciprocity* (1997), which included screen-printing on canvas, wood, medical tubing and sound equipment, and is part of the *Terremoto-Earthquake* series; “a metaphor for the catastrophic collision of worlds, cultures, and political interests in Central American history and a connection to her own experiences of identity and displacement and of being in between cultures” (Cornejo, 2015). In a time when expanded graphics were not widely discussed – encompassing techniques, size, and changes in medium – her work left a strong impression on me as well as the conceptual and technical researches that I was doing at that time. From then on, I began to consider her work in my curatorial projects and incorporated her work/images/concepts into my lectures. Over the many years of collaboration, my recommendations led to her an invitation to the *“The Fluttering Ways / The Ways of Flutter”*, 3rd International Triennial of Graphic Arts Prague 2001 in Czech Republic; an inclusion in the book *“Printmaking in the Edge”* by Richard Noyce, and participation as an artist-curator for the IAPA (International Academic Print Alliance) in Beijing, China, among others. I have also written about her work on multiple occasions, including the essay *“Expulsed from Eden”* in *“Patricia Villalobos”* catalog in 2006, an article in *“Grapheion: an international review of contemporary prints”* magazine, and several papers presented on various occasions in panels, magazines and conferences. Patricia was an artist in residence at Proyecto'ace Artist-in-Residence International Program in 2006 (showing *Alamar-Asea* installation -an intense visual and auditory experience) and was invited as keynote speaker in 'ace's *“Cohabiting Borders-Together Apart Online Residency Program”* in 2022. These activities provided others opportunities to work with her over an extended period of time. With all these elements, I believe that my review of her doctoral proposal, as

well as her conceptual, creative, and personal abilities is strongly based by a wealth of knowledge about her art practice and personal capabilities.

ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

The candidate possesses a rich educational background, holding a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) from West Virginia University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) from Louisiana State University, demonstrating a strong foundation in the field of contemporary art. With a distinguished academic and professional trajectory, she has served as a Professor and Director at the Gwen Frostic School of Art, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, and have held leadership positions as Assistant Chair of the Art Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, among other roles. Their extensive teaching experience, including positions at Cornell University and Southern Oregon University, along with a notable period as Graduate Coordinator, reflects their dedication to art education. Artistically, Patricia Villalobos Echeverría's career has been marked by a remarkable series of exhibitions and projects that reflect her diverse and thought-provoking artistic practice. Notable among these are her solo exhibitions such as "PUSH <> PULL" at the Kerr Gallery, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI in 2023, "Retrace:MI," a participatory art project in Grand Rapids, MI in 2019, and "Retrace," which was showcased in two venues, including the Galeria za szkłem, Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland, in 2017. Her global reach is evident in exhibitions like "tukituktuk," a participatory project in Beijing, China, in 2016, and "Aguasmalas" in New York, NY, in 2008. Patricia's work has explored a wide range of themes and contexts, from urban interventions in San Salvador, El Salvador, to participatory projects in Managua, Nicaragua, and powerful exhibitions across the United States. These exhibitions collectively underscore her dedication to exploring complex issues such as migration and transformation through her innovative and impactful art. Finally, I must to say that one of my favorites previous installations is *Rush*, the architectural intervention that she made for the

11th Havana Biennial 2012. In here a sort of “skin eruption” attacked the central building of the Havana Biennial, the pink Contemporary Art Center Wifredo Lam in the historical old district of Havana, speaking visually and openly about what couldn't be said with words, in front to everyone's view in an ironic and playful manner.

ASSESSMENT OF CREATIVE WORK AND PH.D. THESIS

-BACKGROUND

In order to contextualize this review, it is pertinent to acknowledge that political and social violence in Latin America has exerted a profound and enduring influence upon the trajectory of Contemporary Art within the region. In response to such tumultuous sociopolitical landscapes, artists have emerged as proactive agents of change, engaging in multifaceted endeavors encompassing activism, incisive social commentary, and the therapeutic catharsis afforded by their creative expressions. Furthermore, Latino artists residing in the United States maintain strong bonds with their countries of origin and are deeply attuned to the multifarious issues and adversities confronting their homelands from their vantage point within the diaspora. These artists committedly embrace a dual cultural identity, and their artistic creations serve as poignant vehicles for social critique, addressing pressing concerns such as corruption, socioeconomic disparities, human rights transgressions, and the scourge of violence. Ultimately, their artistic endeavors transcend the realm of visual aesthetics, serving as a catalyst for psychological and emotional recuperation, particularly within the intricate framework of trauma stemming from instances of violence. This recognition derives from the profound understanding that art assumes a paramount role in the intricate process of trauma processing, encompassing not only the artist but also the receptive audience. Moreover, it becomes evident that art assumes an indispensable function in facilitating the collective healing of communities, as the act of narrating their experiences emerges as an imperative

component of the recuperative trajectory. Furthermore, the utilization of diverse artistic mediums affords the capacity to establish connections with a heterogeneous array of audiences, thereby broadening the scope of impact and resonance.

Within this contextual background, Patricia Villalobos Echeverria's pieces epitomize the experience of numerous Latin American emigrants as it is imbued with a profound sense of transnational identity. Her artistic practice inquires into themes associated with migration, displacement, and cultural exchange. Her approach incorporates visual techniques such as collapse, expansion, revelation, and interruption, serving as vehicles for conveying and influencing the content she addresses. Through strategic utilization of the interplay between cultural contexts, the forces of globalization, and the dynamics of a transnational economy, the artist underscores the issues related with what is "periphery" and what is "center" within a post-capitalist world, epitomizing the concept of "mutually contaminating" elements.

- WORK & THESIS

This dissertation investigates the influence of contemporary perceptions of reality on the process of documentation, shedding light on the subjectivity and malleability inherent in our recollections, while underscoring the intricate interplay between media, memory, and trauma. It also examines artists who employ innovative approaches with print and digital media, highlighting the intersection of video and print. Furthermore, it explores the creative and innovative approach of connecting print media strategies to a conceptual framework aimed at evoking dissociation and alienation in both digital prints and video installations.

In this way, the research includes the creation of personal artwork comprising seven large-format digital prints and a video installation. Visually talking, they represent a continuation of the abstraction introduced in "Latitud 12 <> Longitud -86", a previous piece described in the Chapter IV. The titles of these works incorporate angle

brackets "<>"—symbols with mathematical significance signifying "less than" and "greater than". Consequently, what resides within these brackets simultaneously occupies a marginal and central role in the entire code, creating a non-space and non-place. They function both visually and conceptually as points of tension, serving to both separate and connect elements within the series. Additionally, it examines and employs the use of various print procedures, including screen-print, lithography, monoprint, relief, and painting, which employ layered photographic data and tusche washes over paper and canvas substrates. These diverse techniques contribute to a multi-dimensional exploration of the subject matter. Last but not least, the exhibition includes the display of these bi-dimensional and multilayered large prints together with a video projected onto a outsized and concave screen, emphasizing the immersive qualities of the medium and its capacity to oscillate between reality and abstraction, aligning seamlessly with the overarching theme of dissociation and alienation. This approach promises to offer viewers a dynamic and immersive experience, offering fresh insights into how violence and trauma can evoke feelings of alienation.

Aligned with the artist's statement, "PUSH <> PULL" explores the intricate interplay of the past and present, aiming to immerse the observer in a sensory encounter that vividly conveys the intricacies of representation and the flexibility of memory. Using and investigating the potential of prints and digital media to explore dissociation and alienation concerning memory and trauma, she pushes the boundaries of print media to question its relationship with truth and our reality. The artist's research was inspired by living through the April 2018 uprising in Nicaragua while residing in the United States, creating a unique space of disconnection. These facts, that trigger the project, were seized by the opportunity to document the profound changes and ensuing chaos that unfolded in response to President Daniel Ortega's controversial social security reforms. The artist, alongside the courageous protesters, chronicling their struggle and resilience through her lens while was in the midst of this turmoil. In addition, "PUSH <> PULL" links the strategies used in the creation of the works to a

conceptual approach to print-media. It places particular focus on the dislodgment between matrix and progeny and the layering properties of printmedia's conceptual terrain as a means to achieve a sense of dissociation and alienation in the digital prints and the video installation. The use of layers and digital manipulation of print-making marks leads to a similar approach in video, however amplified, by the element of time, movement, and sound. Both the video and prints oscillate between reality and abstraction, in an attempt to tap into our contemporary sense of alienation, incessant media exposure, precariousness, and constant surveillance.

CONCLUSION

"PUSH <> PULL" presents a compelling exploration of dissociation, alienation, trauma, and political violence through the perspective of an artist who identifies as a transnational individual. This analysis delves into the timely and thought-provoking nature of the work, situating it within the context of the 2018 Nicaraguan uprising as a backdrop for the artist's personal experiences, thus infusing it with a poignant and relevant dimension.

"PUSH <> PULL" appears to be a compelling and intellectually engaging dissertation and exhibition that tackles important contemporary issues through the lens of art and media. It combines personal experience with a thoughtful exploration of broader societal themes, making it a valuable contribution to the field of contemporary art and expanded print media. This thesis scrutinizes the effectiveness of print media in conveying the complexities of dissociation and alienation after experiences of violence and assesses the impact of media exposure on individuals and the environment. Ultimately, this research contributes to a broader dialogue about our experiences in an increasingly hostile world and redefines the role of print media in the digital era, making a significant contribution to our field.

The author's deep understanding and extensive research are evident. The thesis

promises to advance our knowledge of Contemporary Art and Expanded Print Media related with artists in the diaspora. The candidate not only possess the necessary academic qualifications but also demonstrate a originality in their research approach, and the potential to make meaningful contributions to the field of Fine Arts and Art Conservation.

I am pleased to grant my approval for the PhD thesis titled " ***PUSH <> PULL*** " submitted by **Patricia Villalobos Echeverria**. I recommend an academic Ph.D. title awarded with honors in the field of Art, in the discipline of Fine Arts and Art Conservation for this candidate.



FUNDACIÓN 'ACE PARA EL
ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO
MARIA ALICIA CANDIANI
PRESIDENTE

Lic. Arq. ALICIA CANDIANI

President | Fundación 'ace para el Arte Contemporáneo, ARGENTINA

Founding Director | Proyecto'ace, Artist-in-Residence International Program, ARGENTINA

Deputy Dean | IPI-International Printmaking Institute, CAFA-Central Academy of Arts, Beijing, CHINA

Member of the International Advisory Board | IAPA- Academic Print Alliance, CAFA-Central Academy of Arts, Beijing, CHINA

Member of the Consulting Committee | FIG Bilbao. International Festival of Graphics and Art on Paper. Bilbao, SPAIN

Director | OPEN Buenos Aires: international encounter of emerging graphics. Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

Member of the Scientific Committee | APOTHEKE. Postgraduate Program Visual Arts Magazine researching into artistic practices and their relationship with Art/Education. State University of Santa Catarina, Florianopolis, BRAZIL.

Alicia@proyectoace.org

+549 11 58544671