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**VISUAL ENCOUNTERS:  
BEYOND THE WRITTEN AND  
TOWARD THE SENSORY**

**VISUAL  
METHODOLOGIES**

**OCTOBER 2011  
SPECIAL ISSUE**



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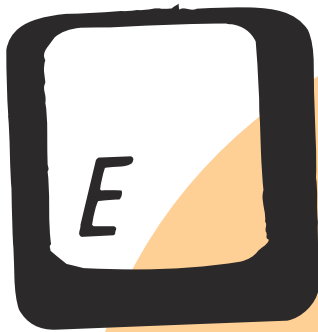
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history \* power \* culture



# Editorial

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*Pains and pleasures, hopes and horrors, intuitions and apprehensions, losses and redemptions, mundanities and visions, angels and demons, things that slip and slide, or appear and disappear, change shape or don't have much form at all, unpredictabilities, these are just few of the phenomena that are hardly caught by social science methods.... If much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have much of a pattern at all, then where does this leave social science? ... If much of reality is ephemeral and elusive, then we cannot expect single answers. If the world is complex and messy, then at least some of the time we're going to have to give up on some of the simplicities. But one thing is sure: if we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we're going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate and to know in new ways.<sup>1</sup>*

John Law

Indeed as Law suggests: Where does this leave social science, and equally importantly, where does this leave the meaning and assumptions of knowledge, what we know and how we know? And in the same vein, who is the "we" postulated as the knowing subject? Where and when is s/he positioned in relationship to a knowledge project and that which is to be known? Equally pertinent: How do we imagine, as practitioners of social sciences and humanities, the relationship among to think, to practice, to relate and to know? What are some of the possibilities of the "new ways"? Do visual methodologies offer one such potential?



The *Visual Methodologies: Beyond the Written and Toward the Sensory* Workshop constituted one site where these and other related questions were put on the table for debate and reflection. The table was populated by a group of eighteen scholars hailing from various backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities and from multiple positions of engagement with the social world. For ten days the table was the meeting point of the histories, libraries, traditions of thought and practice of such diverse places as South Africa, Columbia, Chile, India, Peru, South Africa, Mozambique, Egypt, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Trinidad and Tobago, mediated by individual itineraries and idiosyncrasies. The essays and reflections in this volume are a product of such encounters and debates, mediated yet again by the then and there of Cairo (Egypt) during April 2011.

The spatio-temporal particularities of a city that is emerging from, though still deeply immersed in, a process of revolution and transformation added a flare of immense possibilities and potentials. If the questions posed to the participants called for challenging the commonsense of our habits of thinking and practicing knowledge by focusing on the visual, the context only magnified the urgency of such a call. For one, dominant social science paradigms of knowledge that rendered Egypt and the region – most recently packaged and named Middle East and North Africa, MENA for short – accessible and knowable, have been inefficacious in thinking and anticipating the revolutions that spread from Tunisia to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Syria. The narrow pre-occupation with the exceptionalism of MENA, a region classified as deficient in knowledge, freedom and empowerment, flaunted the limitations of social science tools and methods of analysis.<sup>2</sup> The case of Egypt thus provided an impetus and a platform from which to ask: How and what do we know, with what tools, deployed by whom and to which ends? Probing and querying the visual and the sensory offers a potential for such an engagement. Such potential lies in unpacking that – e.g. the everyday, the contingent, the precarious, the contradictory, the processual, the affective and the not so visible – which may have eluded the determinacy (and hegemony) of the written. The quest is not for a dismissal or rejection of the written, but rather for redefining the rules of engagement of the written, the visual and the sensory. In fact, recourse to the visual has a long history, particularly in the anthropological toolkit. Yet an unequal geography in the training, resource availability, and capacity has marked the presence (and absence) of the visual and the sensory in the production of social science knowledge. As Mark Westmoreland outlines in his essay, the use of visual methodologies and the production of visual knowledge in MENA has been extremely limited. Additionally, the pretexts and assumptions that underlie the use of visual methods, techniques and methodologies, and the relationship between image and text remain fraught with tensions and unquestioned assumptions. The latter is of particular significance at a time when the propensity for including a ‘visual component’ has become a trademark of many a research project, not only in the academic world, but also in development-oriented programs undertaken by NGOs, and in human rights/activists circles. A host of assumptions ranging from ‘being alternative’ or aiming to ‘capture authentic’ voice and experience, to liberatory, democratising, and radical, have underpinned this trend. Yet, these are not inherent qualities in the object of the visual in and of itself, but rather bespeak the need to rethink the epistemological, methodological and conceptual underpinnings of

how the visual is constituted, the politics of its presence or absence, and the meanings embedded therein. In short, instead of asking: ‘What is the visual?’, the workshop invited its participants to think how visual and sensory knowledge are produced and experienced, and how visual praxis is embodied and enacted.

Indeed the powerful presence of the visual in relation to the 25 January 2011 revolution in Egypt was striking. Media channels exported scenes of the revolution to almost every corner of the globe, rendering the revolution not only immediate, accessible and simple, but also seen, witnessed, and known. Yet, what kind of knowledge was generated in this process of on-the-spot circulation of snapshots and the subsequent commodification of scenes of the revolution as memorabilia on postcards, t-shirts, and in galleries and exhibits? Here again the case of Egypt was only a springboard to explore how technology and desire have saturated sensibilities, rendering the extraordinary into mundane consumables. Equally important was the inseparability of the visual (e.g. paintings, graffiti, film, video, photography, comics, cartoons, posters), the oral and sensory (e.g. sounds, chants, songs, smells, rhythms, body movements) from the everyday of the revolution and its praxis. In the aftermath of the eighteen days of occupation of Tahrir Square that ended with the ouster of Mubarak, the visual and the performative remained critical sites for thinking and acting trajectories of change, articulating imaginaries for the future, and exploring facades of past and present social realities that defied easy translation into words and written texts.

The papers in this volume engage and expand these ideas and questions in a myriad of ways. Rike Sitas’ contribution provides a rich instance of how experimental creative practice can be a catalyst for affective encounters that enable dialogue around issues of socio-spatial justice. Focusing on the *dala* project in Durban South Africa, she narrates how public art intersects with the struggle over space and livelihoods. Affect, technology and embodiment in the case of amateur pornography in India and amateur photography during the 25 January revolution is the question Namita Malhorta examines in her contribution. By juxtaposing revolution and pornography, Namita explores how technologies become vehicles for and embodiments of emotions. Mark Westmoreland continues the discussion about technology, art, and visibility by probing its boundaries with ethnography, the overlap and conjunctures in methodologies and practices. From art to museums, Matias Marambio questions the meaning of a museum, by engaging the recent student movement in Chile and the *Museo de la Represión*, set in front of the headquarters of the University of Chile during August 2011. Continuing on Sita’s thread of art and the political, he asks how visual methodologies become pertinent to political change. How does a conceptualisation of document and testimony shift in the act of exhibiting and narrating the life of collected canisters of tear gas and rubber bullets that were used by the regime in acts of political violence? Political violence, memory and the visual/performative are themes Karen Bernedo and Rocio Trinidad engage with in their respective essays focusing on Peru, and the memories of violence during the reign of Fujimori. How is it possible for a people, who have experienced the terror machine of a police state, to forget such violence, and what are the costs of such forgetting? Focusing on the 2011 Presidential elections in Peru, they rethink the possibilities of the visual and the performative in

remembering the past to shape the present and future. In their respective contributions, they highlight the tensions and contradictions in the meanings of images and performances, thus challenging the simplistic readings and assumptions about the neutrality and purity of images. The contradictions and ambiguities of visual tools is the thread Busra Sultana explores in her paper on gender, sexuality and ads in Bangladesh. There she examines how ads relate in uneasy ways to prevailing cultural and social norms regarding gender hierarchies and lived experiences. Experience, the blurred boundary between the anthropologist and the tourist, is the theme Oscar Guarin, Charisma Lepcha, Rui Assubuji and Felipe Cabrera Orozco explore in their essay. They query the politics of positions in the act of seeing by reflecting on their own experiences as anthropologists and tourists in Cairo. They demonstrate how the gazes of anthropologists and tourists blur with images that pre-exist in the mind, generating through daily encounters novel cultural images that cannot be reduced easily to the here and there, now and then.

Finally, it is with great pleasure that I invite you as readers to experiment with the sensory and the visual in engaging the relationship between texts and images contained in this volume. The volume offers a tour through the global south, with its potentialities of knowledge and experience, that I hope will carve out a path for navigating the messy social world, while offering trajectories towards new ways of thinking, relating, practicing and knowing.

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**1** John Law, *After Methods: Mess in Social Science Research*, Routledge, London, 2004.

**2** Arab Human Development Report, 2010 .

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# *From An Anthropological Tourist to a Tourist as Ethnographer*

Oscar Guarin

Rui Assubuji

Charisma K. Lepcha

Felipe C. Orozco

performance  
visual  
archive  
social  
reality  
image  
Pride  
insight  
discovery

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# From An Anthropological Tourist to a Tourist as Ethnographer

This article addresses the relation between the tourist (we and our experience in Egypt) and the ethnographer, and how these gazes interweave with the images that pre-existed in our minds to create a new complex image we call 'cultural images'. The tourists gaze is an overlap between known images, and those images to know, articulated by a variety of knowledge, which gives the status of truth and veracity of such images. In addition, we want to show how the experience can be enriching when we embody both a tourist and an ethnographer as we present this reflective text and a photo essay.



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“Pyramids”. Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.



The Egyptian Revolution and the ousting of Hosni Mubarak had the world’s attention focussed on Egypt. The country was creating news; history was taking place at the ‘cradle of civilization’, where ‘culture’ is believed to have evolved. From the pyramids to the protests, Egypt was a society in transition and it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity for any anthropology student to be there. It would be the ideal place for fieldwork. Fortunately, four anthropology students (hailing from Mozambique, India, and two from Colombia) got this rare opportunity (along with ten other participants) to visit and witness the revolution that was taking place in Egypt since 25 January 2011.

“Felipe”. Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.



Sephis Workshop. Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.



Indeed, the days were long and the nights very young. The schedule required full days inside the conference hall for lectures and discussions. It would get tiring by the end of the day, but that never deterred the zealous souls to go out and explore the city as night fell. From walking to Tahrir Square to taking cabs across town in search of a *shisha* place, bargaining for the revolution t-shirts to drinking tea in unknown alleys, they shared their past experiences and ideas while relating it to the present context. They visited the pyramids and got a boat ride on the Nile. They bought the papyrus and the perfumes. They ate the rabbits and the pigeons. They took many photographs and shot hours of footages. They did the touristy things, but they also discussed the conflict in the past and the present – the battle between tradition and modernity. They were tourists. They were anthropologists.



The four mentioned included Oscar Guarin, Rui Assubuji, Felipe Cabrera and Charisma Lepcha, who decided to create a short video for the final presentation of the workshop ([View Video](#)). Oscar's work in Brazil involved documentary footages of colonial administrators, while Rui worked with Monica Wilson's photography archive in South Africa. Felipe was working with the Nukak of Amazon, while Charisma worked among the Lepchas of the Himalayas. Their field of study was located in different corners of the world but the workshop had brought them together in Egypt as they automatically made Cairo their field of study for ten days. For the quartet, their cameras were their field diaries. They tried to record what they saw and heard, as questions like, 'How real is a photograph? Does it really represent what happened?', were being discussed during the day at the workshop.



Sephis Workshop. Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.



"Anthrotour". Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.

While they had come with preconceived notions about Egypt to be the land of pyramids and pharaohs, they witnessed the revolutionary posters and protestors in and around Cairo. Their first destination 'to visit' was the Tahrir Square and not the Giza. They knew the Nile to be the longest river on earth, but they did not know that lovers met along the Nile during dusk. Their souvenirs included both the papyrus and the revolutionary t-shirts. They had witnessed a mixture of the past and the present of Egypt. This they presented in a short video for the final presentation.





“Revolution”- Rui Assubuji. El Cairo, Egypt. March 2011.

For yesterday’s Egypt, they took clips from the travel film archive while footages of today’s Egypt were shot by the team members. There was an attempt to show the two eras, which were very different, yet connected because of its landscape and the people living there. As much of tension existed in the present Egypt, it was all a result of yesterday’s Egypt. In one part of the video, there was a switch from the film footage to a photograph to a hand sketch on a papyrus, as it aimed to question the different forms of representation. Was a photograph more real than an artist’s sketch? Does the kind of visual representation make a difference to what was real?

Their only answer to those questions could be summed up with a team member’s words on the last day, ‘This was real. Egypt was real.’













→  
Sphinx and Pyramid  
., n.d. Brooklyn Museum  
Archives  
(S10108 Gizeh, image 9938).



“There is nothing so strange,  
in a strange land,  
as the stranger who comes to visit it.”  
-Albert Camus

What is the relationship between the gaze of a tourist and that of an ethnographer? Beyond the obvious differences that may exist in the procedures and purposes, they share a particular appetite for images of the ‘other’, a sort of cannibalism in which the ‘other’ is consumed, devoured, continuously and permanently. Without knowing it, or at least without being fully aware, the tourist is a consumer of images generated by the ethnographer. The ethnographer then, mediates the tourist gaze.

Since the late nineteenth century, the ethnographer was the main producer of images of the ‘other’, and s/he became the producer of the exoticism of modern times. Having been an exclusive property of anthropological literature, this exoticisation had a direct effect on the work of natural history, and ethnographic descriptions. It thus became the lens through which the West saw the ‘otherness.’ The tourist, an European invention of the mid-nineteenth century, then began to travel to ‘far and strange places’ in search of what the guidebooks promised. Thus, the tourist was a carrier of images of the world, and s/he was simultaneously its largest consumer and disseminator. The travel diaries are evidence of how these ‘images’ were reproduced and circulated.





Egypt - Street in Native Quarter, Cairo., n.d., T. H. McAllister, Manufacturing Optician. 49 Nassau Street, New York. Brooklyn Museum Archives (S10|08 General Views\_People, image 9785).

By the early twentieth century, the popularity of the camera, and to a lesser extent the movie camera, allowed another kind of record-keeping. The images recorded by the camera, however, remained as confirmations of the world images that had been in circulation. According to Didi-Huberman, the images made by European tourists were ‘a montage of heterogeneous and discontinuous times’ that were articulated in a particular way: The past and the immediate experiences, all trapped in an image. One thus is compelled to ask: What inspires the images made by the tourists? History, literature, geography, and obviously ethnography, among others, conditioned the gaze on the ‘other’ and over the strange, and which determined the tourist gaze before the experience. Not looking otherwise, s/he sees through the eyes of those who have been ‘there’ already. The tourist thus becomes a mirror that refracts an image. Away from any intellectual or scientific intent that would put in question what s/he saw, s/he becomes a construction-reproduction matrix of these images.



Egypt - Street in Old Cairo., n.d., T. H. McAllister, Manufacturing Optician. 49 Nassau Street, New York. Brooklyn Museum Archives (S10|08 General Views\_People, image 9791).

### Experience in Egypt

According to what we have outlined above, Egypt is a perfect example of this intermingling of previous images and direct experiences. The idea of ancient Egypt, whose past is unchangeable and carries a significant weight in the present, rather than being an idea, remains a recurring image. In contrast, present Egypt fades into simultaneity of times that hide in layers and make it incomprehensible. The ‘gaze’ over present-day Egypt is preceded by massive amounts of ancient history translated into images, but carries little information about its present.

What are the pictures that a tourist takes of Egypt? Precisely the ones that confirm all the information s/he already possesses, that is of a past which no longer exists, but still keeps its effect – through tourist market logic – albeit in a different way. Along with a tourist visiting the pyramids, riding camels, or taking a picture with a ‘real dweller of the desert’, goes unnoticed the present of a country that relates to its past in a myriad of ways. The gaze of the tourists is exclusively directed to an idealized past, made accessible for consumption, and fueled an entire industry of representations, produced for the avid tourist’s appetite of a ‘recently aged’ past.



Seller of new-oldest relics. Oscar Guarín-Martínez. March 2011.

This dynamic, however, is fed by a mutually constitutive process: The external gaze that sees what is

expected to be recognised, and the observed subject, which is transformed to become the expected object of recognition and seeing. We have to acknowledge that the subjects depicted feed into these images of Egypt. These are not only objective shots and innocent scenes of unsuspecting passers-by taken by a tourist. Rather, these images embody the invisible mechanism by which the subject-landscape becomes what is expected to be seen. The images are dynamic and the portrait subject plays more than a passive role in the scene. S/he is, as Barthes contends, the *punctum* of the image.

In summary, tourist images are cultural productions created for a tourist market, which embody simultaneously a game of subtle resistance reflected in the subjects of images, which outwit the tourists and their ‘sophisticated accessories.’ However, a deeper understanding of everyday life of those subjects depicted in an image remains hidden, invisible, and inaccessible to the tourists gaze. This simulation, while affirming an unavoidable condition of hegemony, places its own existence into question. Moving beyond hegemonic colonialism, the exoticisation of the other, thus becomes a tool of resistance, whereby the ‘other’ retains and preserves his/her social spaces ‘out of sight’ by only providing their outer form to the hegemonic gaze. This forces us to consider images beyond the visual frame, involving the ‘other in different ways than simple depiction. The other is thus an essential part in the creation of what we might call ‘cultural images’.

Egypt - Arabs on Camels en route to Sakkara., n.d., T. H. McAllister, Manufacturing Optician. 49 Nassau Street, New York. Brooklyn Museum Archives (S10108 General Views\_People, image 9749).



In this sense, cultural images go far beyond the visual record and frame, and constitute essential elements of how we think and perceive the world. The visual and visibility are the testimony of a gaze that sees neither so innocently nor objectively. Rather, the visual underlies a complex interweaving of pre-existing conditions that shape it. The ‘seen’ and the ‘observed’ emerge with a series of tensions that affect the image, defying the simple reproduction of the ‘familiar cultural image.’ This defiance bespeaks the matrix of power relations and the conditions of the resistance that shape the making, circulation and consumption of images.



# Towards the Sensory: The Creative Catalyst, Public Engagement and Affective Spaces of Social Justice

Rike Sitas

performance  
visual  
archive  
social  
reality  
image

Pride  
insight  
discovery

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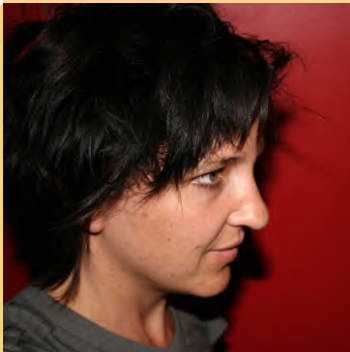
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# Towards the Sensory: The Creative Catalyst, Public Engagement and Affective Spaces of Social Justice

Despite the complexity of affective moments we experience on a daily basis, the power of affect is often neglected in understanding and explaining our world. Affect is an everyday experience of our lives, and one that is deployed by authorities and advertisers, film-makers and artists, often in manipulative ways. If affect can be used to make us do things we would not normally do – such as support oppressive nationalist regimes, or buy a range of products we do not need – it can also be used as an interesting strategic mechanism for fostering democratic spaces. Using a series of examples from *dala's* Livelihoods Initiative, this essay looks at how experimental creative practices (sensory methodologies) can be catalysts for affective encounters that enable dialogue around issues of socio-spatial justice.



Rike Sitas

Rike Sitas spends most of her time exploring and experimenting in the intersection of urban studies and creative action. She is particularly interested in the relationship between art, technology, and democratic spaces of social justice through an 'art of intimate encounters' (Miles). Rike is the co-founder and co-director of the NPO, *dala* (<http://www.dala.org.za>), an interdisciplinary network of creative practitioners that believe in the transformative role of public creativity. She is also currently doing her Ph.D. through the *African Centre for Cities*, exploring the possibilities for public art as critical and creative action (<http://www.africancentreforcities.net>).  
Email: [rike@dala.org.za](mailto:rike@dala.org.za)



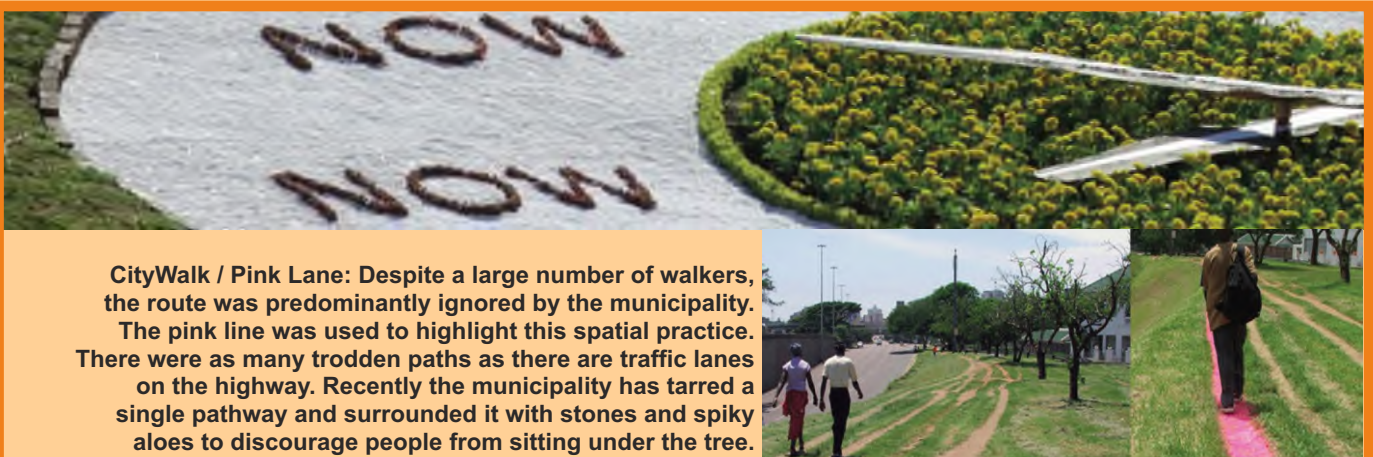
*Cities may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect. Particular affects such as anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can take place either at a grand scale or simply as part of continuing every day life.<sup>1</sup>*

Thrift

Despite the complexity of affective moments we experience on a daily basis, the power of affect is often neglected in understanding and explaining our world. Affect is an everyday experience of our lives, and one that is deployed by authorities and advertisers, film-makers and artists, often in manipulative ways. If affect can be used to make us do things we would not normally do – such as support oppressive nationalist regimes, or buy a range of products we do not need – it can also be used as an interesting strategic mechanism for fostering democratic spaces.

Using a series of examples, this essay looks at how experimental creative practices can be catalysts for affective encounters that enable dialogue around issues of socio-spatial justice. The essay emerged out of a presentation given at the SEPHIS workshop on *Visual Methodologies* in Cairo 2011, and responds to developing methodologies beyond the visual and into the realm of the sensory. Visual methodologies seem to have predominantly involved using images as texts for analysis. Moving beyond this, by creating sensory experiences through creative interactions, image-making and representation become multi-dimensional sites of experience, and in the case of the examples I use, create moments where dialogue around the issue of livelihoods can be explored.

This essay therefore tells the story of how a series of my organisation - *dala's* - public art interactions emerged around the struggle over the space of a market in Durban, South Africa. As an organisation, *dala* (<http://www.dala.org.za>) is committed to exploring inclusionary ways of working at the intersection of art, architecture and public space. This is the story of how we got involved in the struggle for the Early Morning Market in Warwick Junction, Durban, and how we created a series of creative encounters that tap into the sensory to foster affective spaces of social justice. As we are a learning organisation, we are constantly trying to make sense of, and develop new forms of critical creative practices. This essay is therefore more of an exploration of what we are doing and learning.



**CityWalk / Pink Lane:** Despite a large number of walkers, the route was predominantly ignored by the municipality. The pink line was used to highlight this spatial practice. There were as many trodden paths as there are traffic lanes on the highway. Recently the municipality has tarred a single pathway and surrounded it with stones and spiky aloes to discourage people from sitting under the tree.

The theorist is the gifted meditative walker, purposefully lost in the city's daily rhythms and material



juxtapositions. The walker possesses both a poetic sensibility and a poetic science that is almost impossible to distil as a methodology for urban research.<sup>2</sup>

Amin & Thrift

The CityWalk is one of *dala*'s oldest initiatives. It is 'an investigative journey, an exuberant exploration as well as humbling and cautionary tale, an allegory on the infinite complexities of spaces and timings in the city'. It taps into an existing walking route that thousands of people walk on a daily basis to save taxi fare between the informal settlement of uMkhumbane / Cato Manor and the bustling transport hub of Warwick Junction. The CityWalk is a critical and creative experiment and a sensory experience of 'wandering / wondering' (Amin & Thrift). Walking-wandering-wondering in the city is essentially an embodied sensory experience. It cannot be understood separate from its scents, stinks and sounds. The longest incarnation of the walk moves from uMkhumbane, through the city to the harbour. A shorter version moves from a middle class shopping mall of Musgrave Centre, to formal and informal markets of the inner city in Warwick Junction.

The walk is guided by a discussion on the design of the spaces we often take for granted. It is a walk of the in-between – in-between time and space, suburb and city, road and pavement, market and mall. Although the physical space is negligible (+/- two kilometres), for the purpose of this walk, it takes +/- six hours to traverse the psychogeographical terrain. It is about noticing the complexities of, and inconsistencies in our cities: The crack where a blade of grass pushes through the tar, the dance of the pavement as people negotiate everyday lives and livelihoods.

As Amin and Thrift have suggested through looking at the notion of a critical flaneur, walking also enables a range of face-to-face encounters. It is these encounters and relationships that have shaped the methodology of *dala* when working in public space – to always start with a walk – and it is along this route that many of our interventions have unfolded. This paper will highlight a few of these in order to build an argument for creative action as a catalyst for democratic encounters. These examples primarily revolve around the struggle for livelihoods in our city.



**Traces:** This installation involved setting up the frame of a gazebo – a common site on African pavements – and colouring the space of the site in pink powder (ingomanamakosi which is used as a binding agent for traditional medicine, umuthi).



...encounter, and the reaction to it is a formative element in the urban world. So places, for example, are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as moments of encounter, not so much as 'presents', fixed in space and time, but as variables events; twists and fluxes of interrelation.<sup>3</sup>

Amin & Thrift

The choreography of the pavement in all spaces happens in this idea of encounter, somewhere between municipal design and daily practice – especially in cities of the 'south'. Hawkers, pedestrians and motorists negotiate their way in, along, across and over city streets and sidewalks. In many African cities, the street trader is ubiquitous with urban life. But the legitimacy of their trade is often defined by bureaucratic by-laws, and in the case of South Africa, these are often remnants of apartheid urban planning. Stories of street trader evictions are common and it was one such moment along the CityWalk route, where hundreds of traders were brutally removed, their produce confiscated, that inspired the installation called Traces.

Dressed in municipal workers overalls, Doung Jahangeer traced the space of a stall as a way to trigger conversations about the removal of street traders. Even the police stopped to talk, lamenting the orders given by authorities to remove people who they too encounter every day as they patrol the areas. It is in this moment where we can see Freirian dialogue at work. For Freire, revolution can never happen on behalf of people and fundamental to the process of revolution and social change, is demographic dialogue.<sup>4</sup> The creative encounter, using affective strategies, in this instance provides a fleeting moment where people can meet and talk. Although this performative interaction is essentially transient – it happens at a relatively fixed moment in time – it is a useful strategy to trigger conversation about a particular issue.

As cities historically have been rough and tumble places, where some people can acquire a great deal of money and live in increasingly spectacular conditions while others barely scrape by, the diversity of the city can easily foster highly competitive relationships. There is competition over how land is to be used, competition over who can do what kinds of activities in a particular place, competition to make one's voice heard, competition over a set number of jobs and opportunities. While competition has rules, the city-with its plurality of relational possibilities, deal-making, loyalties, and affiliations, enables competition to be often vociferous and cutthroat. As such, the city has been seen as something that needs to be tamed and kept in line.<sup>5</sup>

Simone

The Traces installation marks an early moment of struggle in contested space of livelihood generation in the Warwick Junction area. The busiest node in Durban, Warwick Junction includes a major taxi rank, five markets and hundreds of street traders who seek out a living from commuters. The Early Morning Market, established in 1910, is a fresh produce market in the centre of Warwick Junction. Initially established as the 'Indian' market, it has been trading out of the same place for over one hundred years, and provides thousands of people with a way to earn a living. In 2009, ignoring consultative processes, the municipality decided that the market should be pulled down, and to be replaced by a shopping mall in time for the 2010 World Cup. Assuming that the traders were ill informed, the municipality started a campaign to evict the traders without following due processes. The Early Morning Market Association managed to have the development halted through a series of time-consuming legal processes and popular political action. It is only now, in the latter part of 2011 that the traders have finally ended their legal battle in victory.



The Early Morning Market, Warwick Junction, Durban



We took a vast number of photographs of the public action, as traders marched from the market to the city.

The tension between ordering the city and struggling for survival often leads to some form of collective action as a political mechanism. In this case, the traders took to the streets on a number of different occasions. Demonstrations have always engaged the aesthetic as a means to communicate to authorities – from colour coded t-shirts, to printed and painted banners. Since the 1994 transition, the arts and social movements have become somewhat disjointed – art moving increasingly into the privately owned gallery, and away from the streets. The EMMA was focused on the legal and political strategies to save the market, so through our organisation, we started to explore ways in which to reconnect these practices through a series of creative encounters that aimed to address and engage the struggle to save the market.





**Young Artists Project: Michelle Silk's performative experiment at Musgrave Centre and the Early Morning Market. She set up a stall in both of these places and traded rocks. The purpose was to explore the kinds of exchanges that trading enables. It is also a rare sight to see a middle class woman trading in these contexts.**

This invasion is a symbolic trespass. It symbolizes all acts of trespass we have to commit in order to free ourselves from what oppresses us. If we do not trespass (not necessarily violently), if we do not go beyond our cultural norms our state of oppression, the limits imposed upon us, even the law itself (which should be transformed) - if we do not trespass in this we can never be free. To free ourselves is to trespass, and to transform. It is through a creation of the new that which has not yet existed begins to exist. To free yourself is to trespass. To trespass is to exist. To free ourselves is to exist.<sup>6</sup>

Boal

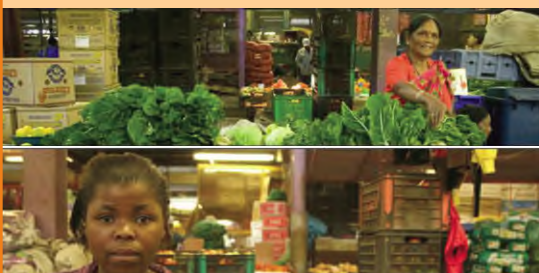
This statement from Boal's manifesto for the Theatre of the Oppressed speaks to the idea of constructing creative encounters in two ways. Firstly, public art is always essentially performative - it happens predominantly in front of a sometimes planned, sometimes incidental, audience - and how this performance of public art is directed, determines how public works of art can be received. Secondly, the idea of trespassing is a physical and intellectual activity according to Baol, requiring people to tread and think in new territories. This offers important opportunities for artists to work with others in exploring new representations of and in the public realm. It also suggests that these encounters of trespass involves some kind of critical thinking and learning.

The *Young Artists Project* involved this tendency towards trespass as a creative methodological tool to unpack the distinction between two kinds of urban retail spaces. Working with the *KwaZu-lu-Natal Society for the Arts (KZNSA)*, dala facilitated a project with artists from four southern African countries. The idea was to work with a series of interventions that explored the intersection of art practice and public space. The market / mall relationship became an interest point for three of the artists, who developed a series of creative experiments in both spaces.

The three participating YAP artists were Retsepile Moholi (Lesotho), Michelle Silk (South Africa) and Idelio Vilanculos (Mozambique). Moholi was intrigued by the performance of begging as a livelihood strategy, and experimented with begging in both contexts. For Silk, the negotiation, relationship building and storytelling of trade became a key interest, and setting up installations in both places became a research strategy for exploring the kinds of interactions that happen within this practice and within these spaces. Vilanculos juxtaposed movement of people in the mall and the market, and explored the sensory textures and experiences these spaces invoked.

Engaging predominantly performative methods, the artists trespassed in these spaces to explore the socio-sensory experiences of retail spaces. The studio was taken to the streets – the laboratory being the pavements, shopping aisles and markets of Durban.

**Young Artists Project: Rets Moholi performing begging outside the mall and the market. The poorer people around the market were more willing to support him than the middle class people circulating around the mall**



Images from portait collection. These portraits are accompanied by a series of stories.



... ‘hope’ is about a certain generosity and gratefulness that we all need in life. If life is a series of encounters and chance meetings, events and social relations, then hope lies across all of these. It is a basic human condition that involves belief and trust in the world. It is the stuff of our dreams and desires, our ideas of freedom and justice and how we might conceive life... hope is also about a spirit of dialogue, where generosity and laughter break open a space to keep spontaneity and freedom alive – the joyful engagements possible with others. For in any conversation – individual or political, written, spoken or read – there needs to be the ability to hear, listen and give. If we shut down a discussion through resentment, fear or unwillingness – through adversity or polarised individual or political positions – generosity ceases, and the openness of real discussion and debate is diminished.<sup>7</sup>

Zournazi

In this context, hope is not a blind faith in ‘things will get better’, but an engaged process of dialogue, with some kind of utopian agenda. It is an imaginative and creative moment, as much as it is political and social. It was what Anderson called a ‘utopian process of hope’ where hope is the process of imagining, being and working towards utopian goals of social justice.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of this thinking, I have chosen three examples where storytelling became an integral part of the struggle for market. Firstly, we started collecting portraits and stories of the market traders (something that is ongoing today). Some people spoke of their families and three generations of working in the market. Others spoke about what and how they have learned through the context of the market. Money Govender told a love story of how she met and courted her husband. Through social media, these stories began to be shared online, drawing in a middle class audience who had predominantly ignored the struggle happening in their own city. These stories began to move the rhetoric from numbers to people, with hopeful lives and livelihoods.



Secondly, sharing the stories in the market was also an important strategy. Struggle is exhausting, and months of negotiating with a seemingly unsympathetic government that theoretically should be protecting one’s rights, is demoralising. Unintentionally, screening these films and showing images from the demonstrations became a renewed rallying point. At the one hundred year celebration, a series of TVs with headphones were installed amongst the stalls, each playing stories, interviews and short films that had been put together over the course of the previous year. The market also became the focus of *Footsak* (<http://www.footsak.com>), and a series of films were screened as part of the programme in Durban.







**TIME\_FRAME Durban 2010: 'banothando' is an interactive installation. The audience member places their hand on the screen and as they move their hand, the trader's hand follows. The audio plays an interview with the trader speaking about the impact of the World Cup.**

The initial plan was to have the market removed and a mall in its place by the 2010 World Cup. The first symbolic victory was that the World Cup came around and the market was still there (although the case for the market was still in court). This did not mean that the livelihoods of the traders were secure. As money and people flooded into the designated World Cup areas, many parts of the city and the country were marginalised. In the third engagement with stories of the market, these issues were addressed through an interactive installation that was exhibited in the *Durban Art Gallery* (national gallery) as part of *TIME\_FRAME / Durban 2010*. Constructed out of interviews with traders on their perspectives on the World Cup, the content spoke of the irony between the excitement of hosting the prestigious event and the frustration of having livelihoods compromised. The exhibition happened during the World Cup and at the same time as two exhibitions specifically themed for a World Cup audience.

All three of these examples demonstrate ways of challenging dominant narratives and introducing alternative voices to public arenas. Miles pondered, 'I wonder if an art of intimate encounters is more revolutionary than efforts to mimic displays of power in a new genre of public monuments (public art)'.<sup>9</sup> I like to think that these platforms for story sharing move towards this notion of a revolutionary art of intimate encounters.

Sign made by number plate trader in Maputo as part of [shoot me] Maputo 2010

**NADA PARA NÓS SEM NÓS**

Working with traders in Warwick Junction has meant linking up with *StreetNet International* – an umbrella body for street trader organisations from across the global south. We were asked to present ways in which visuals and new media technology could be used as part of the struggle. We worked on a video to be used for Africa Day, shot on a simple cell phone camera. We then presented these at their campaign conference in Maputo where the slogan 'nada para nos sem nos / nothing for us without us' was adopted. This became a driving slogan for work we did as part of [shoot me] Maputo 2010. Working with video artists, a dancer, a graffiti artist, a sculptor and street traders in Maputo, *dala* and *Avideoarte-Mozambique* developed a series of public interventions in a public park called *Jardim dos Madgermans*. Although I will not go into details of these projects here, what it demonstrates is how creative encounters can speak not only to the localised contexts in which they occur, but can resonate with global issues of socio-spatial inequality.



**Still from Africa Day video. A time-lapse video constructing the map of Africa out of chillies. The idea was that traders would shoot the same kind of video with cell phone cameras with their trading goods.**

...imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible... imagination is the one thing that permits us to give credence to alternative realities... We also have our social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society.<sup>10</sup>

This essay has given me the opportunity to articulate what and how we are learning as an organisation, and specifically, how this involves building sensory methodologies.

The encounters I have described emerge out of two observations. Firstly, that many of our spaces are fraught with issues of inequality, and that formal institutional democratic processes do not always allow for the kind of dialogue that may lead to new forms of public imaginaries about the present and the future. And secondly, that creative action is important in the everyday experience and expression of our lives, and therefore offers a unique opportunity to explore new ways of addressing this democratic gap in affective ways.

As I have discussed when looking at *Traces*, creative encounters allow for spaces for dialogue to occur. Through Baol's strategy of critical trespassing, new opportunities for experiencing and thinking about spaces can emerge, as was experimented with in the *Young Artists Project*. Storytelling enables affective and hopeful challenges to dominant narratives, humanising marginalisation. Additionally all of these experiments, although implemented locally, offer important critiques of global inequality, while at the same time offering opportunities for global solidarity.

There are many projects, all over the world, exploring similar terrains, but often their insights remain in catalogues and the memories of participants. They are not always as democratic in themselves, and can err on the side of paternalism especially when working with spaces and people that are perceived to be marginalised. If we are to build more rigorous, reflective and reflexive practices, how do we think of ways to strengthen these processes both practically and theoretically, and most importantly, simultaneously? How do we carve out new spaces in between theory and practice that tap into the imaginative possibilities of making more liveable, humane and convivial spaces, towards an art of intimate encounters?

Young Artists Project: Stills from Idelio Vilanculos video juxtaposing the market and mall



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# Peruvian Déjà Vu in Cairo: An Analysis of Political Codes and Demands in a Transnational Sphere

Rocío E. Trinidad

performance  
visual  
archive  
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reality  
image

Pride  
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OCTOBER 2011  
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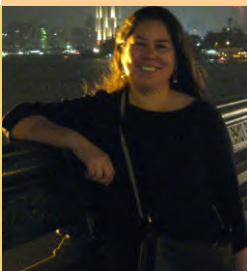
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# Peruvian Déjà Vu in Cairo: An Analysis of Political Codes and Demands in a Transnational Sphere

This article compares and analyses the events that overthrew the dictators Alberto Fujimori and Hosni Mubarak from Peru and Egypt respectively, and explains how in both cases symbolic and performing resources were used to stimulate the memory of the people regarding the corruption committed. In doing so, the author seeks to demonstrate how the political codes and the demands transcend both time and space and get redefined culturally.



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Since my arrival in Cairo in April 2011, I experienced a political *déjà vu*. The use of national symbols, graffiti and political messages on t-shirts, street activism and youth demands for freedom and democracy, reminded me of the experiences lived eleven years ago in my country, Peru. At that time, grassroots activism overthrew the regime of Alberto Fujimori, just as Hosni Mubarak was deposed in Egypt in 2011.

In spite of sharp geographical and cultural contrasts, I discovered similarities between both countries. For instance, in both cases there is a deployment of symbolic resources aimed at reminding the people of the corruption committed by the foregone regimes. There is also an appeal to national sensibilities, to underscore the centrality of uniting in the ultimate goal of changing a political system. There are also the national trials of former presidents. At the time of writing, Hosni Mubarak is being prosecuted by Egyptian courts, just as Alberto Fujimori was tried and ultimately imprisoned in a high-security Peruvian detention centre.

These disparate analogies, point to a political repertoire actively circulating in the transnational sphere, not only in the form of protest, but also in the search for justice and democracy. In this article I offer a reading of the two contexts, as seen through the lens of political cartoons in Peru. Notwithstanding geographical distance and cultural differences, the events in Peru and Egypt and the demands for justice and freedom, bespeak a transnational imagery that refuses to be contained within a neoliberal form of governance.

### **Egypt and Peru: So Far Yet So Close**

The strength of the arrival of the ‘Arab Spring, first in Tunisia and then in Egypt, overshadowed the preparations for the third summit of state and government leaders of south America and Arab countries (ASPA, acronym in Spanish), which was to be held in Lima, between 12-16 February 2011. The presentation of the summit enhanced the links between the two continents: South America shares ‘from its colonial origins, many cultural traits with the ancient Arab civilization, transmitted through the Spanish conqueror.’ In spite of ‘the geographic distance and the historic vicissitudes that led us along different paths during the formative stage of the respective states-nation’, currently our stories converge, ‘since both regions share the same interest in economic development, the preservation of the environment and intercultural dialogue as a means to consolidate world peace, to which we all aspire.’<sup>1</sup> Even within the framework of these historical linkages, no one would have predicted that the political trajectory of the sponsoring country, Peru, and one of the invited countries, Egypt, would be so close.

A few weeks after the Egyptian revolution took place, 25 January 2011, María Macfarland, Washington director for human rights watch wrote an article ‘looking ahead for Egypt—check out Peru,’ in which she wondered if after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt would follow a democratic transition by establishing a legitimate government respectful of fundamental rights.<sup>2</sup> Macfarland suggested that some of the answers can be found in the experience of the Peruvian transition towards democracy. At that moment, her question: ‘Is a similar path possible in Egypt?’, could not be answered.

The similarities between what happened in Peru and Egypt were also addressed by Peruvian political analysts. Mirko Lauer’s ‘Egypt-Peru, Sister Crisis?’, contended that both countries shared an ‘essentially peaceful uprising’, yet they also differed. While Egypt has a ‘geostrategic’ position in the arab world, the Peruvian crisis did not compromise the stability of the countries of the region. As for the future of Egypt and Mubarak, Mirko Lauer argued that had the Egyptian dictator reviewed what happened in Peru, he would have noticed that the establishment of democratic rule entails the ‘need to submit the fallen to a convincing justice recognised by the population.’ Taking into account the fact that the thirty years of Mubarak’s rule was marked by many crimes, he concluded that ‘if Mubarak is not overthrown, there will not be a transition.’<sup>3</sup>

Hosni Mubarak resigned his office on 11 February 2011, preceded by a series of mass protests, similar to what happened in the case of Alberto Fujimori. Fujimori resigned on 19 November 2000, by sending a fax from Tokyo, where – taking advantage of his dual nationality – he was hiding from the Peruvian justice system. This ominous event and its possible relation to what happened in Egypt was comically tackled by the Peruvian political cartoonist, Eduardo Rodríguez, known as Heduardo.<sup>4</sup>

Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt, says he will no longer submit himself to a re-election. He better flee to Japan and surrender by fax.



In the cartoon, the two classic male characters discuss their usual theme, politics. One of them mentions: ‘Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt, says he will no longer submit himself to a re-election’, to which the other one replies, making a clear reference to Fujimori: ‘He better flee to Japan and surrender by fax.’ In the dialogue, through the humour of a double entendre, Mubarak cannot entertain re-election because of the fall of his regime, which disrupted his plans to continue in power (either himself or his son). The only option was to flee Egypt, following the ominous example of Fujimori, who after a voyage that included Brunei, Japan and Chile, was finally extradited. After five long years of arduous legal fight, he was sentenced by the Peruvian courts on charges of corruption and crimes against humanity. After being held in Sharm Hospital, Mubarak is currently being tried in Egyptian courts. No matter what the outcome, and given the sequence of unfolding events, I contend that the experiences of the Egyptian revolution are not alien to the Peruvians. However, the points of convergence between the two countries do not end here.

### Once upon a time... The dictators, their children, and their advisers

‘The fall of the pharaoh’ and ‘the last emperor’ are metaphors that embody and express the fate of the once strong men. Mubarak is popularly known as the *reis* (President), the pharaoh of Egypt, and the maker of the Arab Peace, while Fujimori has been popularised by such names as the ‘Japanese tsunami,’ the emperor, and the maker of national pacification. Both of them, however, have surrendered. Paradoxes of fate: The two strong men are now sick, both suffering from progressive deterioration of their health caused by cancer that has attacked their bodies. In 1997, doctors detected pre-cancerous condition called leucoplast, in the tongue of Alberto Fujimori, now 73 years old. Although he is not terminally ill, Fujimori is considered to be a ‘high-risk patient.’<sup>5</sup> On his part, Hosni Mubarak, 83, suffers from stomach cancer, which has worsened after a surgical intervention in 2010. He also has heart failure, a condition that became manifest right before the first set of investigations of his case during April of this year. Both men also suffer from severe depression which resulted in Fujimori’s loss of fifteen kilos of weight<sup>6</sup>, a systematic worsening of Mubarak’s condition, and the latter’s refusal to eat solid food.<sup>7</sup> In short, in the cases of Egypt and Peru, the end of an era left its mark visibly on the frail bodies of the two deposed dictators.

Mubarak ruled Egypt for almost thirty years, since the assassination of Sadat in 1981. After his first term in government, Mubarak devised a system of governance and constitutional amendments that ensured his automatic re-election every six years. Alberto Fujimori, on the other hand, ruled Peru for only eleven years. In 1990 he was democratically elected, in the backdrop of an unprecedented political and economic crisis. Two years later, however he dissolved the congress of the republic, changed the constitution to ensure his re-election, thus following a similar path to Mubarak in consolidating his authoritarian rule. Both the dictators were also deeply committed to entrenching a neoliberal order in their countries and both of them counted on the advice of the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, and the services of his centre known as Instituto Libertad y Democracia (IDL). During the first half of the nineties de Soto advised Fujimori and during the second half, to Mubarak. He also offered his services to Suharto of Indonesia<sup>8</sup> and Muammar Gaddafi<sup>9</sup> of Libya. Continuing with the neoliberal ideology of her father, Keiko Fujimori relied on de Soto, employing him as part of her technical staff. The political cartoonist Carlos Tovar, known as carlín<sup>10</sup>, provides an illustration.





**Believe me, I would not work with Keiko if she weren't democratic. The evidence is that I have only worked with democrats like her dad, Mubarak and Gaddafi**

In the cartoon, Hernando de Soto and Keiko Fujimori, meet in the midst of a presidential campaign, in some urban-marginal area of Lima, where the economist seeks to develop his projects of titling property among the poor Peruvian people. De Soto, as new advisor to the presidential candidate, embraces her and says: 'Believe me, I would not work with Keiko if she weren't democratic. The evidence is that I have only worked with democrats like her dad, Mubarak and Gaddafi.' What is stated here, ridicules the fact that the daughter of Fujimori elected de Soto, as her adviser, in spite of his experience as adviser of dictators. The cartoon affirms that Keiko not only represents the continuation of the economic policies of her father, but also his authoritarian rule.

The individualistic and predatory character of both Mubarak and Fujimori was expressed in their relentless efforts to institute blood kinship in politics. For Mubarak, the continuity of his presidency was premised on passing on the baton to his son. It is thus, that Gamal, his youngest son, member of the executive committee of the National Democratic Party (NDP), was considered to be his potential successor. However, Gamal, not counting on the support of the army, saw his interests thwarted when the revolution of 25 January 2011 ended his father's rule and finally culminated in his arrest and trial. Currently, Gamal as well as his older brother Alaa as well as their father, face charges and court trials.

In the case of Fujimori, in order to access power his children could not claim to be his legitimate heirs, due to the proven illicit affairs in which their father was involved. Instead, they presented themselves as followers of what 'their father had done well.' During the last elections of March 2011, Keiko Fujimori, the eldest daughter and Kenji Fujimori, the youngest son of the family, were candidates, one to the presidency and the other to the congress of the republic, respectively. In Kenji's campaigns, the photo of the young candidate backed by the image of his smiling father was on display, with the caption: 'Yes...he works! Just like the Chinese.'<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that 'the Chinese' was the nickname with which Alberto Fujimori was colloquially identified, although he hails of Japanese origin.



**Yes...he works! Just like the Chinese!**

Keiko also appealed to the figure of her father. During her election campaign in Cuzco, IDL – reporters confirmed that in the advertisement distributed by the candidate, in association with her distinctive symbol 'k', the photo of the face of her father appeared.<sup>12</sup> Despite their appeals to the figure of their father, many people rejected the two candidates in the presidential elections in 2011, as we shall see below.



**Publicity of Keiko Fujimori for Presidency**

### **From the March of the Four Suyos to the March for Democracy**

*The march of the four suyos, was called upon by Alejandro Toledo, after Alberto Fujimori assumed the*

presidency of the republic for the third time on 28 July 2000. During the march, six people were killed in the burning building of the Banco de la Nación (The National Bank). At first, the blame for violence was placed on the organisers of the march, only to be revealed that it was a conspiracy carried out by the government and the intelligence services to foster chaos and justify the repression of the peaceful, but vigorous march against dictatorship. ‘If the Chinese does not leave there will be a revolution’, and ‘the people will not surrender’ were some of the slogans marching men and women, chanted, while they fluttered the national flag heading towards the main square, where the government palace is located. In the midst of gunfire and tear gas, beatings by the police, people still expressed their rejection of the dictator.

In a short decade, Peruvians, in what is described as the most dramatic political change during the republican era, recovered democracy, had a transitional legitimate government respectful of human rights (2000-2001) and established the truth and reconciliation commission in order to investigate the violation of human rights that occurred between 1980 and 2000. Peru then had two democratically elected presidents, Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) and Alan García (2006-2011). Peruvians extradited, prosecuted, sentenced and imprisoned Alberto Fujimori, a process conducted publicly following the rule of law.

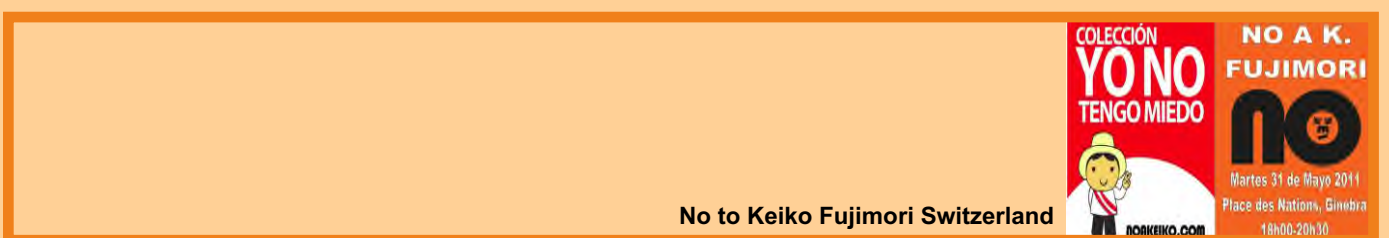
Some think that after the epoch of violence and repression Peruvians will not turn back. It was an unpleasant surprise, when in the April 2011 elections Keiko Fujimori, the eldest daughter of the former dictator, became one of the favourite candidates. Although she did not win the elections, the number of votes she obtained (48.551%) against Ollanta Humala (51.449%) in the second round, speaks for the fragility of democracy in the common sense among many a Peruvian. The results of the elections also demonstrate the precarious nature of our historical memory and the indifference to such horrendous acts as the non-voluntary sterilisation of women in the Peruvian Andes, the targeted assassinations, and corruption that seeped into many corners of the country during the administration of Fujimori.

In spite of all this, we still do not live in complete forgetfulness. During the last elections many resources were used to stoke memories of these incidents. Fujimori, during his rule, was able to buy the editorial line of television channels and newspapers to promote cover-ups and silence his opponents. But during the last ten years the proliferation of internet connections, access to social networking sites has promoted a cyber-activism as an effective alternative to counter pro-Fujimori propaganda as well as state censorship.

By means of twitter, the hashtag #26m was created, through which users could follow the manifestations against Keiko Fujimori and open accounts on Facebook with names, such as: ‘Fuji-rats never again,’ ‘with hope and dignity: Fujimori never again!’, ‘no to Keiko’. The last one with 182 thousand followers.<sup>14</sup> The photos of the profile were witty; they showed doctored photos, in which the image of Keiko was conflated with that of her father, to present them as a single person.<sup>15</sup>



Other sites were related to human rights organisations and called upon Peruvians to remember the mafia action of Alberto Fujimori.<sup>16</sup> Still other sites were set-up by Peruvians abroad, who from their place of residence called their fellow countrymen to vote against the returning of dictatorship.<sup>17</sup>





The culmination of all these efforts was the *grand march for democracy: Fujimori never again*, which included university students, artists, trade unions and workers confederations, civic movements and human rights associations. The march, besides taking place in Lima was carried out in twelve cities throughout the country. As ten years ago, the march of the four suyos was instrumental for the return to democracy, the one carried out in 2011 was a necessary effort to keep the precariously earned achievements.

To keep alive the memory was a movement that spilled from Peru to the neighbouring countries, specifically in Chile and Argentina, which during the seventies and eighties lived under military dictatorships. In Chile, a truth and reconciliation commission was established in 1990 to investigate the serious human rights violations committed between 11 September 1973 and 11 March 1990. Similarly in Argentina, the national commission on the disappearance of persons (CONADEP, acronym in Spanish) was set-up to investigate state crimes committed by the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. Each commission produced its report: In Chile the Rettin Report was published, while in Argentina the Never Again Report marked the scene.<sup>18</sup> The civil trial for the military juntas, which was part of the national reorganisation process (1976-1983) signalled a precedent in Latin America by holding trials of military personnel in national civil courts. The extradition to Chile of the dictator Augusto Pinochet, against the English resistance, was as a precedent, which forced Chile to accept the extradition of Fujimori to Peru. Without doubt, Peru learned from Chile and Argentina and is still learning to keep the memory alive. *Never again*, should not only be seen as a phrase that has travelled across transnational spaces in the struggle for human rights, but must be taken as a *mathra* of the political resistance against any attempt of repression.

### The Final Journey: From Cairo to Lima

Looking at the images of the video made by Charisma k. Lepcha of the experience at the workshop on 'Visual methodologies: Beyond the Written and Towards the Sensory', I nostalgically remember the days in Cairo, where every step in the city triggered a flood of memories and sensibilities familiar to Peru, specifically my city, Lima.<sup>19</sup> The chaotic traffic, the flavour of food, the taste of coffee combined with the smell of cigarettes, the hustle and bustle of people on the streets, bargaining in the markets produced within me pleasant and familiar corporal, auditory and olfactory sensations. Perhaps this was enabled by the presence of Arab culture in Peru, which comprises an integral part of my daily life in Lima. This daily routine is embodied in the many Arabic words incorporated in the Spanish language, traditions brought by Arabs on their arrival to Peru at the beginning of the nineteenth century, ranging from sweets, such as *alfajores*, nougats, *mazamorras*; the food such as lamb stew; the architectural styles and new forms of trade. All that richness has subconsciously registered, and were rendered firm by two excellent books: *Memorias de Cedro y Olivo*<sup>20</sup> and *La Inmigración Árabe al Perú* (1885-1985)<sup>21</sup> written by Peruvians of Arab descent, Leyla Bartet and Leyla Bartet and Farid Kahhat, respectively. Yet the familiar went beyond cultural facades.

My feelings of having seen and been there before resonated at another level as well. They combined with what was taking place at the time and was best exemplified in the vibrancy of the revolution in Tahrir Square. This was the final stamp of a political sense to my 'déjà vu.' Indeed many similarities were encountered: The force of youth, of men and women struggling for change. Entire families cheering for the revolution, small boys and girls with flags painted on their faces, while others carrying banners and shouting slogans about the revolution and peace. There were men and women, not only taking pictures with their cell phones to record and preserve history, but also wearing their cell phones as political tools to capture and retransmit what repression sought to censor. It was cyber-activism in its ultimate expression, and not 'a middle class facebook revolution', as had been called in order to delegitimise the mass protest that embroiled the revolution.<sup>22</sup>

All of us, the participants of the visual methodologies workshop were witnesses of an unprecedented moment in Egypt. However, this moment is only the beginning of a much longer process, both for Egypt as well as for Peru. Indeed we still have a long way to go. As of now, we must be on guard and be vigilant citizens of our governments, and above all, keep our memory alive in order to achieve justice.

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***From Image Realities to Social Realities:  
Unpacking Pleasure and Procreation in TV and Press  
Advertisements of Contraceptives in Bangladesh***

**Umme Busra Fateha Sultana**

performance  
visual  
archive  
social  
reality  
image

Pride  
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# From Image Realities to Social Realities: Unpacking Pleasure and Procreation in TV and Press Advertisements of Contraceptives in Bangladesh

This paper investigates the representations of gender and sexuality in relation to pleasure and procreation in TV and press advertisements of contraceptives in Bangladesh. It unpacks the connection of these representations with the social relationships of gender and sexuality that are influenced by the dominant gender and sexuality norms and discourses as well as institutional settings. The paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the constructions of pleasure in relation to gender and sexuality in media representations. It does not claim that things are considerably better in terms of changing gender and sexuality relations. Rather, it points towards the need for further exploration, in order to have a holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and sexuality both in lived realities and institutional contexts, away from a singular representation of female sexuality as passive and procreative - which has often been considered as the definitive story of female sexuality.



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## Setting the Query

Having an academic career in women and gender studies with a strong enthusiasm to learn and work with visuals and how particular social realities are framed within/ left out from, yet claimed to be 'represented' through different visual methodologies, has always been one of my areas of interest. My paper focuses on representations of gender and sexuality in relation to pleasure and procreation in TV and press advertisements of contraceptives in Bangladesh. I argue that the presentation of gender and sexualities in the ads are highly influenced by dominant gender and sexuality norms and discourses as well as institutional settings. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the presentation of sexualities in the ads are 'real' or a distortion of the 'real'; even though such 'representation' are a controlled manifestation of sexualities, pleasure and procreation shaped up by the dominant social and institutional relationships of power.

## Gender and Sexuality - Outlining the Relationships in Bangladesh

Sexuality as a social relation of power is associated with sex, social attitudes, affects, and the body and their institutional, ideological and symbolic framing.<sup>1</sup> Sexual thoughts, behaviours and conditions have culturally specific interpretations.<sup>2</sup> In Bangladesh, female sexuality is often controlled through denial of access to information on sex, sexuality and reproduction. The majority of girls have only a vague knowledge of sexual life, even at the time of marriage. As a result, their sexual initiation is often shocking and agonising. The trauma has a long lasting consequence and often contributes to developing a negative attitude towards sexual intercourse.<sup>3</sup>

The social construction of sexuality is linked with social structures and cultural ideologies of masculinities and femininities. Some sexual behaviours are considered masculine or non-masculine and some are ascribed as feminine or non-feminine.<sup>4</sup> For women marriage remains the only approved context within which sexuality is deemed appropriate, and institutionalised as procreative and heterosexual.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, aggression and uncontrolled sexual desire is considered a natural characteristic of men. However, these normative assumptions may contradict the upbringing in many families, where restrictions are also placed on men's sexual freedom. Therefore, the social reality of many women and men contradicts how they are presented in visuals. Hence, it is worthwhile to unpack how these diverse realities appear in media representations.

## The 'Emancipatory' and 'Disruptive' Facets of Contraceptives

Before delving into the ads it is important to note that contraceptives have been broadly examined within two frameworks: Birth control and disease prevention. In Bangladesh different institutions play critical roles in defining sexual relationships and maintaining a dual standard of behaviour for men and women, resulting in control of women's bodies and sexualities. For instance, the emergence of Bangladesh as a developing state and its colossal aid dependence hard-pressed the state to adopt a eugenicist population model in the 1980s, which resulted in the massive sterilisation of women.<sup>6</sup> The state apparatus further bolstered its power over women's sexuality by setting a gendered population policy<sup>7</sup> which considered women to be the integral part of family planning and population control. In addition, under the 'new contraceptive revolution'<sup>8</sup> and 'Contraception-21 agenda' for twenty first century the onus of fertility control falls on women.

Contrary to the initial association of female contraceptives with emancipation and appropriation of sexual pleasure, male contraceptives are often perceived as a barrier to sexual pleasure.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the social construction of condom often presents it as a barrier to pleasure, emotional closeness, and naturalness. Sex without condom is seen as the 'real man's sex' and a reflection of 'actual sexual potency.'<sup>10</sup> In addition, condoms are often perceived under the disease prevention framework. Within this framework condoms are viewed only as a health risk reducer and a preventive tool for promiscuous men, and thus as the barrier to keeping a 'good man's' image.<sup>11</sup>

## Sources of Data

This paper draws on my explorative research, which uses both primary and secondary data. My initial plan was to go through the first three months of 2009, in three popular daily newspapers of Bangladesh:

*Prothom Alo*, *Jugantor* and *Janakantha*.<sup>12</sup> However, I quickly realised that there are limited ads in the papers. Hence, I expanded my horizon to both TV and press media. I selected two women's magazines: *Anannya* and *Sananda*, and one youth magazine: *Star Campus*, and followed three TV channels for each of the seven days of a week: One government channel and two private channels.<sup>13</sup> *Prothom Alo* had one condom ad (Sensation Chocolate Scented Condom) which appeared once (on Valentines Day) in the whole researched time. The daily also published one ad on birth control pill on 8 March, celebrating International Women's Day. Neither of the other two daily newspapers, women's magazines or youth magazine, nor the TV channels, had any ad on birth control pills during my fieldwork. *Jugantor* had one ad on the Sensation Chocolate Scented Condom on two different pages appearing once on the Valentines Day. *Janakantha*, the women's magazines *Anannya* as well as *Sananda*, and the only youth magazine *Star Campus* did not publish any contraceptive ads in the specific research time. On the TV channels, ATN Bangla aired two different ads on Hero Condom. Channel i broadcasted one ad on Hero Condom, but the government channel did not air any contraceptives ads. During the research time no ads on birth control pills were aired. Therefore, I collected ads on pills that were broadcast during earlier programming periods and on different channels applying snowballing method. From the above, it is evident that products regarding contraception do not have a large presence in media advertising, which may be indicative of the general silence on the issue.

Conceptually, I draw on Hall's politics of representation which does not separate social reality from images, but views them as mutually constitutive.<sup>14</sup> I also rely on focalisation, framing, and categorisation constructs as tools to understand the mode of representing social interactions and social relations through images.<sup>15</sup> My aim is to unveil the strategic meanings of representation, the larger spectrum of the politics of media representation of gender and sexualities, and their relation to the social world.

### **The Pleasure Pills, Perfections of Womanhood and the Controlled Female Body**

The birth control pill ads portray urban and middle class women. These women do not appear as individual woman, but rather they are attached to the family and portrayed as a wife and husband's sexual partner, mother, and daughter-in-law. At the same time, they are also professional women. Hence, the themes of these ads center on how perfectly a woman can fulfill these manifold roles, and the pill is depicted as a means to ensure such perfection.

#### ***Placing Home at the Heart of 'Perfect Womanhood'***

Femicon is a thirty seconds pill ad which portrays a housewife who is modest, motherly, caring, jolly, educated and knowledgeable. Her ultimate dream is the harmony of her family, evident in the jingle addressing the women directly, with 'you':

*Dreams come true because of your presence. For you I can easily manage the family with fun.  
Because of you there is hope, and love in the faces. It is you for whom every day is without anxiety.*

As the visual images join the song it becomes apparent that the wife is the central character of the family, who happily performs her multiple duties caring for the husband, child, and in-laws. At the end of the day, she is insinuated as a perfect, if gentle, sexual partner of her husband. As she performs her roles, the song unpacks the secret of her success in fulfilling all these roles: Femicon, a birth control pill.

Ovostat Gold, a twenty seconds ad, captures an upper middle class professional wife. Her tensions concerning ownership of apartment, her daughter's study and domestic help's absence, and pleasures in sexual life revolve around the well-being of the family. In other words, conveying the same image as the woman in the Femicon pill ad.

Nordette-28 is a thirty seconds ad that depicts a professional wife. The whole ad moves around the wife's multiple duties as a caring mother, ideal daughter-in-law and a loving wife who uses Nordette-28. She is framed as an 'ideal woman', who is perfect in her numerous duties.

The portrayal of 'perfect wife and woman' in these ads reflects the desire for a mixture of roles to be performed by women, yet in a different way from Abu-Lughod's 'remaking women' and Chaudhuri's 'today's women.'<sup>16</sup> While both authors show how women are expected to excel in both public and



domestic spheres, the pill ads on the other hand, emphasise the domestic sphere as the main responsibility of ‘the perfect woman’. Though some of the ‘perfect women’ have their own professional life, all of their dreams and plans juxtapose their professional life with their family, and priority is given to the latter. Such representation reflects ‘ideal Bangladeshi women’, who are expected to be educated, to become better wives, mothers, and possibly professionals, but for the welfare of the family.<sup>17</sup> In addition, such depiction is also influenced by liberal feminist thinking that claims education and economic opportunity for women from a ‘welfare’ perspective and still remains within the ideological framework that essentialises wifehood and motherhood as women’s natural vocation.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the portrayal of the professional women indicates that the market cannot fully deny the reality of neo-liberal epoch and its increasing demand for women professionals.<sup>19</sup> But, by placing them in the midst of the home, the domestic sphere appears as the ‘ideal’ social location for middle class, urban women. This indicates that gender hierarchies underpin normative ideologies of sexuality, femininity and masculinity.

The emblem of ‘perfect woman,’ with different strategic applications of shots, vectors and angles indicates their authoritative position in the family in relation to their husbands and in-laws. Such positioning contradicts social values and the normative ideologies of Bangladesh that essentialise male domination and women’s subordination.<sup>20</sup> However, according to Hall

Language can never be wholly a private game. Our private intended meanings, however personal to us, have to enter into the rules, codes, and conventions of language to be shared and understood. [...] we must not confuse the material world, [...], and the symbolic practices [...] through which representation, meaning and language operate.<sup>21</sup>

Hence, beneath the illustration of domestic authority of the ‘perfect woman,’ the naturalisation of unequal gender relation prevails. For instance, next to numerous domestic chores women have to undertake in the three ads, there is a silence regarding men’s role in family life. The whole Femicon ad focuses on the wife’s daily domestic activities. The husband becomes visible only in two shots and both are in relation to receiving care provided by his wife. In addition, her domestic authority in relation to the mother-in-law and father-in-law (not in the sense of domination yet support and approval of her effort) is also achieved through the accomplishment of her responsibilities towards them.

The husband-wife unequal gender relation is more subtle in Ovostat Gold where no gender hierarchies are visible considering the way the ad addresses viewers and the frame, camera shot and angles. Yet, there are visual strategies that present gender hierarchies as normal, and therefore hide the inherent power imbalance. For instance, though both the wife and husband work outside the house, the latter is a place for leisure for the husband, and responsibility of the wife. She helps her daughter study and becomes helpless when the domestic helper is absent, while the husband reads the newspaper. This unequal gender relation reveals the invisible power imbalance between the couple, and reinforces normative stereotypes concerning ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles in the household. In addition, the wife shares her helplessness regarding the domestic helper’s absence from the kitchen with the audience, but not with her husband. He has nothing to do with such domestic problems and the wife smiles nicely at him, as if protecting him from domestic concerns. The same is also true with the Nordette-28 ad. There the husband is totally absent, while the central female character is portrayed as a time conscious woman (obvious from female voice-over: ‘*Nordette-28, for time conscious women*’) juggling multiple tasks towards her daughter, in-laws and the new bride.

Concerns about gender equality appears to have inspired a newspaper ad on International Women’s Day (Image 1). A man and a woman hold hands to protect women and girls from oppression and violence: ‘*To protest against violence towards women and girl child, let us, male-female, stand together*’.



Image 1: Press Ad of Femicon, Nordette-28, SOMA-JECT

Though the hands in Image 1 are a close-up shot and frontal angle which could have carried the meaning of equality, the female hand is framed in a bottom-up position implying subordination and the male hand is top-down indicating domination. The ad thus normalises the existing gender hierarchies.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Pleasure Pills and ‘Perfect Woman’s’ Conditional Sexuality***

The ‘perfect woman’ is not denied sexual pleasures in these ads, even though such pleasures are indicated only subtly, and metaphorically. For instance, Femicon compares the sexual touch of the husband’s and wife’s bodies with the touch of Kash flower (*‘Femicon, like a soft touch of Kash flower’*).<sup>23</sup> Ovostat Gold strategically frames the night-time preparations of the wife with their married couple photo, the pill packet, a table lamp and a table clock signifying sleeping time and the male voice-over *‘Ovostat Gold-reliable and free from worries’*, to denote marital sexual intercourse. Nordette-28 captures the new married couple’s intimate relations from a close-up shot and frontal angle along with the pill packet, the text stating *‘Nordette-28, for time conscious women’* in bigger green font along with the female voice-over *‘Nordette-28, for time conscious women’*.

Alongside the metaphorical presence of sexual pleasure, sexual invitation always comes from the wife’s side, contrary to the dominant discourse of men as initiators of sex.<sup>24</sup> Such imagery is also significantly different from Phadke’s analysis of Indian, urban, middle class women’s representation in condom ads, where sexual objectification of women’s bodies (women are presented as half-naked or undressed) has been employed as a strategy for capitalist profit making. The pill’s portrayal of female sexual pleasure in ads is more consistent with the uniqueness of ‘perfect womanhood’, where sexual pleasure is symbolised as part of perfect wife’s marital obligation towards her husband. Such representation indeed fits with ethnographic findings of Bangladeshi urban women’s sexual lives.<sup>25</sup>

However, such sexual pleasure also remains restricted within the expectation of avoiding unwanted pregnancies. For example, in all TV pill ads the sexual intimate moments come with the pill packet and voice-over (*‘Femicon, no tension’* or *‘Ovostat Gold-reliable and free from worries’*) indicating the pill’s capacity to free women from unwanted procreation. Such a view essentially reflects the westernised discourse that views procreation as a tyranny for women, and puts the emphasis on birth control as means of emancipating women’s sexuality from procreative oppression.<sup>26</sup> It is from this angle that Image 1 appeared on the International Women’s Day, where the pill became the symbol of women’s emancipation.

However, emancipatory potentials of such representations may be questionable. Why is the whole focus of birth control on women’s bodies? Why has it symbolised as a unique problem of middle class, urban, married women’s sexuality? Answers to these questions reveal the social and institutional discourses that view contraception as responsibility of married women, and not their husbands.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, ‘perfect women’s’ sexuality becomes conditional upon finding the right birth control pill that can block unplanned procreation.

### **Condoms, ‘Masculine Men’ and ‘Manly Pleasures’ - the Risky and the Sexual**

From pills to condoms some significant changes occur in the ads in the portrayal of gender and sexuality. We no longer see the family. Rather, urban, young men are presented as individuals. The sexual intimate scene between husband-wife is absent here as well. Although a heterosexual couple is present indicating heteronormativity, their relationship remains undefined.<sup>28</sup> In addition, differences exist in the visual and textual portrayal of male sexuality. Where the visual images employ metaphorical strategies to designate sexual activity, the texts make a direct demand in addressing the same.

#### ***Embarking toward a Risky Sex Voyage: Hero Condom***

Hero condom broadcasts almost two identical ads; both fifty seconds long and both portray travelling (in a boat and a train). Men are showcased as risk takers (jumping to catch boat and train respectively) who fall into danger (indicated with dramatic music, a danger signal and a warning in female voice - *‘No.....’*, heralding the possible jeopardy). Noticeably, in both ads the central male character is sketched as a youthful, muscular man undertaking challenges, thus embracing the ‘symbolic ideologies’ of ‘masculine man’ as stated by Lorber and Scott.<sup>29</sup> Next to this ‘masculine man’ not much value is given to exposing the central female character who exists only to warn the man against risk taking.



However, the man takes the risk and falls into danger. Concurrently, the market (with invisible male voice-over) appears engaging in direct dialogue with the male risk taker as apparent in the dialogue visible on the TV screen:

*Do not take risk. Ensure self security first. That is why, advanced quality condom Hero – which protects you from unplanned pregnancy and severe sex diseases including HIV/ AIDS. As long as you have Hero, there is no risk, Hero.*

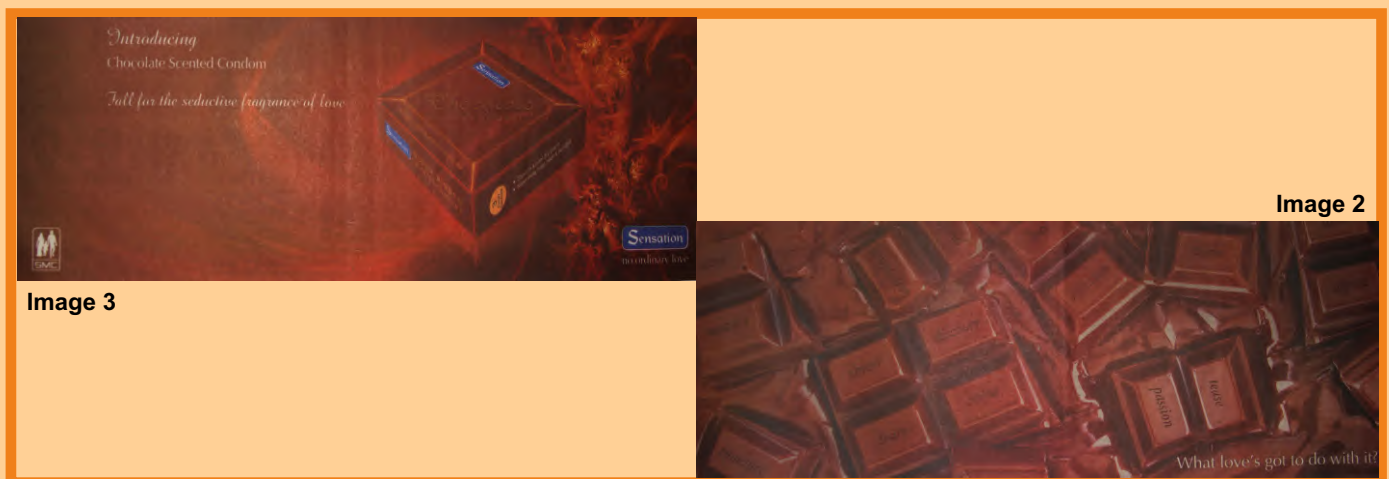
Accordingly, the risky travel becomes interchangeable with man's risky sexual activity, where Hero turns into an emblem of protection from risky sexual behaviour. Although, this veneer of sexuality is portrayed as dangerous ('Do not take risk'), it is not labeled as prohibited ('Ensure self security first'). Rather, challenges are welcomed in the presence of the 'advanced quality condom' that can ensure protection from sexual diseases.

These visual images and texts have several strategic implications. First, it becomes obvious that male sexuality is not inevitably marital. That is why there is no attempt to inform the audience about the character's relationships. The ads are consistent with the statement that 'Condoms are only advised when men establish sexual relations outside their regular relationships.'<sup>30</sup> This reinforces the patriarchal ideologies that view sexual experience out of marriage as a part of 'masculine trait.'<sup>31</sup> Simultaneously, this denies the socio-cultural values that consider marriage to be a moral and religious shield against promiscuity for both male and female.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, symbolising male sexual behaviour as risky and elaborating on the concept of risk as related to 'unwanted pregnancy' as well as 'severe sex diseases,' the 'market' indeed negotiates with the ideologies of sexual morality. Signifying Hero as a risk protector, it negotiates with the 'patriarchal ideologies,' to identify how to satisfy 'uncontrollable masculine sexual urges' in a 'safe' way. Finally, the ad places a high value on condoms as protector against 'severe sex diseases' and limits the idea of condom within a disease prevention framework, essentialising the negative social construction of condom as necessary for promiscuous actions, yet not for marital life.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Sensation and the Nuances of Sexual Pleasure***

The Sensation Chocolate Scented Condom ads (Image 2 & 3) bring a new dimension in defining male sexual pleasure, while the condom as a tool for preventing sexual disease is completely absent.



Both of the images appeared on Valentines Day yet in slightly different form, in two daily newspapers (*Jugantor* and *Prothom Alo*). Unlike the TV condom ads, these do not use human beings, but chocolates. In addition, these ads do not carry any visible messages on femininity or masculinity. Rather, their presence on Valentine Day seems to address sex, love and romance: 'What's love got to do with it?', 'Fall for the seductive fragrance of love' and 'Sensation, no ordinary love'. Image 2 offers enticing chocolate pieces, each carrying an alluring definition of sex: *Attraction, thrill, craving, passion, tease, affection, love, appeal, temptation, shiver, desire, discovery, caress, romance, mystery*, locating the condom in a

diverse framework of sexual pleasure. Thus, the social construction of condom as a barrier of sexual pleasure has been repeatedly challenged by this advert.<sup>34</sup> Rather, its portrayal of sexuality in relation to humour, excitement and adventure resembles Western media representations of sexualities as reflected in the American Academy of Pediatrics (1995).<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the use of chocolate scented condoms obviously insinuates oral sex and hence encourages non-procreative sexuality, which is a significant deviation compared to the rest of contraceptive ads. Ideals of heteronormativity and marital sex are also absent, as there is no indication of the sex of the sexual partners, unless anyone looks at the bottom left corner of Image 3 where the logo of SMC<sup>36</sup> carries an image of a heterosexual couple with a daughter. This logo - its frontal angle, size and white font colour on the chocolate coloured background cannot be ignored, as they seek identification by viewers and create the possibility of interpreting sexuality within the dominant framework of heteronormativity.<sup>37</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

This paper investigates representations of gender and sexuality in relation to pleasure and procreation in media advertisements of contraceptives in Bangladesh. It further unpacks the connection of these representations with the existing social relationships of gender and sexuality that are influenced by the dominant socio-cultural discourses and normative ideologies of sexuality as well as institutional settings. It is within this framework that the ads 'represent' sexuality of 'perfect women' and 'masculine men'. Consequently, female sexuality is portrayed as heteronormative, marital, subtly sexually pleasurable and procreative, yet procreation should be controlled as a part of family planning. Male sexuality is illustrated as heteronormative, not necessarily marital or procreative, relatively flexible and diverse. Even in case of male sexuality, non-heterosexual, non-procreative, non-marital sex is present, though users are gently reminded of dominant frames of sexuality.

Both male and female sexual pleasure is allegorically portrayed in visual images and more explicitly in texts. The allegorical presence of sexual pleasure as well as the conditional procreation aspects helps unpack the tension between the normative ideologies of sexuality set by socio-cultural expectations, institutional obligations from the state and capitalist profit making interest of the market. Therefore, the market strategically negotiates among profit making interests cultural ideologies of sexual morals and institutional influences.

Consequently, representation of gender and sexuality in relation to pleasure and procreation in ads is not as polarised as reflected in some feminist ethnographic researches or in studies on media representation of women which endlessly talk about the objectification of women's bodies and present binary scenes where next to men's sexual pleasure women's sexuality is always identified as non-pleasurable and procreative. Rather, there is a space in media representation that recognises women's sexual pleasure, albeit in subtle and metaphoric ways. This should be further explored to have a holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and sexuality as lived realities, as institutional arrangements and as media visuals.

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**37** Caldwell et al., "The Construction of Adolescence".



# *Archive-museum. Reflections on visual research methods, or, how one goes from an object to a political tool*

Matias Marambio de la Fuente

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# Archive-museum. Reflections on visual research methods, or, how one goes from an object to a political tool

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Matias Marambio de la Fuente

What to say of a workshop, any workshop, on methodology? Should the reflections about such an experience highlight what one has learned? If so, what does one learn in the context of a workshop such as this one? A workshop that is not just any workshop, but one situated in the midst of an ongoing process of historical change: A revolution. If the specificity of the workshop demands some consideration, then so should the specificities of the context in which I am writing. Some weeks after I came back from Cairo, having had the privilege to watch some snapshots of the revolution, a powerful upsurge of the students movement (secondary and university students, as well as teachers and academics) started to take to the streets to demand structural reforms of the education system. Demonstrations, occupations, rallies, flashmobs, and a national strike are only some of the most visible signs of a struggle that goes far beyond education.

During these months, I have constantly been reflecting about the workshop experience, and how to relate it to the political process. How do the concepts discussed during the workshop become tools to question and act in particular social contexts? In any case, how do visual methodologies (in their double dimension: As methods to interrogate visual material and as strategies to develop an investigation visually) become pertinent in processes of political change? The problem was (and, somehow, still is) to transform a context-bound experience into a resource to think in another context-bound

experience. But maybe this is an excessively abstract formulation of the problem. Maybe (but this is not certain), some ‘references’ can help.

Most of the work done during the workshop revolved around discussing concepts. ‘What do you mean by...?’ Concepts were tossed around the room, with the intention to posit new questions to old objects, or to make an object appear as something different from what we thought it was. Projects started taking detours, in order to account for what had been discussed. In a way, our concepts and presuppositions were put to the test, leaving none unchanged. To me, maybe the most enriching of these conceptual discussions was the one regarding museums and archives.

Museums and archives are not ‘innocent’ or ‘natural’, but to state this sheds no light on what the nature of museums and archives is. Certainly, what proved more enriching was not so much the analysis of museums and archives in abstract, but the discussion of how certain projects challenged the very notion of what constitutes or should constitute a museum and an archive. Initiatives such as the Sahrawi War Museum put concepts as basic as ‘collection’ and ‘audience’ (without which much of current museum practice could hardly exist) to test.

During the workshop, I thought that one could conceptualise both the museum and the archive as ‘cultural machines’ that turn objects into something else. A postcard or a passport that enter these machines acquire a different status as cultural artefacts, since they exit in some contexts in order to enter into different ones. Museums and archives serve the purpose of creating experiences and environments for discourses of the most heterogeneous kind: Historical narratives, aesthetic encounters with memory, messages of political reconciliation, testimonies of violence. For historians like myself, it is common to highlight the narrative part of the museum/archive, but I think one can raise good objections to the idea that *all* museums/archives should ‘tell a story’. Doubtless, many of them do, but to characterise the whole by looking only at the part can be a heavy blow of epistemic violence infringed to museums that do not conform to ICOM standards.

For instance, should we only recognise as museums those institutions that have curators? Should we give the credentials of an archive only to those places that store ‘old stuff’? What are the political implications of such definitions? These were some of the questions we discussed during the workshop, and it seems to me that today (in the midst of one of the strongest civil society movements since the return to democracy in Chile), these questions can help to develop a critique of how the visual has become a key point in contemporary political struggle.

I would like to develop some reflections on the workshop by looking at a very peculiar initiative: The *Museo de la Represión* [Museum of Repression], set in front of the headquarters of the University of Chile on 5 August. The day before, the government decided to ban two demonstrations that intended to go through Santiago’s main avenue. As a consequence, heavy levels of police violence had to be used in order to prevent demonstrators from using the streets; I tried to get to one of the meeting points, but it proved useless. Tear-gas and batons were the order of the day, bringing the city to a *de facto* state of siege. Secondary students were told to get off buses and were forbidden to ride the underground. Presence on the street became immediately suspicious.

In this context of political violence, resembling that of Pinochet’s dictatorship, some students occupying the headquarters of the University decided to set an exhibition of tear-gas canisters. As people walked by, they explained how each of those canisters cost around 1,20,000 Chilean pesos (USD 250), and that the whole (more than three hundred) could be more than enough to pay for the education of over twenty students. In doing so, they set up a ‘living museum’, a museum where the distinction between curator and visitor guide was blurred in favour of what seemed like a political ‘show-and-tell’. At the same time, the collection of objects that do not conform to the standards of traditional museums (they are far from rare, they have no link with an ‘illustrious past’, nor do they form part of what a society considers its heritage) allows for an archive to emerge: The canisters act as objects of proof in a society that has systematically turned a blind eye to police abuse which is equally systematic.

Even if such a recourse to the ideas of ‘document’ and ‘testimony’ might seem at first as conservative, it seems to me that the current context makes these concepts an ethicopolitical necessity.



Instead of assuming the place of a victim, the museum/archive of repression confronts violence from the place of the one who has been there. Showing a canister becomes the starting point for a chain of tropes that deal with the phenomena that go far beyond physical violence. Reference to 'repressive state apparatuses' is only the beginning, since the sheer number of the objects shown makes one wonder about the political conditions that enable police action, as well as the way in which government authorities confront civil society.

A further point can be made here regarding the status of museum and/or archive held by the Museo de la Represión. If regular hierarchies usually present in a museum seem to be absent here, what is the project of this museum/archive? How does it confront its visitors? To what use is it putting the artefacts it shows? Some of these questions I have already addressed, but I would like to elaborate on a point that came up while discussing the Sahrawi War Museum. If something that calls itself a museum does not conform to institutional or disciplinary standards, should it not be allowed to call itself a museum? Do museums need 'projects' that fit such standards? How do political contexts shape the demands made to museums? In this particular case, no provisions seemed to be in order so as to the duration of the exhibit, or the destination that the 'collection' was to have. Urgency seemed to dictate the primacy of confronting pedestrians with the horrors of repression, showing what was kept from view in mainstream media. Tables and placards were deemed sufficient for this task, and indeed, they were.

The apparent simplicity of the exhibit does not, in my view, hinder its exhibitionary effectiveness. What this museum-archive achieved was an experience that involved many of the concepts discussed during the workshop: Affect, embodied experience, political contestation, performances of citizenship. As such, the display produced an integration of sight, smell, touch, and sound, even if there was no intended curatorial design, no usage of the codes of installation art to achieve such effects. Here, the museum-archive produces a space for face-to-face interaction that draws attention on the displayed objects. Bystanders start with the question 'what is this?' and 'why are you showing this stuff?', and the students on duty take to the task of explaining. Objects are not relics consecrated by the museum institution, nor pieces of heritage hoarded by the archive as the memory of the nation. Rather, they are turned into a problem, at least in two dimensions: They are both things to be explained, and proofs of an ongoing sociopolitical conflict. At a time when cyber-activism has become more visible than ever, confronting civil society with such (visual) experiences turns out to be a tactic that allows for the construction of an ephemeral public space. The canisters' strong smell, and the possibility to touch and talk about them, also open a space for the 'reenactment' of the evening of 4 August. This museum/archive mobilises more than just some canisters.

What to say of the workshop, after this brief and insufficient reflection? The Museo de la Represión was not my idea, but I must say that if I had not attended the workshop, my take on it might have reduced it to a merely testimonial intervention: Ethically necessary, but not very interesting. Visual strategies have been a key component of political contestation, and I have only mentioned one that relates more or less explicitly to my own concerns. More initiatives have taken shape in these months. We have yet to discuss them. But what interests me more is to say that interpretive apparatuses make a difference, because political change does not appear fully formed, but as a possibility. Conceptual machines are tools for struggle, even if they are (in and of themselves) not enough to settle things favourably for the student movement. Concepts interrogate situations, and they interrogate us as well. A call for reflexivity in the realm of visual methodologies for political struggle should not go unheeded. At least, I have tried to listen to the implications of such a call.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

**“Image 1: Museo de la repre II”:** Students explain the exhibit. Credits: UPI/Miguel Arenas.

**Image 2: “Museo de la repre”:** Museum of repression [Museo de la represión], in front of the headquarters of the University of Chile, 5 August 2011. Credits: UPI/Miguel Arenas.

**Image 3: “Museo de la repre III”:** “If every canister costs approximately \$120,000, in this block alone around 370 were thrown. Draw your own conclusions”



# Beyond Representation

Namita Malhotra

performance  
visual  
archive  
social  
reality  
image

Pride  
insight  
discovery

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OCTOBER 2011  
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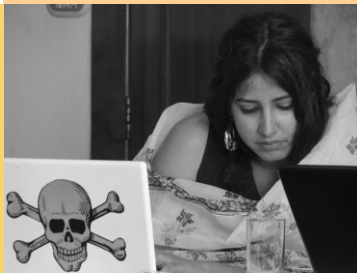
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# Beyond Representation

Namita A. Malhotra is a researcher and media practitioner at the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore, India. She is interested in socio-cultural and aesthetic dimensions in relation to media and technology. She is also involved with online video archiving, making short films and organising film festivals and screenings.  
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Namita Malhorta

Visual methodology or methodology in relation to visual material, sensorial responses and sensations, is particularly relevant for understanding contemporary reality of image and information based late-capitalist culture. My research locates a particular form of amateur video practice and attempts to examine it through the lens of culture, technology and law. Though the focus is on amateur video pornography in India, the questions raised around embodiment, affect, technology and video practices also speak to various other forms of video and technology based practices.

One of the central questions is the relation between video and body, or the assemblage of forces and affects that come together when watching video online. While film studies through a paradigm of representation and psychoanalysis has attempted to understand our relations to cinema, it seems that video in its current digital avatar poses a new set of questions. Jennifer Marilyn Barker in her book 'The Tactile Eye' about film and affect, says that, 'The film has a body like ours, it moves and inhabits the world in similar ways.'<sup>1</sup> Perhaps video shared online or through mobile phones is even more so like the human body – it occupies and moves in the world in very similar ways. Like we do, it stares unseeingly at the world's banality (surveillance footage), or it rushes recklessly into the crowd of protesters and revolutionaries (amateur footage from protests and revolution sites in Egypt, Tunisia and other places). Or as in the case of amateur video porn, it moves into crevices in the human body and creates a bodily relationship of withdrawal and arousal with the viewer. The affective relation to fragments in video clips is complicated by embodiment, notions of realness of the footage and the grainy viscid texture and incomplete nature of the video clip that invites projection and



speculation into the lives of others.

### Amateur Video Pornography

Amateur video pornography in the Indian context refers to video that is made in private spaces and is shared online or through other channels of digital circulation (piracy markets). It is usually very short in length and shot on mobile phone cameras or other inexpensive digital cameras. These videos are suggestive of sex, context, real lives and relationships rather than explicit about any of these – rarely is a completed sex act shown or identities revealed. Some of these videos are at the center of scandals either of prominent public figures such as a politician, a godman, an actress, or ordinary lives that are jettisoned into the public eye because of an inadvertent leak. However aside from this occasional scandal, mass circulation and consumption of amateur pornography continues unhindered by law that only addresses the obscene and the vulgar, but very rarely the actually explicit image of sex.

An analysis of representation of either gender, sexuality, race has often been done in relation to pornography or explicit film and video, though mostly in the context of the global North.<sup>2</sup> But in relation to small amateur video clips such tools of analysis would not reveal much or be misleading, as it is not only about the content within the video itself, but also practices around making, sharing, uploading, downloading within which amateur video porn is embedded. Looking only at representations would also assume a totalising picture of reality as structured meaning, and by doing so does not allow for grasping at the unstructured sensations that are set into motion by watching. Elena Del Rio speaks about the body made of sensations and intensities – the body (in film, video, performance) as a line of flight rather than a representation. She says that understanding of the body as an assemblage of forces or affects that enter into composition with a multiplicity of other forces or affects restores to the body ‘the dimension of intensity lost in the representational paradigm’.<sup>3</sup>

Pornography gives an insight in particular about the involvement of the body with the moving image (in film, video etc.) and the nature of inter-relation. Much of the material that circulates, especially amateur pornography, is grainy and unclear – the surface of such an image evokes a sensation of touch, rendering the material erotic and intimate.<sup>4</sup> It is not just that the image possibly is that of real people recording themselves or unknowingly taped having sex, but that the image itself evokes tactility. Unlike the deeply immersive experience of cinema, pornography exists between the two spaces of the film and body, and yet it is marked by its directness, almost urgency in the material. It is often not self contained like cinema which comes with the sheen of a finished product, but seems to leak into the real life of both the viewer and of those in the video



Pixilated video today is the carrier of revolutions in the Arab world, of disasters like the earthquake in Japan (March 2011), of prosaic home videos shared online and the amorous adventures and pornographic encounters of many in Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, India leading the rest). It is these videos made and shared by ordinary people that have made the moment of revolution shareable and real to so many others who watched events unfold in Egypt as Hosni Mubarak was asked to step down after a thirty year dictatorship. The particular still above is from a hazy video shot on a mobile phone camera, held by someone in the crowd at Tahrir Square. Hands are raised in a frenzy of protest and fists are shaken towards what seems like a burning effigy or a bright red light. Though the video is anonymous, the repeated chants for Mubarak to step down make this small video clip stirring and extraordinary.

These videos are largely made on mobile phones and digital video and camera recorders, and constitute a significant part of how the world saw the revolution that began in Tunisia and spread to other parts of the Arab world, especially Egypt, aside from official sources such as Al Jazeera and a few international television channels. Countless videos of protestors running away from police firing and tear gas shells are available via YouTube from the eighteen days of sit-in and protest in Cairo and Alexandria.

In July 2011 a set of screenings of amateur footage from Cairo was shown in Bangalore, along with short documentary films from the Cairo Documentary Film Festival. The footage shown was shot by Lina Attalah of the battle at Qasr-al-Nil Bridge in Cairo, while the stand-off at the bridge between the people gathered and the police lasted for over half a day, the footage was over two hours. In an alternative and autonomous gallery and community space in Bangalore (1 Shanthi Road), a number of people who attended the screenings raised questions about the nature of revolutions and possibility of change, video and technologies that have altered communication but are also part of aspirational and capitalist culture. Those gathered watched pixillated video shot on a cheap digital camera on a large projection. Amidst occasional firing of tear gas shells and water cannons people eventually charged across the Qasr-al-Nil bridge to join others in their claim for freedom at Tahrir Square.

While the dictates of conventional filmmaking determine that it is high quality video that allows for the viewer to feel enveloped and transported into different worlds, it is precisely the low quality, the rushed nature, the seemingly unmediated and real nature of such video that makes it a vehicle for emotions. Speed, movement and degrees of intensity are also part of how video is experienced and play a role in how we relate to it. This then is also about the way affective energies were pushed into playing around the globe by rapidly changing twitter timelines, Facebook updates and of course streaming video channels of Al Jazeera and protestors uploading their own videos on Youtube. Technology not only played a role in informing, but also in making people participate in a moment; or in a less prosaic sense, of feeling the intensities, pent up angers and frustrations of those who gathered, prayed, lived at Tahrir Square. The distanced response to news from elsewhere was broken down by video that jerks, that dives into the moment, that runs from tear gas shells and firing, is far from unscathed, gets hurt and knocked down, could die and sometimes does – video that just does not record but is transformed by the events itself.

1 Jennifer Marilyn Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2009.

2 See generally Linda Williams (ed.), *Porn Studies*, Duke University Press, London and Durham, 2004.

3 Elena Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008.

4 The study of affect in relation to film is based on phenomenological descriptions and on philosophical meditations on the experience of the body. The work done by Steven Shaviro, Laura Marks, Elena del Rio, Jennifer Barker, Vivian Sobchack among many others looks particularly at the affective experience of cinema itself, while relying on some conceptions and ideas of Merleau Ponty, Brian Massumi, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari. Here the tactile experience of cinema through the texture of what is watched, is analysed from two different perspectives by Jennifer Barker and Laura Marks.



# What do you Mean by Visual Methodologies?

Mark R. Westmoreland

Performance  
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Pride  
insight  
discovery

**VISUAL**  
**METHODOLOGIES**  
OCTOBER 2011  
SPECIAL ISSUE

**VISUAL ENCOUNTERS:  
BEYOND THE WRITTEN AND  
TOWARD THE SENSORY**

GLOBAL SOUTH  
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## What do you Mean by Visual Methodologies?

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Westmoreland was also one of the trainers of the Workshop .

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Mark R. Westmoreland

Only two months after mass protests across Egypt had successfully ousted President Hosni Mubarak, a diverse group of young scholars were due to arrive in Cairo to partake in our Sephis workshop on visual methodologies. The mass protests had continued on a recurrent basis, many foreigners had evacuated and were yet to return, there was almost no police presence in the country, and the military had seized power. The elation that spread after successfully toppling the ‘antique dictator’ had slowly slipped into a waiting-to-exhale malaise. Each week, Hanan Sabea and I would check in with each other and attempt to answer this question, ‘Should we go ahead with the workshop?’ Initially we had wanted to include a practicum component that would have sent participants out onto the streets of Cairo to conduct mini-research exercises, but now this seemed ill-advised. Fortunately, we went ahead with the workshop. Moreover, participants fortunately also refused to let the tenth floor hotel conference room contain their enthusiasm to put theory into practice. And based on the papers in this volume, it was clear that the participants carried this enthusiasm back to their home institutions and own research projects.

Having said this, there are three points of tension that emerged for me in this workshop. The first and second are related and ultimately prove productive sites of questioning. First, how do we exactly define what we mean by ‘visual methodologies,’ and, second, how do we grapple with the interdisciplinary nature of this multifaceted research approach. The third and more troubling tension has to do with the limited way in which scholars of the Middle East and North Africa relate to the prospects of visual methodologies.



As for the first tension, over the course of those ten days, Hanan Sabea, three facilitators – Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh, María ‘Makena’ Eugenia Ulfe, and myself – and fourteen participants from South America, Africa, and South Asia encircled the idea of visual methodology attempting to say exactly what we mean by this notion and what are its implications. The different approaches to the visual proved both challenging and enriching. Some of the participants in this workshop came seeking specific visual techniques that they could add to their toolbox. Others wished to grapple with some particular visual phenomenon or object of study. Still others sought new ways to theoretically disentangle visual ways of knowing. Among the participants’ projects we had those utilising photography and video, those analysing photos and film, those interested in archival media, those interested in new media, those interested in public art, those interested in mapping, and those interested in museums. How could one system of methods contain all these practices?

Perhaps, one of the most challenging aspects of the workshop came in the difference between those employing visual techniques and those analysing visual phenomenon. Some mindfully combined both of these efforts. But even for those focused on analysing visual material, invariably visual techniques come into play with slide presentations and illustrations within written texts or on the cover of books, just as those who produce visual materials must grapple with how to present them. To this end, one must remember that visual examples are never reducible to only content or to mere data. The presentation of images within a book or lecture is effected by both the form in which they are shown as well as the authorial decisions of placement, timing, captioning, etc. Likewise, how we engage videos and photographs depends a great deal on the context of dissemination, whether in a theater, on television, online, or as an installation.

Whether someone is shooting with a camera in the field, manipulating archival photographic collections, or displaying objects in a museum, there are important theoretical considerations that should not be taken for granted. Indeed, Hanan and I had noticed both young scholars and activists gravitating toward visual and sensory registers and these concerns framed our initial call for workshop applicants. We said, ‘A host of assumptions ranging from ‘being alternative’ or aiming to “capture authentic” voice and experience, to liberatory, democratizing, and radical, have underpinned this trend.’ We hoped to question these assumptions, while also providing participants with a critically refined toolbox for employing these techniques more effectively.

In order to achieve this, we necessarily had to approach this workshop from an interdisciplinary perspective, which provided the second point of tension. On the one hand, the workshop carried a strong anthropological sensibility (the organisers and facilitators all had backgrounds in anthropology), but participants came from fields as diverse as law, art, history, cinema, photography, gender studies, and cultural studies, not to mention several students of anthropology. On the other hand, interdisciplinary perspectives informed the research questions and methodologies of several of the facilitators and participants.

As I have argued in a recent piece, art and anthropology share a set of practices and methodologies.<sup>1</sup> Art practices actually point the way for anthropology to consider further how sensory registers produce different kinds of knowledge, including ‘apprehending the performative aspects of quotidian experience, embodied meaning, affective intensity, and agency of objects and images.’ In order to demonstrate this potentiality, I performed a fictive lecture during the second day of the workshop designed to bring into question the position of the researcher while also acknowledging the way personal histories reverberate with and must negotiate over-determined historical narratives. Because the genre of lecture is rarely the site for fictive artistic experiments, it had a profound effect on the participants and helped them open up the question about research and visual and sensory methodologies in new ways.

As for the last point, I am more at a loss for words. Nevertheless, there is an important consideration that needs to be articulated. Hopefully, this will help generate discussion and possible ways to remedy the issue. While one could certainly comment on the diversity of the participants, we were dismayed not to have any from the region in which the workshop took place. Among the nearly 100 applicants, we did have a few applicants, but other applicants presented themselves better. Why so few people from the Middle East? While my own research focused on a vibrant contemporary art and film

culture in Lebanon, there is a significant shortage of scholars engaging with visual and sensory methodologies in their research. This has been further evidenced by a recent study that conducted a twenty-year content analysis of the journal *Visual Anthropology* published by Routledge, in which only six per cent of the journal's published articles focused on the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the space here does not allow me to expand on this issue, but at least three points should be considered. Firstly, what is it about the conceptual framework of research in the Middle East and North Africa that delimits the use of these alternative methodological approaches? Secondly, if part of the problem has to do with the political economy of scholarship in the region, then how might we as scholars and activists find new ways to address these shortfalls? Lastly, what might be the potentialities of an invigorated interest in sensory methodologies applied to the region? Perhaps, another workshop is in order.

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**1** Mark Westmoreland, "Ethnography + Art: Convergence or Collision?", *Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa*, June 2011, Retrieved from <http://www.ibraaz.org/essays/11> on 5 September 2011.

**2** G. Davey, "Twenty Years of Visual Anthropology", *Visual Anthropology*, 21, 3, 2008, pp. 189–201.



# 'Memory' The Visual, the Sensory and the Performative during the Last Presidential Elections in Perú

Karen Bernedo Morales

performance  
visual  
archive  
social  
reality  
image  
insight  
discovery  
Pride

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# 'Memory' The Visual, the Sensory and the Performative during the Last Presidential Elections in Perú

Karen is a visual anthropologist, documentary and art video film maker. She works in the creation and implementation of social projects in memory, gender and human rights related to the armed conflict and political violence period in Perú, using visual culture and arts as a tool of social transformation. She is part of the Cultural Association 'Itinerant Museum Art for the Memory' and is also a researcher and Director of the Virtual Museum of Arts and Political Violence of Perú.

Currently she is attending a second M.A. programme in Gender Studies.

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Websites of projects:

Itinerant Museum Arts for the memory: [www.arteporlamemoria.wordpress.com](http://www.arteporlamemoria.wordpress.com)

Virtual Museum of Political Violence in Perú : <http://www.museoarteporlasmemorias.pe/>



Karen Bernedo Morales

The uses of term 'memory' in Perú have been generally related to the remembering of political violence during the decades of eighties and nineties, especially after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TCR) in 2003.<sup>1</sup> We are told 'we are living the post conflict period,' a time when NGOs and human rights groups carry out projects aiming at the recovery of collective memory to avoid the mistakes of the past. However, armed conflict in Perú is a rather complex situation, especially because there is no consensus about responsibilities or clarity about politically correct ways to remember. In that sense 'memory' speeches turn to be problematic and have failed to have much impact on society, beyond the confines of the human rights movement and war victims associations.

The last presidential elections in Perú during April and June 2011 confronted the whole society of the implications of a 'memory gap.' The daughter of former president, Alberto Fujimori, was about to win with almost the fifty per cent support of Peruvians! For many of us, this was the unthinkable, considering that Fujimori is in prison for several crimes against humanity, corruption and a coup in which closed the Congress of



the Republic in breach of the democratic state.

In a seemingly short span, the country was polarised between *fujimoristas* and *non-fujimoristas*. Such a divide forced many to organise and participate actively in political life to stop the nefarious authoritarian *fujimorista's* goal of capturing power again. This was the context where 'memory' took a leading role in the election campaign and became the center-stage in the discourse that drove the defense of democracy. Then it was not only spoken memory that appeared on the scene; rather memory was generative in the visual, the performative, as well as in the action and social networking, all of which became the perfect platform to remember the past with an eye on the future.

This action was undertaken by a group of women activists to draw attention to one of the most terrible crimes of the Fujimori dictatorship, namely the forced sterilization of thousands of women in the Andes as part of family planning policies of Fujimori government.



Many charts and posters were produced to be circulated in social networks and many of those were also reproduced and printed spontaneously in demonstrations and parades against Fujimori.



Yet the question remains: What are the boundaries between memory as a generative possibility for reconciliation and justice on the one hand, and the objectification of memory for a particular social and political project?

During the months of electoral campaign the production of visual objects in order to 'enliven the memory' about Fujimori's government was overwhelming. Students, artists, activists and civilians, all were compelled to produce and consume memory. 'To do memory' was almost 'in vogue' and there was a market that placed memory as part of the 'public.'



This brand of condoms was created by a group of advertisers and distributed for free at the door of high-class universities where Keiko had more of a following.

Landfills operated in the city with the faces of Fujimori and some of his congressmen and thousands of bags of garbage were printed with their faces to make people use them to put their trash in the morning of the presidential election.

Memory was no longer an abstract term with abstract goals, with which ordinary citizens could not identify. Memory was located in a much broader horizon as the defense of democracy. This new meaning was less confrontational and managed to unite disparate discourses of memory in an effort to avoid the return of Fujimori dictatorship.

Several civil, activists and artists groups organized information campaigns conducted in different parts of the city and the country making reports on the crimes of the Fujimori decade with travelling panels and charts, these actions were carried out during the election campaign in markets, public squares and near universities.



In this sense, the production of memory was constituted as a market with target audiences, consuming art and culture as tools of social transformation and for the transmission of social knowledge.



↑ Lots of actions and public performances during parades and demonstrations happened during the electoral campaign, →



← Houses were used as cultural centers to make conferences and film projections about Fujimori's government.

It is difficult to delineate the boundaries of memory as process and as object. Yet, what is most significant about this moment of 'memory boom' is the hope of an emerging social movement of ordinary people who feel the need to exercise their citizenship by being part of the construction of a new political and social project.



<sup>1</sup> Peru's internal armed conflict was a war between the terrorists groups Shining Path and MRTA, and the Peruvian army. According to TRC report, victims are 69, 280, and thousands more are displaced, injured and tortured. Seventy per cent of the victims of this war were from the poorest parts of the country and Quechua-speaking peasants (www.cverdad.org.pe).





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