



PORTFOLIO

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Detail of performance and installation "Recreación del trayecto de los golpistas" (2019)

Performance / installation / sound

Esto no es 1865

2023 -
ongoing



During my stay on an island in the Tigre Delta region of Argentina, as part of my FlussLab residence in March 2023, I focused on a single episode in Paraguay-Argentina relations: the Paraguayan invasion of Corrientes, Argentina in 1864. I was able to work with naval historian and modelist Andrés Cielinski, from the National Naval Museum located in Tigre. This enabled me to have access to archive material, such as texts, photographs and schematics, with which I created an installation and performance project. I drew from a historical photograph depicting an Argentine naval crew that was taken hostage from Corrientes to Paraguay, where many died, during the Triple Alliance War. On canvas cloth, reminiscent of sails, I painted crew portraits. I also used a phrase in Guarani: ndaikatúi (I cannot), che (me - reflexive), mandu'a (remember), resarái (forget). These paintings were positioned in and around the island bank and the Río Carapachay.

This project is part of larger research. In 2022 I began reading the primary subject matter I use at the facility: war camp newspapers from the War of the Triple Alliance, accompanied by the scholarly literature on them written in recent decades. At the same time, I started an archive of screenshots from different press and social media from recent years. In both cases, I examined the texts to find allusions to the relationship of the Paraguayan nation-state, on the one hand, with its neighbors Brazil and Argentina, since I maintain that Paraguay is a vassal state of Brazil, mainly, and of Argentina in a distant second place.



Details of performance and installation “Esto no es 1865” (2023)

Accesorios

2021 -
ongoing



The National Ruta PY02 exhibits particular material and aesthetic cultures that come from numerous spontaneous expressions of commerce, religion, and culture. Throughout its extension, from the Pantheon of Heroes in Asunción to the Puente de la Amistad in Ciudad del Este, there are niches, sanctuaries and oratories. Around cities and towns the stalls selling tereré, mate, poha ñana, mosto, charcoal, honey, cheese, peanuts, homemade sweets and numerous chiperías appear. Sales of plants, ceramics and wooden furniture are also common. Most are informal and perishable constructions, built temporarily to "take advantage" of the constant traffic of automobiles. Many are made of wood and inexpensive materials. The signs that highlight merchandise are handmade and painted. The present duplication of Ruta PY02 has evidenced the impermanence of these constructions. Both wooden stalls and niches have been knocked down to widen the road. The transitoriness of Ruta PY02 is a quality that has been transferred to the buildings that adjoin it.

At different heights along the length of Ruta PY02 one sees distinct phenomena. Traffic from Asunción begins in Capiatá, sometimes in Itauguá. The cathedral of Caacupe, the Catholic epicenter of the country, attracts pilgrimages that fill Ruta PY02 at the end of the year. The success of Chipería María Ana, near Eusebio Ayala, is visible and palpable in the poor condition of the asphalt around it. The constant braking and accelerating of cars, buses and trucks has filled Km 68.5 with potholes. The flat section east of San José de los Arroyos reveals the topographic change from Cordillera to Caaguazu. The number of radio programs in Portuguese increases closer to the department of Alto Paraná, many of a religious nature. Ruta PY02 connects not only the two most populous cities in Paraguay, but also Formosa, Argentina with the State of Paraná, Brazil.

What does it reveal about us, passers-by and residents of Ruta PY02, this vital road artery / highway? What does it tell us about our tastes, customs and needs? It emphasizes some things we already knew: that yerba mate is the vegetable battery that keeps the country awake. Its ubiquity contrasts with the parvity of coffee, which is bought almost exclusively at gas stations. Other phenomena are economic symptoms that belong to a singular moment: the presence of bottles and drums filled with an exquisitely blue liquid is corollary to the price of fuel. Ruta PY02 does not distinguish between what is legal, what is informal, what is irregular and what is clandestine.

These accessories are the accumulation of reflections on what Ruta PY02 represents. They are meditations on public space, belonging, political will and social coexistence. How do we traverse this highway and how does it instead traverse our realities and identities? Can a place of transit be inhabited? What does it mean to stay in a non-place-place? What does it mean to own a place that is public, other and strange?



Details of objects "Accesorios" (2021-2023)

Too many open tabs

2022 -
ongoing



cual de los dos será?

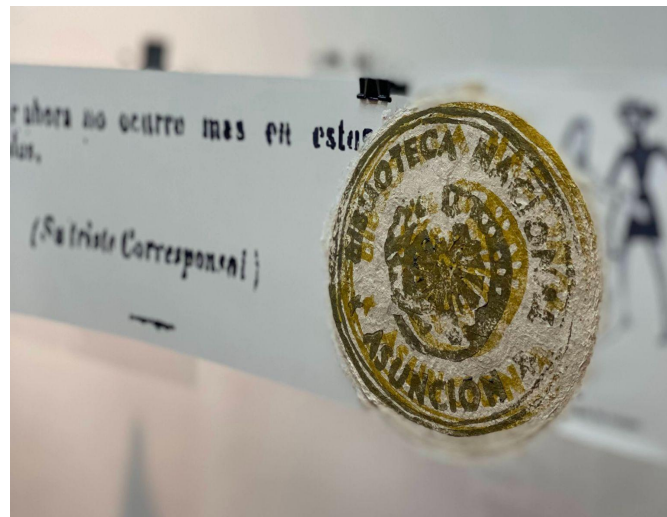
Cabichui > dió ayer por acá cer-
in breve revoloteo, y al escuchar
imada é interesante diatriva, se
ueguito, como aquel que no quiere
todo lo pispa.
el caso : hallabáse, cual pimpollo
a rosa, en medio, d' dos oficiales una
d' : á 16 años, sin pelo de colmillo,
a aun como la tórtola, pero dota-
una fibra sentimental muy fina, que
randa vivamente amor y simpatía,
para poseida con permiso de Dios,
ollizo de la bienaventuranza.
qui, si soñáramos con las zahurdas de
on, tan cierto que agregáramos, que
irar mismo á esa muchacha paragua-
tan fresca como una lechuga, y tan a-
tiva como el iman, blanca no como la
e, sino algun tanto trigueña, con los
s de paloma y sus trenzas de arrehol-
mposible que el maldito espíritu de
nodeo no hubiese hecho sentir los
votos de brague... á los ardorosos con-
dores.
Todavía mas : ella no tenia que per-
necer en nuestro campamento sine por
ince dias, desde que no habia sido
no enviada por su madre en compañía
una tía á traer á sus dos hermanos, que
hallan en la division de centro, no pre-
samente algunos vestidos, comestibles
billetes, cuanto si espresamente los
consejos y exortaciones de cumplir fiel y
salmente las órdenes d' sus superiores, y
e no trepidar un momento en derramar
a sangre por su Patria y Gobierno ; y
ue, contando con sus procederes en
ste sentido, los enviaba tambien su ma-
ernal bendicion, la que de otro modo
no debian esperar jamas ; cumplido,
pues, dicho término debia volver á
su casa á hacer mas losana su ange-
lica existencia, aspirándola la suave
y aromática brisa de los floridos val-
les de Caapueú, sin que mano alguna do-
mestica ni viagera haya de poder marchi-
tar esa privilegiada y candorosa azucena ;
ar esa preciosa recibir el virginal olor de



In 2022, during in preparation for my Art Omi residence, I began to research 19th Century war camp newspapers, namely El Centinela, Estrella, Cabichui, Cacique Lambare and El Semanario. These newspapers ran during the Triple Alliance War that took place from 1865-1870, where Paraguay lost against the combined forces of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. The war was catastrophic for Paraguay. Perhaps 60% of the total population died during the war, and up to 90% of the male population, leaving only men too old or boys too young to fight. Towards the end of the war, even boys were conscripted to fight against professional forces many times their numbers. Their faces were smeared with ash and they were given wooden sticks to hold, to make them appear older and armed from a distance. Needless to say, 10 year old boys do not appear full grown even from a distance, and the child army was massacred.

Paraguay was destroyed and made anew in the image and interests of Brazil and Argentina, whose armies occupied the devastated country. The two major Paraguayan political parties - the Colorados and the Liberales - were created following the war during this time period, one in allegiance to Brazil and the other in allegiance to Argentina. The only reason Paraguay exists as a nation today is because Brazil preferred to maintain it as a buffer zone between itself and Argentina, overriding Argentina's proposal to carve its territory up equally between the two.

Today it is impossible to talk about Paraguayan politics, economics, history, environmental crises or current affairs without talking also about its two largest neighbors. Paraguay is a vassal state to Brazil, primarily, and to Argentina, secondarily.



Details of installation “Too many open tabs” (2022)

Operativo Exitoso

2021



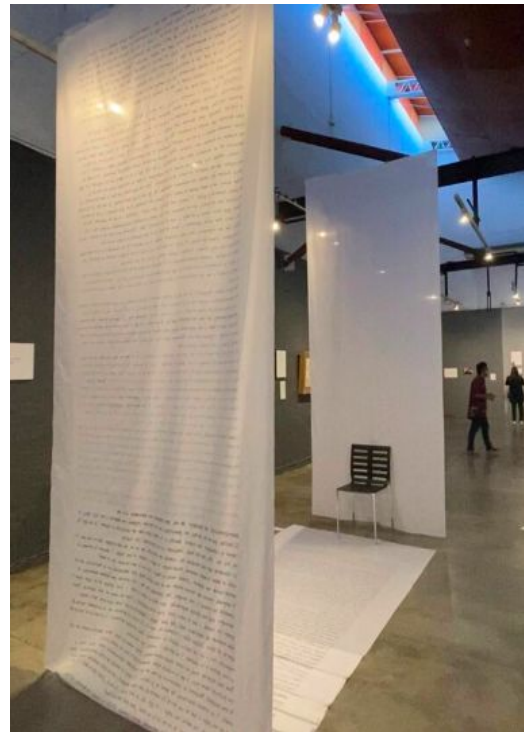
On September 2 2020, President Mario Abdo Benítez tweeted: “We have had a successful operation against the EPP. After a confrontation, two members of this armed group have been killed.”

The work Operativo Exitoso references this tweet and everything that it implies. The Paraguayan state machinery clumsily tried to suppress evidence of state infanticide in Yby Yaú, involving the military, journalists, doctors, forensic investigators, ministers and the president himself. A few days after this tweet it would be revealed, through confusing information leaks, that the “members” were Lilian Mariana Villalba and María Carmen Villalba, two eleven-year-old girls. A revision of the original tweet might read: “We have [carried out a slaughter] against [defenseless girls]. After [an ambush], two [girls] have been [murdered].”

This performance, installation and video work features festive balloons and a printed out image of the photo that accompanied the infamous tweet, hung over a small waterfall. The artist shot the balloons and picture down with an airgun.

Trauma-time y reconsolidación de la memoria

2021



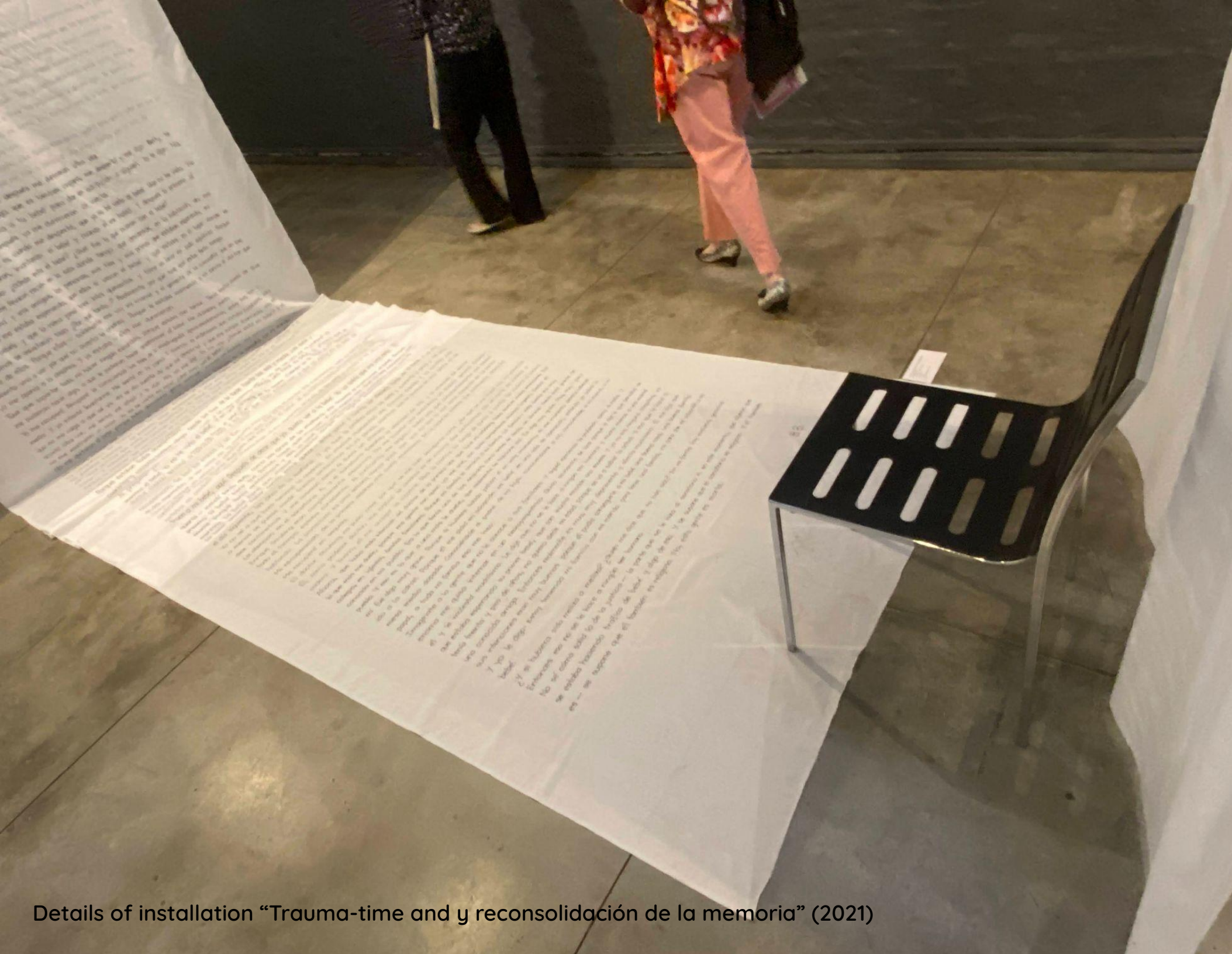
In 1986 a pregnant woman walked into a hospital in Asunción to give birth. She was forcefully sedated and woke up on the surgery table during an unwanted C-section, where her OBGYN doctor offered her US\$200.00 for her newborn. When she later protested the crime, the same doctor accused her of postpartum depression-induced insanity and requested that she be interned in a psychiatric hospital.

The woman is my mother, the baby is my sister and this story has circulated our lives like a vulture. Although traumatic, it is far from unique. The topic of OBGYN medical terrorism and stolen babies for black-market adoption under dictatorship has been a common experience for women in 20th Century Latin America.

These stories are highly personal and, at the same time, violently political. They set the scene for the vulnerability of gestating bodies under a militaristic and patriarchal society. How do we tell these stories? How do we hear these stories? How do we put them into words?

Memory is not linear. It occupies various temporalities and is susceptible to alterations, even after being stored. Each memory is composed of several elements, one of which is the emotional response - something that can be modified, in particular after the memory's activation. This period is named the reconsolidation window and has significant implications for therapy. The plasticity of memory complicates the notion of a single past, stable and immovable, in which we may safely anchor our perceptions of reality. In the case of trauma, "the frightening experience is stored differently from a 'normal' one and can neither be retrieved under normal circumstances nor placed under voluntary control or conscious awareness" (Viebach, 2019).

This installation features a handwritten transcription of a conversation with my mother, where she recounts her experience.



Details of installation "Trauma-time and y reconsolidación de la memoria" (2021)

Recreación del trayecto de los golpistas

2019



“Recreación del trayecto de los golpistas” (2019) is a performance and installation that took place on the 30th anniversary of the military coup that ousted General Alfredo Stroessner, ending his military dictatorship in Paraguay. As the title suggests, the work recreates the route that tanks took from a military command center in Luque and through Asunción, passing in front of such key logistical places as the home of Stroessner’s mistress, “Ñata” Legal; the Police Hospital Rigoberto Caballero, an infantry regiment base; the Presidential Guards’ Headquarters; and ending in the city historical center.

The artist sat in the back of a white Isuzu pick-up truck, the same kind of automobile the national police use today. During the two hours’ slow drive, with blinkers on, she played popular Paraguayan songs on a harp. Beside her there was an installation piece that resembled a devotional offering commonly seen in Catholic ceremonies or funerary processions, made with plastic white flowers and wax. At the end of the drive the truck parked in front of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, dedicated to victims of the dictatorship. There, the artist set the installation on the ground, set it on fire with a cigarette, and continued playing her harp. As the date was San Blas’ Day (February 3rd), she played La Galopera (traditionally associated with this saint).

The coup was a secret mission known to only a few. As it unfolded, an unknown number of people were killed, either in direct confrontation to the coup soldiers or as crossfire casualties. As it was a Saturday night, many people were out of their homes, in bars, on the streets and in dancing clubs. Phone lines were cut and a single radio channel updated the sequence of events. Confusion reigned as people were unable to alert one another about the violence in Asunción. Sunday dawned on city streets stained with blood, pocked with bullet holes, and littered with detritus and gunned down bodies. This was the brutal introduction to democracy in Paraguay.

Empanadas esotéricas

2020 -
ongoing



This project arises out of a meditation on the intersection between art, power, taste and consumption. The vehicle for representation is the empanada, a popular and traditional food staple that is found all over Latin America, brought over with colonization from the Iberian Peninsula, where it originated.

Histories of syncretism are inscribed in the empanada; every country has local variations utilizing native fruits, vegetables and roots. In Paraguay, the local style of empanada is prepared with manioc root. Here, it is synonymous with working class culture and is as ubiquitous as it is cheap. It is *terere rupa*, from the Guaraní “a bed for *tereré*,” as it is meant to settle the stomach before one drinks cold mate tea.

The local art scene is divided, stratified, and commodified in much the same way gastronomy is; just as there is so-called highbrow art, there is expensive, gourmet food, making cheap “fast-food” analogous to popular/ist lowbrow culture. Kitsch and arts-and-crafts would fall under the second category. Anything that might be taught in an instagrammable DIY video would, too. Moreover, handicrafts associated with feminine domesticity are usually relegated to lowbrow culture, with the exception of the work of male artists who “revolutionize” a domestic craft and turn it into highbrow, expensive art. Textile art, beading and cold porcelain-based works are prime examples of this. In this way, art, like food, reflects cultural hegemonic ideologies and the interests of powerful social classes that wield them to maintain status quo (patriarchal, classist, euro-centric and racist).

It is noteworthy that, in local vernacular, “empanada” is a slang term for vagina and vulva, thus signaling the female body as an object to be consumed.



Details of objects “Empanadas esotéricas” (2020-2023)

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?



Details of installation “Avance” (2018)