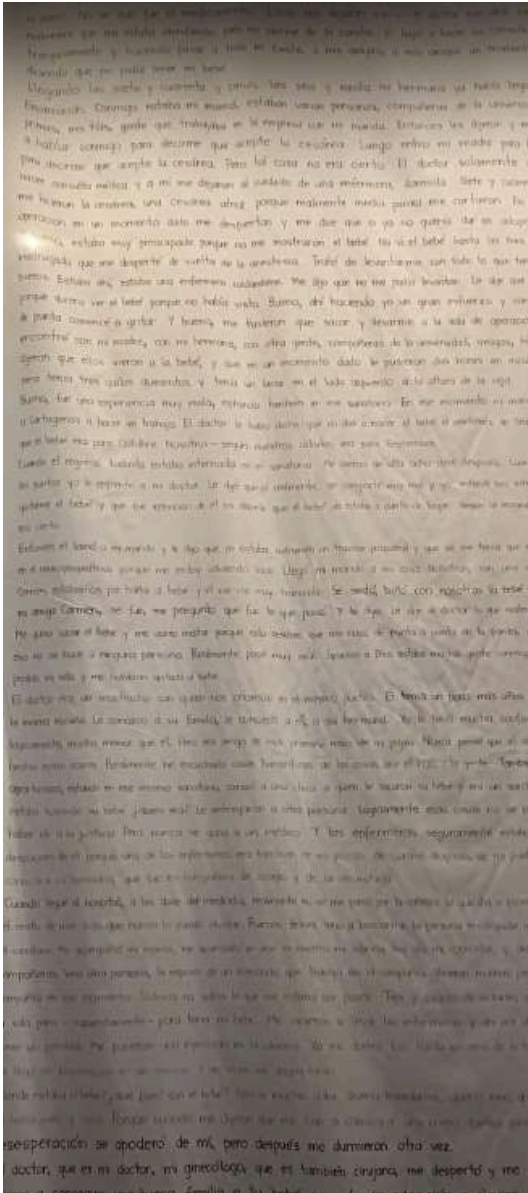




Eselele is a visual artist, researcher and cultural practitioner from Asunción, Paraguay. She obtained a BA in Visual Arts and in Creative Writing from Oberlin College in 2010. In 2015 she completed her Masters in Arts at the Universität der Künste Berlin. Since 2016 she has been working in her home country and has initiated various projects and platforms with local and regional artists. In 2017 she created *Temporal Festival de Arte* with Brazilian artist Van Jesús. The same year she established *Festival Confluencias de Artes* with Argentinean cultural practitioner Walter Tapponier. In 2019 she was the International Research Fellowship recipient for the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Seoul. In 2020 she acted as representative for Paraguay for the *Continuo Latidoamericano de Performance 2020* and co-created the art collective *Ambue*, which is dedicated to performance. She also heads the online platform *Red Gris* and collective art and writing projects like *Proyecto Enajenar / En Casa Ajena*.

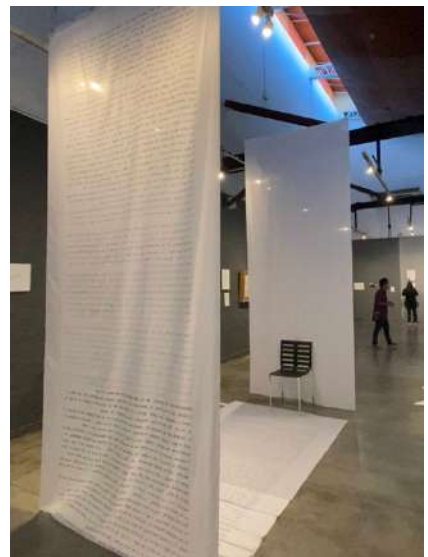
Eselele has worked, researched and exhibited in several countries, including Paraguay, Argentina, Germany, USA, South Korea and Tanzania. Her primary genres of art are installation, object-making, performance, video and drawing. Eselele's work focuses on collective identities, marginality, feminism, histories of conflict, mediation of memory and institutional critique.



## B. B.: Trauma-time y consolidación de memoria (2021)

The installation *B. B.* functions as a linguistic, visual and experiential device. It is composed of several layers, in reference to memory's complex structure. The manuscript is transcribed faithfully from an audio recording of a conversation between the artist and her mother. The latter narrates in a spontaneous manner an experience of trauma with forward and backwards jumps in chronological time and organic misuses of grammar. The text's height, the ink's fluctuating opacity and the fabric's folds hinder readability and require an individual approximation to the work. For this end, the installation includes a single chair, enclosed between the two hanging cloths.

The labor of script implies doubt, error and inaccuracy, a reference to memory's unreliability and the pitfalls and particularities of recalling trauma. It also brings to mind a monastic constancy, bestowing upon the text a solemn and semi sacred air. On both sides of the text are future and past versions of it in the form of its projected shadow and a blank canvas.







### Operativo Exitoso (2021)

On September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, President Mario Abdo Benítez tweeted: “We have had a successful operative against the EPP [Paraguayan People’s Army]. After a confrontation, two members of the armed group have been abated.”

The installation *Operativo Exitoso* is a response to this tweet, which itself is in reference to the murder of two 11-year old girls at the hands of Paraguayan state forces. The government machinery’s clumsy attempts to suppress and destroy evidence of its infanticide involved military personnel, doctors, reporters, forensic investigators, ministers and even the president. Following the disclosure of the “two members” identities and ages, official media sources struggled to control of the narrative in the critical period that followed. The use of language to describe the situation was designed to dehumanize the victims and their families. Battle lines were drawn, real or imaginary, where the two girls represented a plausible threat against the state forces, in particular, and the nation in general. The conversation was derailed and a month after their murders any mention of the incident had ceased in Paraguayan newspapers.

*Operativo Exitoso* recalls the use of misinformation and the grotesque incongruity between official language and the events described. It is an installation and performance that takes place in a forest, similar, perhaps, to the crime scene. The balloons refer not only to the victims’ youth, but also to the fact that one of the girls, Liliana Mariana, was looking forward to celebrate her birthday shortly before her murder, according to her grandmother. The POV situates the viewer behind an air rifle, taking aim and pulling the trigger.





### Memoria de un cañón (2020)

This public installation piece is a scaled-down model of the Paraguayan historical cannon *El Cristiano*, taken as a trophy of war by the Brazilian army during the Triple Alliance War of 1865-1870. It currently resides in the Museo Histórico Nacional de Río de Janeiro, Brazil.

*El Cristiano*, so named because it was forged from 12 smelted-down church bells, is constantly brought up anytime there is a diplomatic spat between Paraguay and Brazil, a common enough occurrence. After 150 years it is defunct as a military weapon, but is still deployed as a soft weapon of diplomacy.

*Memoria de una cañón* is a reference to Do Ho Suh's work and signals *El Cristiano's* absence, which is a focal point of emotional charge for Paraguayan nationalism. In it are combined nationalistic pride, identity, historical collective memory, the question of reparations, xenophobia and asymmetrical power dynamics between a small landlocked nation and a BRIC powerhouse. The work also speaks to irregular acquisition of historical artifacts and artworks by cultural institutions through imperialism, war or colonialism, and the uncomfortable topic of repatriation.







### Empanadas esotéricas (2020)

This work is comprised by objects modeled after the traditional *empanada*, a Paraguayan food staple.

During the COVID lockdown in Paraguay, the artist created over a hundred individual pieces out of cold porcelain, clay, acrylic paint, cloth and beads.

*Empanadas esotéricas* are borne out of a meditation on the intersection of art, power, taste, and consumption. In Paraguay, as in other countries in the region, the *empanada* is a cheap fast-food option found on practically any street corner. With job security on the decline due to the pandemic, many households turned to selling *empanadas* and similar foods out of their kitchens in order to keep afloat. The local art scene is stratified similarly to food – divided, categorized, and commodified according to “good”/gourmet and “bad”/cheap taste, an extension of cultural hegemony allocated to powerful social and economic sectors of society.

It is noteworthy that, in local vernacular, *empanada* is a slang term for the vulva and vagina: the female body as an object of consumption. These *empanadas*, inspired by colorful and kitschy popular aesthetics, return the viewer’s gaze with hundreds of eyes.

## Renunciación (2015)

In this action-based installation, a large mound of dark red earth occupies the interior of a *casona*-style building. Its double front doors open onto the sidewalk, so that passersby may witness the piece as it unfolds. Inside the mound are buried several *ysypo* vines tied together to form one continuous vine. One end is braided into the artist's hair. During the performance, the artist pulls at the vine, unburying it, and wraps it around her body at the same time. She becomes a monstrous form, barely visible underneath the rope-like plant and leaves. The work comes to an end when the artist cuts off her braided hair and walks out of the building carrying the *ysypo* structure with her.

*Renunciación* deploys the metaphors of earth and root-like plants to speak about violent nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric that are controlling social and political forces in Paraguay. The root-like vines are simply buried in the mound of artificially situated earth; they do not sprout nor grow from it. The constructed nature of the installation is analogous to nationalistic fervor in a country with short-term historical memory and selective amnesia.





### Recreación del trayecto de los golpistas (2019)

The title of this performance and installation work translates to “Recreation of the coup’s route.” It took place on the 30-year anniversary of the military coup that ousted General Alfredo Stroessner after 35 years of dictatorship. The performance begins in front of a military compound in the city of Luque, the starting point of the route the armored tanks took, and progresses all the way to the capital’s city center. The artist sits in the back of a white pick-up truck, the same model the Police use today, behind an installation piece made of white plastic flowers, matches and wax. The artist plays traditional songs on her harp as the pick-up truck makes its way from Luque to Asunción at a crawl, hazard lights blinking. The song she plays in particular is *Galopera*, which is traditionally played and sung on *San Blas Day* (the day of the coup, February 3<sup>rd</sup>).

On that fateful day, 30 years earlier, people were out celebrating and dancing, as it was a Saturday and a popular saint’s day. The military coup was a top-secret affair; when it finally happened it generated chaos and confusion as many people were caught in the crossfires. This artist embodies that turmoil in a Nero-like figure, playing her harp as the city is swept with violence.

The performance ends in front of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights. There, the artist descends from the truck with her installation piece, lights a cigarette and, with the same match, sets the installation on fire. She continues playing her harp as the wax melts and runs down the streets.







### Avance (2018)

This installation features a single-occupancy bed and a wave of leaves and hundreds of cicada shells. The artist handpicked the cicada shells during the summer months from trees in her farm in the Cordillera/Caaguazú region, a rural area of Paraguay. The leaves are from bitter orange *apepú* trees that line the capital's city sidewalks and were collected during the winter months, when the trees produce fruits and are most fragrant. Each shell and leaf was manually stitched onto a mesh-wire frame bent into a wave-like form and suspended over the foot-end of the bed.

A trail of leaves and cicada shells extended all the way across the exhibition space and out the door, onto the sidewalk. As people filed into the space they crunched bits and pieces of *Avance* underfoot. These sounds and sensations were the first encounter with the piece.

With this work the artist responds to questions on the separation of private and public space, of natural and urban living spaces. Who is encroaching on whose territory? Are we hundreds of empty cicada shells, or are we the boots that trample them?



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