

The Threefold Topography of Performance

Drawing, Action, and Video in María Evelia Marmolejo's *Anónimo 4*

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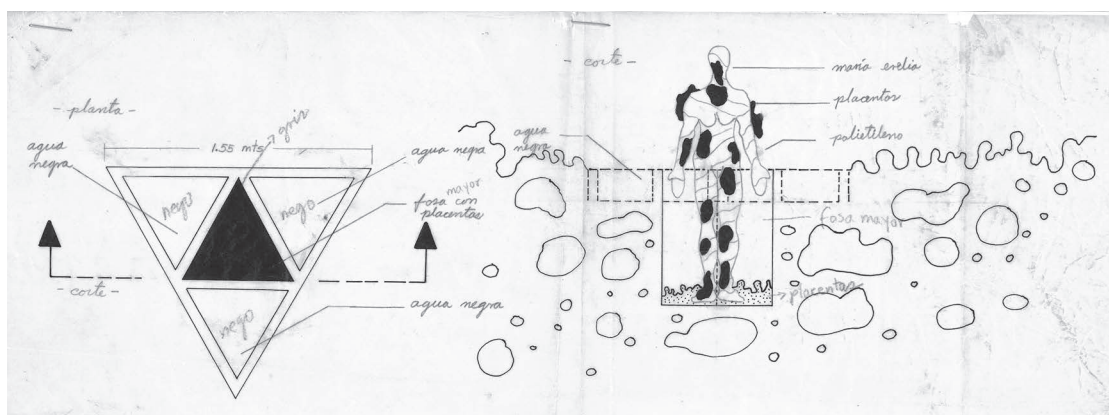


Figure 1. *Anónimo 4* (detail of the “Graphic and written documentation”) by María Evelia Marmolejo. Ink and pencil on paper, 1982. (Courtesy of María Evelia Marmolejo and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani)

MARMOLEJO: I started studies in law but didn't finish them. I didn't want to continue doing anything socially imposed by my family. I left everything behind and gave myself over completely to art [...] Part of my research is related to the position I take as a woman who is against family life... Let me clarify... I am not a militant feminist! I explore what has affected me and affects my development; what constrains me, my family, social boundaries, education. I delve into how I've been socially conditioned, and the mental continuation of this conditioning. [My work is about] my life, not the life of stereotypical and redundant women. It is [about] the very fact of rejecting those women. I hate menstruation. I refuse to be a mother. I hate being a housewife. I believe that the importance of existence lies in reflection, awareness, and fulfillment of one's desires, in presenting maturity and self-confidence to the world [...] There are no progressive art critics in Colombia. They fear publicizing [my work and Rosenberg Sandoval's¹]; they fear writing clearly [about] our alternative artwork. They offer readings that smell and sound fossilized, and completely alter the structure of the code [of our works and language], our geopolitical and historical-social interactions, and many other linguistic relationships. Critics should be as tough and intense as we are, without fear. Those of us who create don't run away. We put up with all that potential for being ripped apart.

—María Evelia Marmolejo (in Díaz 1985²)

1. At the time Rosenberg Sandoval was Marmolejo's partner.
2. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

María Evelia Marmolejo, born in Cali, Colombia in 1958, was one of the leading performance and video performance artists in her home country in the first half of the 1980s.³ Part of her oeuvre, which also included objects and installations, is finally receiving renewed attention, even though the artist stopped producing work when she exiled herself to the United States in 1992, returning in 2014 with the production of a performance designed in 1982. Part of her performance work has been “recovered” by exhibitions like *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* (2017/18) curated by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta for the Hammer Museum (and later shown at the Brooklyn Museum and Pinacoteca de São Paulo), who argue “that the vast body of work produced by Latin American women and Latina artists has been marginalized and hidden by dominant, canonical, and patriarchal art history” (2017:17). There have also been essays written by curators and critics (see for example, Fajardo-Hill 2012 and 2020; Villasmil 2013; Tarazona 2012) who problematically affirm—or tend to suggest—that Marmolejo’s work has never been recognized before, when in fact it has (see for example, Serrano 1982; Calderón 1982; Gómez-Palacio 1982; González 1982 and 1983). As she explained to Luis Alberto Díaz in the interview quoted above, Marmolejo acknowledged the recognition her work received, no matter if she also assessed it as shy and impertinent (in Díaz 1985).

In addition, some of the new approaches to the artist’s work tend to leave aside her personal reasons for withdrawing from the art world while also minimizing the political, material, and audiovisual context of her work. In some cases, there is an understandable interest in labeling her work as “feminist art” (Fajardo-Hill 2012; Knaup and Stammer 2014; Jaramillo 2017; Fajardo-Hill and Giunta 2017), because Marmolejo used materials and organic substances that were literally or metaphorically linked to her body. However, despite their best intentions, these approaches force Marmolejo’s work into a category that the artist herself has problematized (see Vargas 2015), and minimize her interest in using her body to pose questions and provoke reflections from a wider social and political perspective.

The curators of *Radical Women* have recognized Marmolejo’s work as political resistance (Fajardo-Hill and Giunta 2017; Fajardo-Hill 2020). Yet, more needs to be done to better understand the challenge of interpreting her performances and video performances in contemporary times, and how her work plays with and delves into the idea of video as both a constative document and a performative medium that goes beyond the realm of photography—the traditional medium of performance documentation—and into that of the televisual.

The Colombian writer Marvel Moreno’s reflections on her own work and social and political commitment help to identify a way to approach Marmolejo’s work: it is through her non-militant feminism that the artist reacts against oppression and proclaims her “solidarity with women, as I am with Blacks, Jews, and Arabs[, and Indigenous peoples] when they are persecuted or humiliated because of their condition of having characteristics different from those who hold power” (in Gilard 1985:5). “Recovering” Marmolejo’s work by categorizing it only as “feminist” obscures the broader political interests she had in common with women like Moreno

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and those who participated in the 1981 *Primer Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe* (First Latin American and Caribbean Women's Conference) in Bogotá (see EEG [1994] 2016).

The challenge presented by Marmolejo's work is to offer a reading that accounts for and distorts as little as possible what she called "the structure of the code" of her oeuvre, and the "geopolitical and historical-social interactions, and many other linguistic relationships" it proposed, as in her installation *Tendidos* (1979), the installation-performances *Residuos I* (1983) and *Residuos II* (1984); her conceptual-photographic piece *Sesquilé* (1985) in which she declared giving birth to her son Sesquilé as a poetic artwork; the objects presented under the title *Sesquilé II* (1992); and her performance pieces, including *America* (1985) and the *Anónimo* series (1981–2014). The latter includes *Anónimo 1* (1982), *11 de Marzo* (1982), *Anónimo 3* (1982), *Anónimo 4* (1982), and *Anónimo 5* (1982–2014). While the first four works of the series were presented for the first time in 1982 as part of the VIII Salón Atenas at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Bogotá, *Anónimo 5* was designed in 1982 but was not produced until 2014 when Marmolejo resumed her artistic practice.

Anónimo 4 (1982, color video, mono, Beta, 4 min.) continues to garner the least attention by critics, according to Marmolejo (2018), yet is the work in which the artist's action is the most shocking and video plays the most complex role. *Anónimo 4* demands a study that not only pays attention to "the social formation of the producer within class and gender relations," and "recognize[s] the working process or practice as the site of a crucial social interaction between producer and materials" (Pollock [1988] 2008:118), but also acknowledges and considers the artwork as a site of thought and of social and political reformulations of the means the artist used for political and communicational subversion. *Anónimo 4* also outlines a threefold topography that accounts for performance in conceptual, bodily, and communicative terms, and asks viewers to understand video performance as a virtual aspect of communication and collaboration between performing embodied subjects and performing images and sounds.

"Topography" refers to both the arrangement of the natural and artificial features of a place, and the detailed description and representation of the place. Both meanings are interrelated in such a way that the place and the perception of the place's features precede the description, and the description may antecede the experience of those features—for example, a picture may introduce us to a place we visit later, or a face we identify afterwards. Yet, I will also rearticulate these meanings by working with the possibility of an active—rather than passive—"place" (be it the artist's drawing, or body, or video), which is to say, topography may also name the place's characteristic features, actively defining the description itself.

The video performance of *Anónimo 4* was intentionally produced during twilight, using a VHS camera, creating a dark and fuzzy atmosphere with apparently unstable images that are difficult to recognize. The video stills included in this article are also inevitably affected by both the natural decay of magnetic information on a VHS tape and the effects (i.e., thin white horizontal lines) of digitalization. In the opening seconds of the video, the artist indicates in a voiceover (with a black screen) that both artworks "consist of video performance, photography, and graphic and written documentation" (Marmolejo 1982), opening up a spectrum of conceptual possibilities that had not yet been explored by her critics and have strong conceptual cohesion. I will leave out photography, which was not included in the exhibition in 1982 (Marmolejo 2019), and focus on documentation and video.

Two drawings are part of the "graphic and written documentation," a phrase the artist uses to suggest the ambiguity of a drawing that might be a design that precedes an action and also documents it, and a piece of writing that could equally be a postmortem reflection and a projection of the horizon of interpretation. The first drawing (fig. 1, left) shows an outer equilateral triangle and four interior equilateral triangles. It is a plan view that evokes architectural language, and resorts to technical drawing intended to provide sufficient information for analysis. This type of drawing was part of the artist's training during her studies in the sculpture

program at the Academia de Bellas Artes in Cali (Marmolejo 2018). The second drawing (fig. 1, right) is a cross-section view informing us that the interior triangles of the previous drawing are excavated holes, and showing a figure standing in the central hole.

The plan and cross section can be identified in the first images of the video performance (fig. 2), in which we are offered an inclined view that records the lower part of the artist's torso and shows her *mons veneris* almost in the center of the screen. Behind her torso, but practically in the same visual plane, one sees part of the outer triangle marked out with thin wooden slats placed at ground level. In the opening seconds of the video performance three triangulations become evident: a topographic triangulation that both generates and gathers the four interior triangles; a triangulation that installs the inserted body in said topography, and is recorded in the video; and a perceptual triangulation that links the *mons veneris*, video camera, and the spectator's eyes (or better said, a triangulation also naming the intersection of two visual pyramids). This triple triangulation establishes dialogues with art history, the body, and video. In other words, there are at least three interrelated lines that I identify in terms of a threefold topography of performance: a *corpo-graphy*, or the conceptual aspect of topography, referring to the historical-conceptual character of the action in the realm of the representational art tradition; a *corpo-action*, or bodily aspect of topography referring to the aspect of the action that involves the use of organic substances and questions the historical and political practice of immunization; and finally, a *corpo-operation*, or a virtual aspect of topography related to audiovisual montage and editing, and experiments with affecting and being affected.

Corpo-graphy, Chora, Patriarchive

The shape of the triangle in the drawings is not just a metaphor and sign of sexual difference—difference that is no longer a site of/for oppression but rather of equality, as it is in Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–79). The triple triangulation suggested in the first moments of the video and the graphic documentation also emphasizes that *Anónimo 4* takes up geometry as a configuration of thought, of world, and of representation, and, ultimately, as a mode of communication in which these three issues coincide. Noticeably, in the field of art, one of the ways in which geometry communicates this convergence has been through linear perspective. Towards the 1980s, and thanks to technical drawing and historiographical revision, among other things, artists, filmmakers, drafters, and historians began to problematize Erwin Panofsky's linear perspective as an ideological, hierarchical, and bourgeois symbolic form (Damisch [1987] 1994:xv). Rather, they more broadly understood perspective as a “heuristic device” and a historic system of enunciation, declination, conjugation (Damisch [1987] 1994:xxi), and I add, subversion.

In fact, one of the first recognized cases of *sacra conversazione* whose study in the second half of the 1970s revealed the need to think of linear perspective pluralistically (Edgerton 1975:58) is Domenico Veneziano's panel for the high altar of Santa Lucia de' Magnoli church in Florence. The lines of perspective in the architecture representing the world as a creation of the great *architekton* converge at the vanishing point located in the covered genitals of the virgin mother. At this point, the world, the view, and the virgin—understood in Italy at that time as a tabernacle that received the host—converge (Beck 1981:129). This triangulation reminds us of a certain medieval tradition in which the virgin is not only an intercessory figure through whom humans' prayers reach the transcendental trinity, but is also theologically understood as what I describe as a point of intersection of the triangulations of creation-incarnation-vision and father-son-spirit. In this order of ideas, and from the “perspective” of Christian dogma, the vanishing point and the mentioned convergences affirm that the virgin mother is the locus of God. The architecture in this panel denotes a ritual representation of the adoration of the host (Moffitt 1997:22) and the conception of the virgin as both “receptacle and nurse” (Irigaray [1974] 1985a:173) of the gaze, word, and spirit, and a marginalized matrix that “can reproduce everything, ‘mime’ everything, except itself” (Irigaray [1977] 1985b:101). And yet, if one appropriates perspective as a heuristic mechanism and system of declination (in the double sense of the genitive), the geometric construction in the panel opens up another possibility and fracture



Figure 2. *Anónimo 4* by María Evelia Marmolejo, 1982. Video (color, mono, 4'). (Video by José Antonio Dorado; video still courtesy of María Evelia Marmolejo and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani)

within the dogma: the genitals of the virgin may also denote a “uterine perspective” (Moffitt 1997:14) and be a point of emanation and radiation (Zorach 2011:91), a place of the enunciation of a new subject and a new message (*evangelium*), a mundane vanishing point, and a pupil (Irigaray [1974] 1985a:328).

To this inflection of perspective within the Christian canon and religious paintings (which work as a means for archiving dogma), I need to add two non-European references with which Marmolejo’s work and especially *Anónimo 4* are in dialogue. Both of these reinforce the subversion in Marmolejo’s work and also the subversion the panel announces but is unable to carry out. The first reference is a story told to the artist by an anthropologist friend who came back to Cali from south Chocó Department. Chocó is a territory to which, in colonial times, many enslaved blacks escaped from sugarcane fields located on the banks of the Cauca River, particularly from the area between Yotoco and Vije, from which Marmolejo can trace her indigenous roots, and where the action seen in *Anónimo 4* took place (Marmolejo 2018). In south Chocó, Marmolejo’s friend met members of a black community that had an interesting myth of the origin of human life. Their creation myth said that originally there was only one woman. She felt alone and during her menstrual period she decided to mix her blood with earth to shape a phallus. She buried this phallus at night and returned the next day to find a man there (Marmolejo 2018). The second reference is the indigenous myth of Bachué, who emerged from Iguaque, a small lagoon, along with a child, with whom she subsequently populated the land (Simón 1891:279–80). For many years Bachué traveled the land and taught her children the laws of peace and self-conservation. Then she and her first son returned to the lagoon and disappeared, immersing themselves in the water and turning into snakes.

These three references help to set out a path of interpretation that accounts for the geometric “code” and linguistic links suggested by *Anónimo 4*; they also help to highlight a couple of

key points identified in the plan and cross-section views in figure 1. In the image on the right side of the figure, Marmolejo suggestively locates her *mons veneris* at the “natural ground level,” a phrase that in reference to architectural drawings indicates the level of a site before modifications, construction, and habitation. And in the plan view, the artist not only draws the *mons veneris* as a geometric form delimiting the action, but also designates her height (1.55 meters) as the length of each side of the outer equilateral triangle.

In *Anónimo 4* Marmolejo creates a topography where she installs and defines herself as the active place (*tópos* in Greek) of inscription. And specifically in her drawing she establishes a topography where her body—which she utilizes formally, physically, and conceptually—*gives itself* as the defining place. Her process is a corpo-graphy through which she conceives of herself, a sort of “gynesis” as Alice Jardine would say (1985); Marmolejo gives birth to herself and critically rethinks the master origin narrative (genesis), emphasizing processes of becoming and transformation. Of course, while Jardine’s gynesis problematically assumes a universalizing Euro-American approach (Radstone 2007:93), in this case, as will be shown, Marmolejo’s gynesis is focused on subverting patriarchal, colonial, and communicational regimes. In this vein, and to paraphrase and decolonize Jacques Derrida, I will identify in *Anónimo 4* an interesting and condensed “domiciliation” and reformulation of the “patriarchive” and of the intersection of visibility, authority, and (neo)colonial law (Derrida 1995:42). I also identify a gesture of memory and politics that opens up what could be described as a space of manifestation for a resistant and subversive subject. In this sense, *Anónimo 4* takes the anonymous figure to not only denote the woman as excluded from history and artistic creation (Nochlin [1971] 1988) and the defenseless nameless and the persons disappeared by state violence (Taylor 1997:198) but also the anonymous figure who above all is a libertarian figure of a distancing process through which it calls itself in question (Rancière 2005:72).

Placenta, Corpo-action, Immunity

In *Anónimo 3* and *Anónimo 5*, Marmolejo returns to earthworks practices marked by the impulse to expand on fine arts practices and contexts, as exemplified by Graham Metson’s *Rebirth* (1969) and Ana Mendieta’s *Siluetas* series (1973–1980). In these latter two works “the psychic life of the individual in relation to their environment” (Raquejo 1998:27), a return to mother as earth and earth as mother, and rituals of various types suggesting a connection with the primeval, all come into play. In the case of Metson’s *Rebirth*, which responded to the growth of genetic engineering technologies he already discussed in his series *Prophet ... Prosthetic ... Profit* (1967), the fetal position in an oval crevice in a rock denotes the Earth as a Mother-host, a recipient for rebirth (see Lippard 1983:55). On the other hand, in her anthropomorphic imagery of the body in positions of death, Mendieta suggests herself as ritualistically returning and integrating into an expansive Earth understood as the motherland (Viso 2004).

In *Anónimo 4* Marmolejo neither situates her body in the earth-as-host, nor reintegrates into the earth-as-motherland. In her video performance the artist avoids highlighting a terrain outside the margins suggested by the outer triangle in the plan view. The video performance and the documentation affirm a geo-metric and geo-graphic figuration from and on the artist’s body. It is the body that affirms itself as its own land and terrain of action. In this sense *Anónimo 4* sculpturally reformulates the earthworks tradition, so the expansion of the fine arts practice and situation is transformed into a topography of intimacy. In this intimate folding of the corpo-graphy already identified, Marmolejo’s body is the originating place of subjectivity and is a performative enunciation at the same time.

The drawing on the right in figure 1 shows the artist standing on placentas she had collected earlier in the day from public hospitals in Cali and transported, unrefrigerated, in plastic bags. The drawing also depicts Marmolejo with placentas placed on her body, secured with plastic strips that wrapped her limbs, torso, and head, as if compressing her body like “bandages”—a word the artist uses in her written documentation. This extreme closeness with the placentas in a space and situation that Marmolejo both constructs and inhabits reminds me of

Martin Heidegger's thoughts on architecture and living. He recognized something originary hidden in the word *Nachbar* (neighbor, as in fellow human). Heidegger referred not only to the neighbor who lives in one's vicinity in life (*Nachgebauer*), but also to the *Nachgeburt*, the placenta that is close to us before birth (Heidegger [1951] 1971:147). The placenta is what, from the womb, "prepares us to count onwards from two" (Sloterdijk 2011:384), or as in the myth of Bachué, reminds us to actually start counting from two and relating to one's self as two selves. Peter Sloterdijk has not ignored Heidegger's suggestive idea and affirms that the placenta, my-other-self, began to be clinically and culturally marginalized when Jean-Jacques Rousseau not only affirmed that we were born alone as individuals and one-selves, but also suggested that we "could only conceive of the augmentative other as either a direct maternal nature or a direct national totality" (385). That is to say, to the surprise of art historians, the marginalization happens when the other is assumed as an earth-qua-mother host or as an ample earth-qua-motherland—both references evident in many earthworks practices of the 1960s and '70s from which Marmolejo here distances herself.

Anónimo 4 and Sloterdijk also distance themselves (separately indeed) from the colonization and "gynecological inquisition" that has been in charge of "guaranteeing that the correct belief in having been born alone will be firmly anchored in all discourses" (384) as well as in affective, political, religious, and cultural dispositions. *Anónimo 4* responds to this dispossession of one-self, a dispossession that does not allow us to experience the body as a place of an "intimate revolution" in abjection (Kristeva 1997:223).

Notice that the three excavated triangle-shaped holes surrounding the central open triangle are filled with black water (fig. 1, right). It is also important to keep in mind that the placentas, when strapped to Marmolejo later in the day, have already begun to decompose. As the video performance shows, Marmolejo, who most of the time appears to be an unstable and ominous form that evokes a larva or a mummy, vomits and cries while she struggles to remove the plastic wrapping. Her vomit filters through the interstices of the plastic that covers her, accumulating and sticking to her skin.

Anónimo 4 emphasizes that by becoming intimate with one's abject self—as with our placenta in birth—that self becomes apparently "alien" and horrifying. It is not only worth remembering that Marmolejo stated she "hate[d] menstruation" (in Díaz 1985), but also that the abject affirms a *disruptive mobility* that generates the possibility of a specific fracture within the psycho-logical and psycho-corporal structure of the artist's self. In this sense, and as is recorded in her written documentation, Marmolejo designed a space in which she could perform explorations for potentially inducing involuntary psychological and physiological reactions she did not necessarily foresee, to a degree she did not anticipate and was surprised to experience in the action (like vomiting and crying) (Marmolejo 2018). In that space she also configured what I call a *corpo-action* of a self-performing body. It is meant to denote the performing body's action exerted on the body itself: Marmolejo's exploration of abjection enacted on herself as a way of (un-)doing her self.

Marmolejo and Julia Kristeva agree on the idea that abjection affirms a psycho-corporal and potentially political state of crisis of the subject, and a constitutive process of the self. Moreover, abjection marks both the threshold of intimate suffering and public horror (Kristeva [1980] 1982:140), as well as the place of internalization of horror (Keltner 2011:76) and trauma. In this double game that happens at different levels (infiltration and rejection, rupture and constitution, intimacy and publicity) of a dialectic without resolution, the experience of abjection affirms the affective experience of (dis)-connection, and a corporeal, psychological, political, and aesthetic (not)-being-with-another. It is in this context that her repeatedly quoted account of what in part pushed her to do this work should be understood: "According to UNICEF's statistics, every year 11,000 children die from hunger, thirst and cold due to a lack of aid in Latin America; I ask [in this work]: how pleasant is it to come into in a world where there are no benefits or peace for newborns?" (in Fajardo-Hill 2012:53).

Her question should be contextually interpreted as it evokes a similar motive that filmmaker Luis Ospina (Cali, b. 1949) had for producing his feature film *Pura sangre* (1982). This film

was partly inspired by a true story of rapists and murderers of children in Cali. Ospina further sensationalized the story, combining these real-life events with the legend of a millionaire sugarcane plantation and factory owner who is sick and who, like a tropical neocolonial vampire, continuously needs blood transfusions from young people in precarious conditions (Triana de Vargas 1983:6). Obviously both Marmolejo's and Ospina's works propose critical looks at the context and neocolonial structures of political and social inequality in Cali and throughout Colombia, which are also applicable to the then so-called third world. Both works propose reformulations and complications of their social and historical referents at several interrelated levels beyond the evident references to children.

Marmolejo's question also suggests an incisive phonetic resonance and contradiction between placenta and pleasure (in Spanish: *placenta* and *placer*), and with it a tension between psycho-corporal regimes of self-affirming desire and self-destructive pain, biopolitical orders of life and death, and aesthetic orders of perception and (in)visibilization. These different levels of dialectics are brought together particularly clearly in the artist's design of *Anónimo 4* as stated in the documentation. Marmolejo wanted her perceptible and perceiving, abject and abjecting body to be illuminated by the headlight of an "official car," i.e., a police car (the artist could not use such a car on the day of the action due to organizational issues).

It would not be the first time Marmolejo would include police in her work. In *Anónimo 1* police officers formed a protective control "wall" around the public and Marmolejo while the artist cut and bandaged her feet (Marmolejo 2018). With *Anónimo 1* and *Anónimo 4* Marmolejo criticized the Security Statute implemented by Turbay Ayala's government (1978–1982), which gave the police (and the military, functioning as police) judicial powers over civilians.⁴ More than just literally evoking the nocturnal raids the police conducted to control, arrest, and even disappear students, trade unionists, and "deviants," the "police lights" planned for *Anónimo 4* denote the police (the force and the organization) and the modern confusion between police and politics (Agamben 1998:85). The flashing lights indicate a regime of (in)visibility and (in)visibilization that uses violence for legal ends—including the disposition of law as a horizon of (in)visibility that justifies any decree of law or exception (Benjamin [1921] 2004:242; Agamben 1998:86). In this sense, Marmolejo replies to a complex regional and even global modernity marked by the National Defense Doctrine enacted as both policy and politics aimed at ensuring the survival of the nation against the internal enemy (Comblin 1978; Jiménez 2009). She also replies to a symbolic—and for that reason no less real—psycho-corporal, political, and aesthetic constitution of a dynamic transversal to regimes of protection and order that seek to erase or repress difference.

In this sense and context, the horror of abjection in *Anónimo 4* also points to the traditional tension between community and immunity. The latter, as any student of law would know—and Marmolejo was one between 1976 and 1978 before switching to fine arts—is usually understood in Roman Law as the distribution of activities and social responsibilities (*muneras*) that accompany duties (*onera*) and roles (*officia*); that defines exclusions from responsibility as well as from prestige and recognition of roles (Esposito 2011:20), and has a direct effect on the marginalized.⁵ As Roberto Esposito has indicated, historical practices and philosophical, juridical,

4. The Security Statute gave judicial power to police inspectors, mayors, and police commanders, allowing the military to conduct trials against civilians through verbal war councils (Jiménez 2009:83).

5. For instance, think of the *homo sacer* in Roman law (Esposito 2011:52–55; Agamben 1998:71–112). Marmolejo's oeuvre has also responded to such distribution that, in the patriarchal context of Cali, established the woman as a distracting mechanism for the realization of male power and desire (as it occurs in *Pura sangre*) as a source of stain and pollution (which can be seen in Carlos Mayolo's *Carne de tu carne* [1983], where the young Margaret provokes a sexual encounter with her half-brother, re-initiating a sinister process of murder and perpetuation of the lineage and family's power), or as a figure who labors and gestates naturally while the man works and produces poetically (to which the artist responded in 1985 with *Sesquile*) (Marmolejo 2018). Marmolejo openly departed from the work of these two celebrated filmmakers who come from her city of birth.

and theological theories about community have traditionally assumed and guaranteed the *proper* (understood as both property and appropriate) to be the community's *common*, to be "that which unites the ethnic, territorial, and spiritual property of every one of its members" (2010:3), at the same time that they have affirmed immunity as immunization against the im-proper that threatens property and appropriateness. In this order of ideas, the self-affirmation of community involves invisibilization and "percepticide" (Taylor 1997), and assumes immunization as the aforementioned exclusionary distribution as well as a way of instructing or transmitting (Esposito 2010:28; 2011:174), and archiving the proper in images, narratives, and laws. As Esposito has correctly identified, the tension between community and immunity has traditionally been solved by the immunizing communication of the community's proper.

Moreno and Marmolejo, like many of Marmolejo's fellow students at Universidad del Valle, were familiar with leftist ideas and demands; experienced terror and the disappearance of some of their friends and acquaintances under the Security Statute (Marmolejo 2018); and understood that immunization is oriented towards the privileged, exempting them from conditions of common impropriety (i.e., vulnerability, precariousness, deviance, or impurity), and towards defending their privilege against any element capable of threatening it. Marmolejo, as an artist, also understood that—in what I identify as corpo-graphy and corpo-action—it was necessary to find a nonimmunizing mode of communication in order to transform the dynamics of the community's immunization (i.e., a large set of cultural, gender, and social exclusions, and hierarchical distinctions inherited, adopted, and reactivated). Or putting this in a way reminiscent of Moreno's aforementioned reflections, Marmolejo wanted to transform the dynamics of coloniality that have been socially and culturally internalized (Mbembe 2009:35): coloniality which "one does not resist [...] alone [but] from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one's actions, thus providing recognition" (Lugones 2010:754).

I understand that for Marmolejo, this challenge not only meant problematizing the alleged transparency of the media and advertising, with which the existential, corporal, and political force demanded by an intimate revolution is marginalized, trivialized, or made invisible; but also meant an effort for opening the corpo-graphy and enacting the corpo-action as a space for archives and their transformation as well as for experimentation with affective communication with others. It is precisely in this way that I propose we understand the video performance of *Anónimo 4* as a communicational and performative structure.

Video, Communication, Corpo-operation

The video performance of *Anónimo 4*, which was presented on a 20-inch monitor in Salón Atenas, suggests that the action was recorded during twilight, when Venus appears, and a time that is indicative of the "perishable, random, and scarring" (in Díaz 1985). The ominous figure that emerges in an abject genesis critically distances itself from the celebrated *Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli, and seems to offer a dialogue with Ulrike Rosenbach's *Reflexionen über die Geburt der Venus* (Reflections on the Birth of Venus, 1976); Rosenbach, like Marmolejo, also came to video and performance from sculpture.

In Rosenbach's video performance, the German artist isolated the figure of Botticelli's nude goddess and projected her in human size on a wall against a black stage. Rosenbach stands by the wall wearing what looks like a unitard, which is white in the front and black in the back. In front of the artist and next to the camera, outside of the camera's frame, is a small TV monitor connected to the camera and placed on top of foam and a shell placed on a large triangular pile of salt. Recognizing that the 3-D sculpture needs to be seen from different points of view, the artist turns around slowly. When she looks to the front (toward the camera and the TV monitor to watch and control her movements on the monitor), the image of the goddess and the artist's face and body overlap. When Rosenbach slowly begins to rotate on her own axis, the projection gradually fades, and disappears for a fraction of a second while the artist completely turns her back to the camera. The projection gradually appears again as the front of her body

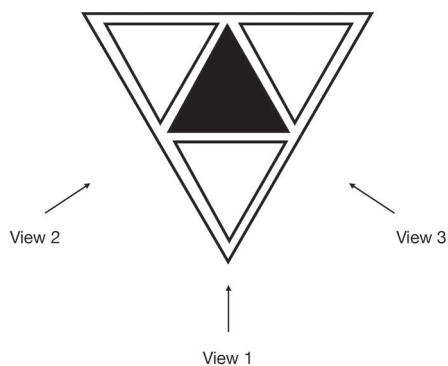
reappears. This fascinating conjunction of images, accompanied by the hypnotizing rhythm of Bob Dylan's song "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" (1966), recalls music boxes with ballerinas inside them. It also suggests a *darse a luz* (in Spanish: literally "to give oneself to light," and meaning "to give birth to oneself") in which Botticelli's *Venus*, used especially in photos, film, and television to represent the epitome of women's beauty and sexual availability, is projected by the male gaze (Mulvey 1975), at the same time that, with an ambiguous gesture, the artist does her best to ironically replace the iconic *Venus*.

This work by Rosenbach, which Marmolejo was not familiar with, is similar to other videos from the '70s that use fixed shots and recordings of actions without pretending to generate narrative. In the case of *Anónimo 4* something different happens: while the instability of the human form in the video disrupts narrative, the efforts toward disruption are geared primarily toward destabilizing perception. This has been omitted by all existent comments about *Anónimo 4* (see for example Tarazona 2012; Jaramillo 2017; Fajardo-Hill and Giunta 2017), which neglect the location(s) of the video camera, the video editing, and the fact that the video-performance has three identifiable parts that show the artist from three different points of view. These views are almost perpendicular to the three virtual planes that extend up from the sides of the outer triangle depicted in the plan and elevation view (figs. 3–6). It is evident that *Anónimo 4* here offers another aspect of its topography, which overlaps with the aforementioned corpo-graphy and corpo-action.

Marmolejo did not edit her video. At the suggestion of her teacher, the art critic Miguel González, she hired José Antonio Dorado and Juan Carlos Velázquez, who were then students of journalism and social communication majoring in film and television. She asked them to follow some basic guidelines like focusing on the body and avoiding as much as possible any inclusion of the surrounding landscape. Dorado made the decision to include the three perspectives, and then presented the final result to the artist, who agreed with him (Marmolejo 2018). Marmolejo recognized the pertinence of Dorado's decision and the resultant emphasis on her design and action, and has always insisted on giving credit to Dorado. From the early stages of her production of *Anónimo 4*, one may say that Marmolejo, as many other artists are, was already prepared to "count onwards from two."

The three viewpoints of the video call to mind Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* (1887) and *The Human Figure in Motion* (1907), historical references for the development of the moving image as any artist and cinemagoer as well as any film and television students like Marmolejo and Dorado respectively would recognize. In these motion studies, Muybridge introduced the triple view to his conception of movement, photographing his subjects from multiple perspectives. Scholars like Linda Williams (1989) have shown how Muybridge's triple view reveals his pseudo-scientific interest in perceptual measurement and biopolitical control, in addition to a Victorian conception of sexual difference according to which, while men were usually portrayed engaged in athletic actions, women were portrayed in "mini-dramas" constantly circulating the question of their femininity (Williams 1989:43), either in relation to domestic tasks or to iconographies of virginity (fig. 7) (Gordon 2015:114). In fact, Muybridge's studies of horses were appropriated, around 1880, by Albert Londe to record the "hysterical" women that Jean-Martin Charcot claimed to "study" (Williams 1989:283n9). Later Muybridge became familiar with these pseudo-scientific experiments and added a movement sequence of a naked woman convulsing on the floor to the 1891 edition of *Animal Locomotion* (Gordon 2015:47).

Nonetheless, equally important for Marmolejo's interest in sculpture is the fact that the three views in Muybridge's proto-cinematic *Animal Locomotion* project also sought to provide an atlas for artists (Gunning 2003:239), geared toward enriching sculptural practice. We can understand this Muybridge as a Pygmalion who took models, "sculpted" them photographically by means of three views and sequential shots, and used composites as a communicative strategy to give them life. In his composites, it is less a question of a photographic illusion of



Figures 3–6. *Anónimo 4* by María Evelia Marmolejo, 1982. Video (color, mono, 4'). From left: Front view, first side view, second side view; diagram by Juan Carlos Guerrero-Hernández. (Video by José Antonio Dorado; video courtesy of María Evelia Marmolejo and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani)



Figure 7. *Woman Pouring a Basin of Water over Her Head* (ca. 1887), from the book *Animal Locomotion* by Eadweard Muybridge. Collotype, 7 1/2 x 16 3/8 in. (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

movement at stake, and more a demand for spectators to imagine, reconstruct, and think of the movements by imagining their own movement around the frozen bodies in the photos (Gordon 2015:111). A cautious review of Muybridge's work in particular, and of the history of photography and video in general, much in line with what Philippe Dubois proposed, shows that photographic and video images and sounds are not mere indexes affirming contiguity with the real referent, but are also image/sound-acts part of a process of creation of meaning and communication that releases them from "the phantasy of a fusion with" the referent ([1983] 1986:79), and gives them—as it also happens with performance documentation—new or renewed "symbolic status within the realm of culture" (Jones 1997:13).

In addition, Muybridge's photographic and proto-cinematic act not only entails a multiplication of viewpoints already present in August Fuhrmann's Kaiserpanorama (1890), but also an effort and impulse to transform and disturb established systems of perception and thought, and to decenter the viewer. His project precedes Sergei Eisenstein's idea and practice of equating cinema and thought, and of understanding the movement of the spectator in the highly abstract field of architecture. According to Yve-Alain Bois, Eisenstein perceived, in the ancient design of the Acropolis, "the decentering effect of parallax (the change of position of a body, hence with its perception, due to a change of position of the observer)" ([1938?] 1989:113).

In *Anónimo 4*, there is also a determined effort to disturb perception and thought, decentering the viewer who is watching the form and movements of an unstable figure. The video offers no fixed perspective that would allow the viewer to have control over the performance and narrative. Moreover, the video performance's architectonics (not limited to the three views) of time and image/sound engender an experience of instability, in addition to the fact that a couple of times the camera, even placed on a tripod, subtly shakes, further enhancing the sense of instability.

The first part of the video, corresponding to the front view, is composed of three takes, while the second part has two takes, and the third part has only one take. In this temporal segmentation the duration of the parts decreases progressively (79s | 74s | 62s), while the length of each take increases (17, 26, and 35s | 28 and 45s | 62s). The editing partially evokes Eisenstein's rhythmic montage ([1929] 1977:74), since the length of the takes directly affects the viewer's perception and experience. The editing includes affective peaks of a visual (e.g., when she vomits) and aural order (i.e., an extradiegetic sound of a toilet flushing, the only sound in the video).

The visual peaks (figs. 3 and 4) are spaced evenly throughout the first two parts of the video, in which the montage creates *false raccords*. In other words, a visual peak at the end of a take is immediately followed by another similar peak in the next take, creating mirror images and producing in the viewer the sense of an affective flow. The experience of that flow may partially explain the misconception, assumed in all the existing commentary on this work, that the video is a mere recording of a performance. Additionally, more than half of the times the aural peaks—evenly present throughout the video—coincide with the visual peaks and false raccords, affecting the spectators who might experience the abject (for instance, might unexpectedly feel the need to vomit [fig. 8]). At stake is less an identification with the artist's experience, and more experiencing one's own body operating in abjection. (As Spinoza would say, "the human body is not a self-contained whole but is built out of other bodies with our own" [in Amin and Thrift 2002:8]). The editing recalls Jean-Louis Schefer's cinematic interpretation of Terence Fisher's *The Mummy* (1959) and the tradition of horror cinema. Schefer understood the mummy less in terms of a recording of an actual body in front of the camera, and more in terms of a virtual body on the screen, whose "aberrant movements" invade and impact the anonymous viewer ([1980] 2016:33)—obviously depending also on the spectator's disposition.

In the third and shortest part of the video, and the only one made of one single shot, there are practically no visual peaks. Aural peaks are used less for emphasis and extradiegetic accompaniment of the gestures, and more as "deviation" from and "disagreement" with the visual image (Deleuze [1985] 1989:244) of the two previous parts, because in this final part there is a

gradual decline of disturbance in both the artist and the viewer, as Marmolejo's face emerges from the plastic wrapping (fig. 5).

Equally noteworthy is that in many of the false raccords in the video, the editing creates "false movements" (Deleuze [1985] 1989:271), that is to say, sequences where the sense of time ceases to be subordinated to movement (as it would happen in a traditional register of a continuous action or as suggested by Muybridge's sequential images), and movement is rather referred to the experience of time as duration or lived consciousness. This is particularly important for the spectator's body consciousness in the experience of abjection.

The originality and strength of *Anónimo 4*'s video performance are evident in the video's "suspension of the world" (Deleuze [1985] 1989:225) achieved not only thanks to the medium's technical limitations (for instance, the shallow video/television space due to the poor depth of field of the analog video and half-inch video tape, clearly contrasting with the photographic capacity of analog cinema film) and the artist's decisions (to record at twilight and avoid including the visual field beyond the abject body and the outer triangle as much as possible), but also thanks to the intelligent use of the aforementioned false raccords, false movements, and deviations. I recognize here that by referring to what I call time-audiovisual—appropriating and complicating Deleuze's time-image—I acknowledge the importance of the materiality and characteristics of the medium of video. I also identify a *corpo-operation* as the third aspect of *Anónimo 4*'s topography, which, as an arrangement of elements of intersubjective communicative operations and body consciousness, brings into play the destabilization of the perceptual structure of control, complicates the transparency of the record as archive (Taylor 2003), and triggers affects in the spectator.

By projecting the video on relatively large screens hanging from the ceiling (for the installation at *Radical Women* exhibitions the screen was at least one meter high), curators have "cinematized" and blurred part of this third aspect of its topography and the rather intimate appeal of the original installation that actually involved a now-dated color TV screen. With this choice, curators understandably aimed to give a central role to the work following current trends in video projection,



Figure 8. *Anónimo 4* by María Evelia Marmolejo, 1982. Black and white photography. (Courtesy of María Evelia Marmolejo and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani; photo by Nelson Velázquez)

which unfortunately tends to blur historical and social operations and conventions related to video and television as “live” and cultural dominant mediums (Auslander 1999:2, 12) distinguished from cinema in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, curators have erased the sculptural character of the television set, which was originally installed on top of a white pedestal (Marmolejo 2019), and of the work itself since it affectively “sculpts” the viewer who, positioned in an almost one-on-one relationship in the televisual space, watches the video on an old TV screen. The curators’ decisions have also blurred the visual culture and political context of the piece, which I acknowledge is difficult to convey to a contemporary audience without the help of text or another communication strategy. It is significant that Turbay Ayala’s government not only introduced the Security Statute and promoted for television (at the time totally public) a system of program scheduling that ensured control, censorship, and repression (Castro 1981). His government also introduced regular color television broadcasting in 1979, which meant a radical change in how the world, news, and telenovelas—the leading melodrama genre in TV at the time—were perceived: in color they were more realistic and convincing (Martín-Barbero 1999:95). Finally, the “cinematization” of the work negates Marmolejo’s achievement as one of the first artists in Cali, and in fact in Colombia, to conceive of video performance as an art form. This is the context in which *Anónimo 4*’s destabilization of the perceptual structure of control, complication of the transparency of the record and archives, and triggering of affection took place.

Some Remarks on the Threefold Topography of Performance

In *Anónimo 4*, I identify a threefold topography that may also be expanded for analysis to other performance pieces while emphasizing the relevance of this work. The fold I named corpography, which refers here to the architecture of the patriarchive as a site of potential subversion, may actually invite consideration of the performance in terms of response to, as well as resistance and transformation of historical, social, political, or symbolic regimes of (in)visibilization in which the bodies are inscribed, marginalized, and excluded. The corpography, in this case of one body, may be expanded to choreography and escenography—understood as arrangements of relations between bodies, and bodies and objects respectively—and the framing of those relations, as a way of seeing and placing as well as being seen and placed in the world.

While this first element of the topography identified in *Anónimo 4* explores performance as a clearing and offering of a territory, that is to say, as a domiciliation, recognition, and submission to the regimes of (in-)visibilization and collective consciousnesses; the second element, corpo-action, enacts the intervention, interruption, negotiation, subversion, and latent transformation of those regimes. This corpo-action points to the usually most recognized components of performance: movements, gestures, expressions, pleasures, pains of and affect in the actual and even transgressive bodies, and objects and materials dynamically emerging and exchanging forces and energies, and also enacting submission and freedom in the territory opened by the corpo/choreo/escenography, which may include the on-site public.

Finally, the threefold topography in *Anónimo 4* is related to the editing, the televisual cultural and political context, video as television-related medium, and communication and (re)production of affect. Here I partially echo Philip Auslander’s proposal for a phenomenological approach that acknowledges “the performativity of performance documentation” (2006:1), which in the case of *Anónimo 4* emphasizes the decentering of the anonymous spectators and the exertion of power and influence on the spectator’s affects. Nonetheless, contrary to his idea of documentation as an autonomous performative event in itself, for which the performance is just like “raw material for documentation” (3), I think in *Anónimo 4* and many other works, including those discussed by Auslander, there is a critical issue still neglected by traditional art historians when talking about single performance artists like Yves Klein: “documentation” connotes a *team* production. And even more, as emphasized by Marmolejo’s acknowledgment of

her collaborators and Sloterdijk's dictum about placenta, performance *and* performance documentation may be understood as—calls for—collaborative work.

With this, I am not interested in discussing the already complex issue of authorship at times vertically assessed by collectors and auction houses, and credited to the artists who, for instance, hired and worked with professionals and amateur photographers, filmmakers, or videographers. The issue, as it happens in *Anónimo 4*, is rather that the documentation team is part of the initial audience, interprets the action, and makes key decisions that may involve dialogue and consent about the whats and hows of the documentation, later interpreted by the consumer. This not only means that the documentation, as I previously stated, is a process of creation of meaning and communication that oscillates between being autonomous from the action and being contiguous with it. It also means that the documenters influence, interfere with, and help define and reformulate, on-site or after, part of the action itself. As Gina Pane suggested, documenters are “positioned inside the action space with me, just a few centimeters away” (in Auslander 2006:3), so their presence may in fact interfere with the performance experienced by the immediate audience, and affect the performer herself. In the case of *Anónimo 4*, even if the video records neither the area outside the triangle designed by the artist, nor spectators, it nonetheless denotes the documenters as the immediate public actually geared to the corpo-graphy and corpo-action: spectators set their viewpoints according to the artist's designed corpo-graphy, and the camera subtly shakes, enhancing the instability of the ominous form of the corpo-action recorded on video.

In performance there is an interrelation—and at many times permeation—between the corpo-operation, where documentation mediums are highly charged social and cultural operatives and performatives; the corpo-action witnessed and interpreted by the documenters; and the choreo-graphy involving the performers, the onsite public if any, *and* the—at times effective, unintended, spontaneous, smooth, or clumsy—presence and interaction of and with the documentation equipment and team, who may also be regarded as a sort of (un)intended public. The threefold topography of performance here identified nurtures analysis and discussion in performance art history, and invites further analysis, for instance, of the apparently secondary but still sometimes intervening and highly participatory role that the camera and sound operators have, both in relation to the early public and to later consumers of, for example, Hermann Nitsch's performance *Manopsychotisches Ballett* (1970), in which documenters take part in the action and even completely enter the visual field recorded by other camera operators.

So again, this threefold topography of performance calls for understanding performance *and* performance documentation as collaborative work. In this line of thinking, I partially concur with Mechthild Widrich's intelligent response to Auslander. She correctly points out that bystanders and police in the documentation of Günter Brus's *Wiener Spaziergang* (1965) can be regarded as “collaborator[s]—albeit unwilling—in the performance,” and an uninformed albeit “informative public for future readers of the work: informative in the sense that they are made to convey a context” (2013:144). Yet, while she focuses solely on the people actually registered by the photographer as uninformed public, collaboration also includes the photographer himself (whose role Widrich unfortunately minimizes) and the medium of black and white photography which, even if she leaves it aside, plays an important role in how documentation captures the event, and also “always permit[s] us to imaginatively assign meaning to the performance” (147).

In this sense, as suggested by Marmolejo in the opening seconds of the video, collaboration also includes the documentation medium, be it video, audio recording, photography, film, and so on. The medium is less a mere archive of performance (Taylor 2003), and more a highly socially and culturally charged operative and performative element of the threefold topography of performance. In this vein, performance art history needs to continue the effort of studying performance as a highly inter- and transdisciplinary practice crossing the humanities and the global history of technology and material culture.

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